BETWEEN SOCIALISM AND COMMERCE
Outdoor Advertising in the People's Republic of China 1996–1999

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The use of Chinese characters and transliterations

For Chinese terms, slogans, or texts cited in English translations, the originals will be provided in Chinese characters at the first appearance of each term in a chapter. Unless otherwise noted, all translations by the author. For Chinese names or terms that were not translated, pinyin transliteration is used.

PREFACE

In 1996, I worked as a German teacher in the vocational training center attached to the Diesel Engine Works in Weifang, Shandong Province. Exploring the town and its surroundings, my eyes were often caught by hand-painted outdoor advertisements for industrial products and shop signs showing the tools on sale. To me, these displays looked like an extraordinary type of pop-art. Fascinated, I spent many days in photographing billboards and posters. The fact that this thesis finally resulted from a simple visual attraction is due to many people's encouragement and support as well as to most fruitful discussions about the arguments involved in the present paper.

I would first like to thank Professor Michael Friedrich for his discerning comments and shared knowledge that were crucial for the development of the thesis' structure and content. Steven W. Lewis generously granted permission to use the advertising image archive of the Transnational China Project allowing me to base this thesis on a much broader visual material than could have been provided by my own photographs.[1] Friends in Weifang and Shanghai opened my eyes for advertising and propaganda billboards and helped me in photographing them. I am most grateful to Wang Junwei from Weifang and Zhou Tiehai from Shanghai. I am indebted to the art curator Dirk Luckow. Although working for him kept me from fully concentrating on this thesis for quite a few years, it also laid the foundation for my approach to the visual material and for writing on it. Among those who accompanied me through the different phases of this work and contributed their expertise in most fruitful and indispensable discussions. I especially thank Irmgard Enzinger, Jianfei Kralle, Caroline Roblitschka and Anja Sommerer for giving me their valuable time although they were all charged with their own oeuvres, as well as Cai Jiehua, Gabriele Hussmann, Marina Podonsky, and Sun Jianguo. The pleasure working with Renate Noeldeke for a small exhibition of Chinese advertising posters contributed a lot to the pleasure in writing the present paper. Shelley Begue and Michael Lusin provided an invaluable service in proofreading. Dieter Siebeck as well as my family and friends merit my very special gratitude for continuously providing me with the space and time I needed to complete this work and helping me wherever they could.

[1] For further information on the Transnational China Project please refer to www.ruf.rice.edu/~tnchina/, retrieved on February 27, 2003.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION – FACETS OF CHINESE ADVERTISING

Images of streets, abundantly filled with advertisements and shop signs, commonly illustrate reports about the rapid economic development that the People's Republic of China experienced since the 1990s.[2] In fact, advertising messages did become almost omnipresent in China's public space. A growing number of different billboards, posters, and signs promote all kinds of products or services and invite customers inside shops or restaurants. In the Beijing subway, even the grab handles offered tiny spaces for advertisements on attached plastic boxes, and in Shanghai, a single advertisement of a total 8,760 square-meters wrapped a whole building on People's Square during the Spring Festival of 1999 claiming to be the largest advertisement in China during that time.[3] However, advertising images are not only a product of and icon for China's economic success; they also reflect two major issues in China's actual development. The first is the apparent contrast between socialist ideology and politics on the one hand and a commercialized market on the other. In a very short time the omnipresent socialist rhetoric gave way to more and more expressions of commercial interests. However, such commercial interests are not only supported, but also widely controlled by the Government and by the Chinese Communist Party.[4] Commercial advertising in the People's Republic of China thus works on the basis of an ongoing dialog with the contents and values expressed in political propaganda. The second issue to address concerns the discussion about globalization and modernization – often considered to be synonymous to Westernization – and localization.[5] Advertising images show an interplay of references to China, the West, and to other Asian powers like Japan, South Korea or Singapore. The advertising industry offers templates for the definition of various cultural identities, often located somewhere in between "global," "Western," "Chinese," or "local."

The present paper deals with these two issues. However, it does not see them as dichotomies, but as a continuum with many different facets and hybrid forms of expression. The elaboration of these facets is based on pictures of outdoor advertisements photographed between 1996 and 1999. These years are a transition period for Chinese outdoor advertising: older billboards or hand-painted advertisements on walls could still be found, while the advertising industry produced increasingly state-of-the-art campaigns. The modernization of advertising became part of the modernization of the whole country. 1999, the last year of the surveyed period, became an important turning point for outdoor advertisements. For the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the People's Republic an important number of construction and renovation projects were due to be finished. Hand-painted billboards, often permanent installations, disappeared in the course of rebuilding

[2]Reported annual growth rates throughout the 1990s were around 8%.

[3]An article in *Zhongguo guanggao* reports how this advertisement came into being. See "Chuang Jinisi ji lu huamian shi ruhe dansheng de?" 1999, p. 47.

[4]On all administrative levels in the People's Republic of China, governmental and Party organs fall into one and are usually headed by the same cadres.

[5]"Globalization," "modernization" and "Westernization" as well as "standardization" or "internationalization" are used as functional heuristic terms.

the Chinese cities. They were replaced by modern media like light boxes and framed posters.

This paper is an account of the transition processes going on in the People's Republic during the late 1990s as pictured in outdoor advertisements.

Related studies and literature

Relevant literature dealing with advertising in China is found in East Asian and cultural studies as well as in marketing studies. The different disciplines offer various, sometimes rather diverse approaches.

East Asian and cultural studies

Until now, only a few researchers from the fields of East Asian and cultural studies explored the interplay between propaganda and commercial advertising. Steven W. Lewis examined the hybridization of political and commercial messages on billboards promoting the so-called Socialist Spiritual Civilization in Shanghai.[6] He describes the establishment of a "piggy-back" rule that obliges advertisers to contribute ten percent of their durable holdings for propaganda messages. As a result, many propaganda posters and billboards show a large line mentioning the name of the producing advertising company.[7] Another source of hybridization, are joint ventures between propaganda organs on municipal and district levels with local advertising agencies.[8] Lewis describes the ongoing decentralization processes of political propaganda as a form of "localization" that is not a counterpart of the "global," but rather a local "customization" of the ideological concepts of the nation-state:

> "The state is still preaching the sermon of China's socialist state authority, and yet now it is promoting individualist political identification and consumerist notions of citizenship. … the Chinese state has adapted to marketization by selling a version of spiritual civilization that serves local development goals and needs." [9]

Geremie Barme discussed how advertisements use Party iconography and language, and – in return – how propaganda applies "commercial standards" and corporate identities for State institutions. Barme upholds that, by adapting to the latest marketing and advertising techniques, the Party remains a dominant player in appropriating as well as in defining the sign system of advertising culture.[10] The authors reveal that the interplay between propaganda and advertising takes place on several levels: both follow the same or similar marketing strategies and advertising techniques, and they share the same media. Besides

[6] Steven W. Lewis, 2002.
[7] Ibid., p. 148.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid., p. 150.
[10] Geremie Barme, 1999, p. 21.

that, the campaigns are often conceived and designed by the same people, and use common iconography.

How advertisements offer cultural identification is usually discussed in the framework of China's social development and changing consumer culture. Steven Lewis observed that images of subway advertisements in Beijing, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Taipei surveyed between 1998 and 2001, often invite "young, educated and predominantly female, commuters" to "join local, national and transnational communities of consumers."[11] He suggests that

> "advertisements in these four global cities promote a lifestyle that is uniquely multi-cultural and only understandable to Chinese who think of themselves as both local and transnational."[12]

Some authors have focused on more specific questions. Growing expenses for housing and furniture, for example, are reflected in an article by David Fraser about luxury housing advertisements[13] and Harriet Evans and Perry Johansson described the depiction of women in advertisements.[14] Jing Wang looks at the subject from a different angle.[15] She explores the importance of

> "the industry perspective on the hybrid process of cultural production (such as advertising) where global and local practices are constitutive of, rather than diametrically pitted against each other."[16]

Her analyses reveals that

> "… local 'content' is inseparable from the global 'form' and 'practices' of branding. … Cultural production indeed unfolds in a process much too complicated for either term in the set – local or global, content or form – to encapsulate. The authenticity of the 'local' is therefore at best an imaginary construct used by the locals to theme a place. Most often, localization is nothing other than the newest marketing tool of transnational corporations."[17]

The majority of the authors reflect the complex role of advertising in shaping and being shaped by culture, society, and ideology as well as by local, national and international players. Each of the studies reveals certain aspects of the impossibility of drawing sharp lines between "China's socialist persona and its capitalist face"[18] and between "local" and "global" approaches in China's marketing and advertising practice. The present paper

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[11]Steven W. Lewis, 2003, p. 262. The term "transnational" that is widely used by American and Australian scholars, will not be adopted for this thesis that is not understood in the context of debates on transnationalism.

[12]Ibid., p. 268.

[13]David Fraser, 2000.

[14]Harriet Evans, 2000; Perry Johansson, 1998.

[15]Currently, Jing Wang is finishing her book *Brand New China: Advertising, Media, and Commercial Culture*. Its publication is scheduled for January 2008 at Harvard University Press. (www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog/WANBRA.html, retrieved on October 12, 2007). She promises to reveal what kind of challenges branding and "*branded phenomena*" in China posed to cultural as well as business globalization. She announces to offer a "close encounter" with the Chinese market that includes such social phenomena like the single-child generation and the bobos fever. An introduction is published on the Internet: web.mit.edu/fll/www/people/Brand%20New%20China.doc, retrieved on May 27, 2007.

[16]Jing Wang, 2003, p. 258.

[17]Ibid., p. 255.

[18]Quoted from the introduction of Jing Wang's forthcoming book *Brand New China* published on the Internet. See web.mit.edu/fll/www/people/Brand%20New%20China.doc, retrieved on May 27, 2007.

confirms these observations and analyzes how they are reflected in the collected photographs of advertising and propaganda messages.

Western marketing literature

Advertising in China is an important issue in Western management and marketing literature that aims at exploring the opportunities of the regularly evoked "world's largest market."[19] However, ideological questions in regard to advertising are rarely discussed. They mainly appear in the context of the "Law of Advertising" that came into force in February 1995. Most authors explain the background and major contents of the law. They aim at raising consciousness regarding possible ideological and legal problems of advertising campaigns that fail to follow the given regulations. James Chadwick, for example, tries to operationalize the law by providing legal advice and guidelines as well as examples of relevant legal cases for the benefit of advertisers.[20] Ian G. Weber is describing a number of challenges advertisers are facing with regard to censorship and moral issues.[21]

Specific "cultural values" and their importance for advertising in China play a much more prominent role in the marketing literature.[22] Many authors are concerned with the debates about standardization or localization,[23] and with questions regarding brand positioning and brand name adaptation.[24] Usually, "Chinese" and "Western" values are presented as stereotyped dichotomies. Authors frequently list collectivist principles, popularity and social status, or oneness with nature as "Chinese" values,[25] whereas "Western" values are generally described as modernity, individuality, independence and manipulation of nature.[26] A thus defined specifically Chinese value system is often conceived as unchanging and as dominant over other "imported" values. Oliver Yau, for example, admits that "general" values held in China were prone to changes at least since the Cultural Revolution, but he still believes that "Chinese values form a clear and consistent system throughout generations."[27] He tries to objectify "Chinese" cultural values to predict consumer behavior, and formulate marketing implications. Although

[19]In addition to independent publications on the subject, six leading Anglo-Saxon management and marketing journals were searched for articles published between 1986 and mid 2004: the *Journal of Advertising Research*, the *International Journal of Advertising*, the *Journal of International Business Studies*, the *Harvard Business Review*, the *Journal of Marketing*, and the *Journal of Marketing Research*. The majority of the 53 articles were published in the *International Journal of Advertising*. This survey is loosely built on a study by Carine Chillier and Jean-Emile Denis who reviewed 20 articles published between 1986 and 1996. Two journals examined in their study, the *Journal of International Marketing* and the *Columbia Journal of World Business*, have been omitted considering that no articles appeared during the years documented. See market.unige.ch/docs_online/papers/Denis/199722.pdf , retrieved on March 14, 2002.

[20]James Chadwick, 1997.

[21]Ian G. Weber, 2000.

[22]Rick Yan, 1994; Zhao Xinshu & Shen Fuyuan, 1995; Kara Chan, 1996; Zhou Dongsheng, Zhang Weijiong & Ilan Vertinsky, 2002; Wei Ran, 1997.

[23]T. C. Melewar & John Saunders, 1999; Sak Onkvist & John J. Shaw, 1999; Susan H. C. Tai, 1997; Yin Jiafei, 1999.

[24]Dana L. Alden, Jan-Benedict E. M. Steenkamp & Rajeev Batra, 1999; Allan K. K. Chan, 1990; Yue Yuan Huang & Allan K. K. Chan, 1997; Norman McGuinness, Nigel Campbell & James Leontiades, 1991.

[25]See for example Kara Chan, 1999 and Cheng Hong, 1994.

[26]See for example Cheng Hong & John C. Schweitzer, 1996.

[27]Oliver H. M. Yau, 1994, pp. 68ff. Although his study was published as late as 1994, Yau argues on the basis of a questionnaire poll conducted in the mid 1980s.

Cheng Hong identifies "Western" values as dominant in Chinese advertisements, he claims that: "Nevertheless, it is still inappropriate to jump to a conclusion now that Chinese advertising has been westernized."[28] Li Conghua focuses on the development of consumer behavior and values.[29] He gives detailed accounts of the preferred consumer products in the different stages of the economic development in China and of the values that are believed to determine these preferences. Li argues that "Chinese don't copy cultures, values, styles and behaviors, they make things into their own, they assimilate."[30]

Western marketing literature is directed at international advertisers and generally circles around questions of advertising effectiveness. The publications are usually built on statistical surveys or on accounts of personal experiences in the Chinese advertising business. Although some of them might lack profound reflections on the political, cultural and social context, they often provide valuable quantifiable material on the development of advertising and consumer culture in China, and on individual topics, for example advertisements for industrial products.

Chinese marketing literature

A growing body of literature on advertising and marketing has been published in the People's Republic of China since the advertising business was revived in 1979. For a brief overview on the existing literature, a search for the keyword *guanggao* 广告 (advertising) was conducted in the catalog of the Shanghai Library on May 9, 2005. It led to 1,581 hits.[31] The earliest few titles in the catalog date from the 1980s when advertising was reestablished in China. During the late 1990s and again in recent years a considerable increase in the number of media could be observed, confirming the growing demand for new advertising and marketing related literature. The catalog lists 357 books that were published during the time span covered in this paper – namely from 1996 to 1999. The titles of these books clearly reveal the interest in design and creative processes. Other frequent subjects are foreign and international advertising, marketing strategies, advertising administration and media related questions. These subjects reflect the need to structure production and administrative processes and to enhance technical knowledge on advertising design and the writing of advertising copy. In addition to this large number of books, several periodicals on advertising have been created and published in China since the 1980s. *Zhongguo guanggao* 中国广告 (*China Advertising*), founded in 1981 is one of the most popular journals.[32] Its contents from 1996 to 1999 give an additional overview on the topics discussed during the time period covered by this study.[33] Again, a major focus lies on business development, marketing strategies, and processes of production in advertising.

[28]Cheng Hong, 1994.
[29]Li Conghua, 1998.
[30]Ibid., p. 20.
[31]The Shanghai Library is the largest public library in the People's Republic of China. In 2004, it held nearly 50 million items. www.library.sh.cn/new-eng/, retrieved on September 9, 2005. The National Library of China in Beijing for comparison only holds around 24 million items. See www.nlc.gov.cn/about/index.htm, retrieved on September 9, 2005.
[32]Other journals include *Guoji guanggao* 国际广告 (*International Advertising*) – since 2003, it includes the monthly supplement *Zhongguo huwai guanggao* 中国户外广告 (*Chinese Outdoor Advertising*) –, *Xiandai guanggao* 现代广告 (*Modern Advertising*), *Guanggao ren* 广告人 (*Advertising People*), and *Guanggao daguang* 广告大观 (*Advertising Panorama*).

Many articles deal with questions regarding the cultural specificity of advertising,[34] problems of standardization or localization,[35] or the use of Chinese idioms.[36] Ideological or moral subjects mainly play a role when so-called social marketing is at stake.[37] Some contributions are dedicated to certain product groups like liquors[38] or real estate[39], or to questions about the role of women in advertisements.[40] Although the majority of Chinese literature is – similar to Western marketing literature – mainly concerned with questions of advertising effectiveness its topics also reflect the concern to develop new forms of propaganda and to create a distinctive and specifically Chinese advertising culture.

Objectives and methodology

Most of the existing studies on Chinese advertising are either rather theoretical or confined to specific subjects with regard to the advertised products or advertising contents. They contain very few visual testimonies, or none at all. In contrast to these studies, this piece of work is based on the analysis of a large sample of outdoor advertisements. They were photographed in China between 1996 and 1999. In a first step, an extended analysis of the interaction processes between political and commercial messages will be provided. As could be expected from the studies cited above, the surveyed material will show a broad co-existence of messages ranging from socialist ideology to commerce and capitalism. In a second step, this paper will explore the complex layering of local, national and international identification spaces offered in advertisements. It will follow up on the assumption that these different appeals do not only exist parallel to each other, but merge into continuously changing proposals for cultural identities.

The collection of photographs

This work is based on 1,259 photographs of all types of outdoor advertisements and propaganda posters. They stem from two different sources: My own collection includes 554 photographs taken between 1996 and 1999 in Shanghai, Beijing, and Shandong Province. 705 more photographs taken between 1997 and 1998 in Shanghai and Beijing

[33] Articles and visual documents are grouped under the headings "specials" (专稿), "advertising research" (广告研究), "market investigation" (市场观察), "case analysis" (个案分析), "advertisement design" (广告创作), "overseas advertisement" (海外广告), and "color plates" (彩色图板). Since 1998 an additional editorial and the section "savor in advertising" (广告五味) were included.

[34] See for example Cui Dequn, 1999; Li Hong, 1999; Li Mou, 1996; Qi Yumin, 1996; Sun Fengguo, 1999; Wu Dejiang, 1996 and Wu Yan & Gao Wei, 1998.

[35] Gao Rui, 1997; Li Yanhua, 1997; Li Yong, 1998.

[36] Li Yunbo, 1996; Lü Suyuan, 1996; Ren Kangdi, 1996; Wu Yisheng, 1996; Zhang Hongyan, 1996.

[37] A Wei, 1999; He Chunhui, 1997; Song Yushu, 1997; Wang Bingjun, 1999; Wang Jiarong, 1999; Wang Zhongfu, 1999.

[38] Gao Yufu, 1999; Ke Zunhong, 1997; Xiang Chaoyang, 1997; Zhang Xiaoguang, 1996.

[39] Cai Zeping, 1998; He Xuefei, 1997b; Hu Jinlin, 1998; Shao Xuelian, 1996; Yin Shixiong, 1998.

[40] Fang Zong, 1999; He Xuefei, 1997a; Lu Min, 1998; Wu Gang, 1998; Yuan Weihua, 1998; Zhang Zhengang, 1998; Zhou Bencun, 1999.

were drawn from Internet archives by the Transnational China Project.[41] Most of the images were gathered by walking down major shopping streets or thoroughfares and photographing every advertisement and propaganda poster of which an acceptably complete and clear picture could be taken. Photographs from the cities' outskirts and randomly frequented side-streets were also included.[42]

Altogether 847 pictures[43] stand for advertising in Shanghai, known to be one of the most important cities representing China's rapid economic development in the late 1990s.[44] 209 photographs[45] represent public messages in Beijing, the Capital city, seat of the national government and also a major center of China's advertising industry.[46] The 203 photographs from Shandong Province were mainly taken in Qingdao, Weifang, Jinan, Pingdu, Anqiu, and Weihai, as well as along highways and in the tourist spots Huangdao and Taishan.[47] They show advertising in cities and towns with a slower economic development compared to Beijing and Shanghai.[48] This collection offers a profile of different styles and qualities of outdoor advertisements in China between 1996 and 1999.

Categorizing the collected images

Groups of photographs, each with a common motif or stylistic element, showcase how advertising contents do range from socialist ideology to capitalism and commerce and how they represent different cultures or cultural hybrids. The main challenge was to find distinctive categories for a suitable way of forming these groups. Several attempts to categorize the body of the collected photographs were undertaken: according to their location in public space, their type of media and production techniques, the product or service they advertise, and their employment of text and images. None of these attempts led to any satisfying result. As a matter of fact, it was often more difficult than expected to define clear criteria for subject categories. In the case of a printed slogan with decorative ornaments for example, it was hard to judge whether these ornaments should be considered an image or not. With a few exceptions, most of the groups deriving from these categorization approaches were too large and often remained almost as

[41] The Transnational China Project was established in 1999 at Rice University, Houston, Texas. Its image archive on the Internet contains a large number of photographs taken between 1997 and 2002 in different cities in the People's Republic as well as in Taiwan and Singapore. See www.ruf.rice.edu/~tnchina/, retrieved on February 27, 2003.

[42] The Transnational China Project's website gives an account of the sites on which the advertisements were photographed (www.ruf.rice.edu/~tnchina/, retrieved on February 27, 2003). See detailed page references in the attached list of Internet sources.

[43] 524 by the Transnational China Project.

[44] After having lived in Shanghai for almost two years during the early 1990s, I visited it again in September 1996, October/November 1997, and from January to March 1999.

[45] 181 by the Transnational China Project.

[46] I visited Beijing several times briefly between 1996 and 2000 and stayed there in November/December 1997.

[47] I lived in Weifang, Shandong, from April to September 1996, and visited it again in November 1996, October/November 1997 and briefly in October 2001. During these stays I had many occasions to travel in Shandong.

[48] Population numbers for 1996: Weifang: 1,237,800; Qingdao: 2,238,600; Jinan: 2,509,100; Pingdu 1,314,800; and Anqiu 1,084,300. See Zhongguo chengshi fazhan yanjiuhui & Zhongguo xingzheng guanli xuehui (eds.), 1997, pp. 78f. Although the coastal city of Qingdao enjoyed rapid economic growth – its GDP increased 16.7% annually between 1993 and 1998 – advertisements there were much less professionalized than those in Shanghai or Beijing. See www.chinese-business-program.com/Seiten/Qingdao/Qingdao_index2.htm, retrieved on September 9, 2005.

heterogeneous as the total body of photographs. The next attempt consisted of a rather intuitive sorting into groups of images that followed a common visual pattern. Most of the resulting groups contained a certain motif depicted in a similar way, for example high rise buildings towering into the sky or women standing in water. In other groups, the similarity of the images was due to a common design or a certain creative concept. These were, for instance, a similar employment of a dominant color, like slogans on a red background, or the integration of Chinese characters with images. Some advertisements could be placed into more than one group which was the case when different motifs were eye-catching, or when a certain motif and a special kind of design were both predominant features. The resulting groups were now concise and homogeneous enough to allow more general interpretations.

Apart from the categorization into the groups described above, a simplified distinction has been made between commercial advertising and political propaganda. More refined categories do of course exist. Possible differentiations of advertisements lie, for example, in the originating region or country of the advertised product or company, as well as in the type of company – state-owned enterprises, private companies, or joint ventures. It would also be interesting to consider which kind of agency – local, joint venture, foreign, or multinational – has produced the advertisement. In the field of political propaganda, messages by the different governmental authorities – the national government, regional, or even local authorities – could be distinguished. Besides that, propaganda ranges from more traditional forms like text banners to modernized forms that are presented as so-called social marketing messages (公益广告). Unfortunately, many of the photographed advertisements and propaganda messages resist a sorting into these finer categories because the images do not reveal all necessary coordinates. Wherever the information is available and provides interesting insights it will be mentioned in the analyses of the photographs.

Since the given visual material cannot be considered representative for all outdoor public messages in China during the years 1996 to 1999, a perusal of the photographs can only be exemplary. One group of advertising images was chosen as an example for the discussion of each of the different aspects of ideologically and culturally specific contents. However, not all groups compiled by the categorization described above were used in this thesis. The groups presented in this paper either contain very frequent motifs, for example images of women, or motifs with a very strong meaning, for example the Great Wall as an important symbol of China.

Analyzing the images

A semiological approach was chosen to analyze the present advertising and propaganda images. In the short essay "The advertising message," first published in 1963, Roland Barthes briefly recapitulates that every message consists of a level of expression (the signifier), and a level of content (the signified).[49] He states that each advertisement

[49]Roland Barthes, 1994.

contains in fact two such messages. In the first message, the signifier consists of the substance of the words and the syntax of the sentence. The signified is the literal meanings of these same words and their syntactic relations to each other. Barthes calls this first message the denotation of the second message. The signifier of this second message is thus the entirety of the first message. The signified of the second message is, so claims Barthes, the same in all advertising messages: "it is, in a word, the excellence of the product announced."[50] According to Barthes, it is a special characteristic of the advertising message that this connotation is not hidden beneath the denotation. Right from the beginning, the intention to sell is clear. Yet, instead of a "banal invitation" to buy, the language of advertising follows the same criteria as poetry. The advertising message opens up a world where the consumption of the promoted product appears "natural," it "reintroduces the dream into the humanity of purchasers."[51] Barthes concludes that by the articulation of the two messages, advertising is in fact a "narrative:" "all advertising *says* the product but *tells* something else."[52]

The analysis of the photographic material in this study inquires about the "narratives" and "dreams" that are expressed in the messages. The denotative of the advertising message – the second message in the sense of Barthes – is called "motif." This refers not only to the advertising text, but also to the objects or persons on the advertising image. It is therefore the "literal meaning" of the words and images. What the advertisement "tells," the "dream" it refers to, is designated as "meaning." Barthes exclusively refers to text messages. The "literal meaning" of an image is in fact much more difficult to determine. However, considering its complexity, a deep semiological analysis would divert from the overall tendencies in the interplay of meanings that are set forth in this piece of work. Thus, the analysis remains largely limited to the most important motifs on each individual advertisement and their most generalizable features, as well as to the most prominent "narratives" that are "told" through these motifs. This limited semiological analysis cannot replace more profound and detailed discussions of the advertising imagery that could be provided by analytical methods from the fields of art history or media studies. The given analysis of common motifs on the collected photographs will nevertheless result in a multifaceted picture regarding the ideological and cultural meanings of advertisements.

[50]Ibid., p. 174.
[51]Ibid., p. 176.
[52]Ibid., p. 178, emphasis by Roland Barthes.

1. ADVERTISING, PROPAGANDA AND SOCIAL MARKETING

The 2002 edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* defines "advertising," "propaganda," and "social marketing" as follows:

> "…advertising, the techniques and practices used to bring products, services, opinions, or causes to public notice for the purpose of persuading the public to respond in a certain way toward what is advertised."[53]
>
> „…propaganda, dissemination of information – facts, arguments, rumours, half-truth, or lies – to influence public opinion."[54]
>
> "Social marketing employs marketing principles and techniques to advance a social cause, idea, or behaviour. … Social ideas can take the form of beliefs, attitudes, and values … their ultimate goal is to alter behaviour."[55]

The terms "advertising" and "propaganda" do at least theoretically include commercial as well as political advertising, but the connotations are quite different.

The meaning of the Chinese term for advertising, *guanggao* 广告, is explained by the expression *guang er gao zhi* 广而告之 (broad or general notification) or *guangfan quangao* 广泛劝告 (wide ranging advice).[56] *Guanggao* is claimed to be a translation from the English word "to advertise" and was probably introduced to China via Japan along with other modern Chinese terminology. In Japan, it appeared as early as 1872,[57] and in China it allegedly was first mentioned in 1907 in the official paper *Zhengzhi guanbao* 政治官报 published by the government of the Qing dynasty.[58] In defining *guanggao*, Chinese authors usually distinguish between a broader and a more narrow sense. The broader sense includes political propaganda and so-called social marketing. However, most authors writing about advertising, as well as the Chinese advertising law, limit themselves to the narrow sense and refer exclusively to commercial advertising (商业广告).[59] Similar to the broader definition of *guanggao*, the term for propaganda, *xuanchuan* 宣传, meaning "to propagate," or – broader – "to declare, to give publicity," is often employed in the context of commercial advertising, showing that there is no sharp distinction between *guanggao* and *xuanchuan*.[60] *Xuanchuan* does not have the same derogatory meaning that the term propaganda has in Western ears, although it is sometimes used in a derogatory sense when explicitly talking about political propaganda (政治宣传) in the literature about commercial advertising.[61] Also, the Chinese Communist Party Propaganda Department took into account that "propaganda" sounds negative in Western ears, and changed its English name

[53] *The New Encyclopædia Britannica*, Vol. 1, Micropædia, 2002, p. 113.
[54] Ibid., Vol. 9, Micropædia, 2002, p. 728.
[55] Ibid., Vol. 23, Macropædia, 2002, pp. 506f.
[56] Dai Guangzhong & Fang Jingbing (eds.), 1995, p. 3.
[57] Ibid., pp. 2f.
[58] Wang Duoming (ed.), 1996, p. 1.
[59] See for example Dai Guangzhong & Fang Jingbing (eds.), 1995, p. 3, Qi Xiangdong (ed.), 1995, pp. 3f & Qiu Peihuang (ed.), 1993, pp. 2ff.
[60] The definition of *xuanchuan* given by the Chinese Advertising Dictionary, for example, also includes commercial advertising. See Wang Duoming (ed.), 1996, p. 147.
[61] Yu Hong & Deng Zhengqiang, 2000, p. 137 and, using exactly the same words: Chen Peiai, 2002, p. 195.

into "Publicity Department" in 1998.[62] Instead of *xuanchuan*, the term *gongyi guanggao* 公益广告 (public welfare advertisements or social marketing) is now frequently used in China. Chinese authors argue that the revival of advertising since 1979 was necessarily restricted to commercial advertising since *gongyi guanggao* had not been suppressed during the Cultural Revolution. They acknowledge though, that the *gongyi guanggao* of that era were more focused on propagating political ideology rather than on subjects of public interest and welfare.[63] However, topics like the promotion of better education, health or security standards had always been part of political propaganda, and they are still defined by governmental and Party organs. *Gongyi guanggao* frequently designates hybrids between propaganda and marketing. In December 1995, the first national "honorable cause" (光彩事业) auction was held in Beijing. The most bidding company was accorded the right to use a propaganda campaign for their own promotion purposes. In a similar auction in 1996, companies in Dalian had been offered to sponsor a propaganda campaign under the title of "Going towards a bright tomorrow" (走向明日的辉煌). The winning company was the *Dalian bingshan jituan* 大连冰山集团 sponsoring 3,560,000 Chinese Yuan. In September of the same year, the State Administration for Industry and Commerce (国家工商行政管理局) issued the campaign "The good customs of China" (中华好风尚). All advertising companies were obliged to produce at least one ad for it. During this campaign, 16,860 social advertisements were produced nationwide, among them 5,406 outdoor advertisements.[64] Advertisers in the field of outdoor advertising are forced "to use at least ten percent of their durable holdings for propaganda purpose."[65] Many agencies obviously reacted by producing hybrid ads containing the political message as well as the name and telephone number of the producing advertising agency or by sharing the same space between the propaganda message and a commercial advertisement. Steven W. Lewis singles out between 18 and 20 percent of political messages in top issue areas as being privately produced. He listed the "top issues" in Shanghai and Beijing in 1998 as follows: citizen conduct and civilization, reforestation and protection of environment, public health and family planning, as well as political events, but also slogans concerning thoughts of the leaders Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin.[66] Whereas Lewis uses the term "propaganda" for all these public messages, Chinese authors usually distinguish between political and ideological propaganda on the one hand and *gongyi guanggao* on the other hand, regretting the fact that many of the latter still carry "some ideological flavor" instead of being based on a "civic society."[67] In fact both the exaggerated use of *gongyi guanggao* for commercial purposes, and a too apparently ideological tone received criticism. In this work, the term "advertising" will be employed only for commercial advertisements. All non-commercial billboards and messages will be categorized as propaganda.

[62] See Germie R. Barme, 1999, p. 21.
[63] Yu Hong & Deng Zhengqiang 2000, p. 135 and Chen Peiai, 2002, p. 191.
[64] Chen Peiai, 2002, pp. 194f and Yu Hong & Deng Zhengqiang, 2000, p. 137.
[65] Steven W. Lewis, 2002, p. 148.
[66] Ibid., pp. 148f.
[67] Yu Hong & Deng Zhengqiang, 2000, pp. 137 & 139 and Chen Peiai, 2002, pp. 194f.

2. SOURCES OF CHINESE ADVERTISING DESIGN

The following examples introduce a number of references that play a role for the (self-) definition of Chinese advertising as culturally or nationally specific.

2.1 Historical shop signs

Chinese authors usually go far back in history when speaking about the predecessors of today's advertising.[68] Among the most ancient forms of outdoor advertising in China they list shop signs or signboards called *huangzi* 幌子 and *zhaopai* 招牌 that are claimed to date back to a time as early as the Chunqiu period (722–481 B.C.) and remained in use throughout history.[69] *Huangzi* shop signs are banners, boards or other sorts of hanging items referring to a certain kind of commodity or service. As the examples below show, *huangzi* signs could advertise many different kinds of shops.[70]

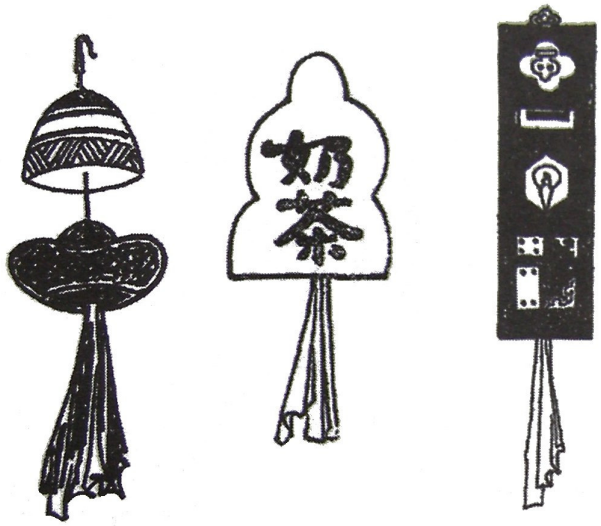

PLATE 1
Drawings of historical *huangzi* shop signs: hat maker, tea with milk, and assorted metal fittings

Zhaopai signboards are a different type of traditional shop signs consisting of rectangular wooden boards with the written name of the shop.[71] In contrast to *huangzi*, *zhaopai* do not advertise a certain commodity, but rather a specific seller or service provider. Users of *zhaopai* count on the recognizability of their own name. To prove the early and continuous existence of these shop signs, the authors quote from literary classics like the *Lun yu* 论语 (fourth century B.C.) or the *Hanfeizi* 韩非子 (third century B.C.), poems, or popular novels

[68] See for example Chen Peiai, 2002, pp. 10ff or Zhang Zezhong (ed.), 1991, pp. 6ff.
[69] Chen Peiai, 2002, pp. 9ff, Ding Junjie, 1997, p. 11. Some authors content themselves in stating that these forms of outdoor advertising appeared "very early", see e.g. Gu Shihong, 1996, p. 4, and Cheng Hong, 1996, p. 75.
[70] Chen Peiai 2002, pp. 12f. Time or location of appearance of these *huangzi* remain unspecified because Chen does not state his sources.
[71] Zhang Changyou & Zhuang Jincai, 1994, p. 19.

like the *Shuihu zhuan* 水浒传 (also known as *Water Margin*, around 1350).[72] The most famous visual testimony for ancient advertising is the *Qingming shanghe tu* 清明上河图 (*Going up the River on the Qingming Festival*), painted by Zhang Zeduan during the Northern Song period (960–1126). The painting consists of a long horizontal scroll showing street scenes in the ancient capital Bianliang, present-day Kaifeng. It pictures several shop signs, for example the *zhaopai* signs for a prognosticator stall on the plate below.

