China's First Encounter with Global Brands: Pre-Communist Shanghai

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China's current experiences with globalization, localism, branding, and advertising can be informed by a consideration of earlier encounters with these forces in Old Shanghai. For more than 100 years, Shanghai was awash with foreign marketing influences. This paper explores the historical context and effects of this experience. The analysis reveals a love/hate relationship with the foreign in Shanghai during the first half of the twentieth century. Resentment of this foreign presence was a major contributor to the civil war that ended in the formation of the People's Republic of China. At the same time, the conflict between marketing the global and the local in Old Shanghai prefigured the conflicted consumer loyalties of contemporary China.

Benson (1996) notes that there is a striking parallel between the growing momentum of commercial forces in 1930s era Shanghai and the "market socialism" of China today. The late 19th and early 20th Centuries were a time of Chinese encounters with foreign products, advertising, and trade that have strong similarities to those that have emerged under the current "open door" policies of China. It both cases, charges of consumerism, worshipping the foreign, and materialism have arisen, as well as local accommodations of or confrontations with globalization. Nevertheless, the conditions that surround these two periods of open contact with the West are different. It is also important to avoid simply framing the earlier contact as a "Western-impact/China-response" model, even though "the old 'impact-response' model is perhaps more relevant in Shanghai than in any other place in the nation" (Lu 1999, p. 18).

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A Brief History of Chinese Foreign Trade

While China may have had some domestic branded goods as early as the late 10th century (Hamilton and Lai 1989), its earliest encounters with foreign goods involved unbranded luxury objects that made their way there along the Spice Route, the Silk Road, and various sea routes. Goods like sugar, spices, and cotton came into China carried largely by Islamic merchants. In exchange, silk, porcelain, nickel, zinc, and grain were China's major early exports (Fairbank 1992; Adshead 1995). This trade was part of an early age of "consumption globalization" running from 1400 to 1800 (Adshead 1997). Although the Islamic merchants also traded with the Eastern Mediterranean and Europe, the foreign goods that China found most interesting were from West Asia, India, and the Ottoman Empire. Cotton is a prime example. While no one in China wore cotton clothing in 1350, by 1850 it was ubiquitous, even on peasants (Huang 1990). Yet, except for a few novelty fabrics, China proved largely impermeable to European cottons (Adshead 1997, p. 87). China preferred the cotton goods of India and Egypt. When China began to produce its own cotton, it was consistently preferred over European fabrics.

Such resistance contrasts sharply with the enthusiastic embrace of Western fashions and virtually anything Western in Japan after the Meiji Restoration reopened that country in 1853 (Hamilton 1977). Resistance to Western goods characterizes most of China's contact with the West before the 20th century (Searns 2001). The causes of this resistance are a matter of debate (Hamilton 1977), but China's belief in the superiority of Chinese civilization to European civilization seems critical.

When some Western goods did enter China in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, they too were initially unbranded commodities. They were exported to China in the hope of balancing the trade deficit from Europe's growing appetite for imported Chinese tea. The Dutch East India Company brought tea to the Netherlands from China. They found that they could initially obtain tea cheaply in exchange for borage and sage, which they told the Chinese would cure a variety of ailments and encourage gaiety. After the company had hooked Dutch consumers on tea, they turned to England where tea drinking became fashionable in the mid 17th century. By 1740 when tea became the dominant drink in England, the Chinese had found that sage and borage were not as effective as they had been told and they demanded gold and silver bullion instead. This insistence
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on precious metals became such a drain on the Dutch East India Company that they ceded the Chinese tea trade to the British East India Company.

The British East India Company had little more success than the Dutch in getting the Chinese to accept European goods in exchange for tea. China also restricted foreign tea trade to Canton so that the British never got involved in local distribution the way they had in India. When the head of the British East India Company, Lord Macartney, sailed a 66-gun man-of-war into the Canton harbor in 1793, along with "two escort vessels loaded with examples of British manufacturing technology" (Fairbank 1992, p. 196), the response of the Qing court was to label the goods a "tribute from England." The Chien Lung emperor also sent a message to Kong George III stating:

We possess all things. I set no value on objects strange or ingenious and have no use for your country's manufactures. Our ways bear no resemblance to yours (quoted in Dong 2000, p. 5).

And in 1816 when Lord Amherst tried again to force British goods upon the Chinese, he and his delegation received a rude welcome and were sent back to England. An English merchant described the dilemma, noting that the Chinese, who considered themselves at the center of civilization, seemingly had the best of everything, including "the best food in the world, rice; the best drink, tea; and the best clothing, cotton, silk, fur" (Stearns 2001, p. 85). While there was a short term fascination in the Chinese court with imported European clocks (Clunas 1991; Wills 1993), when Chinese brokers in Canton were forced to accept these clocks as payment for tea, they took a considerable loss. Because they were unable to sell them, they ultimately refused the clocks altogether. The clock and Western ways of time-keeping and calendars did not make inroads in China until Twentieth century urban industrialization began (Yeh 1995). So the British became resigned to buying Chinese tea with silver bullion from the British colonies.

As was the case with the Dutch, the British found that the bullion drain, coupled with the costs of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, was too much. But unlike the Dutch, the British East India Company found a commodity that was irresistible to the Chinese: opium. The company imported opium from India and left with tea and rhubarb (used as a laxative to fight child dysentery) from China. In an 1852 report to the British Foreign office, W. H. Mitchell, a local official in Hong Kong concluded that: "We bring the Chinese nothing that is really popular among them....Opium is the only 'open sesame' to their stony hearts" (Hao, 1986, p. 55). During the height of the British opium trade there were estimated to be 12 million regular users in China (Adshhead 1997), or one out of every ten people (Dong 2000). This reversed the flow of silver bullion into China, which had grown to $10 million per year (Fairbank 1992). Opium shipments into Canton harbor grew from 200 chests in 1729 to 4000 in 1790 and over 20,000 by 1838. Although opium was used by Chinese tea and salt laborers, and was sought as a relief from tuberculosis, opium smoking also became a form of conspicuous leisure and luxury consumption for the Chinese elite (Adshhead 1997; Stearns 2001). As opium imports rose from the mid 1820s to the mid 1840s, China lost between a quarter and a half of the silver it had accumulated in the previous 120 years of trade, including virtually the whole stock accumulated from England (Richardson 1999).

When the British East India Company lost its monopoly on China trade in 1834, England sent an official to China to demand free trade. The Qing Emperor of China faced not only a political threat to his power but the growing realization that opium smoking posed a moral as well as economic threat to China. Several years of unsuccessful negotiations followed. The Emperor finally sent an incorruptible commissioner (Lin) to Canton. Lin barricaded the foreigners in their factories until they surrendered their current stocks of opium. England responded by sending gunboats and initiating the Opium War (1839-1842). It has been seen as a war about consumption:

What the Chinese were attacking was not the foreigner or opium per se, but the Canton interest: its business ethos, its multiculturalism, its links with maritime Asia, its ability to corrupt any official sent to govern it. They were attacking it for what it was and for what it might become. When [Chinese Imperial Commissioner] Lin Tse-hsi stood at the chests of opium destroyed, he was making implicitly a bonfire of all the vanities. In attacking the Canton of the present, he was also attacking the Shanghai and Hong Kong of the future. He was attacking consumerism itself (Adshhead 1997, p. 238).

Besides gaining Hong Kong Territory, a substantial reduction in tariffs, most-favored-nation status, five new treaty ports, and freedom from Chinese laws ("extraterritoriality") for British expatriates (Fairbank 1992), the British victory in the Opium War also opened the door for an influx of traders and goods from other European nations and the U.S... As Adshhead (1997) suggests however, it opened the door for rampant consumerism as well. Fairbank (1992) argues that it likely also led to social disruption and psychological demoralization that, together with internal conflicts, shook Chinese faith in the superiority of their civilization over that of the Western imperialists.