PLATE 2
Zhaopai signs on Zhang Zeduan, *Qingming shanghe tu*, Northern Song (960–1126)

Zhaopai signboards are predecessors to today's shop signs as well as to modern branding and trademark symbols. Those *zhaopai* that might be the most similar to their historical models can nowadays be seen as signs next to the doorways of buildings or alleys to point out the location of companies or offices inside the alley. With their plain design, they function as direction indicators more than as advertisements.

PLATE 3
Company signs at the entrance of a Shanghai alley, Shanghai 1997–98

[72] See for example Xu Baiyi (ed.), 1995, p. 8; Ding Junjie, 1997, p. 11; Chen Peiai, 2002, pp. 15ff, or Zhang Zezhong, 1991, pp. 38ff.

Signs of the traditional *huangzi* type are still very common today, especially among private shop owners or small companies, because they are easy to make, cheap in material and production, and clearly comprehensible. *Huangzi* banners and boards for wine-shops, noodle-restaurants, key copiers, and other specialized shops are a popular form of self-made advertising by shop owners.

PLATE 4
Noodle restaurant, wooden *huangzi* sign, Shanghai 1999

The above example from Shanghai shows a small noodle restaurant with a *huangzi* board leaned against a tree. It displays the character *mian* 面 (noodles). Shop signs with paintings of the products on sale are found on numerous photographs taken in Shandong. They might also be understood as a form of *huangzi* extended to more than one product. The following photograph, for example, shows a hand-painted sign for a department store selling everything from articles of daily use (日用百货), stationery (文化用品), and cosmetics (化妆品) to assorted plumbing hardware (水暖五金杂品类). Different specimens of the latter are depicted on the billboard, possibly for better identification of the products.

PLATE 5
Department store, painted advertisement, Pingdu 1996

As mentioned before, *huangzi* shop signs originally were very plain without any connotations; they directly referred to the offered products or services. This may be true for the examples given above, but it is different for historicized *huangzi*. By imitating certain traditional *huangzi*, for example the character *jiu* 酒 (alcohol) on a cloth banner or flag, the shop owners do not only refer to their commodity, but also to a romanticized image of Chinese history. Such a shop sign does not perpetuate an old type of advertisement. Instead, the *huangzi* implicitly alludes to movies and television series, for example about the wine-loving, martial art-fighting heroes of the *Shuihu zhuan*, that are placed in a – mostly artificial – historical setting. It has thus to be interpreted as a sign referring to concepts of a cultural identity that are not based on actual traditions, but on mostly second hand entertainment material.

2.2 Traditional couplets in advertising

Duilian 对联 couplets are a specifically Chinese literary form that is still very popular in today's Chinese advertising world. Originally, these couplets were written on two scrolls or boards placed on each side of an entrance for celebrations and other special occasions. The corresponding words in the parallel sentences had to be carefully matched, the tones and rhythms coordinated. The use of *duilian* in advertising is said to have started during the second half of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644).[73] Zhang Zezhong lists *duilian* advertisements for many kinds of products and services and tells stories about their creations and about the reactions of the public. One of these stories is about the Ming dynasty calligrapher Zhu Yunming (1460–1526): He once visited the West Lake in Hangzhou where a couple operated a small restaurant that – to the distress of the owners – lacked business. Zhu Yunming entered the empty place and had a meal there. Since he was quite pleased with the wine, food and service, he asked the unhappy couple why their place was not more frequented. The two explained to him that without a *duilian* at their door nobody would take notice of their small restaurant, and because they were both illiterate, they were unable to write one by themselves. They asked for assistance but no one cared to help them. Zhu Yunming called for writing material and composed the following *duilian*:

> I don't care about East and West, I care about the restaurant.[74]
> May times be good, may times be bad: Please, have a drink!
> 东不管西不管，我管酒管
> 兴也罢衰也罢，请罢喝罢

[73] Chen Peiai, 2002, pp. 31ff; Zhang Zezhong, 1991, pp. 13ff.

[74] The first part of the couplet actually carries a double meaning. It could also be understood as a hint to the problems the restaurant keepers had with finding customers: 东不管西不管 would then be understood as "East and West don't care," meaning that nobody cares.

The couplet with the catchy rhythm[75] became a sensation and made the restaurant's business flourish.[76]

Duilian are still popular, although the rules regarding their composition are no longer strictly applied today. Besides their traditional location next to entrance doors, *duilian* are used for framing advertisements on billboards or posters, containing a kind of slogan. Chinese advertising slogans often follow the structure of a *duilian*, regardless of their position on the advertisement.

2.3 The *Haipai*-style

A famous advertising style that flourished during the 1920s and 1930s in the International settlements of Shanghai is called *Haipai* 海牌, referring to Shanghai (*hai* 海) as its place of origin. On *Haipai* posters, women represent modernity that is expressed in fashion and accessories deriving from a mixture of Chinese and Western styles.[77] Similar mixtures can still be observed on advertisements showing women, although the advertising models today might not come up to the elegance of the ladies on the *Haipai* posters.

PLATE 6
Thousand Lucks Japanese Sake wine, poster, Shanghai, around 1930

The *Haipai* style revived in the 1990s, when Shanghai's economy and entertainment sector flourished. Bars and nightclubs decorated their venues with the old posters. Originals and copies were on sale. The modern international lifestyle represented on *Haipai* style posters

[75] The couplet works with the repetition of syllables that becomes easily visible in the transcription: "*Dong bu guan xi bu guan, wo guan jiuguan / Xing ye ba shuai ye ba, qing ba he ba.*"
[76] Zhang Zezhong, 1991, p. 31, see also pp. 15ff & 28–34.
[77] See for example Yi Bin (ed.), 1995; Zhang Yanfeng, 1992 and Wu Hao, Zhuo Baitang, Huang Ying & Lu Wanwen (eds.), 1994.

became an important source of Shanghai's redefinition as a modern city with an unique ambiance that follows up on the myth of Shanghai in the 1920s and 1930s.

2.4 The propaganda heritage

During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), visual culture in China was largely dominated by State and Party propaganda. Commercial advertising was denounced and disappeared almost completely from the media, from the streets and out of shop windows. Neon-signs were destroyed and old names of shops, department stores and brands had to be changed because they were considered remnants of a feudal society.[78] In her survey of advertisements in the official Party organ *Renmin ribao* 人民日报 (*People's Daily*) since 1949, Lauren Swanson points out that advertisements were in fact still printed during the Cultural Revolution. Yet, they remained very few and were confined to industrial products and raw material.[79] However, the great majority of public messages in the Cultural Revolution consisted of a broad range of political posters, banners and slogans that promoted the prevailing ideology and behavioral guidelines. Workers, peasants and soldiers were represented as "heroes" amidst the people. Popular topics in propaganda were, for example, the accomplishments of these "heroes" in the model work units of Dazhai in Shanxi province with flourishing agriculture on formerly dry fields, and of Daqing in Heilongjiang province with oil fields that had been opened without foreign technology and investment.[80] However, the greatest and most important "hero" was without doubt Mao Zedong himself, often also represented through his thoughts written down in the "little red book," *Mao zhuxi yulu* 毛主席语录 (*Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong*).[81] Under the government of Hua Guofeng (1976–1980), political campaigns continued to be visualized on very similar propaganda posters, with the demonization of Mao's wife Jiang Qing and the so-called "Gang of Four"[82] as a new thematic focus. Later, Deng Xiaoping proclaimed that the actual leaders should remain more in the background. Instead, political leaders of the past, like Zhou Enlai, became prominent figures on propaganda posters. Campaigns about patriotism and environmental issues as well as various behavioral guidelines for different members of society became important topics. Children were taught to honor teachers and elders, and to practice hygiene. Women

[78] See for example Cheng Hong, 1996, p. 78.

[79] Lauren A. Swanson, 1996, p. 226 and 1997, p. 277.

[80] www.sino.uni-heidelberg.de/conf/propaganda/exhibition2.html, retrieved on July 31, 2002.

[81] The image of Mao kept a prominent position in China's public space until today. His portrait still looks over Tiananmen Square. A veritable cult about Mao revived in the late 1980s and early 1990s, reaching its peak in 1993, the year of Mao's 100th birthday. Cultural Revolution posters and Mao badges became fashion items. See for example Robert Benewick, 1999, pp. 134f.

[82] The "Gang of Four" refers to Jiang Qing, Wang Hongwen, Yao Wenyuan and Zhang Chunqiao who have been declared responsible for the Cultural Revolution and arrested shortly after the death of Mao Zedong in 1976. All have been condemned to long prison charges. The death sentences of Jiang Qing and Zhang Chunqiao have been altered to life-long prison in 1983.

working in the service sector were asked for courtesy in treating customers and clients, and men were exhorted to care for workplace safety.[83] Large collections of propaganda posters from the Cultural Revolution (1966–76) as well as from the "Four Modernizations" era in the late 1970s and 1980s were published in the last few years and discussed from different angles.[84]

For at least 20 years before reform and opening policies had been introduced, propaganda posters largely dominated visual communications in China. People were accustomed to read the visual language they used and interpret their signs. Therefore, these posters are a most valuable source to trace back if and how certain motifs found on the visual material from the late 1990s were employed in earlier propaganda. Comparisons with motifs from older propaganda are undertaken in part I of this thesis where the prevalence of these motifs and the upholding of their meanings are examined.

2.5 The emergence of contemporary Chinese advertising design

In the emergence of contemporary design in China one can observe a considerable gap between the discussions in academic and professional circles on the one hand, and the prevailing advertising practice on the other hand.

A 1983 article in *Zhongguo guanggao* 中国广告 (*China Advertising*) claimed that artistic conception and taste are the most important factors in judging the quality of advertisements. The author states the opinion that good advertisements should be like paintings of Qi Baishi (1864–1957) showing a profound artistic conception and inciting associations without offering to be captured at a single glance.[85] The literary critic Yu Hong and the art critic Deng Zhengqiang criticize that these claims for art in advertising remained rather unfulfilled in the advertising practice of the 1980s. Instead, many business

[83] See Stefan Landsberger, 1994, pp. 169ff.

[84] One collection of Chinese propaganda posters is situated in the University of Westminster, London. It includes items dating from the early years of the Cultural Revolution to the early 1980s. Posters from this collection were analyzed in *Picturing Power in the People's Republic of China*, see Harriet Evans & Stephanie Donald (eds.), 1999. The authors cover different aspects like the depiction of women and children or the iconization of Mao Zedong. Around 1,500 images of posters are available on the Internet on *Stefan Landsberger's Chinese Propaganda Poster Pages* hosted by the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam. (www.iisg.nl/~landsberger/, retrieved on September 25, 2002). See also Stefan Landsberger, 1994 and Stefan Landsberger, 1996. He sorted the posters into political, economic, and social topics, as well as according to specific target groups such as age, gender or social groups, and analyzed their symbolism and imagery. The exhibition *Picturing Power: Art and Propaganda in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution* held in 2001 at Heidelberg University and the accompanying workshop *Rethinking Cultural Revolution Culture* are also featured on the Internet. (www.sino.uni-heidelberg.de/conf/propaganda/, retrieved on July 31, 2002). A private poster collection was published by Michael Wolf accompanied by a few essays and translations to the texts on each poster, but without further analyses of the posters, styles and contents. See *Chinese Propaganda Posters from the Collection of Michael Wolf with Essays by Anchee Min, Duo Duo and Stefan Landsberger*, 2003.

[85] Yu Hong & Deng Zhengqiang, 2000, pp. 28f referring to Zhou Shaomiao 周绍淼, "Mai xin bu, kaichuang guanggao, zhuanghuang sheji xin jumian" 迈新步，开创广告装璜设计新局面, in: *Zhongguo guanggao*, 3, 1983, p. 5.

people emphasized informational content in advertisements, employing simple images of the product, tables and technical data, but no or little elements of decoration.[86] Obviously, during the 1980s, the discussions about artistic advertising were more concerned with an ideal than with actual advertising practice. Economic development and growing competition in the mid 1980s led to the need for more effective advertising. During that time, the concept of "modern design" (现代设计) as opposed to the concept of artistic advertising entered China. Chinese universities started to establish specialized departments for graphic design that were separated from those for arts, or arts and crafts. In the 1990s, advertisements became increasingly numerous. This made it even more necessary to produce advertisements that would stick out and thus be fit to catch the consumers' attention. However, in advertising practice, simple depictions of products with some information and decoration prevailed. These kind of advertisements could not sufficiently meet their goal, nor could an advertising education that often was still centered around artistic skills. A 1991 article in *Zhongguo guanggao* blamed the art education in China for the backwardness of Chinese design.[87] In 1993, an article in the *International Journal of Advertising* criticized that "… advertising education concentrates on skills rather than a general theory of advertising strategy" and that "… an emphasis on art often overpowers areas like psychology and statistics."[88]

In most of the Chinese 1990s' literature on advertising design two major strategies are observable: either, the authors use pragmatic economic arguments to introduce design as the preferable counterpart of "art," or they still talk about art, yet everything they explain refers to concepts of modern design. The characterization of "artistic design" given by Zhang Changyou and Zhuang Jincai reveals a dominant orientation towards the economic goals of advertising on the one hand, and similarities to the ideas of propaganda on the other hand. The claimed characteristics include for example the "common character" (通俗性) which may be compared to the "mass character" (大众性) of propaganda. Art and design, should meet the popular aesthetic taste. Effectiveness (时效性) and originality (新颖性) are said to be necessary for the message to be quickly discerned and are understood to be of paramount importance for the success in a competitive market economy. Whereas the motivation of art is said to be an individual feeling, the motivation of design is seen as the "psychology of the masses." Besides that, design is accomplished by a team of experts. This concept is reminiscent of the collective artworks from the Cultural Revolution.[89] The same functions that had originally been accorded to art in advertising were now said to be fulfilled by modern design. Design, rather than art, was seen as an instrument to build "spiritual and material civilization."[90]

Several exhibitions of Chinese posters were held in and outside China since the 1990s. The first design exhibition in China was held in 1992 in Shenzhen, organized by the

[86]Ibid., p. 28.
[87]Yu Hong & Deng Zhengqiang, 2000, p. 68, referring to the article "Xiandai sheji yu da meishu zhi zheng" 现代设计与大美术之争 by Min Ming 敏明 & Yan Zhen 颜珍 in *Zhongguo guanggao*, 3, 1991, p. 36.
[88]Kong Liang & Laurence Jabocs, 1993, p. 183.
[89]Zhang Changyou & Zhuang Jincai, 1994, pp.137ff.
[90]Yu Hong & Deng Zhengqiang, 2000, p. 67.

Shenzhen Graphic Design Association (深圳市平面设计协会). The exhibitions reflect tendencies in poster art by professional designers and design students. The concepts behind their designs are often taken over from Hong Kong, Taiwanese, and Japanese design, mainly those styles that integrate Chinese or Japanese tradition and Western modernity. Only a minority of the posters in the exhibitions were commissioned by commercial or cultural clients; instead, most of them were especially designed for the exhibitions, often following a given topic or motto. This goes back to Japanese practices. Japanese commercial posters since the end of the Second World War most often lacked quality design because companies preferred loud advertisements. In response, the Japanese Graphic Design Association, established in 1978, organized design competitions where contributions followed a certain topic.[91] In 1996, for example, the Shenzhen exhibition was held under the topic "communication" (沟通). "Interaction" (互动) was the official topic of the *Shanghai International Poster Invitational Exhibition '99* [92] (上海国际海报邀请展作品集), organized by the Shanghai Graphic Designers Association. The fact that "interaction" and "communication" were chosen as mottoes for posters, indicates how important it is for designers to explore visual communication processes. These posters do not advertise any product or social cause, but rather the designer's work and style.[93]

Many designers express themselves by transforming images or by combining them with other images in a collage like style, a technique that Henry Steiner[94] describes as "split imagery."[95] Another frequent feature of the posters is the mixing of different stylistic elements like for example brush writing and printed letters. The interaction or communication processes do not only refer to the intercultural dialog between China and the Western world, but also to the exchange between designers from the People's Republic, Taiwan and Hong Kong, as well as to the dialog between generations.[96] Although the posters shown in these exhibitions are usually not put up as "real" advertisements in the streets, they obviously inspired those advertisers whose designs are discussed in chapter 11 of the present paper.

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[91] *Graphic Design in China/Aktuelles Plakatdesign aus China*, 2006, p. 8.

[92] Original English title. See Shanghai pingmian shejishi zhuanye weiyuanhui (ed.), 1999.

[93] Exhibitions shown in Germany include: *Plakate in China* (Posters in China) held in Cottbus in 1997. The catalog offers articles about the situation of design in China as well as about some popular motifs and symbols. The use of Chinese characters, traditional ink-writing equipment, and puns are given the greatest attention. Thus, the special graphical possibilities of Chinese script are emphasized. See Perdita von Kraft (ed.), 1997. *Mirror Images of the Public. The Avantgarde Poster from China* was held in 2001 in Berlin. Designers contributed posters on noncommercial topics like peace, children's rights, culture, environmental protection, and east-west communication. The exhibition was held in cooperation with the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou and the Shanghai Graphic Designers Association. See *Spiegelbild der Öffentlichkeit/Das Avantgarde Plakat aus China*, 2001. The latest exhibtion was *Graphic Design in China,* shown in Hamburg in 2006. It focuses on poster contributions to the 2005 Shenzhen design exhibition. See *Graphic Design in China*, 2006.

[94] The influences of the Austrian graphic designer Henry Steiner who has been working in Hong Kong since the 1960s and was often called the "father of Hong Kong design," can be found on a number of the photographed advertisements. Steiner's works frequently incorporate Chinese symbols and motifs into Western design concepts. His office created the visual identities for many famous Hong Kong brands, for example for the Dah Sing Bank.

[95] Henry Steiner & Ken Haas, 1995, pp. 36f.

[96] Perdita von Kraft (ed.), 1997, p. 23.

3. ADVERTISING SEEN IN THE CONTEXT OF A CHANGING CHINA: 1979–1999

Advertising and socialism

Although advertising had existed in the early years of the People's Republic, and first attempts were made to define the special characteristics of "socialist advertising," the highly controlled economy and the numerous campaigns under Mao Zedong left no space for the development of an advertising industry. In the years of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), advertising was despised. It started to reappear in 1979, with the reform policies under Deng Xiaoping.

An article published in January 1979 in the daily newspaper *Wenhui bao* 文汇报[97] is frequently seen as the new beginning of advertising after its prior ban during the Cultural Revolution. It was titled "Restoring the Good Name of Advertising" (为广告正名).[98] Although the political decision to permit commercial advertising was certainly taken well before this article appeared, its author, Ding Yunpeng, is commonly seen as the first person to publicly reinstate the discussions about the re-legitimization of advertising.[99] Most of the arguments he played out in favor of advertising were of a rather pragmatic nature. He suggested that it should be seen as a useful tool for the "creation of a rich socialist economy" by helping to increase domestic and international trade. He further claims that advertising is a means to improve product quality and to instruct consumers. Apart from these pragmatic arguments for advertising, Ding brings up a number of points for its ideological justification[100] that show its proximity to propaganda: it is supposed to reveal "a wide-ranging mass character" (广泛群众性), "to make people feel the growing prosperity of the socialist economy and culture" (使人…感受到社会主义经济文化的欣欣向荣), and it ought to serve for the people's education. Besides that, Ding claimed that "fine advertising can beautify the people's cities and pleases the heart and the eyes of the people" (优秀的广告可以美化人民的城市，令人赏心悦目).[101]

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[97] The *Wenhui bao* or *Wenhui Daily* is published in Shanghai and distributed nationwide. It is mainly directed at intellectuals. Interestingly, it was also an article in the *Wenhui bao* that is said to have given the final impulse for launching the Cultural Revolution: "On the New Historical Drama *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*" (评新编历史剧《海瑞罢官》) by Yao Wenyuan, member of the so-called "Gang of Four," was published there on November 10, 1965.

[98] Ding Yunpeng, 1979. Title translation taken from Randall E. Stross, 1990, p. 486.

[99] Randall E. Stross, 1990, p. 486.

[100] Rulers of all socialist economies need to justify the existence of advertising, because it is supposed to have no place in a socialist system. Karl Marx counts the cost for advertising among the costs of circulation. These are not related to the production process, that are necessary in the capitalist system, but not in a perfectly accomplished socialist economy. For Marx's categorization of advertising costs among the cost for commodity circulation see www.mlwerke.de/me/me25/me25_292.htm, retrieved on September 9, 2005. For examples of the interpretation by Chinese theoreticians see Wacker, 1991, pp. 184ff.

[101] Ding Yunpeng, 1979. Interestingly, Vance Packard who warned against sophisticated manipulation techniques in advertising in his 1957 book *The Hidden Persuaders*, defended the "advertising men" that "still do a straightforward job and accept us as rational citizens" with very much similar arguments: "They fill an important and constructive role in our society. Advertising, for example, not only plays a vital role in promoting our economic growth but is a colorful, diverting aspect of American life; and many of the creations of ad men are tasteful, honest works of artistry." See Vance Packard, 1957, pp. 8f.

During the early years of advertising in China supply shortages belonged to the economic reality. Under these circumstances, advertising seemed dysfunctional, but it was nevertheless used to inform people what and how to consume. Advertisements and window displays functioned as an internal propaganda of the socialist economic system.[102] Ding's arguments reappeared in a more elaborate form during the discussions about the special characteristics of "socialist advertising" that were mainly led in journals like *Zhongguo guanggao* 中国广告 (*China Advertising*) since the early 1980s.[103] It was meant to reflect the success of socialism, enhance enthusiasm for socialism, and propagandize the achievements of the socialist economy.[104] According to the theories, "socialist advertising" should serve the building of the so-called socialist material and spiritual civilization, it should foster socialist values, aesthetics, notions of happiness, prevailing customs, the way of life, and scientific and technical knowledge standing against "spiritual pollution" and capitalist ideologies.[105] Gudrun Wacker cites authors who claim that advertising should nonetheless differ from political propaganda, meaning that the quality of advertising could not solely be judged by its political content. Instead of the explicit use of political slogans, ideology was supposed to be the soul of advertising.[106] Advertising should form a unity of economical efficiency and positive social effects.[107] The debates about the characteristics of socialist advertising may seem outdated. In fact, references to them become increasingly rare in recent Chinese publications. Nevertheless, although the terminology might have changed, these debates actually center around the same questions that are discussed today: they are about ideological demands or restrictions on advertising as well as about specific cultural characteristics and professionalism.

The Law of Advertising

Apart from theoretical discussions led in books and journals like *Zhongguo guanggao*, official regulations and later the Law of Advertising defined how advertisements should comply to official ideology. The 1987 *Regulations on Advertising Control* (广告管理条例) proclaimed that advertising should be true and easy to understand. Later regulations also state that advertising has to be "healthy" (健康), meaning "free from decadence and ideologically unacceptable content."[108] The *Law of Advertising of the People's Republic of China* (中华人民共和国广告法) came into effect on February 1, 1995, replacing the 1987 *Regulations on Advertising Control*. It explicitly refers only to commercial advertising (商业广告), not to political

[102]Andreas Ludwig describes the same situation for advertising in the German Democratic Republic (1999, p. 7).
[103]For a detailed historical account of the discussions on "socialist advertising" see Gudrun Wacker, 1991.
[104]Gudrun Wacker, 1991, p. 200; James Chu, 1982, p. 40.
[105]Gudrun Wacker, 1991, pp. 198, 200 & 212.
[106]Ibid., p. 201 referring to Fu Hanzhang 傅汉章 & Kuang Tiejun 邝铁军, *Guanggaoxue* 广告学, Guangzhou: Guangdong gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe 广东高等教育出版社, 1985, p. 36. This did not count for foreign advertising, that was supposed to be "strictly for commercial purposes and … clean, dignified looking and in the best interest of good taste." (James Chu, 1982, p. 42).
[107]Gudrun Wacker, 1991, pp. 198, 200 & 212.
[108]Erhard Louven & Karen Zürn, 1988, p. 230; the text of the *Regulations on Advertising Control* can be found in several Chinese publications for example in: Guojia gongshang xingzheng guanliju guanggaosi (ed.), 1993, pp. 1–4 or Qiu Peihuang (ed.), 1993, pp. 543–547.

propaganda or social marketing (article 2). Article 1 states as goals of the law to "give full play to the positive role of advertising in the socialist market economy" (发挥广告在社会主义市场经济中的积极作用), and to "maintain the social and economic order" (维护社会经济秩序).[109] Ideological requirements are also formulated in article 3: "advertisements should … conform to the requirements of socialist culture and ideological progress" (广告应当：…符合社会主义精神文明建设的要求), as well as in article 7: "contents of advertising shall benefit the physical and mental health of the people …" (广告内容应当有利于人民的身心健康) and "… defend national honor and interests" (维护国家的尊严和利益). It shall not use any national emblems and it shall not "jeopardize the social order and go against the prevailing fine social custom" (妨碍社会公共秩序和违背社会良好风尚). Nevertheless, the American scholar Cheng Hong considers the ideological tone of the law as more moderate than that of the Preliminary Regulations from 1987 and he describes the law as more consumer oriented.[110] However, what puts Cheng's observation into perspective is the fact that laws in the People's Republic function as general guidelines that are subject to a wide range of interpretations and applications by regional authorities.

"Development is a hard principle"

During the 1980s, when modernization became a central part of the official policy and Deng Xiaoping proclaimed that "getting rich is glorious" (致富光荣), The Government and the Party started to accept advertising as a tool to gain commercial profit. Advertising accompanied economic growth beginning in the early 1980s. Numerous joint venture companies were established, mainly in the coastal regions, and competition between regions and among different providers of the same kind of product grew. Economic decisions became more decentralized and a dual price system was set up as a factor of free-enterprise motivation.[111] China's economy was officially defined as a planned economy supplemented by market forces.[112] The rate of urbanization increased rapidly and a general strive for modernity was more and more noticeable throughout society. It was Deng Xiaoping's trip to the Special Economic Zones in South China in 1992, the so-called Southern Campaign, that gave the green light to a highly accelerated economic growth.[113] The slogan

> Development is a hard principle
> 发展是硬道理

that is still found on banners and billboards in China originates from these speeches. The cities especially in the coastal areas changed rapidly with the economic development. A great number of old city quarters made way to new housing areas, roads and highways

[109]All English quotes from: *The Law of Advertising of the People's Republic of China*, in: www.scmp.com/chinamedia/laws.html, retrieved on July 14, 2000; Chinese quotes from: *Zhonghuarenmingongheguo guanggaofa*, 1994.
[110]Cheng Hong, 1996, p. 93.
[111]Eberhard Sandschneider, 1998, p. 181; Margot Schüller, 1998, p. 285.
[112]Suk-ching Ho & Yat-ming Sin, 1986, p. 307.
[113]On his inspection tour to Wuchang, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, and Shanghai in 1992, the then 88 years old Deng Xiaoping held a series of speeches that indicated China's determination for profound economic reforms.

were constructed, new shopping centers and amusement facilities opened. In Shanghai, two underground lines improved the city's public transportation considerably.
Parallel to the fast general economic development of the country, China was ranking number one in the list of the world's fastest growing advertising markets from 1988 to 1996, with a total increase of over 1,000% for the period between 1988 and 1997.[114]

Consumption habits and advertisements

The business continues to grow with a focus on the new media in more recent years. The growing advertising market came along with fundamental changes in consumption habits. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, consumption was rather uniform. The wristwatch, radio set and sewing machine, the so-called "three big ones" (三大件), were considered standard possessions in almost every household in the late seventies. Other lists added the bicycle. In the eighties, the "three new big ones" were the TV set, washing machine and refrigerator.[115] With the implementation of the reforms, a period of "frantic spending" began that lasted until around 1985. Almost every available new product was bought, with consumers paying the most attention to simple functionality. Stylistically, the advertisements of the first years from 1979 to 1985 were rather plain. They mainly consisted of the product's picture together with more or less detailed explanatory texts and decorations.[116] The latter often included the use of "traditional Chinese treasures" (中华传统之宝), like motifs or protagonists from Chinese literature and history.[117] References to the international or even global popularity of a product, however, became also frequent.[118] When supplies increased after 1985, consumers started to choose the better quality among competing products. In the mid eighties, the focus in product advertising shifted away from formal product descriptions towards explanations on how to use the product. The association of a product with sport and famous athletes was seen as advantageous for sales, and advertisements showing pretty women were widely produced, although this was not officially supported by socialist advertising ideologies. Since 1992, intangible extra value like the aesthetic properties of a product or a famous brand name gained more attention. Television supported this development with game shows about how many and which brands the contestants knew.[119] Although the newness of a product was still considered a value as such, it did not promise the long-term success that could only be attained with additional values. Li Conghua describes this development in his study *China: the Consumer Revolution.*[120] He names ambiance, efficiency, health and status as the fundamental areas of concern for consumers in the late 1990s.[121] Advertisements promised romanticized worlds of nature, of Chinese tradition, as well as of modernity and of the

[114]"Regional advertising expenditure & media share," 1999, pp. 271f.
[115]Perry Johansson, 1998, p. 31.
[116]Yu Hong & Deng Zhengqiang, 2000, pp. 9 & 25.
[117]Ibid., pp. 24f, see also pp. 42f & 114ff.
[118]Ibid., p. 27.
[119]Ibid., pp. 60 & 79ff.
[120]Li Conghua, 1998, pp. 120f and pp. 153–158.
[121]Ibid., pp. 9 ff, 122 & 188f.

West. Images of a beautified and idealized Chinese traditional life – often in a rural setting, and often connected with images of pretty women – were sometimes subtly mixed with visualized dreams of the West.[122] Another way of transporting ambiance was the use of celebrities in advertising. Among those, an ad with the famous actress Gong Li smiling for *Meide* 美的 ("Beautiful") air conditioner received special attention because of the extraordinary high pay she received for it.[123] The demand for household appliances and gadgets had been largely satisfied in the early 1990s. In a 1994 article from the *Harvard Business Review* it was expected that consumer attention would shift to housing, transportation and telecommunications.[124] When the article was published, his expectation had already become reality. Li Conghua lists taxis and telecommunication (120%), medical products (92,5%), interior decoration (63,5%), and general housing and renovations (58,5%) as the product categories with the greatest rise of expenditure between 1993 and 1994. The importance of these product categories is also reflected in the products appearing on outdoor advertisements during the late 1990s.

Several factors led to these changes in the consumption pattern. Purchasing power rose considerably with an average increase of incomes of around 600% from 1978 to 1995 compared to an increase of the prize levels of only 200% in the same period. From 1980 to 1998, the per capita living space almost doubled, with more and more people living in private apartments as opposed to multi-family units, where they had to share the same washing and cooking facilities.[125] Condominiums and housing related products like furniture, home appliances and decoration were among the most important commodities one "had to have."[126] Other growing markets are related to those consumer values that Li Conghua considers being the most important in today's China. Cosmetics, nicely designed lingerie, flowers as gifts and also the growing domestic tourism mirror an increasing desire for ambiance.[127] Search for more convenience and efficiency in daily life enhanced the popularity of frozen and instant food as well as of more advanced communication tools like pagers, cellular phones, home computers, Internet access and of services like taxi rides.[128] The importance of physical health is reflected not only by the growth of the pharmaceutical industry of an average of 20% per annum since 1990 but also by the emerging markets in fashionable health foods and drinks as well as in sporting equipment, health and fitness clubs.[129]

The billboards and posters photographed for this thesis confirm the popularity of the aforementioned products and services. More than 20% of the photographed advertisements are for real estate, for housing related products like furniture or home

[122]Yu Hong & Deng Zhengqiang, 2000, pp. 97ff.
[123]Ibid., pp. 122ff; her pay reportedly was 1 million Chinese Yuan, whereas ordinarily one would receive around 10,000 Yuan for this kind of modeling. See www.ibiblio.org/pub/packages/ccic/org/cnlink/931213, retrieved on February 12, 2005.
[124]Rick Yan, 1994, p. 74.
[125]Conghua Li, 1998, pp. 23 & 26.
[126]Ibid., pp. 117 & 160.
[127]Ibid., pp. 123–129.
[128]Ibid., pp. 131–143.
[129]Ibid., pp. 145–151.

appliances, and for building material and tools. Food products and beverages also amount to more than 20%, almost 25% of which are alcoholic drinks. Fashion and cosmetic products are represented by around 16% of the advertisements. It can be seen from the given sample that housing related products, food and beverages, and fashion thus fill more than half of the advertisements in China's public space. Besides these, the products and services making frequent appearance on the photographed advertisements are related to entertainment and culture, like movies, theater plays, exhibitions and nightlife venues as well as to travel and amusement facilities (approx. 8%). Just as telecommunication tools like mobile phones, pagers or fax machines (approx. 5%), or cars and motorbikes (approx. 2%), these products reflect new consumption possibilities.

PART I

THE PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC IMAGES: BETWEEN SOCIALIST PROPAGANDA AND COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING

After the break that the Cultural Revolution brought about for the Chinese culture, society, and economy, advertising media and styles had to be reestablished and reinvented. Whatever had been designed to lure consumers in earlier decades or even centuries could not be the only point of departure for advertising after 1979. During the early 1980s, advertising in the People's Republic of China developed and redeveloped its own imagery and visual language in a dialog with political propaganda that had until then dominated the production of visual media in the country. The concepts and styles of propaganda were deeply rooted in the thoughts of those who planned and designed advertisements, and most people in China have learned to read and interpret the visual language of propaganda, to follow, to reject, or simply to ignore it. Also, the early organization and administration of advertising was closely connected to propaganda. Lacking qualified personnel, state-owned companies, for example, most frequently had their advertisements conceived by their internal propaganda departments.[130] Some designers had worked in propaganda before entering the advertising business and other advertising people were also involved in designing propaganda posters. Today, advertising agencies are still not only commissioned by governmental and Party institutions, but they are also officially obliged to provide their share in propaganda campaigns. These campaigns are often designated as social marketing, or public welfare advertisements (公益广告).[131]

To examine the interplay of meanings and values in political propaganda and commercial advertising, twelve groups of images were chosen from the collected photographs. On the one hand, most of them reflect important topics of propaganda like modernization, family planning, or national strength and success. On the other hand, they represent popular values used in commercial advertisements like modern housing and family life, success in business, or fun. The five following chapters examine whether and how commercial advertisements change or recontextualize motifs compared to their usage in political propaganda.