Although the opium imports in the first half of the 19th century turned the balance of payments against China for a time, by the late 1860s the country showed a surplus again (Richardson 1999). But by the 1890s China had developed a hunger for foreign manufactured and branded goods that again resulted in a growing trade deficit. In the 30 years between 1864 and 1894 China's foreign trade more than doubled with branded Western consumer goods leading the way (Wang 2000). There was also a qualitative shift in the nature of Chinese trade (Richardson 1999). Previously China's trade was that of an advanced economy with
exports of manufactured and processed goods such as silk, tea, and porcelain and imports of barely processed goods (opium). But as China grew more receptive to foreign manufactured goods, it became like an underdeveloped economy. The promotion of newly imported branded merchandise and had much to do with the growth of Chinese consumer desire, and eventually the Chinese began to produce branded goods themselves (Hao 1986).

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OF SHANGHAI

With the end of the Opium War in 1842, Shanghai began a 106-year period of foreign occupation, described as "semi-colonialism" (Wood 1998). In 1849 Britain's International Settlement on the waterfront in Shanghai was joined by France's "French Concession." The British and French were later joined by Americans and Russians within their foreign enclaves. After winning the first Sino-Japanese war in 1895, the Japanese also became a growing, and especially resented, presence. The number of foreigners in Shanghai grew rapidly after the turn of the century, reaching 100,000 by 1930 (Wei 1993). Lee (1999a) saw these foreigners and local Chinese living in two worlds. But while Chinese were initially excluded from the International Settlement, by 1915, more than 620,000 were living there (Wei 1998).

Prior to the Twentieth Century (and later under Mao), urban life in China was singled out for criticism (Lu 1999). In Confucian tradition, the countryside and nature are seen as virtuous while urban locales, especially big cities, are seen as depraved and foreign. Because artificial illumination at night was associated with gambling, prostitution, and drunkenness, when Shanghai installed electricity, the authorities threatened to punish Chinese who installed foreign lighting (Crow 1940; Chio 1993). Although anti-urban sentiments never entirely disappeared (Benson 1996), the international milieu of Shanghai proved highly seductive and city life became much more interesting. Shanghai was also the focus of social criticism because it was modern. It became the emblem of consumerism, materialism, Western influence, and cosmopolitanism (Strand 2000).

By 1930, Shanghai was the fifth biggest city in the world. Even though the largest department stores, Sincere and Wing On, were owned by Chinese entrepreneurs, they featured many foreign luxury goods including clothing, cosmetics, shoes, and jewelry (Chan 1998; Ching-hwang 1993). Shanghai became nearly synonymous in China with "modern"--Western style streets, gaslight, electricity, telephones, running water -- all made it a metropolis even by Western standards (Lee 1999b). Elevators, sewer systems, air-conditioning, department stores, and neon lights all appeared in Shanghai soon after they were introduced in the West (Lu 1999). Shanghai became the Chinese fashion capital as well, with rapidly changing styles of clothes, hairstyles, makeup, dance, music, and entertainment.

As a treaty port since the 1840s, Shanghai offered a sharp contrast of old and new, East and West, Chinese traditional and the foreign exotic. It was also a site of contestation for several colonial powers. There was a mix of Western building styles on the Bund -- the waterfront area that along with Nanjing Road formed the center of Western commercial culture in the city. Shanghai was also the site of China's confrontations with globalism and cosmopolitanism (Cochran 1999a; Lee 1999b). Leisure locales such as high-rise hotels and golf courses, which largely catered to foreigners, were initially quite alien to the local Chinese and distant from their daily lives. But common people in the city eventually found their own ways of partaking in the new and wondrous world of material consumption. All kinds of consumer goods, from packaged consumer foods to luxurious automobiles, flourished and competed for the attention of Chinese consumers in Shanghai. Western leisure venues such as modern cinemas, dance halls, and horse racing, as well and many other novel consumer products became accessible to common people in China for the first time, especially after the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1912.

Old Shanghai wasn't just a synonym for modernity and an exotic blend of old and new, it was the key exemplar of decadence at the time, with rampant opium, prostitution, corruption, greed, and abundant entertainments (Dong 2000). The decadence and consumer culture that characterized Shanghai were no doubt aided by the liminal status of the city: "Half Oriental, half Occidental; half land, half water; neither a colony nor wholly belonging to China; inhabited by citizens of every nation in the world but ruled by none" (Dong 2000, p. 2). As Bakhtin (1968) has demonstrated in the context of the medieval carnival, both the carnivalesque and the market emerge most strongly within marginal places occupying a liminal betwixt-and-between status; a no-man's land wherein anything goes. In Shanghai this was aided by the extra-territoriality privileges China granted to the foreign concessions, guaranteeing that Chinese laws did not apply.

Perhaps no other institution of Shanghai captures the carnivalesque and decadent mix of the local and the foreign as well as the great amusement halls that sprung up in the city. When filmmaker Joseph von Sternberg visited Shanghai to make his 1932 movie Shanghai Express, he visited the Great World Amusement Center and reported that.

On the first floor were gambling tables, sing-song girls, magicians, pick-pockets, slot machines, fireworks, bird-cages, fans, stick incense, acrobats and ginger. One flight up were the restaurants, a dozen different groups of actors, crickets in cages, pimps, midwives, barbers and ear wax extractors. The third floor had jugglers, herb medicines, ice-cream parlours, photographers, a new bevy of girls, their high-collared gowns slit to reveal their thighs, and under the heading
of novelty, several rows of exposed toilets, their impresarios instructing the amused patrons not to squat but to assume a position more in keeping with the imported plumbing. The fourth floor was crowded with shooting galleries, fan-tan tables, revolving wheels, massage benches, acupuncture and moxa cabinets, hot-towel counters, dried fish and intestines, and dance platforms serviced by a horde of music makers competing with each other to see who could drown out the others. The fifth floor featured girls whose dresses were slit to the armpits, a stuffed whale, story-tellers, balloons, pep-shows, masks, a mirror-maze, two love-letter booths with scribes who guaranteed results, "rubber goods," and a temple filled with ferocious gods and joss-sticks. On the top floor and roof of that house of multiple joys, a jumble of tight-rope walkers slithered back and forth, and there were see-saws, Chinese checkers, mahjong, strings of fireworks going off, lottery tickets, and marriage brokers (von Sternberg 1955, in Wood 1998, pp. 237-238).

Other amusement halls also included Shanghai opera, mini-golf courts, skating rinks, and in-store hotels (Zhen 2001).

This special climate of hedonism didn't arise overnight, and advertising and retailing played important roles in precipitating this dramatic change to a carnivalesque consumer culture. The Shanghai retail landscape included multi-story department stores, with the four most prominent built by overseas Chinese investors. Like the department stores that helped spur consumer culture in the West (e.g., Williams 1982), these stores exuded luxury and enveloped shoppers and window shoppers alike in an aura of rich variety, silver, silk, satins, and furs (Chan 1999; Lee 1999a). They offered an array of temptations, including American cosmetics, French truffles, Scotch whiskies, German cameras, American fountain pens, Japanese toys, English leather wallets and shaving kits—alongside a bewildering array of Chinese products (Dong 2000, pp. 96-97).

Many of the free-standing cinemas, theaters, restaurants, and hotels of the city were similarly exotic and luxurious in their atmospheres. Tea houses were a popular place for lower and middle class men to spend long periods taking in the free story telling performances (Benson 1996, 1999). While local cuisine is often taken to be one of the most difficult-to-change anchors of culture (Wei 1993; Escherick 2000), Western foods came to be associated with all things chic and elegant (Lu 1999; Yeh 1997). Even milk came to be "the epitome of what it meant to be scientific and modern" (Glosser 1999).

As Wei (1993) demonstrates, many Chinese houses in the foreign settlements emulated the foreigners' homes in wealth and ostentation. A number of these wealthy Chinese were compradors who served as liaisons between foreign firms and local distributors (Bergère 1986). They were necessary not only due to the lack of Chinese language by most foreigners, but also as a result of China's policy of allowing little or no direct involvement in distribution by foreigners. Because of their association with Westerners, they were despised as a class. The novelist Wu Chien-jen observed, "To the comprador, even the foreigner's fart is fragrant" (Wood 2000, p. 256). Beneath the wealthy Chinese were a large number of "comfortably well-off" who also lived much as foreigners did.