Chapter 4, "The perpetuation of propaganda in advertising" introduces three groups of motifs that strongly affirm propagandistic messages and the official ideology. This does not necessarily mean that they also use the same imagery that can be found in political propaganda. Advertisements for local industries, for example, work as a propagation of economic development by presenting machinery and other industrial goods as a showcase of local economic achievements that do otherwise not appear on propaganda images. Also, advertisements using images of the globe to claim worldwide standing of locally produced products are unparalleled in propaganda. However, they affirm the propagation of national pride. Images of flying appear both, in propaganda and in commercial advertisements. They visualize progress and development.

Chapter 5, the "privatization of values" presents a different picture. The analyzed advertising and propaganda images use very similar motifs to transmit very similar values. In propaganda these values are proclaimed for the general public. Everybody is supposed to comply to a certain behavior so that the benefits of the proclaimed values are achieved

[130]Yu Hong & Deng Zhengqiang, 2000, p. 53.
[131]See Steven W. Lewis, 2002.

for everybody. However, in commercial advertising, the same values are presented as exclusive and achievable only for the private consumers of the offered goods. Although the advertisements seem to affirm propagandistic values, they in fact turn them into an exclusive good. Depictions of nature exemplify this process.

The advertisements in chapter 6, "transformed meanings," also use motifs that are familiar from political propaganda. However, advertisements change the context of a motif such as to alter its meaning almost completely. Images of sunflowers for example, lose their character as a symbol for the veneration of Mao Zedong. Instead, they come to carry a meaning related to the product, for example as to represent the American company Sun Microsystems.

The motifs on the advertisements discussed in chapter 7, "new imageries," are not found in propaganda from the Cultural Revolution or "Four Modernizations" period. The sky, for example, that was almost nonexistent on earlier propaganda posters, plays an important role on propaganda as well as on advertising images of the late 1990s. Images of families with two children or images of business people mirror social changes by showing representatives of the Chinese society that has developed under the opening and reform policies. These motifs exemplify how the images on outdoor messages reflect political and ideological changes, and how sometimes even messages that are contradictory to official ideology are tolerated in advertisements.

Chapter 8 exemplifies "the interaction of advertising and propaganda" through images that are picturing the progress of Shanghai. Whereas chapter 4 introduced a form of indirect perpetuation of propaganda, this chapter shows how advertisements and propaganda messages obviously work hand in hand to create common images and values that serve both the Government's and the commercial world's interests.

4. THE PERPETUATION OF PROPAGANDA IN ADVERTISING

When advertising was reinstated in China, one of its ideological functions was to serve as a visual testimony for economic reforms and growing prosperity. Advertisements promoting local industries are closest to fulfilling this claim. Mostly confined to a single location near the factories they hardly served any marketing function. Instead, the mostly hand-painted billboards showcased industrial achievements. Chapter 4.1 explores the diverse means by which the advertisements for industrial products support the picture of a prospering national economy on a local level. Some of these advertisements refer to the worldwide reach of the products' fame or circulation to underline the achievements of the factory. Following this clue, chapter 4.2 examines advertisements picturing the earth. They refer just as much to the importance of the promoted product or its far reaching fame as to the strength of the national economy. Another motif that visualizes national economic progress is the depiction of flying that will be analyzed in chapter 4.3. Flying airplanes, soaring rockets, peace doves, or air-borne balloons are a familiar feature on traditional propaganda posters. Many advertisements reuse these images showing all kinds of flying products or logos that visualize the dynamics of development. Although the advertisements discussed in this chapter are also motivated by local entrepreneurial public relations or sales interests, most of them are basically in line with the ideological function ascribed to them. They support the official propaganda message of economic development by claiming that their products are parts and representatives of this development.

4.1 Advertising industrial goods and local industries

Advertisements for industrial goods were among the earliest and most common ones to appear in newspapers and to line the streets after 1979. Most of them were executed in very similar designs: product pictures, explanations and maybe some decorative elements. In order to paint common products, painters used the products themselves, their pictures in instruction manuals, or pattern books as models.

A survey by Helena Czepiec revealed that between 1980 and 1989, over 90 per cent of all the advertisements in the newspaper *Renmin ribao* 人民日报 (*People's Daily*) had been for industrial products. The *Renmin ribao* is the official organ of the Chinese Communist Party. Distributed through the work units not through individual purchase, it probably reached the leadership in state-owned enterprises, but most of its readers were certainly unconcerned with questions of buying industrial goods. Today, its role in the Chinese media environment is rather marginal. According to Czepiec's survey, these advertisements were mainly informational. Thus, most of them showed depictions of the product and explained the major product characteristics. Besides, they often included assurances of quality that were certified by outside sources such as receiving an award at an

exhibition, adherence to standards, and dependability. Guarantees, or the years of experience in business confirmed these outside sources.[132] The informational function that socialist advertising theories ascribed to advertising was primarily meant to support the better national circulation of industrial goods and thus build up the national economy. Success stories illustrated that the industry had a chance to solve its problems of nationwide distribution by placing advertisements in newspapers. However, advertisements for industrial goods also showcased national industrial achievements to those recipients who did not belong to relevant target groups. In their eyes, the given details about the features of the offered industrial goods were of minor interest. Instead, the main information for them was that the national industry produced goods that allegedly were of high quality. This was true for the general readership of a newspaper, but even more for those who passed by billboards that were often situated near the factory itself and could therefore hardly fulfill any marketing function. In design, these hand-painted billboards resembled the newspaper advertisements, except that they were colored and contained less written information. They represented the factory for those who drove or cycled past them, for customers and suppliers, and for the people working in the factory. Helena Czepiec interprets her findings in the survey mentioned above solely in the marketing context. She concludes consumer preferences from the given contents of the advertisements and formulates guidelines for the promotion of industrial goods. However, she does not disclose the propagandistic function of advertisements for industrial goods. Czepiec acknowledges that the affirmations of quality and emphasis on "made in China" might serve to convince buyers that the negative image of Chinese products is untrue. Stating that the notion of insufficient quality and dependability of Chinese products is said to be widespread among the Chinese public, she nevertheless fails to mention that these persuasion attempts were not only directed at potential buyers but at the general readership of the *Renmin ribao* and that therefore, advertisements for industrial goods in the *Renmin ribao* constitute an image campaign for national products. The same situation of misguided advertisements in terms of marketing strategies and target groups was observed in regard to television advertising by Kong Liang and Laurence Jacobs who noted in 1993 that nearly one third of it was for heavy industrial equipment. These authors also do not take a propaganda function of these "commercials" into account, but solely argue with Chinese managers' "limited understanding of advertising's role in the economy."[133]

During the second half of the 1990s, hand-painted outdoor advertisements for local industries were still common. Among the three localities observed in this study, this was especially true for Shandong Province that has a comparatively slower economic development than Shanghai and Beijing. In Shandong, 43 billboards of this kind were photographed. 22 pictures were taken in Anqiu, eleven in Weifang, five in Pingdu, and five in other locations. The billboards were all situated along roads or on major traffic junctions near the factories. The main focus of this chapter lies on advertisements for industrial goods, but it also includes seven advertisements for consumer products, because

[132]Helena Czepiec, 1993, pp. 259f.
[133]Kong Liang & Laurence Jacobs, 1993, p. 182.

their location next to the billboards for industrial products or at the entrance gates of factories allowed to clearly identify them as representational billboards for the local industry that are not meant to attract private consumers.

Advertising the local industry in Anqiu

The 22 photographs from Anqiu serve as an example for closer examination because they comprise different varieties of billboards for the local industry that can also be found among the billboards from other locations. Anqiu is a town south of Weifang with a population of around one million. It is seat of the county government. In 1996, a section of the highway from Weifang to Anqiu was lined with large hand-painted billboards displaying advertisements for the local industry. Most of them show depictions of products like machinery, rubber products, petrol, glass fiber, tiles, card boxes, wrapping paper for fruits, thermoses, or cookware. Some of the billboards are quite plain in design, whereas others reveal some creativity. Generally, the same typical varieties of style and content can be found that have been described in the aforementioned survey on newspaper advertisements. The most common design is to simply depict the products and add some information about them as well as about the producing company. Usually, an address and telephone number are included. Apart from the companies' names, their organizational form or status is often among the most prominent information given on the billboards. One could find for example a "pivotal national enterprise" (全国重点企业), a "factory appointed for production by the Ministry of Electric Power" (电力部…定点生产厂), or a joint venture (联合公司), titles that categorize enterprises according to their size and significance. This proof of importance is additionally underlined by a more "personal" text that is repeated in mostly the same phrases on many of the billboards.

PLATE 7
Shandong Anqiu electrical appliances factory, painted billboard, Anqiu 1996

On the above billboard, the director of the Shandong Anqiu electrical appliances factory (山东安丘电器厂) "sends his greetings to numerous customers" (向广大用户致意). Another advertisement by the Anqiu Hollowware Casting Factory (安丘市铸锅厂) includes "the whole workers' team" (全体员工) that "warmly welcomes visits of friends from all circles"

(热情欢迎各界朋友光临[134]). By suggesting that there are "numerous customers," the advertisements underline that the promoted companies are economically successful. Although the designs of the billboards in Anqiu are similar at a first glance, the advertisements shown below all use different approaches to underline their importance and their product's excellence.

PLATE 8
Anqiu Rubber Products Factory, painted billboard, Anqiu 1996

One way of testifying the enterprises' achievements is to mention or visualize that the company or the promoted products have won prizes or gained quality certificates. Plate 8 shows a billboard by the Anqiu Rubber Products Factory (安丘市橡胶制品厂). Next to product images and a list of the available products, it displays a truck tire adorned with a large red ribbon, a trophy, and a certificate stating that the factory is approved as a "Shandong enterprise for high-tech and new technologies" (山东省高新技术企业). A different billboard by the Anqiu Oil Mill (安丘榨油厂) uses a red badge stating "excellent" (优) as a certification of their products' quality.

PLATE 9
Weifang Routing Equipment Factory, painted billboard, Anqiu 1996

The Weifang Routing Equipment Factory (潍坊市线路器材厂) in Anqiu has opted for a different approach to prove a certain economic success (see plate 9): the character *le* 乐 (happy) as the factory's brand name has been stylized as a logo in the center of the

[134]Instead of 迎, the variant character 迓 was used.

billboard. The concepts of brand and logo give a professional touch to the advertisement. They suggest that the offered products are high-quality and recognized as special in comparison to their competitors because of their brand. This example indicates that some of the companies are increasingly concerned with modern marketing or design concepts.

PLATE 10
Anqiu Thermos Factory, painted billboard, Anqiu 1996

The allegation that the products have a worldwide presence is directly visualized on the above billboard by the Anqiu Thermos Factory (安丘市保温瓶厂).[135] Product samples were pictured on a globe in front of an orange sky. In the background, balloons are rising into the sky – an image for the celebration of national grandeur common on propaganda paintings. Here, the balloons celebrate a state-owned enterprise as a contributor to the nation's and the region's economic strength.[136]

PLATE 11
First brickyard of Butou, Fangzi district, Weifang, painted advertisement, Anqiu 1996

Some advertisements painted onto the wall around a factory compound leave out most of the information found on the other billboards. The above example provides no more text

[135]This billboard is the only one among the advertisements on this Anqiu road that was found badly neglected although the factory did not cease to exist.
[136]The motif of the globe as well as the motif of flying and rising into the sky will be further treated in the two following chapters.

than the factory's name, First brickyard of Butou, Fangzi district, Weifang (潍坊市坊子区埠头第一砖瓦厂). Two bricks are shown in front of an outlined silhouette of buildings that represent economic growth and progress. The image suggests that the bricks are the raw material not only of the buildings but also of progress itself. The single bricks stand for the parts that large buildings are made of. Similarly, the local industry's advertisements in Anqiu display how the town sees itself as a part of the region's and finally also the nation's economic achievements. The patterns described for the advertisements in Anqiu are followed by most of the advertisements for the local industry and industrial products. Although many of the advertisements refer to customers from afar, they are in fact mainly directed at the local or regional public. This is due to their location along streets that are mainly used by local or regional commuters. An example from Weifang clearly shows how much these billboards are confined to the local context. It includes a long text with informational background about the company, stating: "This factory is one of the important assembly parts manufacturers for Weichai. It is Weichai's only producer of tube pieces." (本厂为潍柴主要配套厂家之一。是潍柴唯一管件生产厂). The Weifang Diesel Engine Works – short Weichai – is one of the biggest state-owned enterprises in China employing a considerable part of the town's population. Since the company already defines itself on the billboard as a supplier for Weichai, it does not appear to look out for more customers. Also, the significance of Weichai might not be known to non-local passers-by. Such representations of the local industry are thus clearly aimed at the local population.

Sometimes, the claimed economic importance of the factories and their products represented only an ideal. The upholding of this ideal has to been seen in light of the economic changes that towns like Anqiu, Weifang, or Pingdu have undergone since the late 1990s. A large state-owned enterprise, or work unit, like the Weifang Diesel Engine Works employed nearly a quarter of the working population. Housing as well as social and cultural facilities around the factory were provided by the work unit that thus completely dominated the whole neighborhood. By then, one could claim that the local public and the workers in the enterprise were a largely identical group of people. With the severe economic problems that state-owned enterprises were – and are still – facing, the social structures around the factory have changed. Real estate has been developed and sold – not only to those belonging to the work unit. Laid-off employees and workers are looking for jobs in other, mostly private companies. Some of the state-owned enterprises however, have managed to sustain themselves successfully through restructuring processes.

PLATE 12
New outdoor Advertisements in Anqiu, Anqiu 2005

The above photograph shows the same location in Anqiu in 2005, where these processes are also visible in the completely changed picture of outdoor advertisements. New uniform aluminum frames now contain large advertising posters printed onto plastic film. However, the topics of the posters remained unchanged. They are still promoting the local industry and local products, showcasing the success of the economic reforms.

A factory's product for the factory's employees

The photograph below shows the entrance gate of the Double Star (双星) sport shoes factory near Huangdao. It is framed by a pair of over-sized sneakers standing for a way of public relation that is directed not only at local commuters, but also – and maybe primarily – at the workers and employees of the factory. The company's general manager Wang Hai asserted at a 1992 press conference in the United States that the company cares a lot for the attractiveness that the product allegedly has for the factory workers. Being asked what kind of shoes he was wearing himself he was reported to have answered: "I am wearing Double Star shoes, and none of my workers go anywhere else to buy shoes, they all buy our Double Star shoes for themselves." (我穿的是双星鞋，就连我的员工也都不到外边买鞋，他们都买我们自己的双星鞋穿。)[137] Ahlthough passers-by might be attracted to look for these sport shoes in shops, the main function of this three-dimensional advertisement is to transfer the attractiveness of the product to its production place.

PLATE 13
Double Star shoes, factory gate, Huangdao 1996

Advertising industrial goods in Beijing and Shanghai

Outdoor advertising spaces in Shanghai and Beijing are mainly filled by advertisements for consumer goods and by propaganda messages. Advertisements promoting local industries and industrial goods have become rare. On one billboard photographed on a crossroad in Beijing, north of the Imperial Palace, 20 state-owned companies share the space displaying their logos and brand names. The explicit goal of the billboard is to "foster the image of state-owned enterprises and establish brand names in the heart of the consumers" (树立国有企业形象创消费者心目中的名牌). Although it is directed at the consumers, the main

[137] See Bai Guang, 1999, p. 148.

intention behind it is not to sell certain products but to propagate the quality of domestic industrial production. In recent years, the Chinese government undertook considerable efforts to foster and popularize Chinese brands also internationally. Important successful brands are for example the white goods producer *Hai'er*, Lenovo computers and *Li-Ning* sporting goods.

PLATE 14
Jiangsu zhengchang jituan granulator factory, subway poster, Beijing 1998

Five modernized versions of the hand-painted billboards for industrial advertisements were found in 1998 in the subway stations in Beijing and Shanghai, with the paintings substituted by photographs of the factories or machineries. Whereas the poster from Shanghai promoted one of the numerous new "industrial parks" around the city, the subway posters in Beijing advertised industrial enterprises from the remote provinces Jiangsu and Gansu, like the *Jiangsu zhengchang jituan* (江苏正昌集团) (see plate 14). Although visually they are similar to the hand-painted billboards from Shandong, their function is comparable to the advertisements for industrial products in the *Renmin ribao* or on television: only a very marginal number of commuters in the subway might be considered potential clients or investors. They mainly propagate the industrial achievements of remote provinces in China's capital city.

Conclusion

Marketing researchers observed a great number of advertisements for industrial goods in China throughout the 1980s. These advertisements might lack marketing effectivity, but they fulfill the clear propagandistic purpose of convincing a general public of the success of China's industrial development. Equally, the outdoor advertisements presented in the above chapter do not only promote individual enterprises and their products, but a local and regional economic strength that is part of the prospering national economy. Thus, not only the factories profit from this type of publicity, but also the local and ultimately the national government. Billboards for local industries have a representational function. They foster the pride of working for a certain company and living in an economically successful region – and nation.

4.2 The lure of being global

On one of the Anqiu billboards, thermoses were drawn onto a globe to refer to their worldwide success (plate 10). The collected material offers 21 more advertisements that use the globe or a map of the world as one of their main visual elements. Products are placed on the globe or circling around it like a satellite. The planet earth is pictured on advertising images in all three locations, in Shandong (nine photographs), in Beijing (eight photographs), and in Shanghai (seven photographs). It appears on hand-painted billboards as well as on large printed billboards or light box posters in the subway stations. It indicates a general interest of advertisers to position their product – and its consumers – in a global economy. Globes were also found on two propaganda posters for environmental protection – one taken in the Shanghai subway, the other in Beijing –, both showing the world in human hands.

Famous worldwide

Five advertisements picture liquor, medicine, household gas bottles, or software placed onto a globe, a common way of claiming that the product is successful throughout the whole world. This type of image is obviously not restricted to a certain product category.

PLATE 15
Shandong Fangzi distillery, billboards at the factory gate, Fangzi 1996

The Shandong Fangzi distillery (山东坊子酒厂) near Weifang produces one of the white brandies (*baijiu* 白酒) that Shandong is proud of. One of the hand-painted billboards flanking the gate of the distillery shows an over-sized bottle sitting on a globe. Other products of the same distillery are lined up on both sides of it. The billboard on the other side of the gate presents a variation of the motif: instead of the globe, a large yellow disc or balloon lights up the bottle. The billboard claims that the product has won a silver medal (银牌) that might be represented by this disc. However, the dark blue background with some stars also points to the idea of the bottle being a planet circling around the sun. The importance of the liquor is raised by suggesting that the bottle is identical to the world. As chapter 9.1 will show, *baijiu* is considered to be a very "Chinese" product, an incorporation

of Chinese history and culture. Also this *baijiu* is designated as a "famous wine of culture" (文化名酒). The interpretation of the image might therefore be extended: it is Chinese culture that stands tall on the earth – and that is circling around the sun as the earth itself.

A different way of showing that a product or a brand has acquired world fame, or world wide importance, is to represent it circling around a globe. Seven advertisements follow this pattern: records and DVDs, a shoe, and logos: all are flying and floating above and around the earth.

PLATE 16
Pitanco leather ware, billboard, Shanghai 1997

The background of this advertisement for Pitanco leather ware shows a multicolored sunrise above the ocean. Looking out from the violet sky, the eyes of a woman are directed toward the viewer. A leather bag is floating on the horizon and a man's shoe is circling the globe. The slogan promises an immediate rise in self-esteem:

> Having Pitanco
> will make you more proud today
> 拥有必登高
> 今日更自豪.

The promised pride is confirmed by the admiring look of a desirable woman, given to the man who circles the world in his Pitanco shoes.

The hand-painted billboard below was taken in one of Shanghai's main shopping streets, Nanjing Lu. On a rainbow colored background, the globe is circled by a yellow golden tiger with wings, the logo of Flying Tiger (飞虎) painting colors. The slogan, in the style of a *duilian* couplet, is following its orbit:

> It paints half the country
> and colors the world.
> 涂半壁江山
> 绘七彩天地.

Apart from the claim that Flying Tiger is a popular brand around the world, the advertisement gives several references to nature and to the universe: the "country" is literally called "rivers and mountains" (江山), and the "world" is referred to as "heaven and earth" (天地). The coloring of the background alludes to a rainbow. It is, just like world

and nature, made colorful by paints from Flying Tiger. Chinese brands being successful throughout the whole world is an important economic goal that is closely linked to national self-consciousness. Advertisements like this foster this ideal although none of the products appearing here seem even close to reaching this goal. Images like these might also support the concept that China has a major position in the world as a "global player." The pride that allegedly results from purchasing Pitanco leather products is the pride of being a "global player."

PLATE 17
Flying Tiger painting colors,
painted billboard, Shanghai 1997

Reaching and connecting the world

When an airplane or products like a mobile phone are shown circling around a globe, it often also literally refers to the world-wide reach of the promoted product or service. On the poster below, a paper plane rises up from the stylized and flattened surface of a globe. Flashes indicate its speed. The message "flies up" and reaches any place in the world.

Express Mail Service
express service worldwide
邮政速递
速递全球.

PLATE 18
EMS express mail service, subway poster,
Beijing 1998

The speed of the message is emphasized by the slogan's repeating of the words "express service" (速递). This poster can also be understood in the context of the speed of China's opening to the world: Back in the early 1990s, worldwide communication in China was either costly or slow, and often connected with inconveniences of lining up and undergoing controls in post offices. On advertisements by telecommunication companies and mail services, the image of the globe illustrates the opening of China, the facilitation of far-distance communication, and new international relations with slogans like

> With a single tool at hand understand the whole world[138]
> 一机在手通达全球

or

> The whole world is communicating.
> Communicate with the whole world.
> 全球通
> 通全球.

PLATE 19
Dazhong insurance company, framed poster, Shanghai 1997–98

Opening to the world also implies global business connections. They are visualized on a poster by the *Dazhong* insurance company (大众保险) shown above. Two business men, represented by their hands in suit sleeves, are shaking hands.

> *Dazhong* Insurances creates tomorrow with you
> 大众保险与您共创明天.

This "tomorrow," so the image of the world map in the background implies, lies in a global cooperation. The handshake seemingly anticipates an international business contract: shortly after this advertisement was photographed, in 1999, the *Dazhong* insurance company merged into a joint venture with the German Allianz.[139] Interestingly, the map in the background does not show the usual Chinese placement of the continents with China in the center and the American continent on the right side. Instead, Africa and South America

[138]What is literally translated as a "tool at hand" is in fact a play with words in Chinese because *shouji* 手机, literally a "hand-tool" means mobile phone.
[139]Four advertising posters by this joint venture are discussed in chapter 11.2.

are most prominently in view. This may remind of the role China claimed in uniting the people of all developing countries that was often visualized on propaganda posters.[140]

Controlling the world

Two advertisements express more than a mere connection to the world. They suggest that the world – or at least part of the world – is in control of those who use the offered services.

PLATE 20
China Telecom telecommunication services, painted billboard, Qingdao 1996

The above billboard by China Telecom was photographed on a main road in Qingdao. Like a puppet on a string, major European cities are held by a large hand in the orbit. Next to it the China Telecom slogan offers service for all, worldwide, or literally translated:

> Service for one thousand homes and ten thousand customers
> connects the four seas and five continents
> 服务千家万户
> 连接四海五洲.

Although this slogan talks of "connecting" (连接), the image clearly implies the control that China – represented by the China Telecom customers – can exercise over the world. For Western viewers, this advertisement hardly calms the fear of a growing Chinese influence in the world market system.

The travel agency Smart Travel has chosen a different approach to claim that their customers are in control of the world (plate 21). An inflatable globe covers almost half of the posters space. It is not completely filled with air. In fact, it looks like it is just being deflated. Next to it, a business man is shown in a sort of Chinese martial arts position. He wears a black suit and a tie combined with sport shoes. The poster describes the company as a "travel consultant" (旅游顾问), who claims to offer "new ideas" (新概念) for "business travels" (商之行). Using the services of Smart Travel – so the advertisement suggests – makes the globe appear like a child's toy, that may be deflated on wish and put in the business man's pocket. The movement of the man not only refers to the blend of ease and

[140]See for example the posters on Stephan Landsberger's poster pages: www.iisg.nl/~landsberger/ff.html, retrieved on September 25, 2002.

power that is familiar from popular martial arts movies, but also identifies the man as Chinese, because the martial arts are understood as a kind of Chinese national treasure.

PLATE 21
Smart travel agency, subway poster, Beijing 1998

Both advertisements imply a personal control over the world, and in both cases, the depicted executor of this control can be identified as a representative of China. Thus, the images also connote the strength of China.

Protecting the world

Two advertising agencies have designed posters with images of the globe as their share in the official demand to issue posters for propaganda campaigns.[141] One of them shows a gigantic razor held by two equally gigantic fingers. It shaves everything off the earth and leaves an empty white stripe on it. The size relations make the humans – represented by the fingers holding the razor – and their destructive machines appear almighty, leaving earth at the mercy of human acts.

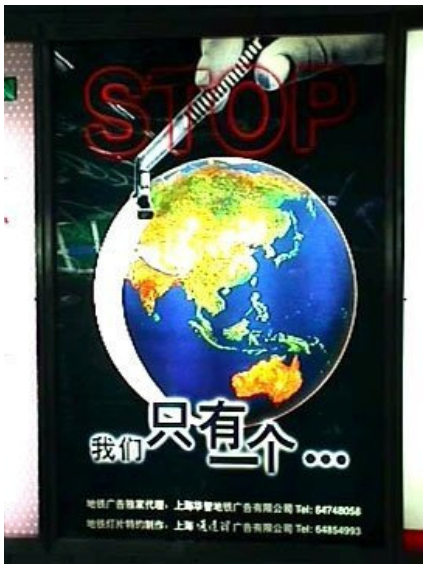

PLATE 22
Environmental protection, poster, Shanghai 1999

[141]See Steven W. Lewis, 2002.

Whereas the slogan

> We just have one…
> 我们只有一个…

is in Chinese, a large English caption reads "Stop." The use of English implies that the poster deals with a global problem and is therefore directed also at international recipients. Noting that the razor on this image has not yet touched China, and that the English caption is written onto the razor's image, may allow the conclusion that the Western world is seen as the main responsible party for environmental destruction.

PLATE 23
Environmental protection, billboard, Beijing 1997–98

The Beijing Sunlight Advertising and Exhibition Art Company (北京阳光广告展览艺术公司) has designed a poster for the propaganda campaign "social marketing on the subject of the good customs of China" ("中国好风尚"主题公益广告). Again, the world is shown lying in human hands, yet this time a protecting gesture is depicted – in contrast to the destructive gesture in the previous image. The motto of the campaign implies that China considers herself as the depicted protector of the world. However, the slogan

> Clean our space
> protect our homeland
> 清洁我们的空间
> 保护我们的家园

points to a certain global thinking with the earth designated as "our homeland."

Conclusion

In all three regions, state-owned and privately owned enterprises equally use images of the globe in their advertisements. These advertisements reflect a growing national self-awareness as well as an increasing interest in continuing to open up to the world. Chinese products claim a globally important position, and promise world-wide reach and power to the Chinese people. However, propaganda or so-called social marketing campaigns connect the growing power of China to the demand for an equally growing responsibility.

4.3 Images of flying

Flying and taking off play an important role in the propagandistic visualization of progress: military power, for example, is frequently illustrated by flying aircrafts or helicopters.[142] Images of spacecrafts are also related to the propagation of believing in science. The Chinese space program that had been stopped due to the political turmoil in the Cultural Revolution was revived under Deng Xiaoping in the 1980s. It led to ample use of space images on propaganda posters during the 1980s and 1990s.[143] On many of them, space vessels sore into the sky. Others show chubby babies – a popular motif of New Year's prints – in a space setting. The progress of science and the space program are important constituents of national pride. Spacecrafts fill the sky above children representing the call to "love science" (爱科学) on two poster series for educational campaigns issued around 1994 and in 1997.[144]

On the following poster for patriotic education that was issued as part of a series in 1996, a flying rocket and the rising white pigeons visualize the greatness of China that has achieved development, peace and stability. The slogan manifests national pride:

> China's reform and opening-up are amazing
> 中国改革开放了不起.[145]

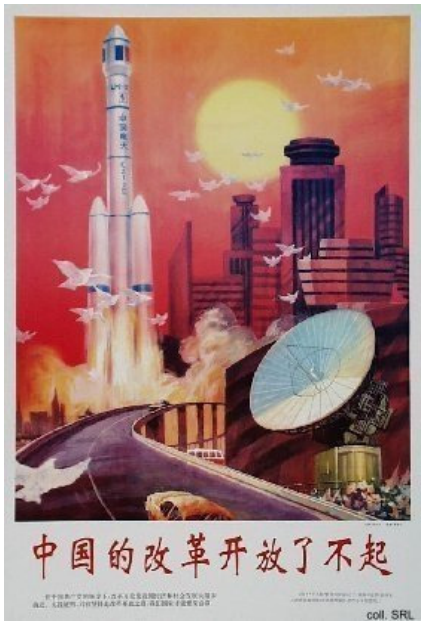

PLATE 24
Reform and opening policy, poster, 1996

The topic of flying is dominant on 29 advertisements among the collected photographs. 13 of the photographs were taken in Shanghai, 12 in Beijing and four in Shandong. One propaganda billboard and eight advertisements show airplanes including a paper plane,

[142] See images on www.iisg.nl/~landsberger/pla7.html, retrieved on September 25, 2002.
[143] www.iisg.nl/~landsberger/csp.html, retrieved on September 25, 2002.
[144] See www.iisg.nl/~landsberger/ssc3.html and www.iisg.nl/~landsberger/ssc7.html, retrieved on September 25, 2002. The other images of these series demand children to love labor, learning, the people, socialism, and the motherland.
[145] See www.iisg.nl/~landsberger/ssc5.html, retrieved on September 25, 2002.

balloons, or a zeppelin. Flying white pigeons appear on two billboards. Yet, the most popular kinds display products or logos flying through the sky or through space.

The promise of flying

The symbol of flying has remained largely unchanged in the imagery of propaganda in China. It still points to China's economic and scientific progress – not only in regard to the National Space Program – to a powerful nation, and to a joyous future.

PLATE 25
Sincere tax paying, painted billboard, Weifang 1996

In 1996, the fiscal office of the Weifang Kuiwen district used a soaring airplane and satellite receivers as emblems for national success that could – so the slogan suggested – only be achieved by everybody's tax contributions:

> Accumulating wealth for the nation is dependent on lawful contributions.
> We all have to make great efforts
> 为国聚财依法纳
> 你我都尽一分力.

Private incomes that clearly exceed the level of personal needs are a relatively new phenomenon in the People's Republic. The system of private income tax collection is therefore rather new and not very elaborate. This explains the necessity of such a call for tax declarations. The flying airplane and the other emblems of technical and scientific progress visualize idealized results of everybody's contribution.

The billboard below, photographed in Shanghai in 1999, presents the symbol of flying in a twofold way: an airplane taking off into the red sky, colored by the rising sun, and the dynamic building of the Pudong International Airport. The building is meant to resemble the bird "roc" (鹏) that appears in the book Zhuangzi as a giant bird with wings spreading all around the sky:

> "He beats the whirlwind, leaps into the air, and rises up ninety thousand li, cutting through the clouds and mist, shouldering the blue sky … The little quail laughs at him, saying, 'Where does he think *he's* going? I give a great leap and fly up, but I never get more than ten or twelve yards before I come down fluttering among the

weeds and brambles. And that's the best kind of flying anyway! Where does he think *he's* going?' Such is the difference between big and little."[146]

PLATE 26
Pudong International Airport, billboard, Shanghai 1999

The slogan

The great roc spreads his wings
大鹏展翅

evokes greatness and the ability to fly high and to fly everywhere. It also implies the wide and far-reaching perspective that the roc has in comparison to the little quail who only flutters among the weeds. This billboard uses the idea of flying in a very literal way. Placed along the city highway that led to the old Shanghai airport in Hongqiao, it announces the opening of the new airport:

Pudong International Airport will soon be in use
行将启用的浦东国际机场.

Compared to the old airport, the new one promises to be much bigger, more modern and comfortable, and potentially famous for its design by French architect Paul Andreu. This advertisement for the new airport also functions as propaganda for the progress of Shanghai. The roc bird becomes a symbol for a great and strong China that is symbolically lifting up and flying anywhere in the world. The red sky with the rising sun in the background point to the source of this success: socialism.

The hand-painted billboard below shows flying white pigeons. It was photographed in 1997 in one of Shanghai's major shopping streets, Nanjing Lu, and combines economic success with the call for a green environment. A prominent red banner with the slogan

Making Shanghai green brings happiness to the people
绿化上海造福于民

makes it appear like a propaganda poster. Yet, on a second sight it becomes clear that a new office building, the New era square (新时代广场) invites possible future tenants to visit the estate. The balloons and the white pigeons serve to celebrate the opening of the building, and at the same time to point to "happiness" in stable and peaceful times. This

[146]See the first chapter "Free and Easy Wandering" 逍遥游 in *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* 庄子著作, translated by Burton Watson, 1968, p.31.

billboard is rather irritating, because it remains unclear how the office building and the call to make Shanghai green are connected to each other.

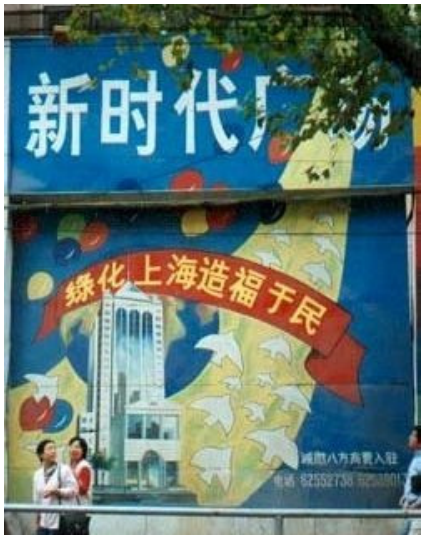

PLATE 27
New Era Square office building, painted billboard, Shanghai 1997

Flying up and reaching the whole world

Images of flying are often used to visualize the possibility to reach out: literally, to far-away places, or metaphorically, to a better life. This implies being a global player, a full member in a network of world centers, and sharing an international lifestyle. Some advertisements using this motif have already been discussed in the above chapter on images of the globe. Other advertisements relate the concept of flying to their products, for example an airline, a shopping center, and a credit card.