While newspapers and other forms of advertising were abundant in Shanghai, Crow (1937) estimates that only about ten percent of Chinese were literate and that less than five percent were newspaper readers. Lee and Nathan (1985) suggest considerably higher numbers: 30 to 45 percent male literacy and 2 to 10 percent female literacy. They estimate that one-quarter of urban men read periodicals. Thus full-fledged participation in the new consumer culture of Shanghai was something which involved only a minority of Shanghai's Chinese residents. Nevertheless, as Lu (1999) documents, few in the city failed to be touched by some aspect of this global consumer culture. Even lowly rickshaw pullers and coolies were likely to wear shoes with British rubber soles, smoke American packaged cigarettes, and light them with Japanese matches (Lu 1999). Escherick (2000) reports that even working class women from the cotton mills saved to dress up, go to movies and the opera, and go window-shopping with friends. Those who couldn't afford readymade clothes used less expensive tailors or made their own clothing in the latest styles (Lu 1999). Lee (2000) argues that a hybridized or creolized culture pervaded city life, evident in the combination of Western calendars and Chinese lunar calendars on ubiquitous ad posters (yu fen pai). Thus, even though complete adoption of consumer culture was something only a minority of Chinese could afford, there were few, if any, who were untouched by some aspect of global consumption patterns in the city. Moreover, the advertising and consumption that began in Shanghai spread far inland into China as well, although with less intensity (Lee and Nathan 1985).

The Advertising Environment

Western missionaries started the first newspaper in China in 1853, the Chinese Serial. The next year it began to carry advertising with the express purpose of inciting Chinese to emulate the West (Wang 2000). In 1872 Shun Bao (Shanghai News) began, and it soon became the largest and most influential newspaper in China, with distribution in other major cities the following day (Lee and Nathan 1985). Both Shun Bao and the next leading newspaper in Shanghai, Sin Wan Pao were initially foreign owned, but soon were bought out by Chinese owners (Wang 2000). Newspapers in cosmopolitan Shanghai were published not only in Chinese, but also in English (North China Daily), French (Le Journal de Shanghai), and Russian (Shanghai Zaria).
Magazines circulation also reached its peak in China during the 1920s and 1930s, when it was estimated there were approximately 2,000 periodicals on the market with an audience of 30 million readers (Nathan 1985; Xu 1990; Wang 2000). Most magazines carried advertising and had a heavily female readership. Leading titles focused on the home, family, fashion, beauty, movies, and shopping (Wang 2000). So significant were these magazines in shaping consumption that Warra (1999) concludes “Artists and Publishers were self-conscious inventors of Shanghai’s new-style consumer culture” (p. 87). In addition corporations published journals to promote their products. British American Tobacco offered *Qing Yan Pao* (a monthly on capitalism), Bayer Pharmaceutical Company published *Tien De* (*God’s Virtue*), a medical journal, and Eastman Kodak published *Kodak Photography* (Xu 1990).

Other prominent forms of early Twentieth Century advertising in China included billboards, neon signs, posters, calendars, radio, and cinema advertising. Shanghai was saturated with outdoor advertising and neon signs that made the city a blazing spectacle at night (Lee 1999a). Retail display in the stores of downtown Shanghai quickly followed European and American trends with big plate glass windows with eye-catching displays and sumptuous arrays of merchandise (Cochran 2000; Lee 1999b).

Shanghai also had approximately half of China’s 93 radio stations in 1935 (Lee and Nathan 1985). Radio stations became popular by broadcasting the *tanci*, a storytelling genre popular in tea houses. Advertisers sponsored these shows and writers remade the traditional *kaiping* songs, that the *tanci* included, to address popular topics such as world leaders, soccer stars, movies, and divorce, as well as lauding the advertising sponsors (Benson 1996). Unlike the lower class male patrons of *tanci* in the teahouses, the radio *tanci* broadcasts attracted a large and upscale female audience. Prominent among the advertisers who chose to address this radio audience were silk merchants, department stores, jewelry stores, clothing stores, furniture stores, and furriers. Although many broadcast *tanci* songs became critiques of the materialistic Shanghai lifestyles and were later used to promote anti-consumption and anti-foreign nationalist movements, advertisers were not deterred and even co-opted these critiques for their own advantage (Benson 1996, 1999).