PLATE 28
Dragon credit card, subway poster, Shanghai 1998

Two "Dragon" credit cards (龙卡) issued by the China Construction Bank are "taking off" at an airport site together with an airplane that is shown below the much larger cards. An obviously busy businessman – he is looking at his watch – exemplifies the target group of

the advertisement. These cards, so the advertisement promises, can allow you to go anywhere in China, that is designated as the "Divine Land."

> With only one card in hand
> you can traverse the Divine Land [China]
> 一卡在手
> 走遍神州.

The flying credit cards stand for the financial capacities of the business man. However, they are also images of flying dragons – symbols for China – that are soaring upwards. The image of the flying credit card thus visualizes the progress and power of China. Yet, as the following advertisement will show, similar images of flying can also be used, at least partly, to contradict these ideological connotations.

PLATE 29
Quantas Airlines, billboard, Shanghai 1997

The airplanes on the above advertisement are not flying upwards, but clearly flying away. They are all heading towards a violet sunset that is opposed to the emblematic red sunrise of socialism. Strikingly, this billboard advertises for a foreign company, the Australian Quantas Airlines. This image does not stand for the greatness of China, nor does it imply a connection of China with a worldwide network, instead it situates the place of desire elsewhere, beyond China's borders. Unfortunately it remains unclear whether this billboard has been designed by a Chinese or foreign advertising agency. It appears to be close at hand that a foreign airline intends to evoke the idea of leaving China – in this case to reach Australia – but the advertisement does not offer any information that would allow one to conclude if the color purple was deliberately chosen for the sky in distinction to a "socialist" red sky.[147]

Flying products in a dynamic consumer society

Commenting on the posters about the Chinese space program, Landsberger mentions that:

> "Aside from the political use of the space mission, its success really has struck a chord with the people. They feel proud and consider China's joining of the space family as another indication that the country is regaining some of the splendor and importance it had during its imperial past. As a result, a number of Chinese

[147] Interestingly, the logo of the airline is red.

companies have included the Chinese conquest of space in their printed and television advertising…"[148]

In fact, 21 images among the collected material show different products – often electronic appliances – flying around the sky, the universe, or towards the consumer.

PLATE 30
E2000 light switches, billboard, Beijing 1997

The above billboard taken in downtown Beijing in 1997 serves as an example: Light switches by an allegedly famous Australian brand (澳洲名牌) appear like large spaceships flying through the universe. Other advertisements use similar imagery showing different products flying through space: electronic equipment like communication tools, DVD players, or microwave ovens, heaters, baby-food, and snacks. All these advertisements reflect the fascination of space. They are in line with the propagation of national progress and – as Landsberger observed – with national pride about China's achievements in the space program.

Conclusion

Advertisements promoting the possibility of reaching the world, either by mean of telecommunication, or personally, by airplane, reflect that China claims the role of a global player. The economic progress of China is affirmed by images of products flying or taking-off that are metaphorically linked to China like the Dragon credit card or the Shanghai airport building that is compared to the Chinese fable roc bird. Products in dynamic motion, flying through space, picture the national pride about China's space program. Images like flying airplanes or space vessels are used in propaganda and advertising images alike. They signify modernity and economic progress, as well as technical and scientific achievements, and they illustrate the position China desires to take in the world. As a matter of fact, such images of flying can also easily take a quite different meaning, namely by suggesting a flight away from China.

[148] www.iisg.nl/~landsberger/csp.html, retrieved on September 25, 2002.

5. THE PRIVATIZATION OF VALUES

The previous chapter showed how commercial advertisements affirm values that are promoted by political propaganda. This chapter introduces advertisements that only seemingly do so. It will be examined how advertisements use the same motifs as political propaganda with the same implied values and meanings while reducing them to something only available to private, usually wealthy, consumers. I call this the privatization of values. Representations of nature, greenery, and flowers that are popular on advertisements and propaganda posters alike serve to exemplify this privatization of values. The images show landscapes or fragments of landscapes, meadows, trees, single tree leaves, flowers, water sceneries or drops of water.[149] The terms that are used to describe nature on the posters and billboards show what kinds of different aspects of nature can be found on the images. On propaganda posters, the human living environment often appears as environment (环境), living or ecological environment (生活 or 生态环境). Nature in the cities is referred to simply as greenery (绿 or 绿色) and also as the act of "making green" (绿化). In advertisements, free nature, comparatively uncontrolled by humans, is often called nature or natural (大自然 and 天然, literally the "great being so of oneself" or the "being so of heaven"). Cultivated nature on the other hand is usually called garden (花园). Additionally, advertising slogans and texts frequently refer to the sun, mountains, water, lakes, forests, trees, grass, and flowers.

In their depictions of nature, both propaganda and advertising often point to certain desired qualities that are identified with nature. These are as diverse as a challenging wilderness on the one hand, and a cultivated pastoral idyll as a space for relaxation on the other hand. The desirability of natural qualities is played out when it comes to propagating environmental protection, and when similar qualities are borrowed to describe the benefits of a promoted product. Chapter 5.1 deals with those images that directly refer to nature or the qualities ascribed to nature. However, on propaganda as well as in commercial advertising, nature motifs are also associated with values that are no longer directly related to natural qualities. These are for example civilized behavior or an exquisite taste. Appearing on propaganda posters, these meanings and values refer to the public or to society as a whole, while advertising transfers them into a private sphere belonging to the tenants of a particular building, a family, or an individual consumer. In commercial advertisements, the values of nature are reserved for those who are able and ready to purchase the offered product. Chapter 5.2 uses the example of real estate advertisements to show how the meanings symbolized by images of nature and flowers are transferred to the sphere of human behavior or social status.

[149]Stephanie Donald hints at the importance of distinguishing landscape (山水) as a culturally defined way of representing surroundings, from countryside (风景) that "can be entered, worked, or in any way made ordinary." She further argues that landscape is "visible only on the level of icon, and those that do enter it themselves become icons, elements of cultural imaginary" (Stephanie Donald, 1997, p. 100). Although some of the advertising images discussed in the following chapters may depict rural settings, they do never appear ordinary, and therefore in each case qualify as landscape.

Nature motifs were found on the considerably large number of 114 of the advertisements and propaganda posters. Another 45 images were sorted out, because they only show nature motifs in the background. Also not included are 26 images that only make allusions to nature by references to greenery in the text or by using green color without explicitly depicting nature. Most of the photographs can be categorized into four types, depending on the way nature is employed: nature as a source of health, nature as a space for relaxation, wild nature conquered by humans, and nature as a symbol for civilization and exclusivity. Examples for each of these four general types exemplify how advertisements appropriate the values associated with nature, claiming that they can be "purchased" by buying the offered products. This also implies that these values are not a public good, but that they can only be achieved by those who can afford these products. They are thus – more or less exclusively – available only to the private consumer.

5.1 The values of nature

The most obvious public value that is represented by images of nature is an intact environment. In the People's Republic of China, the State defines itself as the responsible agent for the natural resources of the country and as the major actor in environmental protection. Environmental protection, established in the Chinese constitution in 1978, is officially written in big letters, although these official intentions are not being realized in China, where the environment faces very severe problems.[150] The Provisional Environmental Protection Law was first adopted at the 11th Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Fifth National People's Congress on September 13, 1979, but it came into force ten years later, in 1989. The 1990s additionally brought a growing number of environmental regulations and according to the ninth five-year-plan for environmental protection (1996–2000) the year 2000 was supposed to bring the ecological turn in the People's Republic.[151] The following billboards and posters can be understood in the framework of a national campaign for green cities and environmental protection that the Government undertook during the late 1990s.

Care for greenery – propaganda for environmental protection

In China's urban areas, heavy destruction of old city quarters and the construction of new buildings led to a visible lack of green spaces. Propaganda billboards and posters reflect concern for the environment and for more greenery in the cities. The ten photographs showing public messages about environmental protection were all taken in Shanghai and Beijing with the main focus of the posters lying on the love of greenery in the city. The population is called for a greater awareness and for contributions to caring for urban

[150] For a short overview on China's environmental situation see for example Dai Xingyi & Peng Xizhe, 2000.
[151] See Dirk Betke, 1998, pp. 347f.

greenery. Two images from Beijing deal with water resources, an important topic in northern China. In Shanghai and in Beijing, the creation of a pleasant looking and attractive city is a high political necessity regarding the coming Olympics 2008 in Beijing and the Expo in Shanghai 2010.

In 1999, large light boxes below the Yan'an Road highway in Shanghai promoted environmental awareness and public responsibility with slogans in the usual red or – fitting the topic – in green:

Green makes us more beautiful
绿色让我们更美丽.

PLATE 31
Environmental protection, light box poster, Shanghai 1999

The above propaganda poster with the slogan

Planting trees and meadows
improves our ecological environment
大搞植树种草
改善生态环境

shows a detail of a park or forest. Only the lower parts of the trunks and leaves are visible. Despite this small selected section, the image has a certain deepness. The sunlight mixing with the shadows of the trees creates a light and friendly atmosphere. Further surroundings of this segmented natural scene are completely left out. The limits of the depicted space are omitted and thus dissolved. The fragmentary depiction leaves the viewer without information as to whether it shows cultivated nature in a garden, or rather free nature – as if the Daoist yearning for untouched nature should be combined with the Confucian love for a cultivated garden. The other environmental protection posters photographed along Yan'an Road also show fragmentary images, like a close-up of a waterfall, shown on plate 32, with the slogan

To protect the ecological environment is everybody's duty
保护生态环境人人有责.

A very similar fragmentary view on nature can often be observed in China: a woman poses for a photograph in a public park. She is tenderly touching a flower or the branch of a tree.

The resulting photographs not only document the kind of analogy that is seen between the women and a flower, it also serves as a souvenir for the visit in the park that is itself debarred from the picture together with its urban surroundings. These concepts of nature are probably confined to people living in cities. In rural areas, nature is mainly agricultural land on the one hand, and unconquered wilderness on the other. The selection of the motifs representing nature and the way it is depicted define the kind of nature that is seen as a value per se: blossoming flowers, green leaves, sunlight combined with cooling shadow and refreshing springs of water. The valued nature is a well cared-for space for human relaxation and refreshment.

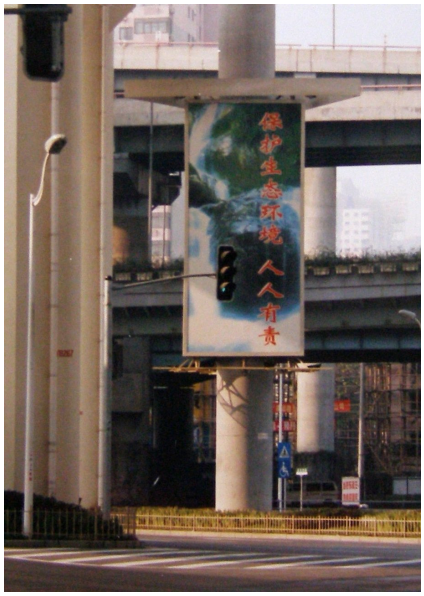

PLATE 32
Environmental protection, light box poster, Shanghai 1999

In this propaganda series, the location at the Yan'an highway plays an additional important role for the context of their content, because the highway is one of the most frequently used emblems for the city's progress. On the same light-box installation around the pillar of the elevated highway, images of the Shanghai Pearl Tower and the shiningly lit highway itself are displayed.

A framed poster from Beijing shown below carries the slogan

Beautify the appearance of the city
pay attention to hygiene
make the capital green
protect the environment
美化市容
讲究卫生
绿化首都
保护环境.

It shows comparatively dull flowers and grass below an elevated highway and some high-rise apartment buildings in front of a blue sky. Although the composition of the image draws a clear separating line – the elevated highway – between buildings and greenery, the slogan suggests that green spaces with grass and flowers and the buildings form an

integrated "beautified" urban space. This illustrates on the one hand how greenery forms a closely integrated image with the modern city, and on the other hand, how propaganda visuals often refer to a very orderly and controlled type of nature.

PLATE 33
Environmental protection, framed poster, Beijing 1997–98

On all of the posters, no specific action is asked for. The vague message is that greenery, environment, parks and water should be cherished and valued, implying that they should not be destroyed or wasted. These propaganda messages serve to announce and popularize governmental programs, in this case environmental protection and more greenery in the cities.

The creation of nature in commercial advertising

By placing products in front of nature sceneries, advertisements present nature as something cherished. Advertisements for food products or medicine, cosmetic products, but also air conditioners, a water boiler, and a refrigerator exemplify the two most common combinations between products and nature: It is either asserted that the use of the product creates – so to speak – "nature" or "natural pureness," like the air conditioner or the water boiler, or the advertisement claims that the product – like food or medicine – is of natural origin. In environmental protection propaganda nature and the natural environment is thematically addressed and at the same time pictured on a poster. Contrarily, commercial advertisements need to transfer the values of nature to the products they promote. The advertisements suggest that by purchasing a product, people can acquire the positive values associated with nature.

The image that was chosen to advertise Rinnai brand water boilers looks very similar to the waterfall image in the above described propaganda series along Shanghai's Yan'an Road highway. Both posters show a fragment of nature scenery. There, the waterfall serves pars pro toto for an ecological environment that has to be protected; here, the focus lies on a single quality of the waterfall: the natural pureness of the water. This quality is transferred to the product: the poster suggests that the water from this boiler is naturally clear and pure as if the boiler could transform ordinary tub water into spring water.

PLATE 34
Rinnai water boilers, subway poster, Shanghai 1998

The slogan suggests that this pureness is easy to reach:

Just one step away
Rinnai water boilers
一步到位
林内燃具.

PLATE 35
Yadu Air conditioners, painted billboard, Shanghai 1999

The above advertisement for Yadu air conditioners even goes one step further claiming explicitly that their air conditioners actually produce nature:

24 hours breathing nature
24 小时呼吸大自然.

A window frame with an attached air conditioner is in the center of this surreal-looking, hand-painted billboard. On one side of the window frame a park lies under a blue sky with a few white clouds. This landscape is duplicated on the other side in a kind of air bubble created by the air conditioner. The living room furniture seems to be arranged directly inside this free landscape. Thus, the air conditioner dissolves the separation between inside and outside. The "nature" brought inside the room appears like a wide spaced park, a

space for relaxation. The natural air that is allegedly produced by the Yadu air conditioner is associated with the feeling of an open space of nature or a garden offering a comfortable and spacious ambiance of living.

"Natural" products

Various advertisements claim that a product is of a natural origin and therefore valuable.

PLATE 36
Green A medicine, subway poster, Shanghai 1998

The above advertisement for a medicine called "Green A" (绿 A) explicitly refers to nature as the source of its quality:

> Green A, a natural health-keeping product
> 绿 A 天然保养品.

The image shows a landscape with a lake and mountains, reminiscent of traditional Chinese landscape paintings *shanshui hua* 山水画 ("mountains and river paintings"). A building on the mountain leaves some space for human presence in the image. The medicine bottle and its cardboard box are shown at the lake shore in front of the mountain. The harmonious balance of powers in the Chinese concept of nature is transferred to the beneficial effects of the medicine that is supposed to regulate the harmonious interplay of bodily functions.

The Malaysian brand "Dutch Lady" presents its assortment of dairy products in front of an artificially drawn landscape with cows, a small river and wind mills.

> Dutch Lady:
> the most precious among milks
> 荷兰子母
> 奶中之宝

is claimed to be

> the authority in dairy products
> with a complete assortment
> 奶品权威
> 种类齐全.

PLATE 37
Dutch Lady dairy products, subway poster, Beijing 1998

The image of nature employed here is a cliché of a "typical Dutch" landscape defined through the windmills. The Dutch Lady advertisement displays an agriculturally cultivated and artificially depicted nature largely different from the image of a relaxation space. However, it does not show any sign of farm labor or agricultural production. It is not agricultural labor, but nature herself that is claimed to be at the source of the product. The cultivated land is transferred to the Netherlands. When it comes to agricultural land, it is not Chinese, but foreign nature that stands for quality.

Where the advertisements analyzed above depict natural spaces that are inhabited by humans as their cultivated land or as their possible relaxation space, the following hand-painted billboard photographed in Weihai, Shandong, in 1996 depicts wild nature.

PLATE 38
Cashmere underwear, painted billboard, Weihai 1996

A company producing cashmere underwear has decided for an image of rocky coastal scenery with goats as providers of the raw material and representatives for the product.[152] The depicted nature is idyllic and untouched, without any human presence. This quality is

[152]The cashmere advertisement gives an address and telephone number of the local factory, together with the information about how to find the product's provider on the "street north of the bus station" (汽车站北街). Compared to the advertisements for local industry discussed in chapter 4.1, this billboard with the nature scenery is unusual, because it does not display the product and it does in no way relate to any national or local economic achievement.

transferred to the product, implying that the wool is natural and pure. Although not explicitly mentioned in the text, nature and naturalness are defined as a quality of the product.

People in nature

People in nature settings appear on 21 of the photographed advertisements. Whenever the advertising images do not only display products in relation to nature, but also people, nature often serves to transfer certain qualities, characteristics or feelings to those people. These in return are associated with the product and its benefits for the consumer.

PLATE 39
Hair shampoo, billboard, Shanghai 1997

A shampoo is promoted with the slogan

> Hundred years of shining hair
> 100 年润发.

The green color found on the packaging of the shampoo is reused in the nature scenery in the background and the clothes of a couple. The man is tenderly rinsing the woman's hair. Both are smiling. The consistently used color green and the obvious happiness of the two people suggest the harmony of man and nature as well as the harmony of a loving couple.

Five photographs show advertisements for fashion that follow the simple pattern of one person or a couple standing in a nature setting. A young couple, for example, is wearing "Baleno World"-fashion in a diffusely blue landscape of fields and sky, and another young man in relaxed posture is standing inside a green field or meadow promoting clothes by "Green Jewel" (绿宝石). On most of these advertisements, nature is presented as a space for relaxation and recreation. All protagonists in these kinds of advertisements are young and placed in front of nature scenery that appears to be without borders and horizon. This is often achieved by a similar fragmentary cut-out of nature as on the above discussed propaganda billboards for environmental protection.

The young woman on a 1998 subway poster from Shanghai shown below is sitting or reclining in a meadow full of yellow flowers that dissolves into a white light. The yellow flowers are repeated on her red dress. This advertisement promotes a medicine against menstruation pains called *Yueyueshu* 月月舒, meaning "comfortable every month."

PLATE 40
Yueyueshu medicine, subway poster, Shanghai 1998

In colorful, playfully arranged characters the slogan says:

> We wish you relaxed "holidays"
> 祝你轻松渡"假期"

with the term "holidays" in quotation marks referring to her monthly period. The meadow represents the space where relaxation can be achieved.

PLATE 41
Giovanni Valentino clothes, framed poster, Shanghai 1997

Apart form these artificial spaces, another way of defining attractive natural settings for relaxation is to place them in a foreign country like on the above advertisement for Italian fashion by Giovanni Valentino. The Western man on the photograph, the foreign brand name, the country of origin, Italy, named in English, and the landscape itself, all speak for a foreign setting. Apart from the relaxation space, an element of luxury is added. It is available for those who are able to afford a holiday trip to Europe, or at least to buy the promoted fashion.[153] Natural relaxation spaces are presented as dreams – a pendant to urban greenery on propaganda posters that is shown as an ideal. The advertising images represent a dream of natural relaxation spaces.

[153]The associations between an European scenery and luxury will be further discussed in chapter 9.2.

PLATE 42
Bedding, subway poster, Shanghai 1998

This idea of a dream of relaxation in nature is taken literally on the above advertisement for blankets involving a male protagonist. The image is split into two parts. On the right side a man sleeping under a blanket is seen on a white background. The image on the left side repeats the silhouette of the man in the same sleeping position beneath a tree in a green landscape. Next to him sits a dog watching over him and protecting him while he sleeps. Whoever sleeps in these blankets, so suggests the advertisements, feels like he is being transferred into free nature. Apart from the motif of relaxation, the concept of the man surrounded by wild nature – well known from the famous Marlboro man – is hinted at. Images of this smoking man on horseback are also found on two of the collected advertisements from Shanghai.

Conquered nature

All the people on the above images find themselves in friendly environments that allow them to enjoy harmony with nature. The following two advertisements, on the contrary, show natural spaces that are conquered by people through their vehicles.

PLATE 43
Santana car repair shop, painted billboard, Weifang 1996

The painted billboard shown above advertises a specialized repair shop for the Chinese Volkswagen model Santana in Weifang. It shows a red car in the open country driving on sand and earth and – at least with one of its wheels – in water.

With a Santana
you won't be afraid to go anywhere in the world
拥有桑塔纳
走遍天下都不怕.

The Santana that has been developed in Shanghai especially for the Chinese market is not at all a cross country vehicle, but still, the freedom to go everywhere is illustrated with diffuse nature scenery. The slogan implies that nature and free country is something to be feared. However, for those who are driving a Santana, wild nature is claimed to lose anything that might be frightening.

PLATE 44
Chunlan motorbikes, billboard,
Beijing 1997

Such a conquest of nature also takes place on an advertisement for *Chunlan* motorbikes. The motorbike in a desert scene appears like a wild cat ready to attack the viewer. According to the slogan, this wild animal is waiting to be tamed by the owner of the motorbike:

Ride a tiger and race a leopard,
powerful, bold and stern
骑虎驱豹
威猛凛凛.

The slogan plays with two Chinese sayings. The first part of the slogan derives from the proverb "When you ride a tiger it is difficult to get off" (骑虎难下). The proverb is a warning not to engage in something dangerous, but here, the ending has been altered to "drive a leopard" (驱豹). The buyer of the motorbike is thus affirmed that the wilderness represented by tiger and leopard can be tamed. The expression in the second part of the slogan has only been slightly altered: *Weifeng linlin* 威风凛凛 meaning majestic-looking and awe-inspiring, has become *weimeng linlin* 威猛凛凛. *Weimeng*, that is "powerful and bold," emphasizes the element of strength that alludes to taming the "wild."

The taming of wilderness functions differently on the following subway poster from Shanghai. Here, a possibly frightening wild nature – again represented by a leopard – is transformed into an entertainment park for tourists. This poster is one of three different

posters for wildlife parks and an aquarium in Singapore that were photographed in Shanghai in 1998.

PLATE 45
Singapore city promotion, subway poster, Shanghai 1998

The slogans

> Explore the exotic world without going to Africa
> 不到非洲一样探奇

on the above image, and

> Be a companion in a swarm of white birds
> 与百鸟结群作伴

on a second poster promote the wildlife parks, whereas a huge underground aquarium advertises with:

> Although you can't dive, you can leisurely move around
> 不会潜水也悠游.

The wildlife that people usually picture in the almost unreachable distance of Africa is suddenly close: a wild animal is placed in the foreground on one side of the image to "invite" the viewer to the exotic scenery. Wilderness becomes like a garden, the classical motif of cultivated nature with clear borders.

Conclusion

Most of the images that refer to nature as a source of health and pureness and as a space for relaxation were taken in Shanghai and Beijing, where environmental protection and greenery in the city are important topics. This is not only reflected in the propaganda posters with idealized images of urban greenery, but also in advertisements promoting products with images of harmonious natural spaces. The concept of nature prevalent in these images is clean and harmless. Nature appearing on propaganda as well as on advertisements needs to be adapted to human needs. That means that is has to be mainly beautiful but also "clean" and orderly. Images of conquered nature also fit into this picture. Advertisements make a possibly dangerous wilderness appear like a harmless place that is accessible to humans or that can easily be conquered by humans.

The qualities and values of nature are very similar in propaganda and advertising. Propaganda presents these values as an ideal that the citizens should strive for. The advertisements support the concept of nature as a valuable space, yet they claim that it is their products that bring the pureness, peace, and harmony of nature to the consumer. They offer desired natural spaces to those who purchase the promoted commodities and suggest that the same ideal natural spaces shown in propaganda are in fact available for private consumers. The values that are represented by natural spaces are thus privatized.

5.2 Civilization and elegance: green cities and flowers

In the imagery of propaganda and advertising, nature and greenery have not only been employed for its more or less inherent qualities, but also for certain values that might be associated with it, like youth, beauty, elegance, or romance. Flowers are among the most popular motifs to represent these values, but other kinds of greenery are often used in an equal manner. The following chapter focuses on two very similar values that are used in political propaganda as well as in commercial advertising: civilized behavior on the one hand and its counterpart in advertising, a refined lifestyle, on the other hand.

Propagating outer and inner beauty with flowers and greenery

The previous chapter showed that parks and greenery are defined as an integrated part of the city that need care and protection. Parks are valued because of their beauty. Depictions of artificial and arranged nature in the cities are referred to as beautiful, but they are also employed to motivate for hygiene and cleanness. Artificial nature thus becomes a positive product of human civilization, on the contrary to a repelling and frightening "wild" nature.[154]

PLATE 46
Clean environment, framed poster, Beijing 1997–98

[154]See Paolo Santangelo, 1998, p. 618.

The poster shown above was photographed in Beijing between 1997 and 1998. It shows a view on skyscrapers in a mountainous green environment, a scenery that is assumed to be located in Hong Kong.[155] The slogan asks to

> Protect municipal sanitation
> create a clean and beautiful living environment
> 保持城市卫生
> 创造清洁优美的生活环境.

The greenery and skyscrapers belong to the "beautiful living environment" that is, according to the slogan, created by keeping hygiene and cleanness everywhere in the city. Hong Kong is attractive for people in mainland China because of its economic success. This poster obviously attempts to extend this attractiveness to the idea that Hong Kong is a clean place with functioning municipal sanitation, and thus motivate the people in Beijing to follow the demands of the slogan. Presenting Hong Kong as a model implies that Beijing will be like Hong Kong by keeping good hygiene.

PLATE 47
Civilized behavior, billboard, Shanghai 1998

The above large propaganda billboard resembles the images of the green city campaigns: a park in the foreground, high-rise buildings in the background. Yet, the topic of this propaganda billboard is not parks and greenery in the cities. Instead, the slogan in Chinese and in English asks to

> Improve citizen's quality
> and promote the city's civilization
> 提高市民素质
> 提高城市文明程度.[156]

The values beauty, hygiene and cleanness that are frequently associated with images of well cared-for greenery in an urban environment are here subsumed under the term "civilization." Instead of role models for "improved quality citizens," cultivated nature as part of human civilization takes the role of promoting a "civilized" conduct. The order in a well cared-for garden or park becomes emblematic for an orderly behavior.

[155]The building on the left side seems to be the Lippo Centre in Hong Kong.
[156]The Chinese slogan says, literally: "Raise the quality of the local population and the city's civilization level."

PLATE 48
Civilized behavior, light box poster, Beijing 1997

In 1997, the propaganda department of the Beijing East City district (东城区委宣传部) issued a series of light box posters with slogans concerning civilized behavior in the city. On the above example of this series, citizens are asked to

> Build a fine order
> create a civilized atmosphere
> 共建优良秩序
> 共创文明氛围.

Six similar photographs were taken along Dongzhimennei Dajie, the strongly frequented road west of the Dongzhi Gate. They all show propaganda billboards with close-ups of flowers, blossoms or leaves covering the whole surface, and slogans in different colors all similarly calling for more civilized behavior in the city. One of the slogans of this series reveals what is meant in-depth by this "fine order" and "civilized atmosphere:"

> Carry out the movement of 'four dos and four don'ts.'
> Improve the local population's civilization
> 开展"四要四不要"活动
> 提高市民文明.

The movement mentioned here refers to behavioral rules like treating people politely (礼貌待人), paying attention to hygiene (讲究卫生), keeping service standards (规范服务), and obeying traffic regulations (遵守交规) as well as avoiding dirty and vulgar language (说脏话粗话), avoiding chaotically spitting and throwing things (乱吐乱扔), avoiding abusing one's power in administrative positions (冷硬拖卡)[157], and avoiding walking and riding, stopping and parking chaotically (乱行乱停).[158] Again, the addressed citizens do not appear on the images themselves. Instead, the beauty of the flowers represents the beauty of "civilized" human behavior.

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[157]The four words that this guideline is composed of refer to the four ways of abusing one's power in administrative positions: *leng* 冷, "cold," means to simply ignore a demand by, for example, putting documents into a drawer and leaving them untouched; *ying* 硬, "hard," refers to an unfriendly way of denying administrative approval of a demand by, for example, continuously asking for additional documents; *tuo* 拖, "to delay", means to delay administrative procedures endlessly although maybe showing and friendly and willing attitude, and *ka* 卡, "to block," points for example to the interpretation of laws and guidelines against an applicant.

[158]www.bjwmb.gov.cn/public/info_selinfo.asp?Info_ID=10493&Bar_ID=129, retrieved on August 21, 2005.

PLATE 49
Correct language, framed poster, Beijing 1997–98

This association of civilization virtues with nature is sometimes taken very far, for example when a random image of mountainous scenery like the one on the poster shown above, is supposed to promote using correct language:

> Speaking and writing according to the rules
> makes life and work more convenient[159]
> 说话写字要规范
> 生活工作都方便.

Beauty and refined taste: nature and flowers in real estate advertisements

Real estate advertisements count for a considerable part of all outdoor advertisements in Shanghai. According to 1993 statistics of the State Administration of Industry and Commerce, they even hold the second position in quantity nationwide.[160] Among the collected real estate advertisements, 26 are illustrated with nature motifs. They serve to exemplify how commercial advertisements present beauty as an exclusive good while using almost exactly the same nature motifs that appear in propaganda to promise beauty for everybody's life.

PLATE 50
Jinhui huaguang cheng real estate, painted billboard, Shanghai 1999

[159]"Convenience" probably relates to the fact that misunderstandings in daily communication are avoided by speaking Mandarin and writing standard Chinese characters instead of character variants.
[160]See Han Chifeng, 2001, p. 142.

Like propaganda, real estate advertisements frequently combine images of buildings and greenery. Lines of trees or green meadows are a popular motif to frame apartment compounds like the *Jinhui huaguang cheng* 金汇华光城 on the image above. The slogan

Green home
绿色家园

emphasizes the green environment of the compound that is actually situated amid an urban development zone in the west of Shanghai. The high rise apartment blocks on the image are grouped around a fountain and another blue surface that might be a swimming pool. A relatively wide street around the compound suggests that it is easy to reach. The green environment obviously serves to underline the exclusive, comfortable, and spacious living atmosphere that the compound claims to offer.

PLATE 51
Beautiful palace of the heart real estate, painted billboard, Shanghai 1999

The above billboard photographed in Shanghai announces the sale of office space in a building that is still under construction. Here, a single large tree leaf is enough to signify the "beauty" that is supposed to be found in this

Beautiful palace of the heart
美丽心殿.

PLATE 52
Holiday Apartments real estate, painted billboard, Shanghai 1999

Flowers are often found in the foreground of real estate advertisements. The apartment-complex Holiday Apartments (假日公寓) in Shanghai was advertised with a hand-painted

billboard right at the construction site (plate 52). The price for the square meter is marked as being between 4658 Yuan – in large figures – and 6580 Yuan – in considerably smaller figures. The readers are asked to compare products and prices. A row of roses is painted on the bottom of the billboard as if they were growing right out of the sidewalk. The flowers separate the building from the noisy traffic. Both the flowers and the name Holiday Apartments distinguish the house from ordinary places. Everyday life and work is exchanged for the feeling of a life in endless holidays. The roses are not only a sign for beauty, but also for an elevated standard and exclusivity. This elevated standard is additionally underlined by adding an English name that is written on the left side of the billboard: "Holiday Family."

PLATE 53
Taiwan Garden villas real estate, painted billboard, Qingdao 1996

The above advertisement for Taiwan Garden villas (台湾花园), taken in Qingdao, contains a considerable number of different text and visual elements. The red tulips are most dominant, being placed in the center of the composition and appearing larger than most of the other elements. Their color is repeated in the name Taiwan Garden. The hand-painted billboard shows a logo and an illustrated map of the compound with 15 distinguishable houses in a garden environment and two close-ups of houses, one almost disappearing in plants and greenery. The tulips structure the image and emphasize the refined taste and beauty of the offered living environment.

PLATE 54
Shining Garden Century City real estate, framed posters, Shanghai 1999

Large framed posters are hanging on the facade of a new building on Shanghai's Fuxing Road that was built in pseudo-classical European style. They advertise apartments on sale in a newly built estate. One of the posters shows the complete building. The second offers insight into the foyer of the building, looking more like a luxurious hotel lobby, with dark green walls and a landscape painting that is being looked at by an elegantly dressed woman. The third poster finally presents the advertising slogan of the so-called "Shining Garden Century City" (明园世纪成) printed onto a background covered with roses. It reads:

> Tackle the extreme limits of quality.
> That's the honorable character of Fuxing
> 复兴尊贵本色
> 挑战品质极限.

Flowers, especially roses, are a popular motif expressing exclusivity and elevated standard. They also appear in advertisements for other products like a night-club, jewelry or a hotel. The connotation of an elevated style is emphasized by the combination with other signifiers: beautiful jewelry, the elegant atmosphere in an entrance hall or a leaf with musical notes.

Conclusion

Plants and flowers in the environmental protection campaigns serve to transfer their beauty to the urban surroundings and the conduct and behavior of a city's inhabitants. The function of plants and flowers in advertisements is very similar; their beauty is transferred to a product and thus becomes a sign for an elevated standard. The rather educational focus that associated the beauty of flowers with civilized behavior is turned into the notion of refined taste and style. The civilized behavior promoted by governmental propaganda and the wish for a beautiful and exclusive living environment that is expressed in real estate advertisements are very similar. Both relate to order and cleanness: flowers and greenery are properly lined up and arranged on both propaganda and advertising images. The important difference lies in the fact that the same values in real estate advertisements point to a fenced-in private living space whereas propaganda would like to see an elevated standard in public spaces and people's behavior.

6. TRANSFORMED MEANINGS

Whereas the previous chapter has shown how commercial advertisements reinterpret propaganda values and transfer them to a private sphere, the motifs discussed in this chapter exemplify how political propaganda and commercial advertising connote very different meanings to a certain motif. The motifs are given new meanings when the contexts of their appearances are changed. A few advertisements for example use images of the Great Wall as an emblem of Chinese culture and history (chapter 6.1), and others picture sunflowers, emblems for the adoration of Mao Zedong (chapter 6.2), by placing them in the context of products and their proclaimed qualities. They are taking over these symbols for the constitution of their own commercially defined meanings.

6.1 The Great Wall

In political propaganda, the Great Wall was and is frequently used to illustrate anything that is related to patriotism, patriotic behavior, and the strength of the nation. It refers to Chinese history, unity and strength, as well as – being a unique building – to the uniqueness of China and Chinese culture. Despite its comparatively rare appearance on only six of the collected photographs, it is a very strong symbol for Chinese identity. Four propaganda posters showing the Great Wall were photographed between 1997 and 1998 in Beijing. Their topics include praise of China in the context of the return of Hong Kong under Chinese administration in 1997, socialism with Chinese characteristics (中国特色的社会主义), and proper tax-paying. Two commercial advertisements, one from Beijing and the other from Shanghai, have extended these meanings to praise the promoted products.

PLATE 55
Patriotism, framed poster, Beijing 1997–98

On the above poster with the slogan

> Long live the land of the ancestors
> 祖国万岁,

the Great Wall functions in juxtaposition to the modern city, lit at night. Both are displayed together on an outline of the Chinese map, the Great Wall on the right side amidst a green scenery, and the image of the city on the left side.[161] The image of China that is created here is a mixture of Chinese history, represented by the Great Wall, and modernity, represented by the city. Although the slogan does not refer to the return of Hong Kong, the image also includes a view of Hong Kong – still outside of the Chinese map. The yellow light of the sunrise indicates the dawn of a new day, metaphorically pointing to the new future that Hong Kong is awaiting. According to the official Chinese view, the return of Hong Kong brought the unity of China one step closer. The Great Wall on the propaganda poster affirms this unity. The same symbolism also appears on another propaganda poster announcing the return of Hong Kong that shows Hong Kong right at the foot of the Great Wall.

PLATE 56
Socialism with Chinese characteristics, billboard, Beijing 1997–98

The Beijing Sunlight Advertising and Exhibition Art Company (北京阳光广告展览艺术公司) has created the above billboard with the slogan

> Progress towards the triumph of building socialism with Chinese characteristics
> 沿着建设有中国特色的社会主义道路胜利前进.[162]

It pictures the Great Wall in a shining golden color following the common allusion that the Great Wall resembles a golden dragon. On this picture, the landscape around it is all red, making the "golden dragon" fly through a red – socialist – country. Socialism on the one hand and China on the other hand thus form an integrated image and appear inseparable.

The Beijing Local Tax Department (北京市地方税务局) issued the following billboard with the slogan

> Lawful tax paying makes
> the nation rich and the people strong
> 按发纳税
> 国富民强.

[161]Interestingly, the image of the city is placed onto the mountainous and desert areas of Tibet and Xinjiang, instead of the eastern part of China where most of the large cities in China are located.
[162]The same advertising agency has also designed a billboard for environmental protection discussed in chapter 4.2.

PLATE 57
Lawful tax paying, billboard,
Beijing 1997–98

Two tax officers represent State control surveying over the fulfillment of the demand, but at the same time also the "strong people" mentioned in the slogan. The image of the Great Wall underlines the reason to follow the demand in the slogan: lawfully paying taxes serves the greatness of China.

Nationalized culture in advertisements

The two advertisements, one photographed in Shanghai and one in Beijing, play on the positive connotation of the Great Wall as a symbol of China. Yet, they use the characteristics attributed to the Great Wall to put the promoted products in a positive light.

PLATE 58
Great Wall credit card, advertisement on a newspaper display case, Shanghai 1997–98

The Bank of China, China's national bank, is also the largest bank in the People's Republic. On its English website it claims to have "played an important role in promoting China's economic and social progress."[163] It chose the Great Wall as name and emblem for the first credit card that was issued in China in 1986. By using this strong national icon

[163] www.bank-of-china.com/en/common/third.jsp?category=ROOT%3Een%3EInformation+Center%3EAbout+BOC%3EAbout+Bank+of+China, retrieved on September 6, 2005.

the Bank of China affirms its leading national position in the banking business, but besides that, the image of the Great Wall also points to guaranteed strength and security.

PLATE 59
Nanfu batteries, subway poster, Beijing 1998

The concept of strength is also present in the above advertisement for Nanfu Batteries (南孚电池). The Great Wall stands for security and endurance, used here in the sense of reliability of the product. Without adding a slogan or product description, the batteries are presented as reliable, strong, and enduring. Only a small text below the image informs the reader that Nanfu Batteries have the greatest production number throughout China. However, contrary to the credit card advertisement where the national element plays a major role, this aspect is less significant here. The qualities associated to the Great Wall are used directly to describe the product.

Conclusion

The Great Wall is a very strong symbol for China's history, strength and unity. Yet, these meanings are not necessarily confined to the People's Republic of China and the socialist government. Thus, national propaganda instrumentalizes the symbol of the Great Wall just as much as commercial advertisements do. Advertising does not – or at least not exclusively – adopt the meanings that the current national leadership attributes to the Great Wall. They refer to the meanings of the Great Wall as a symbol for China, but they mainly establish a relation between the symbolic meanings of the Great Wall and the qualities of a product.

6.2 Sunflowers

The sunflower is among those motifs that had a clearly defined connection to Mao Zedong in propaganda imagery. During the Cultural Revolution, pictures of Mao Zedong

served as a symbol for the revolution and the Chinese nation. Mao was called the "red sun", and since the sunflower always turns its head towards the sun, it signified the adoration of and love for Mao that was considered the same as love for China.[164] Sunflowers thus have been a popular motif, for example on posters, badges, and on the "little red book" *Mao zhuxi yulu* 毛主席语录 (*Quotations from Chairman Mao*).

PLATE 60
Veneration of Mao Zedong, poster, 1968

The meaning of the sunflower in Chinese socialist propaganda was confined to the veneration of Mao Zedong, as for example on the above propaganda poster from 1968:

> Respectfully wish Chairman Mao an eternal life
> 敬祝毛主席万寿无疆.

Despite the ongoing presence of Mao's image in the People's Republic, he is no longer the topic of propaganda posters and billboards. It is therefore not astonishing that none of the propaganda posters among the collected photographs show sunflowers. Yet, six advertisements taken in Shanghai and Beijing show how this motif is given a completely different meaning, making the old propagandistic connotation a merely historical one.

The banking card of the Merchants Bank is adorned with sunflowers. On a large billboard in Shanghai, six banking cards are shown on the background of a map of China. The map refers to the nation, but only in the context of the bank's claim that their card can be used everywhere:

> A new breakthrough in dealing with money business:
> with an account at the Merchants Bank one card counts for everything.
> 理财方式新突破
> 招行储蓄一卡通.

The banking cards "fly" over China, cover China. The whole image is held in blue, which is considered a suitable color for representing banks in many Western countries. However, the bank's official logo is red, which is the preferred color for banks in China because of its association with financial luck. Since red is also the color of socialism, the combination

[164]For the processes of nation-building through images of Mao Zedong see Henrietta Harrison, 2001, p. 228.

with blue on this billboard dissociates the sunflowers from the framework of signals pointing to Mao like the image of Mao himself and the color red.[165]

PLATE 61
Merchants Bank, billboard, Shanghai 1997

The sunflower has not only been chosen to name and decorate the banking and credit cards of the Merchants Bank, but also their general financial services and their so-called "sunflower wealth management" program. Public relations texts on the bank's website often refer to the creation of a "beautiful tomorrow" (美好明天), and also the English slogan "we are here to create a better future for you"[166] reveals that the sunflower remains a symbol for turning towards the sun – that in this case stands for a "better future." It is no longer Chairman Mao who promises this better future, but the "sunflower financial services" of China's "first share-holding commercial bank wholly owned by corporate legal entities."[167]

PLATE 62
Canon printers, subway poster, Beijing 1998

[165]The different meanings of the color red are elaborated in chapter 10.1.
[166]www.cmbchina.com and http://english.cmbchina.com/personal+business/sunflower, retrieved on July 12, 2006.
[167]http://english.cmbchina.com/cmb+info/aboutcmb, retrieved on September 25, 2005.

To exemplify the beauty and clearness of color prints, the advertisement above shows a Canon printer on top of an over-dimensional sunflower, printing out an image of sunflowers to prove that the colors are genuine. The slogan accordingly talks of quality:

> Canon prints,
> the choice for quality
> 佳能打印
> 品质之选.

This advertisement of the Japanese company Canon presents the beauty of the sunflower as something reproducible that is in no way related to Mao Zedong.

PLATE 63
Sun Microsystems information technology, subway poster, Beijing 1998

The American enterprise Sun Microsystems uses the sunflower in the context of its own company name. An artificial model of a nature scene with a sunflower and an over-sized bee is meant as an analogy to the slogan

> Sun creates Java, Java gives life to the network
> The network is the computer
> Sun 创造 Java, Java 赋予网络生命
> 网络就是计算机.

Again, nothing reminds of the old connotation the sunflower had to Mao Zedong.

Conclusion

The meaning of the sunflower in commercial advertisements is easily loosened from the propaganda context, because the veneration of Mao Zedong was already a historical topic in the second half of the 1990s. It no longer played a role in propagandistic image production for outdoor billboards and posters. The China Merchants Bank still plays out the connotations of the sunflower image as a sign for a positive future, but merely in the context of the bank's financial services. Other advertisements associate the sunflower to the product name, like in the case of Sun Microsystems, or to the products' qualities, like in the case of Canon. On the Canon poster, the sunflower appears even randomly chosen as beautiful and colorful.

7. NEW IMAGERIES

The motifs treated in this chapter serve as examples for new imageries in advertising that have emerged in the changing social environment especially in urban China. The sky, for example, is a popular motif on public messages of the late 1990s. This was not the case on traditional propaganda posters from the Cultural Revolution and Four Modernizations era. The sky is thus a relatively new motif in the late 1990s (chapter 7.1). Chapter 7.2 deals with images of families. How a family is supposed to look has been strictly determined by China's one-child policy. Visual propaganda usually pictures the ideal one-child family as parents and a girl to fight against the traditional preference given to boys. Advertisements have changed that image by showing quite different families. Chapter 7.3 introduces a completely new group of people on commercial advertisements: business people appear as models for a desired urban lifestyle and living standard. The changes in values that are mirrored in these new imageries reflect how advertisements are turning away from official ideology. All these motifs have been altered or newly introduced by advertisers to appeal more to modern society, popular tastes, or the presumed desires of potential customers.

7.1 Opening new horizons: the sky in advertising and propaganda

On some advertisements and propaganda images, the sky takes up half or more of the image space, sometimes even the whole background. In many cases, the sky is clearly defined by its blue color and a few white clouds. Sometimes though, it is just a blue, red, orange or yellow surface. In advertising, it is a quite frequently employed motif, present on 143 or approximately one eighth of the commercial advertisements in the collected photographs. On 74 of them, it fills at least half of the billboard's or poster's surface.

The limited sky in political propaganda

On the first glance, the motif of the sky seems very similar to the images of flying and striving upwards that have been elaborated in chapter 4.3 above. Yet, there is a notable difference: whereas images of flying have been a popular motif also on propaganda posters from the Cultural Revolution, the sky, especially the open sky, is almost non existent on these early posters. Stephanie Donald notes in an analysis of a 1972 propaganda poster that the sky is not represented at all. There is, so she concludes, "nothing to be discovered on the horizon."[168] This observation can be applied to the great majority of propaganda posters from the Cultural Revolution and Four Modernizations era. If the sky is shown on the pictures, it is either populated by flying rockets, planes, white doves or balloons, by the Chinese national flag, or by a giant representation of a great leader, usually Mao Zedong,

[168]Stephanie Donald, 1999, p. 89.

or another role model. Contrarily, among the propaganda posters and billboards from the late 1990s, the sky plays an important role. It appears on 36 photographs which is more than a quarter of all the collected propaganda images. Yet, as will be shown in the following, the depiction of an open sky is still mostly avoided. On the great majority of all the propaganda images showing the sky, it is seen above buildings or cities. With rare exceptions, the openness of the sky is visually limited. One common way to achieve this limitation is to place a slogan on the very top of the image. Another way is to frame the sky by placing objects – mostly buildings – along the sides.

PLATE 64
Promotion of sports, framed poster, Shanghai 1999

On the above poster

> Raise the standard of sports and exercises
> inspire the spirit of the Chinese nation
> **提高体育运动水平**
> **振奋中华民族精神**

the sky is framed by yellow flowers on the bottom part of the picture and a corresponding yellow slogan on the top, as well as the small Chinese national flag occupying the top right corner. The slogan almost touches the building so that the sky is divided into two separated fragments and closed up. Its only opening is to the left, the side that propagandistic iconography accords to socialism. Designs like this draw the view to the main motif that is often identified with some kind of national entity or pride, in this case a sport stadium that is nationalized by the Chinese flag.

The method of closing up the open sky is also repeated on the following propaganda poster taken in Shanghai in 1999. Two buildings frame the sides of the image and the slogan covers the top:

> Accelerate the development of Pudong
> stride towards the 21st century
> **加快浦东发展**
> **迈向 21 世纪.**

Following the interpretation of the missing sky provided by Stephanie Donald, this picture suggests that the development and modernity associated with the 21st century take place in

the confined space of China and that there is still no need to look further, into an open horizon.

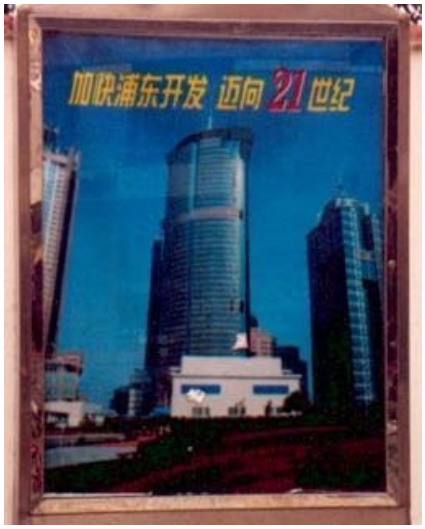

PLATE 65
Development of Pudong, poster, Shanghai 1999

The open sky in commercial advertising

Compared to propaganda images, the sky on advertisements is more open. It offers space and underlines the outstanding position of a product. A lot of advertisements for high-rise buildings, for example, follow the same simple pattern: the tower is placed in front of the open sky with hardly any other buildings next to it, suggesting that the tower is much higher than everything else around it, and that it can be seen from afar. Usually, it is even so high that it often almost touches the upper limits of the picture frame. Although a wide openness is surrounding the building, obviously nothing is allowed to be above it.

PLATE 66
The Panorama real estate, painted billboard, Shanghai 1999

The tower on the advertisement above looks very similar to the one on the propaganda poster discussed above. Not only the name of the office building, "The Panorama,"[169] but

[169]The fact that the name is given in English suggests that the target group of the advertisement is an internationally working business community.

also this way of depiction promises a far-reaching free view from the inside. The picture of the building is framed like a painting or valued photograph. The frame makes the motif on the picture appear more precious and concentrates the view on it. At the same time, the frame constitutes different kind of visual limitation of the sky that is repeated also on other similar-looking posters or billboards.

While high-rise buildings are – suitable to their shape – preferably placed in the upright format, advertisers for villa compounds usually choose the horizontal format. The plates below show examples of advertisements from Qingdao using the sky as an indicator of broad space.

PLATE 67
Villa compounds, painted billboards, Qingdao 1996

The yellow sky on the first image follows the color of the large-character name of the compound "Whole World International City" (环宇国际城) and opens up to both sides. This effect is further emphasized by the line of the buildings' roofs on the right side. The "Garden of Delightful Harmony" (怡和花园) on the second image seems completely surrounded by openness. The colors of sky and sea are mingling without a separating line between. The name of this compound already promises the most elaborate atmosphere, its sound, *Yihe huayuan*, even reminds of the old Imperial Summer Palace in Beijing, the *Yihe yuan* 颐和园. In both cases, the sky is open rather to the sides than to the top that is filled with text. It thus serves to emphasize the spatial living environment that the villas are supposed to offer to their inhabitants.

PLATE 68
New Flight electrical appliances, framed poster, Shanghai 1997–98

Aside from real estate, the sky is also found on advertisements for many other products or brands. The refrigerators on the above advertisement are towering into the sky in a way comparable to the high rise buildings on real estate advertisements. Read from left to right, the view is guided into the open sky on the right side directly to the logo of the refrigerators' brand: New Flight electrical appliances (新飞电器). This logo visually closes the sky, but the idea of a departure into the open sky remains because of the brand name "New Flight," and because the logo shows a stylized bird spreading its wings.

The collected material offers around 30 similar advertisements where products are shown solitary on green land, on a segment of globe,[170] or amid a city. The product thus appears to be big, suggesting greatness and outstanding significance. Similar to the depictions described in the chapter about flying, some products or logos float up in the sky. In these cases, the whole background of the image is covered by sky. Products, logos, or slogans are usually placed in the middle of the image with a vast open space around them.

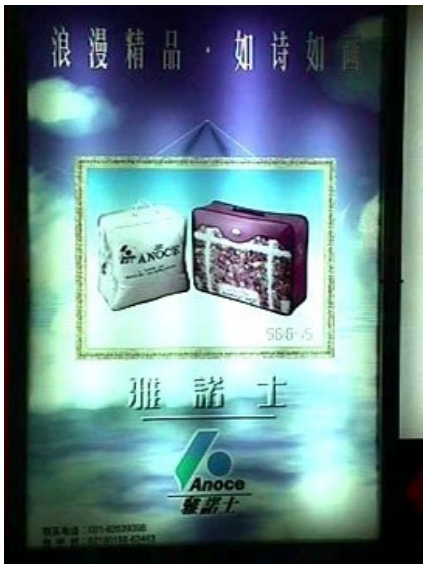

PLATE 69
Anoce bedding products, subway poster, Shanghai 1998

[170]See chapter 4.2.

The bedding products by the Guangdong based company Anoce are "pinned" onto the sky in a picture frame (plate 69).

> A romantic fine article
> like a poem or a painting
> 浪漫精品
> 如诗如画.

Similar to the framed high rise building above, this slogan raises the product to the level of a piece of art. That this "artwork" is presented "hanging" on the sky underlines its outstanding quality.

The sky also covers the background of an advertisement for the Great Wall credit card issued by the Bank of China.[171]

PLATE 70
Great Wall credit card, subway poster, Beijing 1998

Palm trees are reaching into the sky on the left side of the image. A couple is walking hand in hand directly on the lower frame of the picture with no ground to be seen, as if they are walking on the plain sky. The slogan

> With the green card in hand
> you can go everywhere in the Divine Land
> 绿卡在手
> 走遍神州

relates the openness of the sky to the vastness of China that is poetically referred to as the "Divine Land" (神州). The palm trees on the image may refer to Chinese holiday and recreation spots like Hainan Island in the south of China. The credit card gives the power to reach this place. In fact, the Great Wall card is only valid in the People's Republic. Although it becomes increasingly common today for the wealthy in China to enjoy travels abroad, this was less easily possible in the late 1990s, when most overseas travels required participation in official groups and invitations by a foreign host. However, the couple on this advertisement is leaning towards the right frame of the picture, as if being about to leave it in an instant. The young woman is waving goodbye. The posture of the couple

[171] Another advertisement for the Great Wall card has been discussed in chapter 6.1.

suggests that the two are about to leave for maybe even more attractive places in the near future.

Conclusion

In contrast to traditional propaganda posters, the sky takes an important position in propaganda and commercial advertising images from the late 1990s. However, propaganda images still tend to limit the openness of the sky and draw the focus on the depicted representatives of socialist and national achievements. Commercial advertisements seem to allow more openness; they use the sky as the background for their products to present them as outstanding and important. Yet, also in commercial advertisements, the vaster sky is only allowed to be vast enough to create the best possible *mis-en-scene* for the product.

7.2 Families

A small group of eleven photographs, mostly taken in Shanghai and Beijing, shows families consisting of parents and children in different settings, at home or during leisure activities. Only two of these family pictures were found in propaganda messages, the remaining nine appear in commercial advertisements. This number of outdoor advertisements showing families is very low, considering an examination of television advertisements in 2000 that named family values as the second most frequently used value after quality and product effectiveness.[172] This indicates that the topic of the family is a very strong image regardless of its low appearances in one specific media.

Parents and a girl-child: the family on propaganda images

The family did not play a big role in Cultural Revolution propaganda; instead, all kinds of collectives dominated the images. In later propaganda the most important context in which families appeared was the one-child policy that was adopted in 1979. Images showed happy families with one child. This child was usually a girl which was intended to convince people that daughters are equally desirable as sons. On propaganda posters from the late 1990s, this type of core family was still propagated as the sphere of personal happiness.

The topic of the propaganda poster below that was photographed between 1997 and 1998 in Beijing is not the one-child family, but to

> Care for the collective,
> cherish public property,
> be enthusiastic about general welfare,
> protect cultural treasures
> 关心集体
> 爱护公物

[172]Yan Bing Zhang & Jake Harwood, 2004, pp. 165ff.

热心公益
保护文物.

PLATE 71
Promotion of the collective, public property, general welfare and cultural treasures, framed poster, Beijing 1997–1998

Nevertheless, the typical family with a single girl-child plays a major role on the image. The family is shown as the agent in charge of fulfilling the demands of the slogan. Here, the one-child family has become representative of concepts like the collective and general welfare, and as such, agents of caring for public property and cultural treasures.

Parents and sometimes more than one child

Commercial advertisements clearly prefer to depict ideals of the family that are different from the one-child family with a daughter. In all of the examples, the single child is a son; two advertisements even present families with two children, one son and one daughter. Those families are shown in a rather wealthy environment or enjoying often costly leisure activities like a meal at the Pizza Hut or a visit to a sea aquarium. They are preparing a meal in a well furnished kitchen, watch TV sitting on an expensive looking sofa, or appear as the future tenants of a classy apartment. In accordance to these settings, the products being advertised are mainly food, home appliances, amusement facilities or housing.

PLATE 72
Hormel food products, subway poster, Beijing 1998

The above subway poster from Beijing presents a family in a modern kitchen that looks spacious, clean and well-equipped. Mother and son are watching the father who is about to prepare food. Contrary to the propaganda poster discussed above, this family appears in a merely private setting. Unlike the family on the propaganda poster that is shown in charge of social responsibilities, this couple and their son are not represented as social agents.

PLATE 73
Pizza Hut restaurants, subway poster, Shanghai 1998

The same is true for the family on the above subway poster from Shanghai. Parents and two children are shown during a meal in a Pizza Hut restaurant. The father wears a business suit, mother and son are well dressed, the son even wears a bow-tie as if dressed up for some festive occasion. He is shown in the center and takes the most prominent position on the image with the slice of pizza pointing to him, emphasizing his position and "feeding" him. This family is obviously wealthy and follows an international life-style. They can afford to have two children, this means that they are either foreigners or unconcerned by the financial sanctions that families with two children still have to suffer from in the People's Republic.

PLATE 74
Legend computers, subway poster, Beijing 1999

The single child on the above subway poster is a son. He is learning to use a personal computer guided by his father who points at something on the screen whereas the mother is standing behind, watching both of them. The image does not reveal what is on the screen. Yet the fancy picture in the background suggests that the computer opens fantastic worlds where houses are shaped like mushrooms and where children are flying through a sky with heart-shaped balloons and at the same time diving through a sea full of fishes. This fairytale scenery may derive from associations offered by the computer's brand name that the company translates as Legend (联想, literally a mental association).[173] Again, the advertisement shows a private scene. The family is engaged in personal entertainment, not in social responsibilities. By showing a world of imagination, of flying and diving, the image suggests that all opportunities are opened for their son and his future.

Conclusion

Political propaganda presents families as fulfillers of the official population policy or as agents of social responsibility. In commercial advertisements on the other hand, images of the family are indirectly linked to images of wealth. This includes the possibility of having more than one child, good food, nice clothing and a good education. Instead of following the official ideology of the one-child policy that is traditionally visualized by displaying parents and a daughter, advertisers choose to satisfy the desires that the urban public, especially the new middle class, is assumed to have: having a son, or even better, having two children.

7.3 From working people to business people

Some advertisements represent a group of people that had and have no place in propaganda: people in business suits and office workers. In traditional propaganda, hard working, yet happily smiling farmers and industrial workers populated the posters. Service personnel, mainly women, teachers, doctors, and scientists joined in during the 1980s. The material offers 17 commercial advertisements showing office workers and managers identified by their suits, ties or business suits as well as by an office surrounding. The majority of the photographs were taken in Shanghai and Beijing, only one in Qingdao. This suggests that the species of the business man or woman remains largely confined to the big cities.

Young and joyful in business

Most of the business people and office workers on the advertisements are comparatively young. The young man on the two posters below shows by his gestures what would happen to him if he did not use the promoted pager that keeps him informed about everything.

[173] Legend is an extremely successful local brand that in 2001 held over 30% of the mainland Chinese market. See Michael T. Ewing, Julie Napoli, Leyland F. Pitt & Alistair Watts, 2002, p. 199.

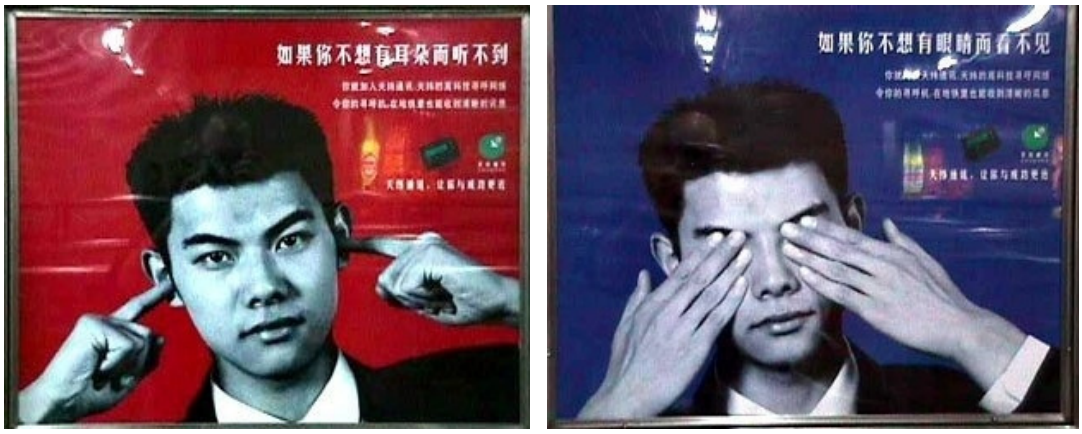

PLATE 75
Pagers, subway posters, Shanghai 1998

The slogans explain:

> If you don't want to have ears that don't hear
> 如果你不想有耳朵而听不到,

and

> If you don't want to have eyes that don't see
> 如果你不想有眼睛而看不见.

It implies that somebody who is not using the promoted pager does not see or hear anything. As his business suit suggests, the information that he should not miss is of entrepreneurial nature.

Those products that are most frequently advertised with images of business people are directly related to doing business like office space and office and communication equipment, but also suitable clothing.

PLATE 76
Guangming milk, subway poster, Beijing 1999

The above advertisement is for a milk drink that can – as the poster suggests – easily be consumed during work in the office to keep fit.

As for most people represented in advertising, the depicted business people are all good-looking. They give the impression of working both effectively and joyfully. Only three of the collected advertisements show people actually at work, and yet, this work does not seem to be dull but communicative and interesting. Many of the pictured business people are on the phone, in meetings and casual talks with others or traveling. The life of the depicted business people appears to be joyful and stress-free.

Gender roles

Of all the business people who appear clearly visible on the images, 38 are men and only seven are women. Besides this great difference in quantity, leading and managerial roles are mostly left to men, whereas the positions of the women either remain rather undefined or suggest an assisting role.

PLATE 77
Nokia mobile phones, subway poster, Shanghai 1998

On the above advertisement for Nokia cell phones taken in Shanghai in 1998, a businessman uses his mobile phone to stay connected to business partners, colleagues and family. The man is positioned in the middle of a kind of crossroads while using his phone. In the four corners, the different situations and people to which he has to stay connected are illustrated. They show the man playing with his child, going for a walk with his wife, discussing or shaking hands with other business people. Holding his phone, he is standing high above the whole situation, obviously in control of everything.

The following advertisement for Casio palm computers features a woman, supposedly a secretary, assistant, or translator, who seems to have stepped out of the translation computer for English. The computer is – so suggests the image – as good as a real translator, who is – in contrast to a real person – always available. Looking up to the computer's user, the woman presents herself as ready for work and subordinate to the user who is represented by a pair of – male – hands holding the device.

PLATE 78
Casio translation computer, subway poster, Shanghai 1998

The general trend in the different depiction of women and men is at least partly confirmed by a study on character images in consumer magazine advertising from 1992. Whereas men were more often portrayed as older and leading managers of the seller's company, women were presented as younger customers or professional models.[174] Among the collected advertisements showing business people, men are also young, yet they take the manager positions whereas women remain in the more supporting roles.

Model workers in business

An interesting exception from the young and good-looking models that represent idealized business people are the 19 managers portrayed on the subway poster below.

PLATE 79
Model enterprises, subway poster, Shanghai 1999

These representatives of model enterprises are all at least middle-aged. Only one of these managers, the last one in the second row, is a woman. Following the socialist tradition of presenting role models, this propaganda poster uses a – socialist – red background and

[174]Nan Zhou & Linming Meng, 1998, p. 111.

shows managers who have been chosen because of their alleged achievements as "model" entrepreneurs. [175]

Conclusion

Success in business life is officially considered an important value and belongs to the ideology of getting rich to add to economic growth of the whole nation. Nevertheless, the representatives of economic success have almost no place in propaganda imagery. However, images of business people help to foster this new ideology on commercial advertisements. There, they mainly support the model of the young male successful business man and the young, good-looking female office worker.

[175]Prizes for model enterprises are handed out by several institutions in China on a local and national level. Unfortunately, the quality of the given photograph does not allow the issuer to be determined.

8. THE INTERACTION OF ADVERTISING AND PROPAGANDA

Political propaganda and commercial advertising share the core concept of economic development and progress that has been part of the official ideology since the beginning of the opening and reform policy. This common goal of the Government and the economy is exemplified by propaganda and advertising images about the urban development and modernization of Shanghai. Shanghai was chosen because only a few streets or living areas remained untouched by the demolition of old buildings and the construction of new ones. Thus, almost everybody living in the city was concerned with the question of urban construction and changes in the cityscape. The development of urban centers as motors of the national economic progress was fostered after the founding of the first Special Economic Zones along the south-eastern coast in 1979. At first, Shanghai remained excluded from the privileges granted to these cities. The city was neglected to such an extent that over 86 percent of its revenue earned between 1950 and 1990 went to the central State coffers to finance other regions.[176] Deng Xiaoping admitted the mistake in his 1992 Southern Campaign Speech and initiated the following rapid development of Shanghai's economy. The modernization of Shanghai as a shared value for the State and the economic world became an important topic in propaganda and advertising alike.
56 billboards and posters among the collected photographs show different parts of Shanghai (26 photographs) or individual buildings in Shanghai (30 photographs) the latter being mostly real estate advertisements. Motifs and styles resemble each other in both types of public messages: the city is represented by its skyline, buildings, highways and bridges.

MAP
Shanghai outer ring road city map

[176] Erich Pilz, 2000, p. 541.

The map shown above gives an overview on the locations in Shanghai that are pictured on the advertisements.[177]

Chapter 8.1 shows how real estate and other products promoted in advertising become part of the modern city or means to participate in modern city life. These advertisements are fully integrated into the framework of propaganda about the achievements of governmental modernization policies. Local propaganda and advertising are following a common goal when promoting the achievements of city development on the district level. This will be exemplified in chapter 8.2 about propaganda and advertising in Shanghai's Changning district.

8.1 Picturing the progress of Shanghai

Since the beginning of the reform policies in 1979, propaganda pictures took a clear urban orientation; cities and industrial buildings became a popular motif.[178]

PLATE 80
Praise of China, poster, 1979

Typical topics on the posters were, for example, utopian displays of a "modernized," science fiction-like environment under the emblem of the communist State like on the above poster

Long live the People's Republic of China
中华人民共和国万岁

from 1979, or role models in front of a skyline of high-rise buildings.

The following poster from 1980 shows a girl in a gesture of reflection, the hand, with a pencil between her fingers, supporting her chin. Emblems like a test-tube and other chemistry equipment depicted in front of her face indicate that her thoughtfulness concerns scientific questions. In the background, the dark silhouette of a modern city proves that the girl is tirelessly working during the night. On the right side, next to the

[177]Map taken from www.caup-train.com/xxfw/1/detail-dzdt.asp, retrieved on October 19, 2007.
[178]Stefan Landsberger, 1994, p. 113.

slogan, a white statue is standing out from the dark blue background. With an upwards-striving gesture, the statue points to the future:

> The future summons us
> 未来在召唤.

PLATE 81
Future achievements, poster, Shanghai 1980

The most important difference between the depictions of cities on earlier propaganda posters and images of Shanghai from the later 1990s lies in their reference to reality. The images are gradually losing their utopian character and their focus on building the future. Instead, they increasingly depict the existing cities. They do so however – as the following examples will show – in a most advantageous light.

Shanghai's representational buildings

Some representational buildings in Shanghai serve as emblems of the city's strive for modernity on propaganda as well as on advertising images. The choice usually lies between the new television tower, the so-called Oriental Pearl Tower, the skyline of the new financial district Lujiazui, the new bridges crossing the Huangpu River, and the old architecture along the Bund. This list already shows that most of the emblems for Shanghai's success are "new," and part of Pudong, the east side of the Huangpu River that used to be underdeveloped until the beginning 1990s. Nearly every building there was destroyed to construct the new financial district and – further from the center – new industrial areas. The television tower was built in 1995; representational skyscrapers – among them one of the tallest buildings in Asia, the *Jin mao dasha* 金茂大厦 – and large bridges followed. They connect this new Pudong to the old parts of Shanghai on the other side of the river. However, these new emblems have not completely replaced the old emblems of Shanghai like the skyline of the river promenade Bund with its Western style buildings. They still stand for the myth of Shanghai in the 1920s and 30s when it was an

international modern enclave. Some advertisements and propaganda billboards even combine the new and old emblems. Among the collected material, ten images displaying these representational buildings transmit propaganda messages, and nine images show commercial advertisements.

PLATE 82
Development of Shanghai, billboard, Shanghai 1997

The above propaganda billboard shows both the Oriental Pearl Tower and the Bund skyline. Whereas the lower part of the image displays what has already been achieved in the building of Shanghai, the wide red sky above the city skyline is covered by a slogan that refers to the future prospects of Shanghai's ongoing development:

> Strive passionately toward accelerating the development of Shanghai into a modernized international socialist economic center!
> 为把上海尽快建成社会主义现代化国际经济中心城市而努力奋斗!

The symbols of old Shanghai, like the colonial buildings on the Bund, did not fit into the self-image of socialist China for a long time. With the policies of opening and reform, these emblems of foreign presence and power in China obviously became acceptable again. Here, the Bund recalls the "high time" of Shanghai as an economic center in the 1920s and 30s, while the Oriental Pearl Tower represents the achievements of socialist modernization.

Commercial advertisements help to strengthen this image of a socialist modernity by adopting pictures of the Oriental Pearl Tower that was established as a symbol of Shanghai's development and economic success by State propaganda. The following hand-painted real estate advertisement, for example, shows a night scene with the promoted building, the so-called *Taiqi* Summit (泰琪峰), in the center, the Bund skyline in the background, the Oriental Pearl Tower – that appears smaller than building itself – and the bridges over the Huangpu River. A logo for the building hangs on the black night sky like the moon. The slogan underlines how outstanding and significant the building ought to be by alluding to a poem by the Song dynasty poet Xin Qiji (1140–1207).

PLATE 83
Taiqi Summit real estate, painted billboard, Shanghai 1999

> Everywhere and for a thousand times, I had been searching for residence.
> All of a sudden, I turned my head and caught sight of *Taiqi* Summit.
> 众里购屋千百度
> 蓦然回首泰琪峰.

The phrase is from the poem *Qing yu an* 青玉案, known as *The Lantern Festival*: The original of the transformed part is about a woman:

> Everywhere and for a thousand times
> I had been searching for her
> all of a sudden I turned my head
> and there she was, within the waning lantern light[179]
> 众里寻他千百度
> 蓦然回首
> 那人却在
> 灯火阑珊处.

The building allegedly offers a view of the major symbols of Shanghai and is likewise presented as a major attraction of Shanghai's development. The chosen view is, by the way, far from reality: the building is not even situated in Pudong.

PLATE 84
Pujiang zuo real estate, billboard, Shanghai 1999

[179] Translation by the author and Irmgard Enzinger.

The real estate promoted on the image above claims to offer a view of the river, the television tower, and the old Shanghai Mansion Hotel built in the early 1930s.

> This financial street commercial and residential building offers a true view on the Huangpu River
> 真正看得见黄浦江的金融街商住公寓楼.

Future owners or tenants of the apartments and office space are promised the privilege of having a view of a clearly identifiable part of the city. The slogan even makes clear that this view is meant to be no empty promise – like it is on the advertisement for the *Taiqi* Summit – but "true" (真正). Yet, the emphasis of the picture is not on any of these specific buildings but on the ensemble of the modern city that is represented by old as well as new emblems of modernity; it insinuates that people desire to take part in this modernity. The poster defines the modern city positively and assumes the need – or wish – of the people to identify with it.

PLATE 85
Alliance Financial Center Mansion, billboard, Shanghai 1999

Another advertisement promotes a new tower by mirroring the image of a clearly distinguishable old building in the glass facade: the former Shanghai Race Club from 1933 that now hosts the Shanghai Art Museum (plate 85). Thus defined, the tower called Alliance Financial Center Mansion (联合金融中心大厦) is centrally located in the middle of Shanghai's major shopping street, Nanjing Lu, opposite the People's Park (人民公园). Although the urban environment on this poster is more lively than usual, the advertisement follows the common design of a shining building that borrows the fame of representational buildings to lift its own importance and distinguish itself from similar estates.

It seems only obvious that most of the commercial advertisements showing buildings and cities offer real estate. But also some other products use the emblems of modern Shanghai, for example the following poster for Peony credit cards (牡丹信用卡) issued by the China Industrial and Commercial Bank (中国工商银行).

PLATE 86
Peony credit card, framed poster, Shanghai 1999

The advertisement features the Oriental Pearl Tower with a bridge in the foreground. The credit-card floats on top of the Pudong skyline next to the television tower, and thus points to the power to purchase a share of the shining modernity that is represented by the skyline. Again, this modernity is presented as positive, and having a share of it as desirable.

The modern appeal of Shanghai's roads and bridges

In the 1990s, one of the biggest problems that Shanghai had to face was traffic. Public transportation was limited to buses and trolley buses, and the streets were encumbered throughout the whole day, not only through peak hours. New streets, highways and bridges as well as the underground were thus seen as a major development task. A second level was added to the ring road as well as to Yan'an Road that crosses the city from east to west. A tunnel and two bridges were built to connect the city to the new Pudong district across the river that was formerly only accessible by ferries. More recently a third bridge has been added to provide a faster connection to Pudong International Airport, and additionally, the Transrapid Maglev Line has been built as the world's first high-speed commercial commuting system connecting the airport with the Longyang Road subway station in Shanghai.

PLATE 87
Yan'an Road highway, light box posters, Shanghai 1998

The above photograph shows light boxes adorning the pillars of Yan'an Road elevated highway. They display a nightly image of the viaduct itself. An ideal aesthetic image of the road thus coexists next to the built reality, as if the attractiveness of the real site is meant to be confirmed by its image.[180]

A similar image shows the nightly lit Nanpu Bridge that spans over Shanghai's Huangpu River since 1991. The poster asks to

> Make Shanghai's road traffic more easy, flowing, driver-friendly and open
> 让上海的道路更畅通.

It belongs to a series of posters with the main topic

> What can I do for Shanghai?[181]
> 我为上海做点什么?

The people who are called to action are not present on the image, although they are asked to serve the attractive appearance of the city as it is represented on the poster.

PLATE 88
Free roads, framed poster, Shanghai 1997

A hand-painted billboard advertises for a company that was in charge of building a part of the Yan'an Road elevated highway in downtown Shanghai. It includes several elements that are commonly associated with propaganda posters. The company name in red characters fills the sky above the highway. It is combined with a kind of slogan and given in Chinese as well as in English:

> Urban Construction Group
> Genggeng Municipal Co. Ltd.
> Hero Team of Bridge Building
> 城建集团
> 耿耿公司
> 造桥英雄队.

[180] See Heike Kraemer, 2000, pp. 560.
[181] Steven W. Lewis chose this motto for the title of his article "'What can I do for Shanghai?' Selling spiritual civilization in China's cities," 2002.

PLATE 89
Genggeng bridge building company, painted billboard, Shanghai 1999

The name "Hero Team" places the advertisement in a context of propaganda where bridges were built by "heroes," the most famous example being the Yangzi River Bridge in Nanjing. This 1.5 kilometers long double-decker bridge was seen as a great revolutionary success. It was finished in 1968 after the engineers from the Soviet Union pulled out in 1960 and allegedly took all the construction plans with them. The "Hero Team of Bridge Building" on this billboard seems to lay the emphasis on the workers that are involved in the construction process, but yet again, none of these "heroes" is depicted.

Comparing to New York City

Not only the illuminated city nights of Shanghai are considered to be beautiful. An advertisement for Steinlager beer shows a surreal cityscape of New York with a bottle of Steinlager taking the place of one of the former Twin Towers.

PLATE 90
Steinlager beer, subway poster, Shanghai 1998

The Chinese brand name *shihao pijiu* 世好啤酒 literally means "world" – "great" – "beer." It may be translated as "world class beer."

World class beer
makes the world applaud
世好啤酒
让世界叫好.[182]

New York also appears on advertisements for Parliament cigarettes and for China Telecom. Its skyline serves as one of the models for the new and modern Shanghai. The city is following the examples of Singapore and Hong Kong that are often called "New York of the East."[183]

The similarity of the shining sky-scrapers in New York and in Shanghai suggests that Shanghai can by now – at least in this respect – compete with its model. Seen from this angle, the Steinlager advertisement implicitly also refers to the modernity of Shanghai as it is depicted on the propaganda images.

Conclusion

In the development of the propagandistic urban image, the increasing absence of people is as noticeable as a shift towards photographic depictions of "real" cityscapes. Whereas the earlier propaganda promised the building of utopian cities and called the people to work for their construction, the propaganda in the late 1990s seemingly tries to convince the people of the beauty and attractiveness of the newly built cities by literally making it appear in the most positive light. If action is called for, it is not the construction of the cities, but their maintenance, cleanness and the civilized behavior of their people. In advertisements, people also appear rarely. Implicitly they reach out for the modern city as its spectators or consumers and thus confirm the modernized city as a desirable goal. As in propaganda, the city is depicted as something to be seen, not to be lived in. The aesthetics of the city does not include its inhabitants. Their contribution to this aesthetics is to remain as invisible as possible, staying in their apartments in a spectator's position. Propaganda and advertising have formed an image of modern Shanghai that integrates both concepts: socialist modernity and the myth of old Shanghai – with the negative sides of both naturally being left out.

8.2 The representation of Shanghai's Changning district

Changning district is located in the west of Shanghai, near the old Hongqiao Airport. In the mid 1990s, it was extensively developed, partly in former rural areas. Among the new quarters are quite a few luxurious living compounds like the Gubei New Area (古北新区)

[182]The Chinese slogan includes a play with the words "world" (世) and "great" (好) that constitute the Chinese brand name: "to applaud" is literally expressed as "to shout 'great'." Literally translated the slogan would thus be "'World-Great'-Beer makes the world shout 'great'."

[183]However, "New York of the East" is not an exclusive "title:" A simple search on the Internet leads to numerous pages about Shanghai, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Singapore, Bombay or Moscow.

that includes exclusive shopping and service facilities, restaurants, cafés, and infrastructure like private and international schools and kindergartens.

PLATE 91
Civilized Changning, billboard, Shanghai 1999

In traditional propaganda, a utopian urban living environment was usually represented by uniform apartment buildings that have long become reality in the Shanghai of the later 1990s. Pictures of these new buildings in the city were found almost everywhere in the streets. They stood for the modernity that had already been achieved and simultaneously called for efforts to adapt one's behavior to this new environment. A typical example for this is the above propaganda billboard issued in 1999 by the Changning district government in Shanghai:

> Create a civilized Huayang neighborhood
> build a civilized Changning district
> 创华阳文明社区
> 建长宁文明城区.

By referring to the city district, even to a single neighborhood inside the district, the billboard offers a small space of identification in the continuously changing and growing city of Shanghai. Again, the members of this neighborhood themselves are not represented on the picture. The buildings seem almost empty – many of them actually might have been empty[184] – and no people are visible on the street in the center of the picture.

In Shanghai, the city districts enjoy a comparatively high administrative autonomy. Each district government fosters the district's own economic and infrastructural development, often in competition with each other, and sometimes even causing difficulties in the implementation of planning for the whole municipality.[185]

In 1999, the Changning district promoted itself with a series of posters lining Hongqiao Lu, one of the district's main streets. The following poster shows a street flanked by an elevated highway, an exhibition venue on the left side and a few tall buildings in the background.

[184]During the late 1990s, new buildings were constructed in incredible speed. Many of them remained empty for a long time. Supply was clearly exceeding demand.
[185]Personal conversation with Professor Wu Jiang, Tongji University, Shanghai.

PLATE 92
Development of Changning, framed poster, Shanghai 1999

It asks to

> Support Hongqiao
> develop Changning
> 依托虹桥
> 发展长宁.

The picture provides another example for an open, yet limited sky on propaganda posters:[186] The building reaches almost to the top of the picture and the red slogan covers the sky. The sky is unusually clouded as if to close up the openness of the sky and concentrate the view on the Changning street. Here, the scope of the limitation is not the Chinese nation, but a single city district. The propagandistic meaning is confined to a locality: Changning may use images standing for openness like the sky and the highway leading out of the picture, but it nevertheless remains the important center of attention.

PLATE 93
Investments in Changning, framed poster, Shanghai 1999

A different poster shows some of the new luxury apartment buildings in the Shanghai Gubei New Area. In its uprising gesture, the statue in front of the buildings resembles the

[186] See chapter 7.1.

one on the propaganda poster from 1980 discussed above (plate 81). The slogan propagates the attractiveness of the district by claiming that

> Soaring Changning
> is a hot ground for investors
> 腾飞的长宁
> 投资的热土.

The statue points to the building behind that represents an object of the investments in the district, but it also points upwards to the future which is interestingly towards the right, not towards the left – socialist – side. The district government presents Changning as economically successful. However, this success is not attributed to mostly state-owned enterprises as in the local industry advertisements described in chapter 4 above, but to private investors who are buying their share of Changning. The district is represented as a successful product.

An interesting counterpart of these posters issued by the Changning district government are advertisements for the investment projects of the New Changning Group, a real estate developer in Shanghai that owns or holds shares of about 80 companies.[187]

PLATE 94
New Changning Group real estate developer, framed poster, Shanghai 1999

One of them shows the enterprise's name, New Changning Group (新长宁集团), with the English translation below and the red sun rising behind a globe. The sky and the earth are both tinted in red. In the lower part of the image, the Changning Group's fields of business are listed: real estate (房产), commerce and trade (商贸), industry (工业), and science and technology (科技); the latter two are also important catchwords of propaganda. The rising sun is as much a part of the imagery of traditional propaganda as the color red. The name of the enterprise reminds of the "new China" (新中国), that is often called for in political propaganda. On the one hand, the New Changning Group makes use of the imagery and language of propaganda to emphasize its own role in the progress of the district, and on the other hand, it evokes the association of an international player by using the image of the globe.[188]

[187] www.multimediapark.com.cn/english.html, retrieved on July 11, 2005.
[188] See chapter 4.2.

PLATE 95
New Changning Group real estate developer, framed poster, Shanghai 1999

Another advertisement for the New Changning Group takes over the traditional imagery of early propaganda images about modernization and urban development. In the center of the image, the previous poster is repeated. Around it, several kinds of buildings are presented, each in an individual frame. The motifs suggest the same ideas about modernity that can be found in the utopian cityscapes on older propaganda posters. Yet, the displayed modernity is not the People's Republic of China, but only those buildings and industrial plants that have been built by the New Changning Group and that are separately framed to emphasize their uniqueness and to exclude their environment.

Conclusion

Both the propaganda posters by the Changning district government, and the advertisements for the New Changning Group are locally confined to the city district. They share the same value, a developed, economically strong and beautiful Changning district. The district government portrays the economic success of the district as a kind of financial product by outlining its attractiveness for investors. The New Changning Group presents itself as a player in the economic achievements of the district. It can be assumed that a great degree of personal connections exist between the responsible governmental and entrepreneurial agents. The advertisements as well as the propaganda posters appear to be very much similar to the advertisements for local industries in Shandong. They are image campaigns for the district rather than advertisements targeting customers among those who walk, ride or drive by. However, contrary to these advertisements, local economic success is not shown as part of national progress, but as confined to a Changning district that competes with other districts of Shanghai.

PART II

BETWEEN "NATIONAL STYLE" AND INTERCULTURAL DESIGN

In the 1980s, theories on "socialist advertising" claimed that advertisements should have a specific "national style." The ideal advertising art was defined as nationalistic, revolutionary, romantic, and up-to-date.[189] It was supposed to combine ancient cultural traditions with modern times (古为今用, "let the old serve the new"), and to take over excellent foreign design as well as display great Chinese traditional art (洋为中用, "let the foreign serve the Chinese"). Japanese design was frequently given as an example for a successful fulfillment of this aspiration: it was said to form a synthesis of traditional Eastern and modern forms.[190] The *Zhongguo guanggao cidian* 中国广告词典 (*Chinese Advertising Dictionary*), published in 1996, still claimed that the "national style" should raise national conscience and pride without being blindly anti-foreign. Instead, it should use the positive qualities of foreign advertising to develop China's advertising business. Chinese advertising was meant to have "Chinese" style and "Chinese" characteristics, and to "take rich nourishment from the long-standing and rich culture of all the nationalities in our country" (从我国各民族悠久丰富的文化中吸取丰富的养料).[191] However, the demands regarding "culturally specific" contents of advertising do not only refer to so-called traditions but also to moral standards. In the entry "targets for cultural art" (文化艺术指标), the *Chinese Advertising Dictionary* requests not only that the depiction should "respect national customs" (尊重民族习惯), but also that the content of advertisements must not be primitive, vulgar and unhealthy (低级庸俗，不健康).[192]

During the 1990s, the interest in more professional and therefore more effective advertising grew and developed into a veritable advertising hype. Bookstores were filled with related theoretical and visual material mostly concerned with the administration of advertising agencies and with modern design. Examples of visual design from all over the world were widely available. Books about creativity became bestsellers. Western literature was introduced, and design examples from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan and Western countries were studied. In the discussions about design principles from Western advertising theories, Yu Hong and Deng Zhengqiang observed two main tendencies: The first was to rigidly follow Western marketing theories, and the second tendency was to to "draw inspiration from the spirit of Western theory and experience and apply it in tune with an artistic creativity based on the conditions in China" (…取西方理论与经验之精神启示而应变于中国情境的艺术化创意).[193]

Marketing debates about localization or globalization were concerned with finding effective local advertising approaches in terms of customer acceptance and sales. Those in China who argued in favor of localization base their opinion on believing that culture and tradition are seen as a common framework of mutual agreement among the people of one

[189]Gudrun Wacker 1991., p. 208.
[190]Ibid., pp. 208f referring for example to Xu Baiyi 徐百益, "Dui kaichuang guanggao xin jumian de ji dian jianyi" 对开创广告新局面的几点建议, in: *Zhongguo guanggao*, 3, 1983, p. 7, and Ding Tongcheng 丁同成, "Guanggao de minzu jingshen he xiandaigan – jiaoxue zhong de yi dian tihui" 广告的民族精神和现代感——教学中的一点体会, in: *Zhongguo guanggao*, 3, 1983, pp. 8 & 13.
[191]Wang Duoming, 1996, p. 32.
[192]Ibid., p. 308.
[193]Yu Hong & Deng Zhengqiang, 2000, p. 97.

nation. They assume that the message or the information given in an advertisement can only, or at least best, be captured when expressed in a familiar and culturally distinctive way. This is said to be especially true in China because of the extraordinary long and stable tradition.[194] Already at the end of the 1980s, it had become fashionable throughout China to draw back to traditional Chinese culture. In the course of this "cultural fever" (文化热), consumer behavior was increasingly treated from the viewpoint of cultural psychology. The "characteristics of the Chinese mind" were widely discussed and defined and Chinese tastes were determined.[195] In a 1995 interview published in the People's Republic, the Taiwanese advertiser Yan Boqing argued in favor of localization. He cited a statement Lu Xun allegedly made about literature: "The more it is Chinese, the more it is global" (越是中国的，就越是世界的), and concluded that all countries and regions should express their special character, because this is the only way to achieve international acclaim. According to Yan, more content in ads should derive from Chinese culture.[196]

The debate on globalization in China started after a Chinese delegation took part at the Cannes International Advertising Festival in 1996. Advertising people in China discussed questions centering around two problems: "how to go the path of nationalization without being trapped in tradition" (如何走"民族化"的道路而又不陷入"传统的困境") and "how to follow modern trends without blindly imitating Western advertising." (如何紧追"现代潮流"而又不陷入"盲目的模仿")[197] The answers were clearly in favor of a globalized approach. First, it was stated that if the decision had to be made between "national" and "modern," the choice should always be "modern." Second, one had to consider that the "national character" and the "psychology of the masses" are in a state of constant change. To achieve modern advertising the actual social situation should be considered.[198]

The following three chapters discuss advertisements in regard to contents and styles that obviously or seemingly belong to either the Chinese or the Western culture. They will show how motifs, values and styles that are associated with a certain culture are often used to define the qualities of specific products. However, in the post-traditional and post-socialist society of China, the frequent hybridization of these cultural associations offers new identities beyond a fixed cultural framework. The advertisements discussed in the following chapters thus mirror cultural transition processes in China and the search for a cultural identity. Some "culturally defined" motifs manifest themselves as decorations next to product images. Examples for this simple form of reference to a certain culture are elaborated in chapter 9. "Culturally defined" values and moral standards are as much a part of official guidelines as of marketing studies about globalization and localization. They are going to be exemplified in chapter 10 that deals with the use of the color red and images of women. Finally, chapter 11 introduces culturally specific design styles like playing with the visual and expressive qualities of Chinese characters.

[194]Ibid., p. 114.
[195]Ibid., pp. 58f.
[196]Lu Taihong, Li Shiding, Chen Junyong & Zhang Bibo, 1995, p. 314.
[197]Yu Hong & Deng Zhengqiang, 2000, p. 157.
[198]Ibid., pp. 155ff.

9. CULTURAL DECORATIONS

During the early and mid 1980s, advertisements usually contained simple depictions of the product with explanations and decorations in the background. The decorations often included so-called traditional Chinese treasures (中华传统之宝), motifs that allude to Chinese history, popular classic novels, or arts and crafts.[199] Yu Hong and Deng Zhengqiang criticized that trend. For them, the popular use of images showing, for example, ancient Chinese emperors, was only apt to satisfy the "people's dreams of emperors or kings" (人们的帝王梦) instead of offering any useful information on the promoted product. They even called these images "cultural trash" (文化垃圾).[200] Their criticism points to a number of problems that they see in these types of advertisements. Besides the lack of "useful information," they doubt the cultural authenticity of the images, especially in relation to the promoted product. Furthermore, they complain about the lacking creativity of designers who do not find other ways of expressing cultural identity in advertisements. And finally, they clearly see an act of manipulation in instrumentalizing appealing cultural images. Yu and Deng argue that after the disillusion from the political ideologies of the Cultural Revolution, the public in the People's Republic of China was open to such attempts. On the one hand, many people turned to an extremely pragmatic lifestyle, but on the other hand they pursued "romantic dreams" (浪漫梦幻) of a romanticized Chinese tradition and – at the same time – of a Western modernity.[201] Yu and Deng do not talk about cultures – Chinese or Western – but about the simultaneous desires for tradition and modern lifestyle. Advertisers borrow cultural motifs to promise the fulfillment of these desires that are claimed to be embodied by the product and characterize its users. The employment of these motifs is not about culture but about the pragmatic goal of enhancing sales.

Decorative motifs drawn from Chinese culture and history were – and are – especially popular in advertisements for Chinese liquors (*baijiu* 白酒). They therefore exemplify this type of advertisement in chapter 9.1. Some "Western" motifs that equally appear as mere decorations, or simply transmit a certain desired ambiance, can be said to represent dreams of leading an elegant life in Rome or Paris or of a modern American lifestyle.[202] Examples for these motifs are discussed in chapter 9.2.

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[199]Ibid., p. 24.

[200]Ibid., p. 120.

[201]Ibid., pp. 97ff. As an example for an advertising agency that worked especially successful by appealing to "romantic dreams," Yu Hong and Deng Zhengqiang name the Guangzhou based White Horse (白马) agency that was established by members of the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts in 1986 and since then served over 300 international and local clients. As White Horse Adshel, a company focusing on outdoor advertising, it now operates in about 29 cities in China and claims to be "the biggest, the best, the most professional outdoor advertising company." See www.whadshel.com/cn/history.htm, retrieved on June 17, 2007.

[202]Yu and Deng seem to be less sensitive to the instrumentalization of Western culture then they are in regard to Chinese culture.

9.1 The Chineseness of hard liquors

Baijiu 白酒,[203] a strong white spirit that is mainly distilled from sorghum or maize, is commonly defined as a Chinese product. In most of the articles published in *Zhongguo guanggao* on advertisements for *baijiu*, its production and consumption is understood as a part of Chinese culture:

> "Our country is a great wine-producing and consuming nation with a long and rich wine culture."
> 我国是一个产酒及消费酒的大国，酒文化丰富悠久。[204]

> "China is the originating place of a wine culture with great varieties and a long history."
> 中国是酒文化的发源地，多彩多姿，源远流长。[205]

> "In the Chinese nation, *Baijiu* is a traditional product that is intimately linked to its consumers from numerous families. At the same time, it is related to the happiness and luck of festivities and holidays…"
> 白酒是中华民族的传统商品，和千家万户的消费者都有密切关系，同时又和喜庆吉祥、节日假日联系在一起，…[206]

Phrases like this explain why the use of cultural and historical motifs may be so close at hand for anyone designing an advertisement for *baijiu*. The Chinese "wine culture" (酒文化) – manifested in historical and literary references to drinking – is adopted for commercial purposes and brand positioning. However, not all of the 19 outdoor advertisements for *baijiu* that were photographed use images of Chinese culture. Most of them simply show the product,[207] and one even uses a cartoon figure that might be reminiscent of Mickey Mouse. However, three photographs serve to exemplify how *baijiu* advertisements draw on different spheres of Chinese culture, philosophy, literature, and art. The great majority of *baijiu* advertisements were found in Shandong where many *baijiu* brands are produced and where the consumption of *baijiu* is strongly cultivated. Only two were taken in Shanghai and one in Beijing.

The following advertisement for the "famous historic wine" (历史名酒) "Zhuangzi Family wine" (庄子家酒) was photographed in 1997 at Shanghai's river promenade Bund. It claims that

> Drinking Zhuangzi Family Wine
> will make your life carefree and easy
> 喝庄子家酒
> 会逍遥人生.

[203]Most of the authors refer to *baijiu* when using the term *jiu*, although this term can also be used for any other kind of alcoholic drink. In the following quotations the single term *jiu* has been translated by "wine" whereas *baijiu* has not been translated.
[204]Gao Yufu, 1999, p. 63.
[205]Ke Zunhong, 1997, p. 14.
[206]Zhang Xiaoguang, 1996, p. 31.
[207]In regard to the much higher frequency in the use of motifs from Chinese culture that is suggested by the mentioned articles from *Zhongguo guanggao*, one might assume that some of them do so in other advertising media or promotion material.

PLATE 96
Zhuangzi Family Wine, painted billboard, Shanghai 1997

The white surface of the billboard is filled by an invented portrait of the philosopher Zhuangzi, ancient-style paintings of horses and carriages, *ruyi* 如意 clouds that stand for the granting of wishes, as well as a picture of *baijiu* bottles and the following text:

> Zhuangzi Family Wine is rooted in the Warring States or Spring and Autumn period. Zhuangzi established a distillery in his old residence in Qiyuan in Mengcheng County. Choosing the sweet springs of a sacred well, he brewed a good wine. Often, he drank this wine to his heart's content, and in his dreams, he transformed himself into a jade butterfly. Now, we adopt these ancient traditional crafts and collect the profound experiences of famous brewers for a fine brewing to realize the unique qualities of Zhuangzi's home.
> 庄子家酒源于春秋战国时期，庄子在蒙城漆园故居建一酒坊。取圣井甘泉酿造美酒，其经常饮此酒至酣，梦而化成玉蝶。现采用古老之传统工艺，并博采酿酒名家之长，精工酿造，实系庄子家乡一绝。

The text not only claims Zhuangzi to be the original brewer of this *baijiu*, but also insinuates that the famous text about his dream of being a butterfly was an actual dream that Zhuangzi had after the consumption of *baijiu*. In this story, commonly known as *Zhuangzhou meng die* 庄周梦蝶, Zhuangzi had a dream about being a butterfly

> "… a butterfly flitting and fluttering around, happy with himself and doing as he pleased. He didn't know he was Chuang Chou [Zhuangzi]. Suddenly he woke up and there he was, solid and unmistakeable Chuang Chou. But he didn't know if he was Chuang Chou who had dreamt he was a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming he was Chuang Chou."[208]

The butterfly in the advertisement is additionally given the attribute "jade" to make it sound more precious. According to this advertisement, the philosopher actually was a talented brewer, and his thinking was engendered by the consumption of *baijiu*. The text combines rather doubtful allusions to history and mythology with references to the quality of the promoted *baijiu*. Most of the given allusions are neither clearly related to each other, nor to the pictures of carriages or *ruyi* clouds. Assembled together, they serve to create a romantic image of Chinese cultural treasures, with the *baijiu* being part of them.

[208]See the second chapter "Discussion on Making All Things Equal" 齐物论 in *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* 庄子著作, translated by Burton Watson, 1968, p. 49.

PLATE 97
Jingyang chunjiu liquor, three-dimensional advertisement, Weifang 1996

Whereas the Zhuangzi Family Wine emphasizes the image of a Chinese spiritual past, the picture on this 10 meters high bottle of Shandong-produced *Jingyang chunjiu* 景阳春酒 points to the physical strength of a heroic figure from Chinese literature: Wusong is beating the tiger (武松打虎). Wusong is a hero from the novel *Water Margin* (水浒传) written around 1350. This novel tells the popular story of a group of rebels from Shandong – most of them devotees of *baijiu* – and their adventures. Until today, men from Shandong often refer to themselves as "real men from Shandong" (山东大汉), therefore, the image of the strong hero Wusong is considered very suitable to decorate the packaging of a product that is made in Shandong. It offers identification for Chinese men who would like to be "real men" by promising Wusong's strength to all those who drink the wine. The advertising sculpture was photographed at a Weifang highway junction in 1996. The brand was quite popular in Weifang, and several of these large sculptures could be found in and around the town. In 1993 *Jingyang chunjiu* won a national award for its "culturally valuable" packaging. As a reporter interviewing the company's CEO, Wang Kezhi, puts it,

> "… Great Spring became an acknowledged model of the association between wine and culture. From the bottle shape to the packaging box, it contains typical Shandong culture, the culture of Chinese legends, the culture of traditional decorations, the culture of ancient writing, and most romantic and colorful literary stories."
> 景阳春成为公认的酒与文化结合的典范。它从瓶型到外包装盒都蕴涵着典型的齐鲁文化、中华传奇文化、传统装饰文化、古文字文化和极具浪漫色彩的文学故事。[209]

Again, manifold cultural allusions – including the idea of a "romantic" story – are used to constitute a product image.

[209] www2.soofan.com/jingying/fangtan/2005-3-13/23491.shtml, retrieved on July 12, 2005.

PLATE 98
Guizhou maotaijiu liquor, framed poster, Taishan 1996

Placed next to a snack shop on top of the famous *Taishan* 泰山, one of China's sacred mountains, this framed poster shows the mountain scenery of *Taishan* in the style of traditional Chinese landscape painting (山水画). A bottle of *maotaijiu* 茅台酒 in the right margin fills the frame of the poster from bottom to top. The *maotaijiu* bottle stands even taller than the pictured mountains. By sharing the same frame, it is linked to the scenery on the image that is at the same time the location of the advertising poster. In addition, the integration of the bottle into a Chinese landscape painting makes it appear as being part of a piece of traditional Chinese art. Visiting the *Taishan*, looking at a landscape painting, and – as the advertisers hope for – the consumption of *maotaijiu* become a combined cultural experience.

Conclusion

The billboards for *baijiu* discussed above use Chinese history, philosophy, literature, or art. By doing so, they stylize *baijiu* as a national product that constitutes a part of Chinese culture itself. This way of employing cultural motifs was severely criticized by Xiang Chaoyang in a 1997 *Zhongguo guanggao* 中国广告 article: "Only too bad," he states, "that the wine of the ancients had neither trademarks nor brands" (只可惜古人的酒没有商标也没有牌子), so that most of the brands "… can only put all their efforts in stretching meanings and forcing analogies" (…只有在生拉硬扯上下功夫了).[210] He adds:

> "China is a nation with a wine culture that dates back a long time. Naturally, the history does not lack many wine drinkers, as well as poems, sayings, and literary quotations on wine. Now, for advertising with its inspiration dried up, 'the past can serve the present' really well."
> 中国是一个酒文化渊源流长的国家，历史上的酒徒、"酒诗"、"酒话"、"酒典故"自然不少，现在正好被江郎才尽的广告"古为今用"。[211]

Xiang Chaoyang ironically refers to the dictum "let the past serve the present" (古为今用) that he obviously sees overused or wrongly used in the case of *baijiu* advertising. Similar to Yu Hong's and Deng Zhengqiang's general criticism of the use of cultural motifs in advertising, he points to the lack of cultural authenticity and to uninspired design. In fact,

[210] Xiang Chaoyang, 1997, p. 30.
[211] Ibid., p. 30.

baijiu advertisements may use motifs from Chinese culture for the purely pragmatic purpose of appealing to customers. They do so by creating a – however artificial – image of Chinese identity that is inseparable from the consumption of *baijiu*.

9.2 Western ambiances

The ideologically motivated idea of a "national style" as an expression of Chinese culture and tradition is directly contradicted by those advertisements that employ motifs associated with the West. Many kinds of advertisements – roughly one third among the collected photographs – allude to the West because they show Western brands, picture Western models, or are obviously simple reproductions of an originally Western advertisement. Many of them picture processes of media internationalization and reflect an adaptation or appropriation of Western modernity. The designers of around 85 advertisements among the collected photographs have chosen to employ motifs that are borrowed from different spheres of Western culture, like classical music and architectural or artistic styles, or figures from American popular culture. These aspects of Western culture easily appeal to "romantic dreams," just like the emblems of Chinese tradition discussed in the previous chapter.

The noblesse of Western arts

Images that are meant to create a Western ambiance were extremely popular in Shanghai during the second half of the 1990s. New expensive residences were, for example, named "Baroque Garden" (巴洛克花园) or "Rome Garden" (罗马花园). Around Shanghai nine new satellite towns were planned and developed, each inspired by architectural styles from a different Western country including France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Russia, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. These new towns are usually planned by foreign architects and claim to offer an elevated quality of living.[212]

Eleven of the photographed advertisements allude to concepts of Western classics. Four of them, taken in Beijing, are concert announcements; the others – taken in Shanghai – advertise real estate, and – one poster – shoes. Judging from the price level of the products, most of the Shanghai posters are directed at social groups with comparatively high incomes who are striving to distinguish themselves from the rather plain life that most of their parents led; they exemplify how images of Western arts are used to create an ambiance of elegance and refined lifestyle.

[212]See for example "Shanghai surprise … a new town in ye olde English style. Jonathan Watts in Songjiang" about the building of an "English style" satellite town in Songjiang near Shanghai. See www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,3604,1229359,00.html, June 2, 2004, retrieved on September 24, 2005.

PLATE 99
Sun City Garden real estate, billboard, Shanghai 1999

At least since the mid 1990s, advertisements for real estate like the one shown above were frequently found in Shanghai, not only on outdoor media, but also in newspapers, magazines, and on flyers. This large billboard was displayed on a Shanghai expressway in 1999. It advertises the residential compound Sun City Garden (太阳都市花园) as being

> The noble residence of outstanding personalities in Great Shanghai
> 大上海高尚豪宅.

This view of the "outdoor scene" (实景) is flanked by two statues in pseudo-classical style with a gate and three pavilion-like buildings in a garden behind them. High rise apartment blocks can be discerned in the far background. The advertisement promises an elegant living environment in a classy neighborhood. Elements of a fantasized Western classic like the statues represent these ambitions.[213]

PLATE 100
Benato shoes, subway poster, Shanghai 1998

[213]The fact that the majority of these statues or pictures show females, often nude, could be an interesting side aspect in the discussion of images of Western women in Chinese advertisements.

The "classical" sculptures in the Sun City Garden mark the residential compound as noble in style and high in quality. The same can be said about three men's shoes pictured in an absurd composition with a violin: the shoes' heels are practically "trampling" on the instrument. The slogan,

> A gentleman's demeanor
> an unmatched spirit
> 绅仕(sic!)风范
> 气宇不凡

is just as absurd in regard to the picture. Similar to the advertisement for Zhuangzi Family wine in the previous chapter, the single components of picture and text constitute a certain image: here, a "gentleman" associated with elegance and his – certainly impeccable – demeanor is combined with an "unmatched spirit" that distinguishes him from the masses. Among the urban upper classes in Shanghai and Beijing it is popular that the children learn to play violin or piano in order to testify not only their financial but also their educational status. The violin thus stands for the elegance and elaborate taste promised to those who choose to buy Benato shoes, and at the same time gives them the romantic touch that is linked to classical European violin music.

European ambiances

Nine advertising images among the photographs refer to European landscapes and cities. They appeal to dreams of elevated living standards that are filled with images of European towns with their beauty and quietness or cities with their cultural ambiance.

PLATE 101
Master lacquer, framed poster, Shanghai 1997–98

The above advertising for Master brand lacquer (大师牌漆), for example, is set in a street of a "European-style" town with a church in the background. This setting obviously stands for the "beautified life" mentioned in the slogan:

> The master in beautifying life
> 美化生活的大师.

In the foreground, a "master" in white working clothes serves as evidence for the quality of the product, whereas the neatness of the houses beside him shows the desired results of the painting work. The image can be understood in the context of the new satellite towns around Shanghai that are built following concepts of European architecture and planning. Buying a condominium in these places is comparatively expensive, and living there is appraised as a privilege for those who can afford to leave the high-density living in the center of Shanghai behind. Although the advertisement works with an artificial romantic image of living in a small town in Europe, it also focuses on product quality testified by the alleged Western provenience of the product.

PLATE 102
Chantefleur wine, framed poster, Shanghai 1997

The above poster for French Chantefleur wine equally plays on the European origin of the product as a proof of its quality: the advertisement explicitly states that the wine is a "factory packed import from France" (原装法国进口). Two bottles of wine are placed on one side of the image leaving the rest of the space for scenery that obviously ought to represent the elegant style and romantic ambiance of the product's country of origin. The framed logo with the wine's name hangs above this scenery as if "Chantefleur" designated not only the wine, but also the hill and the castle below. Between the castle and the wine bottles, the poster leaves enough space to be filled with the "romantic dreams" of the consumers.

The goal of the following advertisement for potato chips is to transmit the chic ambiance of Paris, although the product has no connection whatsoever to France, Paris, or the Eiffel Tower. The background is filled by a color reminiscent of the potato chips that are shown on the packaging. It is decorated with yellow paint strokes that might be meant as an allusion to the stereotype of Paris as the city of artists. This advertisement was photographed in Shanghai. A growing number of people there now have the possibility of traveling to Europe as a part of their newly acquired living standard. Those who don't may attempt to satisfy the dreams of visiting exotic places by purchasing the snack.

PLATE 103
Lay's potato chips, subway poster, Shanghai 1998

Eight photographs show advertisements with Western interior decorations like chimneys and candlesticks, wine glasses or coffee cups. Similar to the castle or the European town, these accessories carry a broad spectrum of meanings: an expensive and therefore elaborate, prestigious and international lifestyle, access to Western modernity and often also ideas of romance in an exotic setting.

American popular culture

Advertisers in China often choose images from Western popular and folk culture to fashionably decorate products or sales announcements. Numerous cartoon figures, for example, have found their way into printed as well as hand-painted advertisements and shop signs for all kinds of products. They are found on thirteen advertisements of the collected material, with Mickey Mouse being the most popular one appearing on six of them. Other figures are Batman, Bob Dog, Winnie the Pooh, Snoopy or characters from Sesame Street. They are used to advertise for such diverse products as restaurants, a film studio, a mail service, or ice cream, and they are found as often in Shanghai and Beijing as in Shandong.

PLATE 104
Tongda restaurant, hand-painted signboard, Weihai 1996

The above photograph of a signboard of a certain *Tongda* 通达 restaurant was taken along a small highway near Weihai, Shandong, in 1996. On the sides, the Walt Disney characters Mickey Mouse and Scrooge McDuck are pointing to the dishes on the central piece of the shop sign. The *Tongda* restaurant is neither Western, nor fancy, nor for children. The American cartoon figures thus merely appear as fashion icons that are completely detached from their Western origin and from their context of children's entertainment. Instead, they rather give an allusion of Western modernity, creating the impression of *Tongda* restaurant being a place that offers Chinese food served with Western standards, including for example a quiet and clean atmosphere. The *Tongda* restaurant thus attempts to distinguish itself from the ordinary roadside restaurant.

PLATE 105
Sales announcement, banner, Shanghai 1997–98

Although the Christmas season does not play a big role in China's everyday life, Santa Claus, who appears on eight of the collected photographs, is another fashionable emblem of Western culture that is especially popular in promoting sales events. Mainly in cities with many foreigners like Shanghai and Beijing, Christmas decorations can be seen at many places, often not only during Christmas season. On the example shown above, Santa Claus invites customers to the sales in a department store promising "Up to 70% off" (3 折起). Santa Claus functions as a representative of a Western lifestyle. His image underlines the international ambiance that Shanghai is identified with. It is much less related to any cultural or religious meaning than to the idea of buying presents. Through the image of Santa Claus, shopping for presents, or even shopping in general, is suggested to be a modern experience in a cosmopolitan city.

Conclusion

Whereas the motifs from Chinese history and tradition employed in *baijiu* advertisements evoke an image of Chinese identity, motifs associated with Western culture point to certain desired qualities or values like elegance, modern lifestyles, prestige, or – generally – elevated standards. Images of Europe and European style are frequently used to

distinguish a social elite; fashionable consumption on the other hand is often related to American folk culture and popular culture. The focus of these advertisements lies on elite values, on "romantic dreams," or on popular concepts of a fashionable and interesting lifestyle. The elements of Western culture are a means to express these desires that are themselves submitted to fashion.

10. CULTURAL VALUES

Both the Chinese and the Western literature on management and marketing often includes discussions about the importance of adapting to local customs and so-called "traditional values" to gain greater consumer acceptance. Studies exploring the predominance of certain values in advertising usually examine a large number of advertisements to identify general tendencies and their concordance with prefabricated lists of cultural values. The values that these studies ascribe to Chinese culture include health, convenience, or safety, as well as collectivism or respect for the elderly.[214] However, these "culturally specific" values mostly remain either vague or stereotyped, or their description is limited to anecdotes about cultural misunderstandings and mistakes.

Similar to decorative motifs that are meant to represent Chinese tradition, art, or history, the transmission of "Chinese cultural values" in advertising messages is ideologically backed by concepts of a "national style" in advertising. Due to the circumstance that the Communist Party's traditional ideology could no longer satisfy the Party's need to protect its absolute authority, the so-called Socialist Spiritual Civilization campaign promoted "traditional Chinese" values including social morality and family ethics as well as public order and professional ethics.[215] It constitutes an important background for the production of media content in the People's Republic of China.[216]

In the following, two groups of photographs will be examined that both prominently mirror what the marketing literature defines as traditional or cultural values in advertising, as well as the transition processes they are undergoing: Chapter 10.1 examines differing meanings of the color red. The frequent employment of red in propaganda and commercial advertisements is motivated by a whole variety of meanings that might, for example, be associated with socialism, Chinese or Western culture, or a combination of both. Subsequently, chapter 10.2 focuses on the cultural meanings implied in the depictions of Chinese and Western women.

10.1 Shades of red

Red is certainly the most frequently used color in Chinese propaganda and advertising: almost 40% of all the images on the collected photographs use red as the main eye catcher. Red is claimed to be the warm color par excellence, reminding of fire and the sun as the sources of warmth and heat. Additionally, through "complicated ideological, emotional and all sorts of life experiences" (复杂的思想感情和各种生活的经验), red is also associated

[214] See for example Kara Chan, 1999 and Cheng Hong, 1994.
[215] The Socialist Spiritual Civilization campaign was issued in October 1996 on the sixth plenum of the Fourteenth Central Committee.
[216] Feng Chen, 1998, pp. 33f & 37.

with enthusiasm (热情), happy events (喜庆), or revolution (革命).[217] While some of the emotions associated to the color red might belong to general psychology, others are culturally or – as in the case of socialism – politically determined. The meaning of the color red can thus almost solely be defined by the context in which it is employed.

Socialist red

The political slogan is one of the most important and frequent contexts in which the color red is employed in Chinese outdoor messages.

PLATE 106
Socialist spiritual civilization, billboard, Shanghai 1997–98

The above photograph, for example, shows a billboard attached to the pillars of the Yan'an Road highway in Shanghai.[218] It propagates to

> Strengthen the building of socialist spiritual civilization
> 加强社会主义精神文明建设.

White characters on a red background or vice versa were and are still one of the standard formats for propaganda messages of all kind, no matter whether they are hand-made – sometimes even looking improvised – or professionally printed.

PLATE 107
Fight against crime, text banner, Beijing 1997–98

[217] Ding Yunpeng, 1987, pp. 153ff.
[218] See also plates 31 and 87.

Whereas most of the slogans are written on billboards or posters, the cloth banner is also a common media, often for slogans relating to short-term events. The example above asks to

> Severely strike against criminal offenders and ensure safety
> 严厉打击刑事犯罪确保一方平安.

This format had been used throughout the history of the People's Republic of China and extensively during the years of the Cultural Revolution.

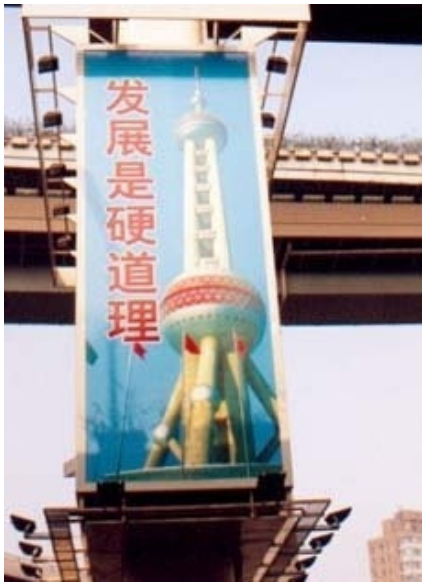

PLATE 108
Development, billboard, Shanghai, Yan'an Lu, 1999

Yet red slogans do not only appear separately, but also on images illustrating the slogan's content. On some of them the color red is a significant element of the image design. This large illuminated billboard uses one of the most well-known slogans by Deng Xiaoping,

> Development is a hard principle
> 发展是硬道理.

The same slogan is also frequently seen in the simple red-white version. Here, it is illustrated by an important symbol of this development, the Oriental Pearl Tower built in 1995. Red flags in front of the tower make it clear that the socialist system has to be thanked for this development. The red is also picked up in the tower's window colors. This underlines the association to socialism although the principle of truthfulness is not held in honor here, because the actual color of these windows is dark violet. The message of development and progress is in this case additionally stressed through the position of the billboard under the Yan'an Road highway, which is itself a symbol of development in Shanghai.

Red advertising slogans

The cultural and business world uses text banners – often for opening events or special offers – that are very similar to propaganda banners.

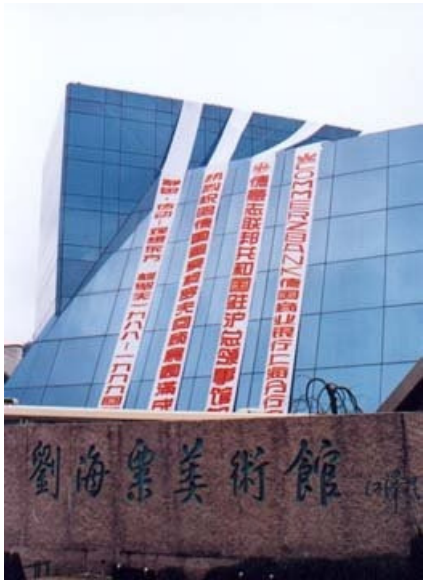

PLATE 109
Commerzbank exhibition sponsoring, text banners, Shanghai 1999

In 1999, the German Commerzbank and the German Consulate sponsored an exhibition in the Shanghai Liu Haisu Museum showing a collection of works by German artist Rolf A. Kluenter (柯罗夫), who lives in Shanghai. The banners that were hung up outside the museum hardly bear any visual difference to the socialist propaganda type of banners. The German name of the bank and a logo (first banner on the right) and the German national eagle, the *Bundesadler* (second banner on the right) are adapted to the size and appearance of the Chinese text below.

PLATE 110
Galanz home appliances, billboard, Shanghai 1999

Also, the above advertisement by Galanz, a home appliances manufacturer from Guangdong, is only marginally distinguishable from the propaganda slogan on the neighboring pillar of the Yan'an Road highway in Shanghai. Only the company's logo on top of the slogan,

> Which ranking among China's trademarks?
> 中国第几品牌？

identifies it as a commercial advertisement. This slogan not only refers to Galanz, but also points to the importance of Chinese trademarks as such. In this national cause, a certain vicinity to a propaganda slogan seems only natural.

PLATE 111
Advertising text banners,
Shanghai 1997–98

As the above examples for advertising banners show, the allusion to the traditional propaganda media "text banner" is frequently cut off by a more vivid arrangement of the characters on the banner or an additional logo. Although other colors like blue or yellow are popular for these purposes, red is quite common because it is seen as the color that is most suitable to incite attention.

Mixed meanings of red

The fact that red is the color of socialism does not imply that propagandistic posters do not use the color red with additional connotations.

PLATE 112
Health promotion, framed poster,
Beijing 1997–98

Change prevailing habits and customs
live healthy
plan the family
strengthen your physics

移风易俗
健康生活
计划生育
增强体魄.

A framed poster with this slogan shows silhouettes of four – seemingly barely dressed – women who are enthusiastically jumping around in a landscape tinted in the red light of sunrise. The warm red on the image stands for vitality and health, whereas the red background of the slogan below identifies the poster as socialist propaganda.

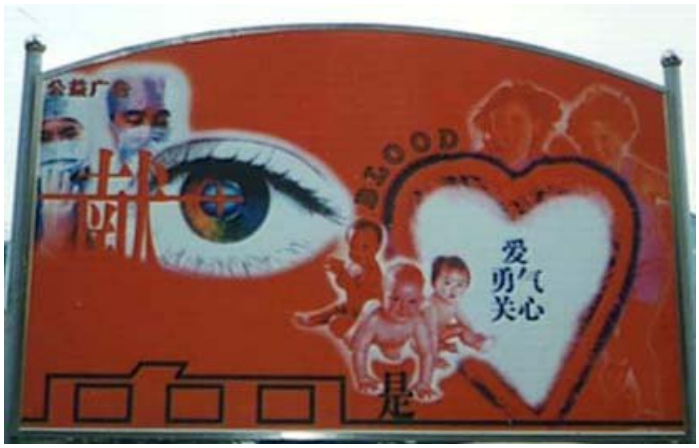

PLATE 113
Call for blood donation, billboard, Beijing 1997

The above billboard photographed in Beijing promotes blood donations with the slogan

Blood donation is love, courage and caring
献血是爱、勇气、关心.

The designers have chosen red as the color of blood that is also associated with life and health. The layout of this billboard is rather complicated. It contains several images, Chinese and English text as well as six different typographical styles. Unlike the previous image, it does not point to socialism by any visual sign. Four small characters in the upper left corner define it as social marketing (公益广告). It belongs to a new type of propaganda message that clearly distances itself from the imagery of political propaganda.

The propaganda message

Pick out the rotten apples
把烂苹果挑出来

on the following poster stands for the fight against corruption inside the Communist Party.[219] The framed poster that was photographed in Shanghai uses a rather original design idea including the color red: three rows of red apples all looking alike cover the left half of the poster, one firmly next to the other. On the right side, a single apple with a worm has been "picked out." The left side belongs to socialism, whereas the right side is associated with the so-called "rightists" who have turned their back to socialist ideals and principles. The red apples thus come to signify the closed rows of the upright socialist cadres. The composition of the image leaves it unclear where this rotten apple was pulled out from: there is no empty space among the others. This implies that the rows of upright

[219] www.ruf.rice.edu/~tnchina/polads/polpub.html, retrieved on August 21, 2005.

socialist cadres are still closed. Like the blood donation billboard above, this poster bears no visual resemblance to the familiar propaganda imagery. However, the red apples offer a "new design" for socialist red.

PLATE 114
Anti-corruption, framed poster, Shanghai 1997–98

"Chinese" red

In China, the association of red with socialism never eliminated the notion of red as the traditional Chinese color of luck. On the contrary, the positive emotions evoked by the color red certainly helped the early communists to establish an advantageous image of their Party. Because of red signifying luck and success, mostly in the field of finance, quite a few Chinese businesses have chosen this color for their visual identity. As pointed out before, red is for example used in the logos of many banks like the Bank of China or the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China.[220]

The following photograph provides a typical example for the notion of red as the color of financial success.

PLATE 115
Qingdao High Tech Park advertising agency, painted billboard, Qingdao 1996

[220]See chapter 6.2.

The "advertising industry" (广告实业) of a "Qingdao High Tech Park" (青岛高科园) promotes its business with the slogan

> We open up the road of success for you!
> 为您拓展成功之路！

The promised success is visualized by two simple means: the color red and the typography of the slogan that draws "the road to success" in an upward striving line. At the same time, the red on this billboard is also a strong attention catcher. Similarly, red was also used for the China Welfare Lottery, for the Great Wall credit card and for announcements of real estate for sale.

Success with Western accessories

The color red is especially popular in advertisements for office equipment or other tools that signify success in the world of business, either as status objects like pagers and mobile phones or as office equipment like photocopying machines and computers. In the more private domain of the family, an important factor of luck is the success of the family's children, or, most frequently, of the single child that carries all the parents' hope.

PLATE 116
Heinz baby food, subway poster, Beijing 1998

On the above poster, the American food company Heinz promotes baby food on a red background. A baby's head on the left visualizes the fulfillment of the parents' dream with an academic graduation hat. However, the focus lies on a "Super Baby" "breaking through" the image's surface. The academic success of sons, an important topic in Chinese concepts of luck, stands next to the image of the baby as the American cartoon and movie hero Superman who is not famous for his academic achievements but for supernatural physical strength. The color red is at first an attention catcher, but in the context of a nutrition product, it also stands for vitality and health. At the same time it is also the color of the Heinz logo and corporate identity. The red background thus carries a variety of meanings and evokes different associations that support the positive image of Heinz products.

A similar example is provided by Jing Wang who describes a television advertisement for Coca Cola that was broadcast in Harbin at the end of the 1990s:

> "… it offers a *mis-en-scene* of North China, complete with a soundtrack of festive Chinese music. We witness small children donned in Chinese cotton jackets running around in a rich sea of Chinese red – red sails at a harbour and red windmills blowing in the north wind in a remote rural village where peasants, old and young, are cheerfully greeting what seems like the new year's fresh snow. And of course, a Coke bottle coloured in the subtle shade of Chinese red emerges in the final shot to solve, light-heartedly, the mild suspense created by the seemingly purposeless assemblage of random shots and images." [221]

Although the "communication strategy and creative execution" of this commercial was seemingly localized, it was in fact determined by the corporate identity and "brand personality" of Coca-Cola. Wang concludes that the alleged localization of Coca-Cola is rather part of the corporation's image creation than an actual promotion of cultural specificities.[222]

"Western" red

Compared to the frequent use of red in connection with success and financial well-being, the appearance of red as a signifier of passion, desire, and love is rare. This interpretation that is more related to Western culture can be found on fourteen advertisements.

PLATE 117
3M diversified technology company, framed poster, Shanghai 1997–98

The color red is used in an explicitly erotic context on an advertisement for the diversified technology company 3M. The poster displays the exposed legs of a woman in red high-heels and a red skirt that is somehow being blown up, vaguely reminiscent of the famous scene with Marilyn Monroe in *The Seven Year Itch* from 1955. Ten other posters and billboards show images of reclining women in red dresses, women in red underwear,

[221] Jing Wang, 2003, pp. 251.
[222] Ibid., pp. 251f.

women with red lipstick worn on a seducing half-open mouth, or a barely dressed woman standing behind a red motorbike.

Luck and romance

The intermingling of culturally diverse concepts of red is especially obvious on two advertisements photographed in Shandong. Red is the traditional color in China for dresses worn at festive occasions like the Spring Festival or marriages. Both of the following advertisements mix this concept with Western styles.

PLATE 118
Golden World photo studio, framed poster, Weifang 1996

The photo studio Golden World (金天地) is advertising its "artistic" (艺术) pictures. The dress of this young woman on a bridal photograph constitutes a mixture of Chinese and Western style. As usual for a Chinese wedding dress, it is red, yet its style resembles a romantic Western evening dress, including the concept of red as the color of romance.

PLATE 119
Wedding City shop, billboard, Weifang 1996

On the above billboard for a shop called Wedding City (婚庆城) in Weifang, red appears as the background color. Like the Golden World photo studio, the image transmits the Chinese as well as the Western idea of red. It is the color that is usually chosen for marriages, but, because the bride wears a Western style white wedding dress, it is also related to the notion of a romantic marriage.

Conclusion

Text banners with red slogans have long been used in China as an attention catching form of advertising. Although it is not a socialist invention to advertise with red banners or red slogans, this form of publicity has long been dominated by socialist propaganda. However, propaganda messages no longer use the color red only as a signal for socialism. Instead, apart from "socialist red," they also allow other connotations of red like vitality and health, or even concentrate only on these other meanings to dissociate the message from the political context. However, one poster reinterpreted the red of apples so that it came to signify socialism.

"Chinese" and "Western" interpretations of red belong to considerably different spheres. Whereas the "Western" meanings are often related to the field of emotions and desires, the Chinese meaning frequently refers to the area of material well-being and success. However, in many advertisements the meanings of the color red cannot be confined to a single interpretative framework. Meanings ascribed to specific cultural contexts may be mixed and a certain cultural meaning of red may be combined with the notion of red as an attention catcher or as belonging to the corporate identity of an individual product. Advertisements combine, for example, the "Chinese" red of success with Western motifs like on the advertisement for Heinz baby food, or they open the "Chinese" meaning of luck towards a "Western" interpretation of romance in marriage pictures. These kinds of mixtures offer identifications for the viewers that are no longer confined to a single cultural framework.

10.2 Women as carriers of cultural values

No study about advertising motifs would be complete without considering the omnipresent images of women. Among the collected photographs 109 images display women and couples, and sometimes only female body parts. 81 of them were photographed in Shanghai, 22 in Beijing and seven in Shandong Province. Women in advertising are a very complex issue and subject of individual and comprehensive studies. Perry Johansson has analyzed advertisements from Chinese women's magazines published between 1985 and 1995. By comparing his findings with the following analyses of advertisements it will be shown how ideas of culturally defined roles of Chinese and Western women are changing, and become increasingly mingled.

Johansson states that the "post-Mao Chinese woman has paradoxically been conceptualized as both a traditional housewife and as a pleasure-seeking hedonist exploiting her youth and good looks,"[223] but also that the prevalent ideal for females since the 1980s was defined as "oriental" (东方) or distinctly "Chinese." The beauty and good qualities ascribed to this concept of the ideal Chinese women – gentleness and a capacity for deep love – were taken from Confucian tradition. They include for example, being a devoted and attentive wife and mother.[224] The "individualistic, careless and hedonistic Western woman"[225] is the counterpart of this stereotype. In describing how Western women are portrayed in Chinese advertisements between 1985 and 1995, Johansson summarized the following differences to Chinese women: Chinese women were generally shown as more shy, inclining their heads to the side or forwards and smiling without showing their teeth. They were depicted as subordinate, often reclining or lying down, or even taking childish postures. Western women on the contrary were presented as strong, healthy, passionate and sexy. Their posture is usually not subordinate, instead they stand firmly, hold the head high and the chin up, and they are not lying down. They look straight into the camera and show their teeth when laughing.[226]

This chapter examines if and to what extends these typical depictions of Asian and Western women and the related values are still prevalent in advertisements, and what kind of hybrids can be found.

Four women for Audrey underwear

In comparing two advertisements for Audrey underwear, one might at least partly find a reproduction of the stereotypes regarding China and the West. The above advertisement for Audrey lingerie, photographed in 1998, shows two very similar-looking Asian women, one wearing red, the other blue underwear, both standing in water with their legs crossed. Female nudity is among the most suspect advertising motifs in the eyes of socialist officials. Images of barely dressed women in sexy poses are seen as an unhealthy means to strive for more profits. They are interpreted as a sign of Western decadence and carefully controlled. Already in 1985, the president of the then newly-founded China International Advertising Corporation (中国国际广告公司), one of the largest advertising companies in China, expressed the Government's and the Party's need to control advertising contents especially referring to erotic images: "We are very careful what influence ads have on society."[227] Nevertheless, in 1992, Chinese authorities allowed images of women in bikinis and bathing suits to be published.[228] In advertising, such images were mainly tolerated if the bikini – or underwear – itself was the product. It seemed only logical that these products were presented by women wearing or using them. Another excuse that has

[223]Perry Johansson, 1998, p. 54.
[224]Whether or not this characterization is in fact limited to China shall not be treated here.
[225]Perry Johansson, 1998, pp. 62f.
[226]Ibid., pp. 141–154.
[227]Suk-ching Ho & Yat-ming Sin, 1986, p. 312, quoted from an article in the *South China Morning Post* from November 28, 1985, "Business news: Sex appeal a turn-off in ad industry."
[228]Perry Johansson, 1998, p. 150.

frequently been offered for the depiction of barely dressed women is art. In a collection of advertisements from all over the world, published in 1995, the editor states that "advertisements with a sense of beauty or erotic" (美感或性感广告) are those displaying the beauty of women. The author nevertheless acknowledges that these advertisements have to obey the laws and respect local customs.[229]

PLATE 120
Audrey underwear, subway poster, Shanghai 1998

The two women on the poster above stand close to each other, yet they are not communicating. Both smile at the spectators. One may think of the women as figures from the fairy island of Penglai instead of real women. Beautiful women standing in water are a popular motif, just like cosmetic products presented in connection with water. This corresponds to the traditional correlation of water with yin, the female energy, and to the association of water with emotions and eroticism. The crossed legs and slightly inclined heads convene with Johansson's observations that Chinese women are generally depicted in rather shy postures. However, these women look straight into the camera and show their teeth. Thus, the characteristics are no longer as rigidly determined as observed by Johansson for earlier advertisements.

The following poster from 1999 offers a quite different setting. Two Caucasian women, both wearing nothing but white underwear, are meeting in an undefined public space that could be a train station, an airport or an exhibition space. The scene shows an encounter of two women who seem to be displeased to find that they are wearing the same dress. In contrast to the above image, competition – often described as a Western characteristic – comes into play. At the same time, the women appear more independent because they are interacting; neither of them is looking at the spectator, they seem to be concerned only with each other.

Both scenes are unreal. Whereas the Asian women seem like fairy figures that might disappear just like they appeared, the Western women are self confident in their postures, but also exposed. Their nudity is publicly available. It is interesting to note that, although

[229]Zhao Bing (ed.), 1995, p. 193.

they advertise for the same brand and product, even in the same city, the posters are strikingly different from each other.

PLATE 121
Audrey underwear, subway poster, Shanghai 1999

Strong Western women

The computer montage picture of this advertisement for Lycra clothes shows a young blond woman rope-pulling against a whole team of men. She is the only one pictured in color whereas the men seem to stem from an old black and white photograph, dressed in old-fashioned sport clothes.

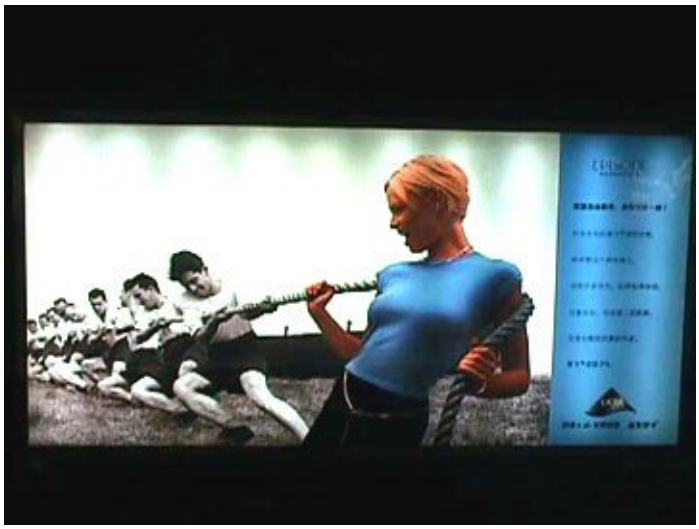

PLATE 122
Lycra clothes, subway poster, Shanghai 1998

The woman is obviously stronger than the all the men together. Wearing modern clothes, she is characterized as modern compared to the men. The advertisement is part of a series that confirms Johansson's observation of the strong and healthy Western woman: on each of the four posters a strong women dominates male athletes in a different way. A woman wearing nothing but underwear runs much faster than her male opponents. One woman has turned two wrestlers into a veritable knot, and another woman is water-skiing on two swimming men.

Gentle Western women

The following billboard is an example that shows how Western women might lose their strong and independent demeanor. While Johansson concluded for the years 1985 to 1995 that Caucasian women were not shown in reclining, subordinate postures, this blond woman on a 1997 advertisement is shown lying on a mattress, smiling and looking at the spectator.

PLATE 123
Tiffany mattresses, painted billboard, Shanghai 1997

The ornament around the brand name Tiffany (蒂芬妮) follows the form of her hips. The name Tiffany – associated with the famous jewels – and the ornament suggest that she is very precious.[230] A complex set of meanings is implied in the fact that she is Caucasian. A Western woman's opinion about the comfort of a mattress might be considered a most valuable testimony. However, the fact that this Westerner is a half-dressed woman also carries a less flattering meaning: her availability for the male – and Chinese – spectator and consumer. On this billboard, the Western woman appears like a valuable and prestigious possession. Her gesture implies that she is definitely more an object for the male consumer than a subject testifying for the quality of the mattress.

Asian women with Western accessories

The first thing that defines a woman as Chinese – or at least as oriental – is her outer appearance. In some cases it might also be her dress. However, Megan Ferry points out an increasing "… lack of signifiers that readily identify a woman in the media as Chinese."[231] Although a number of differing cultural values like family values on the one hand and eroticism on the other hand are ascribed to women, they generally appear as "universal modern females."[232]

The following examples show advertisements that depict Chinese, or Asian, women with at least partly Western physical features or in contexts that allude to Western culture.

[230]The jewelry store Tiffany & Co is assumed to be known by brand conscious people in Shanghai. Tiffany & Co also has a store in Shanghai that does not use a Chinese company name. See www.tiffany.cn, retreived on July 4, 2006.
[231]Megan M. Ferry, 2003, p. 283.
[232]Ibid., p. 283.

PLATE 124
Three Rifles underwear, framed poster, Shanghai 1997–98

In the advertisement for Three Rifles underwear (三枪内衣) two women are sitting together in a tender, almost romantic ambiance. They are both wearing long-sleeved and long-legged winter underwear, what makes the situation even more intimate. The setting of their tender encounter is completely artificial and unreal. One of the women is reclining on a bench that looks like a fallen pillar. In the background, a kind of statue – possible of a bearded Chinese sage – is discernible in diffuse light. The intimate dress leads to believe that it must be a private garden where two friends are spending a few moments together. Here, the gentleness ascribed to Asian women is combined with the allusion to elegance and a culturally refined lifestyle that is transmitted by pieces of Western antiquity on the one hand and diffuse allusions to Chinese tradition on the other hand.[233]

PLATE 125
Ciba Vision contact lenses, subway poster, Beijing 1999

The idea of the gentle woman is promoted even literally in this advertisement for American Ciba Vision contact lenses with the slogan

> Make women gentler
> 让女人更善变.

[233]See chapter 9.2 for a discussion of the meanings associated to images of Western antiquity.

A "gentle" look that generally belongs to the qualities assigned to Asian and especially to Chinese women is presented as desirable. However, although the women on this poster are Asian, their features do more resemble Western concepts of beauty: the women have wide-set eyes and comparatively large lips. A concept for women that is considered Chinese is mixed with features of Western beauty – the lenses are colored in shades of blue and green.

PLATE 126
Za cosmetics, subway poster, Shanghai 1998

The woman on the above poster for Za cosmetics is reminiscent of a type of woman that emerged during the 1930s, the so-called New Woman (新女性). She was, as described by Megan M. Ferry, "… the modern ideal of an emancipated woman who had a public life, an education, was self-supporting, and surrounded herself with modern (Western) accoutrements such as cosmetics, new technology, frequented dance halls and coffee houses …."[234] Although her features are Chinese and the dress she wears loosely resembles a traditional Chinese *qipao* 旗袍, she is eating a Western dish in a surrounding that is bare of anything that could signify being Chinese. Even the slogan is only given in English: "Change. Make Change."

The beauty of Chinese women in advertisements is sometimes criticized as not actually fitting local Chinese concepts of feminine beauty, but instead being shaped by Western standards. The most common example is the actress Gong Li, who was chosen as the Chinese face for the cosmetic company L'Oréal, which was often called a wrong choice because her looks were said to appeal more to Western than to Chinese spectators.[235]

[234]Megan M. Ferry, 2003, p. 280.

[235]See for example: "8 Things You Didn't Know About Chinese Consumers," 2000, p.46. Harriet Evans gives a different interpretation: Chinese beauties whose images are also exported symbolize "… China's economic success on the international stage, China's dominant position in the rise of the Asian economies, and by extension China's emergent status as a great Asian-Pacific power." Harriet Evans, 2000, p. 236.

Conclusion

Perry Johansson observed clear differences in the depiction of Asian and Western women in Chinese advertisements published between 1985 and 1995. While Chinese women were shown as gentle and more submissive, Western women were presented as strong and independent. The collected outdoor advertisements from the years 1996 to 1999 do not completely confirm these observations. These "Chinese" or "Western" qualities are no longer necessarily ascribed to Chinese and Western women specifically. Chinese women appear more self confident, for example by showing their teeth when smiling, whereas Western women are increasingly depicted as gentle and in rather submissive postures. However, the general tendency observed by Johansson remained visible also in the outdoor advertisements from the late 1990s. Regarding the outer appearances of the women and the accessories they use or they are surrounded with, a clear identification as "Chinese" became increasingly difficult. The posters display women that may identify themselves as Chinese and at the same time as being part of a modernity that is represented by the West.

11. CULTURAL INTERACTIONS IN ADVERTISING DESIGN

> "Ideally, designers are representative of their own culture yet adaptive to new surroundings. The goal is to achieve a harmonious juxtaposition; more of an interaction than a synthesis. The individual character of the elements should be retained, each maintaining its own identity while also commenting on and enriching the other, like the balance of Yin and Yang."[236] (Henry Steiner)

This statement by Henry Steiner, an Austrian graphic designer living and working in Hong Kong, describes his idea on cross-cultural design. Many of his works have succeeded in introducing corporate identities of "local" Chinese companies to a "global" public. Working with modifications of typography and combinations of contrasting images, he defines his adaptation of the Chinese cultural context as transformation: "… influence has been assimilated and the once foreign becomes personal and natural."[237] It is interesting to note, that it is a Westerner's adaptation and "naturalizing" of Chinese culture that constitutes an important model for modern Chinese design. Steiner's design concepts are exemplary for the influences on modern Chinese design that came to China mainly via Hong Kong, Taiwan and also Japan. The concept of "interaction" is part of Steiner's ideas on a design that is to be "international" and "Chinese" at the same time. It was topic for the *Shanghai International Poster Invitational Exhibition '99*.[238] At exhibitions like this, many young Chinese designers experimented with typography and the juxtaposition of contrasting images – although rarely related to different cultures. Whereas Henry Steiner works as a Western designer who has adapted Chinese culture, Chinese designers take over design techniques to develop their own visual language.[239]

Chapter 11.1 introduces a billboard campaign from Shanghai that uses a combination of Chinese and Western images. However, the design in its entirety works in fact more for a Western, or at least English-speaking public than for the Chinese-speaking majority on Shanghai's streets. Chapter 11.2 provides a variety of examples for designs working with the transformation of Chinese typography. All are only understandable by Chinese readers, thus offering approaches to a localized adaptation of modern design techniques.

11.1 The integration of all needs in the campaign for "Citic Square"

Many advertisements for office and commercial buildings focus on the outer appearance of the promoted estates that are often enough hard to distinguish from each other. Typical

[236] Henry Steiner & Ken Haas, 1995, p. 9.
[237] Ibid., p. 2.
[238] See chapter 2.5.
[239] See also chapter 2.5.

examples show a total view of the building, its name, sometimes a slogan, or a logo.[240] Others add descriptions, a map, or diverse decorative elements. However, the overall layout remains almost identical. The following advertising campaign is surprisingly different.

The "Citic Square" – the name being an abbreviation of the estate's developer China International Trust & Investment Corporation – was built in 1999 in Shanghai at the corner of Nanjing Road West and Shaanxi Road North. This location lies in a central business area close to the Shanghai Exhibition Center, with a few international hotels, as well as shopping and entertainment facilities. The construction was flanked by a large-scale campaign that included a series of fourteen different billboards around the construction site as well as advertisements in Chinese and English city magazines that are mainly read by the international business community and wealthy consumers. This was probably a singular or at least a short term campaign, because its visual design and even the logo are quite different from the public relations material used later on.[241] All the billboards are bilingual, but the following analysis will show that the campaign functions in fact better in English than in Chinese.

The English slogans refer to "Citic Square" simply as "The Square," thus claiming it to be the first and most important among all the other estates called "square." The campaign plays on this designation by using the geometrical square as the basic concept of the design: all the billboards are square shaped and the logo of the building shows its silhouette in a rectangular rhombus. In fact, the whole imagery of the campaign is based on the concept of the square: the design works with the Chinese puzzle game Tangram (七巧板). It consists of a square cut into seven geometrical forms, five triangles of different sizes, a small square, and a rhombus. These seven pieces can be rearranged to cast a multitude of forms and motifs, all deriving from the original square. However, the Chinese designation of the estate as *guangchang* 广场 (public square) does not support the play on the word "square," because the term *guangchang* does not imply the geometrical form of the square. This part of the design idea does therefore not work for Chinese speakers without sufficient knowledge of English.

The billboard below offers the key to understanding the use of Tangram in the Citic Square campaign. In the center of the billboard, the square as the basic Tangram form is shown. Each of the pieces is given a different color, predefining the colors that are going to be used in the design of the other billboards. For all those who know the Tangram puzzle, this image already implies a great multitude of different shapes – that may point to the same multitude of future business opportunities at Citic Square. The accompanying English slogan reinforces this promise:

There are many sides to the Square.[242]

[240]For examples for this type of real estate advertisements see chapter

[241]For reference regarding the actual corporate identity of Citic Square see the website launched in 2002: www.citicsquare.com, retrieved on July 4, 2006.

[242]Unfortunately, no clearer photograph of this billboard is available. On this picture the Chinese slogan cannot be retrieved because too many characters are covered by the traffic lights in the foreground.

PLATE 127
Citiq Square real estate, billboard, Shanghai
1999

Although the reference to the square as the name of the estate does not work in Chinese, the idea of the Tangram game as a metaphor for great possibilities and varieties remains clear.

PLATE 128
Citiq Square real estate, billboard, Shanghai
1999

In the center of eleven additional billboards a single form cast by Tangram pieces is shown. The loose pieces are gathered around this central form referring to the openness of the unmade puzzle that already contains all the other possibilities. On the above billboard, the shape of a person in a joyful and energetic gesture was formed. On it, a photograph of a smiling woman in colorful clothes represents the quality of the Square that is claimed in the slogan:

There is a chic side to the Square.

Like on all the billboards, the Chinese slogan differs from the English one. Since the Chinese language cannot use the play on the word square, the slogans contain the term *yi mian* 一面, meaning "a side," "a face" or "an aspect." Here, it is

An aspect of fashion trends
时尚潮流一面.

PLATE 129
Citiq Square real estate, billboards, Shanghai 1999

In each of the shapes, blue lines indicate how it is composed by the Tangram pieces, so that the reference to the puzzle remains obvious on each individual billboard. A different photograph fills each shape, either pointing to one of the business and shopping opportunities offered in Citic Square or to promised facilities and services. On the first picture, a hamburger in a shape resembling a cocktail glass or a cup of ice-cream stands for the "yummy side to the Square," whereas the Chinese text is much more poetic:

> An aspect of infinite flavor
> 滋味无限一面.

Pieces of elegant furniture in a house-shaped Tangram motif on the second picture promise There is a "homely [sic!] side to the Square," and in Chinese:

> An aspect of a warm stay at home
> 温馨家居一面.

On the third and fourth picture are meant to show the "dependable" (信誉保证) and the "secure and reliable" (安全可靠) aspect. They are illustrated by rather simple geometric

Tangram shapes with images of a uniformed guard watching the building, and two business men shaking hands. Judging from the logos printed on top of the business men's suits, they represent the two companies – the Citic Group and Swire Properties – that jointly developed Citic Square.

Conclusion
The marketing people for Citic Square opted for a clearly recognizable identity featured in different media like billboards and journals. The campaign presented the life and the business going on inside the building instead of the building itself. They depicted not the product but the assumed qualities and the character of the product. In doing so, they made use of a Chinese game that is not only very popular in the West, but also clearly associated with China. However, the Chinese cultural motif in the Citic Square campaign is adapted for a design concept that is sophisticated only for the English-speaking international community of Shanghai, not for Chinese speakers. The campaign is an example for "transcultural advertising" in the sense of Henry Steiner, not for a specifically Chinese design approach.

11.2 Playing with Chinese characters

For advertising designers in China, it is a popular way of expressing meaning to play with typography and Chinese characters. Whereas the first technique is applicable to alphabetical as well as ideographic writing, it is a specialty in Chinese design to explore the visual possibilities offered by ideographic writing, for example by combining the meanings or the shape of a character with images referring to the original meanings of a Chinese character or its components. On the collected photographs, fourteen advertisements work with this approach. They were found in all three regions and among all types of media. In contrast to the campaign for Citic Square, most of them are only understandable for Chinese readers who can read the characters.

Typographic sneezing
The following two small light box posters next to a clock in a Shanghai underground station were photographed in the winter of 1997/98. The design of the following poster is very ordinary, simply showing the product with a slogan below: Coltalin flu medicine is said to

> Soothe the flu
> lighten sniffling
> 舒缓感冒
> 减轻流涕.

PLATE 130
Coltalin medicine, subway poster, Shanghai 1998

However, the advertisers had a good reason to expect that more people would be willing to respond to this rather simple poster because it had a much more interesting predecessor on display in the same location.

PLATE 131
Coltalin medicine, subway poster, Shanghai 1997

An onomatopoetic arrangement of the characters "*a jiu*" 啊啾 (Achoo) visualizes sneezing. Differently sized characters imitate the descending and ascending sound of sneezing with pauses in between that are signaled by lines of dots. This "image" is followed by the question:

> What is to be done?
> 怎么办？

The poster does not mention the product that is advertised for. It catches attention because it does not follow the usual patterns of presenting a product. The openness of the message and the fact that it addresses a common problem creates a certain curiosity. Since the entire information is transmitted by the Chinese characters, this advertisement is also only understandable for Chinese readers; however, the design idea behind it can also be applied to any other written language. The design approach is not specifically Chinese.

Compositions with characters

Whereas the above advertising series is also imaginable in languages with alphabetic writing, the following examples all work with the specific possibilities of Chinese characters. Most of the designs function in a very similar way: a part of the Chinese character is transformed into an image or replaced by an image. This design principle has been used in Hong Kong at least since the late 1970s, maybe most prominently by Henry Steiner, who gives several examples in his book *Cross Cultural Design*.[243]

PLATE 132
Package for peanut oil, Hong Kong 1979

The above image shows a packaging for peanut oil designed by Henry Steiner. In this simple design, the water radical of the character for "oil" (油) has been replaced by three peanuts. This image-writing mixture is intended to communicate "its meaning immediately to any Chinese reader," [244] although the image does not stick to the original meaning of the water radical.

PLATE 133
Front and back covers of an annual report for San Miguel beer, Hong Kong 1989

[243] Henry Steiner & Ken Haas, 1995.
[244] Ibid., p. 47.

Steiner employed a very similar idea for the cover design of a Hong Kong brewery's annual report from 1989 (see image above). Here, the mouth radical (*kou* 口) in the character for "beer" (啤) has been replaced by a can and the *you* 酉 in the character for "liquor" (酒) by a bottle.[245] *You* itself also means liquor but may also represent a kind of amphora for making or preserving fermented liquors.[246] Whereas the *kou* and the can are only related by their shape, the replacement of the *you* by the beer bottle follows the character's meaning.

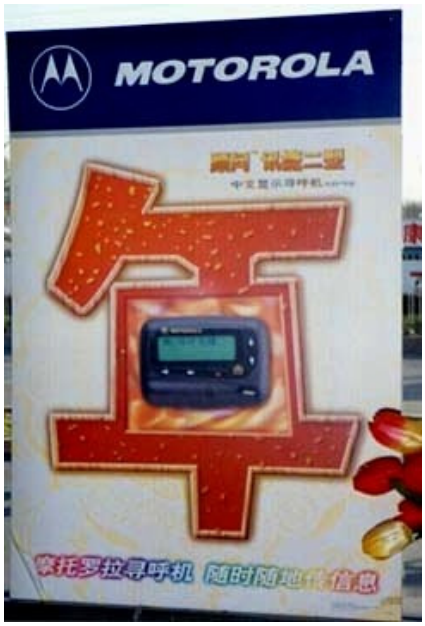

PLATE 134
Motorola pagers, poster, Beijing 1997

Similar to the first part of the San Miguel beer advertisements above, two posters for Motorola pagers show no clear connection between the product and the character that is used. The use of the characters *nian* 年 (year) standing for the New Year – and *fu* 福 (good fortune) – turned onto its head, a pun meaning that "good fortune arrives" (福到) – are similar to the employment of cultural motifs and "national style," that are supposed to connect the product to some sort of common value.

PLATE 135
Laoshan beer, painted shop sign, Qingdao 1996

[245]Ibid., p. 45.
[246]Léon Wieger, 1965, p. 117.

The visual association of *you* with a wine jar is also employed on the image above in a kind of shop sign for a kiosk selling

> Fresh Laoshan Beer
> 崂山鲜啤酒.

The advertisement has been hand-written onto the wall of the kiosk. Here, the *you* is tilted like a jar to pour out the "beer" represented by the "three drops" of the water radical. This amateur design remains close to the meaning of the character and its components. The resulting image of beer being poured from a bottle emerges from a special typographic arrangement without adding any other pictures as carriers of information.

PLATE 136
Hot pot restaurant, window decoration, Shanghai 1999

This photograph shows an even simpler version of this principle. It was taken outside a small hot pot restaurant in Shanghai in 1999 and displays the word "fire" (火) with the strokes' endings shaped like burning flames. This image also clearly refers to the meaning of the character and to the content of the advertisement.

PLATE 137
Underground Business City supermarket, painted billboard, Qingdao 1997

Relying on the visual shape of the character rather than on its meaning is the above design for an underground supermarket called Underground Business City (下商城) in Qingdao. The *kou* (口) in the lower part of the character *shang* 商 has been replaced by an image of

the shop's interior. The upper part of the character appears as a solid structure or a roof with the character's component *dian* 丶as a triangular logo on top. In fact, the whole static composition of the character *shang* may be interpreted as a logo.

PLATE 138
Hualian supermarkets, painted billboard, Shanghai 1997

Hualian 华联 supermarkets advertise with the slogan

> Hualian, my home.
> This supermarket is home for ten thousand families[247]
> 华联我的家
> 超市连万家.

In this case, the red outline of the character *jia* 家 ("home" and also "family") is filled with the image of the shop. The supermarket *Hualian* is equalized with the concept of "home" that gets a two-fold meaning: on the one hand, it refers to the homey feeling one should have in the supermarket; on the other hand, it is associated with China through the name of the supermarket as well as through the image that shows the character *jia* placed on the outline of the map of China. The company that claims to be the first supermarket chain established in China has the stated strategic goal to open shops all over the country, and thus claims to unite families all throughout China.[248]

In 1999, the newly founded joint venture between the German Allianz and Dazhong insurances advertised with a series of four posters.[249] On each poster, one character of their new company's name *Anlian dazhong* 安联大众 is combined with an image. On top of the character *an* 安, meaning peaceful and secure, a helmet replaces the stroke *dian* 丶. This simple visualization alludes not only to security at the workplace but also to the protection of home and family, because the helmet protects the woman (女) under a cover or roof (宀). The character *lian* 联 (join, unite) is composed of two parts that are written each in a different way. The vertical stroke of the "ear" (耳) on the left that is shown in brush writing has been replaced by a Chinese brush. As a contrast, the "barrier" (关) on the right was written with a writing feather that substitutes one of its strokes.

[247]Literally the second line of the slogan says: "A supermarket unites ten thousand homes." The above translation takes into account that *jia* 家 means both, "home" and "family."
[248]See the company's website www.962828.com/hualian1/qyjs/qyjj.jsp, retrieved on July 6, 2006.
[249]An advertisement for Dazhong Insurances was described in chapter 4.2.

PLATE 139
Alliance Dazhong insurance company, subway posters, Shanghai 1999

This is the only poster that includes a relation between China and the West in its imagery illustrating that the company is a joint venture between a Chinese and a Western partner.

It is interesting to note, that a traditional – or rather historic – writing instrument was chosen to represent the Western part. The juxtaposition that was made is thus not between Chinese tradition on the one hand and Western modernity on the other hand. The partners are presented as equal. On the third poster, the character *da* 大 ("great") is shown as a huge iron structure that stands for a great size as well as for strength and solidity. Finally, in the character *zhong* 众 ("masses"), the upper component "person" (人) is formed by a group of people in business suits, ready to offer their services. Each of the posters stands for one of the qualities that the insurance company claims for its services.

Conclusion

Using the shape of Chinese characters to transmit an advertising message is a design technique employed in very different contexts. This is either achieved by transforming characters into an image, or by combining them with images. It can be found on hand-painted unique advertisements that might sometimes even be self-made by shop or restaurant owners, as well as on professional posters by large international companies. The image that is made part of the Chinese character sometimes stays true to the actual meaning of the character's component, as for example in the hand-painted shop sign of a Laoshan beer seller, or it pictures the product, or part of the product, that is promoted by the advertisement, like on the poster for Motorola pagers or on the billboard for the Underground Business City. Sometimes it refers to the claimed quality of the product, as exemplified on the poster series for the Alliance Dazhong insurance company. One of the posters by this joint venture company combine two images, one of which alludes to China and the other to the West. This pattern is reminiscent of the design concepts that were introduced by designers like the Hong Kong based Henry Steiner, and that are frequently found on posters displayed in contemporary exhibitions of Chinese poster design.

The messages of these posters can usually be captured at a glance by those who read Chinese, but they remain largely incomprehensible for those who don't.[250] Chinese writing has resisted quite a few attempts of being abolished in favor of alphabetic script. Although this kind of design is inspired and challenged by Japanese design, Chinese characters offer great possibilities to designers who are searching for a specifically Chinese approach to design.

[250]Chinese characters also appear in Western advertisements, fashion magazines and clothing design. Here, they remain without meaning except for their signaling of exoticism.

CONCLUSION

Today, an abundance of public messages fills public space in China. Many of them are various kinds of commercial advertisements: they are issued by Chinese and foreign companies; by state-owned enterprises, joint ventures, or private companies; by retail chains or private shops. However, a still large quantity of public messages consists of political propaganda that has been produced by different governmental institutions: by the national government, by regional or local governments, or by specific ministries and departments. Propaganda also includes so-called social marketing messages that are usually not addressing ideological topics but, for example, matters of social welfare or environmental protection. All these public messages determine the topics that people are supposed to think and talk about.

This study examined the contents, styles and values expressed in outdoor advertising in the People's Republic of China, focusing on two questions. The first part of the study explored ideological inclinations of advertisements and their relation to political propaganda. The second part deals with those advertising contents that seemingly belong to a specific cultural context or that contribute to defining various cultural identities. An analysis of around 1,000 photographs of outdoor advertisements taken between 1996 and 1999 revealed a great complexity in the ways advertisers respond to governmental and Party ideology and deal with elements of local, national, and international culture. In the following, the main developments, phenomena, and tendencies will be summed up.

The background

The introductory chapters of this thesis provided background information about the development of advertising styles and contents in China. A brief survey on historical shop signs showed historical forms and styles that Chinese advertisers or shop owners from the late 1990s can resort to. Some may do so because these types of shop signs are simple, cheap to produce, and easily understandable, for example the display of one character designating the type of product or service on offer in a shop or restaurant. Others use old forms of advertising as a fashion item. It became clear that especially this latter way of re-using traditional shop signs "tells" more than just the product: it references Chinese history and literature and its popular medialization in historical novels or movies.

One of the main reasons for the fact that there is no simple perpetuated use of certain forms of historical advertising is the interruption of the advertising business during the Cultural Revolution between 1966 and 1976. It is one result of the general cultural and social break that this period brought about, that elements of traditional culture can only be reused and reinterpreted – at most re-built – but not simply continued. The visual propaganda of the Cultural Revolution constitutes another important heritage for the

development of advertising in China. For nearly ten years, propaganda dominated visual culture. People were accustomed to reading and interpreting the meanings of the signs used on the posters. Taking over or changing the depiction of certain motifs familiar from visual propaganda is therefore an important indicator of changes in the political and ideological climate in China. It shows which propaganda topics, for example the successful Chinese space program, remained popular also beyond official intentions, and which other topics, like the one-child family, are undermined by the contradicting images on advertisements.

The Government decided to restore advertising in China after the Cultural Revolution, in the late 1970s. The discussions on the specific characteristics that were ascribed to "socialist" advertising reveal that the expectations on the functions of advertising in the Chinese society placed it in close vicinity to political propaganda: "socialist" advertising was meant to educate the people and to reflect the growing prosperity of the Chinese nation and people. Especially this latter function that may lead to the conclusion that in fact all advertising in China is a privatized, yet controlled form of propagating the success of economic reforms. The claimed characteristics of "socialist" advertising were not always put into practice, which led to an increased need to officially regulate advertising administration and contents. Several regulations were issued, and finally, in 1994, the Advertising Law. The law affirms the concept of advertising as a means to reflect "socialist culture" and "ideological progress." However, another major goal of the Advertising Law is the protection of consumers that were not experienced in reading and interpreting advertising messages, and often fell for their false promises.

With ongoing economic reforms during the 1980 and 1990s, the consumer culture in China, especially in the urban centers, changed rapidly. Growing availability of consumer products and changing consumption patterns influenced styles and contents of advertisements. Advertisements focusing on product information were no longer adequate in a more sophisticated consumer society. Instead, the transmission of intangible values like ambiance and status became more important. The need for effective advertising in an increasingly competitive economy led to more pragmatic approaches towards advertising, and Western marketing and design theories were widely discussed. The result was a growing professionalization of advertising regarding media, marketing strategies and design.

This professionalization was not limited to advertising. Under the reform and opening policies, propaganda departments on different administrative levels adapted technically modernized media and presented propaganda messages that lost most of their ideological tone. These so-called social marketing messages (公益广告) are often produced by advertising companies. On the one hand advertising agencies are officially obliged to do so. Yet, on the other hand, they use this obligation to promote their own services by signing the posters with their agency's name and sometimes even telephone number. A growing number of advertising spaces like poster frames fixed in a street are shared between propaganda and commercial advertisements. This shows the increasing hybridization between advertising and propaganda on the level of production and media as

well as regarding goals and target groups. Official obligations and the advertisers' wit to use propaganda for their own benefit is not the only explanation for these hybrid messages: they are also due to close cooperations and personal links between the players in politics and business.

Advertising in dialog with official ideology

In part I, the photographic material was surveyed to elaborate how the interactions between propaganda and advertising imagery and styles are mirrored in the actual advertisements from the late 1990s. Twelve groups of posters and billboards with different motifs were examined. They altogether contain more than 500 photographs. Around 100 of them were closely analyzed. This resulted in the distinction of five different types of interaction between advertising and propaganda, ranging between advertisements that clearly affirm propaganda contents and values, and advertisements that directly contradict these values. "The perpetuation of propaganda in advertising" introduces advertisements that affirm propagandistic ideals of economic development and national pride. Under the title "The privatization of values," it was shown how advertisements affirm a propaganda message, but transfer it to an exclusive and private sphere. They contradict the common and public orientation of propaganda. Differently, the advertisements in "transformed meanings" change the context of a motif that is familiar from propaganda and thus alter the message almost completely. "New imageries," presented advertisements with motifs that are not found on traditional propaganda. They mirror social, political and ideological changes and sometimes also contradict official ideology. Finally, advertising and propaganda images that are picturing the progress of Shanghai exemplified "the interaction of advertising and propaganda." In the following, it will be summed up how these different types of interaction illustrate the facets of pragmatization and privatization in the production of meaning in commercial advertising.

Pragmatic affirmations

Advertisements showing images of the globe, world maps, or motifs associated with flying reflect nationalism, pride of China's economic achievements, reform and opening, and the desire that China takes an outstanding position in the world. However, the commercial advertisements that thus affirm official propaganda messages do so to promote a product or service. A great number of the products or services employing these motifs are related to communication and travel: telecommunications, mobile phones, express mail services, and travel agencies. The providers of these product groups claim that they make some of the public benefits of reform and opening conveniently available, for example easy communication and travel. They thus affirm propaganda values that already have a great common appeal, and sell their products as part of the achievements of the reform and

opening policy. When ideological values effectively appeal to the public and convince customers to buy, the choice to affirm official ideology is a rather pragmatic one, not an ideological choice. Some advertisements, however, obviously carry the concept of "opening" a great step further. This is shown by a poster for an Australian airline: The image on their advertising billboard implies the desire to fly away, and leave the boundaries of China. Apart from the fact that foreign companies like an Australian airline are certainly less inclined to support Chinese nationalism than Chinese enterprises, examples like this one prove that there is only a thin line between affirmation and contradiction of official ideology.

Local confinements in advertising and propaganda

Advertisements for local industries, mainly in small towns, claim that the company has its share in national economic achievements. It was argued that these advertisements do not fulfill a marketing function, but are representational for the local and regional economic progress. Given the fact that most of these advertisements are issued by state-owned companies that are often major employers in town, the self representation of these companies is nearly identical with a local self promotion. Here, taking over the official value of economic progress is not only in favor of a single enterprise, but of the whole locality or region. Advertisements for local industries are not the only public messages that are confined to a certain local setting. The same could be said about propaganda and advertisements, picturing emblems of Shanghai's rapid urban and economic development. Similar to the advertisements discussed above, the advertisements are highly affirmative of the official ideology of progress that is transmitted in the propaganda images of Shanghai. However, compared to facilitated communications and travel, public reception of Shanghai's urban development is much more ambivalent. It is therefore not astonishing that most of the advertisements that affirm this urban development are for real estate, for buildings that are themselves representatives and parts of the urban changes. Propaganda and advertisements – especially those for real estate – work hand in hand to convince people of the attractiveness and benefits of urban development. This was especially obvious in propaganda and advertisements that commonly promote the local development of Changning district in Shanghai. The positive depiction of the new development of the cities in advertisements is not only a pragmatic marketing decision, but again due to the fact, that one can assume many personal connections between governmental and entrepreneurial agents.

The confinement of values to the private sphere

A local confinement of advertising or propaganda messages like in the promotion of Changning can also be found in the propaganda for a beautiful green city and for civilized behavior in the city. However, at least in the confinement of the city, the values of a beautiful living environment and civilized atmosphere are presented as public and for everybody's benefit. In real estate advertisements on the contrary, the same values are raised to an exclusive good for those who will live in the promoted buildings or

compounds. Images of greenery and flowers are used as a signifier for beauty and civilization in propaganda and advertising, with the only difference that advertisements promise this beauty as an exclusive good: advertisements employ images of flowers and greenery to point to an elaborate lifestyle that is only affordable for the prosperous. Advertisements for other products also transfer the positive values associated with nature to the private sphere. Images of nature promise a beautiful and clean environment, health, or relaxation. Whereas propaganda messages direct these promises the whole, or at least a majority of the local population, advertisements confine the promised benefits to those people who are going purchase the products. This allows for a two-fold interpretation: On the one hand, advertisements support the Government's demand to value greenery and affirm the propaganda message by equally presenting nature as a positive value. On the other hand, they deny that the benefits of a green environment and nature are actually publicly provided by the Government. Instead, they claim that these benefits can only be achieved privately through the purchase or consumption of a specific product.

The benefits of a consumer society in commercial advertisements

Above, it was argued that the Government and the Chinese Communist Party at least partly perceive advertisements as a mirror of the economic opening and social progress in China. The opening policy of the Chinese government is almost "literally" reflected in images of a wide open sky. Virtually non-existent on older propaganda posters where the scope of view is restricted on the Chinese nation, its leaders and role models, the sky plays a major role on advertising and propaganda posters of the late 1990s. The observations of the photographed advertisements revealed that this opening of the sky is nevertheless visually limited, for example by buildings, slogans, or frames. The attention is now on an open China and the products that the new "socialist" market economy offers; but it still lies on China.

The role models for the changing Chinese society that are presented by outdoor advertisements are quite different from those on propaganda posters. Exemplified through images of business people and families, it was shown how advertisements picture people that appear differently in political propaganda, or not at all. Many of these role models implicitly convene with the official ideology. The business people, for example, represent the officially fostered new possibilities of "getting rich," but also reveal tendencies to show more men than women and assign more subordinate roles to women; under the pressure of rising unemployment rates, this inequality that also reflects the attempt to confine women to roles of housewives and mothers is at least tolerated, if not supported, by the Government. On images of families, these mothers are often mothers of a son or even of two children, and the families are in most cases depicted as wealthy. In the case of a male child, advertisements differ from the usual propaganda images that show a daughter to work against the common preferences for boys. In the case of two children, advertisements even directly contradict the official ideology of the one child policy.

A different form of advertising's turning away from propaganda messages was exemplified through motifs that find new interpretations in advertising through changed

context. These re-interpretations can be at least partly affirmative of official ideology, but also completely detached from it. An affirmation can be observed on images of the Great Wall, a strong symbol for China, and – instrumentalized by State propaganda – for the notion that China is represented by its socialist government. The meaning of this symbol is extended by advertisements to describe a product with the positive characteristics associated with the Great Wall. Loosened from propagandistic interpretations are images of sunflowers that no longer stand for the veneration of the former Chairman Mao Zedong, but receive new meanings similar to meanings of other flowers.

The advertisements with the above mentioned motifs partly take over the visualization of new social ideals like wealth, but they also exemplify the liberties that advertising takes – and is obviously allowed to take – in present-day China.

The privatization of public images and the pragmatic use of ideology

The interaction between advertisements and political propaganda is complex. However, a general tendency can be examined. Although the values defined in the official ideology most frequently remain unchanged and even affirmed in advertisements, the affirmations of ideological values are of a mainly pragmatic nature, following the goal of every professional advertisement that is simply to enhance sales. Public values are increasingly privatized or at least instrumentalized for commercial purposes.

Redefining cultural identities

In part II , advertisements were analyzed in regard to three different kinds of so-called culturally specific contents. First, motifs that are defined as culturally specific, second, values and moral standards ascribed to a certain culture, and third, design styles that are based on culturally specific knowledge. For each of these categories, two groups of motifs were discussed. They contain around 400 photographs of which around 45 were closely analyzed.

"Chinese" advertising as an ideological request

The discussions about a "national style" of "socialist" advertising showed that special Chinese characteristics were and are ideologically desired for advertisements. These characteristics were mainly meant to be a matter of contents and values.

An example for specific Chinese motifs that are used in advertisements is Chinese white liquor, *baijiu*. *Baijiu* stands for a product group that is already conceived as "Chinese" similar to other food products. For many advertisers this is reason enough to promote these products as a venerable part of ancient Chinese culture. Some of them, for example a *baijiu* from Shandong that advertises with an image of Wusong beating the tiger, have even won prices for "national advertising culture," while critics argue that these advertisements

commercialize a "fake" Chinese culture. However, these advertisements appeal to "romantic dreams" that were described by the cultural critics Yu Hong and Deng Zhengqiang as widespread in the Chinese population of the 1990s.

Western motifs in advertisements were exemplified with images of imitated Greek or Roman classics and images of Western popular culture like cartoon characters. Most of them appeal to similar "romantic dreams." These Western motifs do not so much stand for Western culture, but for certain desired qualities like elegance, elaborate lifestyles, or a clean and quite atmosphere. Thus, the use of cultural motifs, Chinese or Western, was shown to be mainly an appeal that is deemed suitable for the product or the desired lifestyle of the advertisement's target group.

Similar pragmatic decisions were also observed in regard to the use of cultural values in advertisements. Cultural values were exemplified through the various meanings that the color red can take, and with images of women that transmit culturally defined qualities of women. Both groups showed that these values are in many cases not clearly separable. Instead, they intermingle and interact with other motifs on an advertisement that could be ascribed to an "opposing" cultural context. Although the clear differences in the depiction of Chinese women as gentler and Western women as stronger that were observed in previous studies are still observable, they get increasingly mixed. This reflects fashion trends as well as social changes, especially in China's big cities.

Searching for a Chinese identity in design

A different form of "interaction" between Chinese and Western culture is observable in the examples for design approaches that search to combine Western design concepts with specifically Chinese forms of expression. Major stimuli for these approaches came from Western designers working in Hong Kong. This may lead to results like the campaign for the Citic Square building in Shanghai. Here, an integrated design concept was combined with the use of the Chinese game Tangram that is nevertheless also widely known and popular in the Western world. It was found that this campaign is in fact only fully understandable by an international community in Shanghai because major clues of the designs are only comprehensive in English, not in Chinese.

A number of advertisements that were executed in different media and technical qualities make use of the specific visual possibilities of Chinese characters. Unlike many other so-called cultural specificities, Chinese writing has proven to be a cultural phenomenon that resists any attempt to its abolition. Since the great majority of these designs are built upon the meanings of Chinese characters and their components, they therefore remain only comprehensible for Chinese readers, and thus might in fact constitute a specifically Chinese form of expression in advertising.

Outlook

This study includes advertisements and propaganda from Shanghai, Beijing and Shandong Province. Personal insight into the settings and local context of the advertisements was given priority over covering a greater regional variety. However, some chapters of this thesis only concentrate on one of the three locations where advertisements had been collected. Due to the fact that there are great differences in the amount of photographs that are available for each region, a thorough regional comparison of the advertisements could not be undertaken. Further research that includes material from other regions may offer a broadened range of images with additional motifs and styles. In economically less developed provinces advertising is, for example, expected to be generally less professionalized than in the two urban centers Shanghai and Beijing and the comparatively flourishing Shandong province. Advertisements from Canton and Zhuhai can more closely show the influences of advertising design in Hong Kong.

The collected material offers only very little and vague information about the production and the scope of distribution of the advertisements. This includes differences between advertisements for foreign or local products, advertisements created by foreign or local agencies, and advertisements that are locally, nationally or even internationally distributed. Some, for example hand-painted advertisements, are considered to be more or less unique and locally confined, whereas others, for example subway posters, might have appeared in larger quantities in many different locations. Some advertisements might also appear in different media and thus only constitute a part of a larger scale campaign. Upcoming studies offering a closer look on the perspectives of the advertising industry and the system of the distribution of outdoor advertising space promise to provide closer insight in the interplay of different agents on the production level of advertising and propaganda messages.

Only assumptions could be made regarding the targeted groups of the advertisements. However, in many cases, the locations of the advertisements allow to confine the visibility to more or less exclusive parts of the urban Chinese society. Main target groups are for example those who are wealthy enough to drive or take taxi rides on the elevated highways in the cities, and take strolls along the major shopping streets. The subway is the preferred public transportation for younger office workers who commute on a daily basis. They therefore constitute one of the major target groups of advertisements on subway posters. However, the photographic material offers no information about public reception and success of the advertisements that can only be provided by large-scale market research.

In the past few years one could observe increasing unification of outdoor advertising media. Prefabricated spaces for advertisements often limit visual possibilities. The advertisements for industrial products in Anqiu, for example, were replaced be unified aluminum-framed billboards, and similarly, the Shanghai artist Zhou Tiehai criticized aluminum-framed shop and restaurant signs as a most unpleasant unification and restriction of shop owners' creativity in designing their own advertisements. However, it

will remain an exciting endeavor to follow the further development of advertising contents and styles in the People's Republic of China. As multinational advertising agencies grow stronger in China and more people receive a thorough advertising education, the professionalization of the business continues, and along with it the tendency towards a "privatization of ideology" and a "pragmatization of culture" in advertising.

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Abbreviations

IJoA	*International Journal of Advertising*
JoAR	*Journal of Advertising Research*
JoM	*Journal of Marketing*
JoMR	*Journal of Marketing Research*
Zggg	*Zhongguo guanggao* 中国广告

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