The Lao Jiu He Silk and Foreign Goods Emporium proclaimed that:

> The Emporium is deeply aware that promotion of national goods is fundamental to nation building, but among foreign products are articles that China does not produce, and to satisfy the demands of everyone...we supplement our silk with foreign merchandise (Benson 1996, p. 160).

By the mid-1930s, Shanghai had approximately 300 movie theaters that could seat 300,000 people (Lee and Nathan 1985). British American Tobacco (BAT) began producing film clips in 1922 using English film crews. Its first ad featured an animated cartoon showing a donkey that refused to move until it smelled the smoke (which spelled out BAT in English) of a cigarette lit by its owner (Cochran 1980, p. 135). Given the predictably poor Chinese response to such advertising, BAT turned to Chinese filmmakers who were able to employ Chinese language, Chinese actors and actresses, and Chinese theatrical traditions. BAT bought a network of theaters and contracted with others to show their ads. Sometimes packets of its cigarettes were sold at the door as tickets for admission (Cochran 1980). Other advertisers, like medicine companies, also used cinema advertising, based on short films or slide shows (Cochran 2000).

One special form of advertising in old Shanghai was calendar advertising (*yue fen pai*). There is a tradition of hanging up New Year pictures during the Spring Festival (Lunar New Year) period in China. In addition, traditionally Lunar calenders with portraits of the kitchen God were purchased and hung at this time of year. The popularity of New Year Pictures attracted the both domestic and foreign businesses. By creating a give-away calendar that was attractive and carried the name and image of their products, they could be assured of a constant presence in numerous Shanghai households.

Another special form of advertising in old Shanghai is the cigarette card. So successful was the introduction of foreign cigarettes into Shanghai by American J.B. Duke of British American Tobacco (BAT) that tobacco was called the opium of the twentieth century (Wood 1998, p. 197). The cigarette card is a well-painted small picture with various subjects, inserted in cigarette packages and intended to be a collectible that would promote brand loyalty. The first set of cigarette cards in Shanghai were by British Wales Tobacco in 1894 and included soldiers from the Qing Dynasty Army. American DaMei Tobacco issued a series of cigarette cards and advertised that those who collected 50 of them could send them back to the company and receive a beautiful picture book. The subjects of cigarette cards included philosophy, religion, politics, economics, foreign policy, commerce, law, military, geography, history, chemistry, physics, antiques engineering, agriculture, transportation, art, music, opera, animals, flowers, beauty, famous people, clothing, film, and more. The cigarette card was so popular that some businesses other than cigarette companies also began to send out printed serial cards as a form of promotion. In the 1930s, cigarette cards reached their peak. Following the war with the Japanese in the 1930s, cigarette cards stopped because of inflation.

BAT even gave away small rugs for the bottom of rickshaws with their name on them (Chiou 1993). While there were American, British, Japanese, and French advertising agencies operating in Shanghai to produce all this advertising (Benson 1999; Cochran 1992b; Xu 1990), of the four largest agencies, two were local (China Commercial Advertising Agency and Consolidated National Advertising Company) and two were owned by foreigners (Carl Crow and Millington). While a detailed...
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In those days when you were flying high.
Who would have rejected you?
Everyone loved you
Saying you were better than silver dollars
Because your taste overwhelms people
And is even better than opium.

... I thought our love affair would remain
Unchanged until earth and sky collapsed.

... Then this movement against the treaty got underway
And spread everywhere.

Because Americans mistreated our Overseas Chinese
Degrading us like lowly oxen and workhorses.
Therefore everyone has united to boycott America,
And that means opposing Americans (quoted in Cochran 1980, p. 47).

While the boycott stimulated local Chinese companies to begin manufacturing cigarettes, they were ultimately overcome by the huge resources of BAT and the company faced no serious local competition until 1915.

The anti-American boycott of 1905 and 1906 was followed by anti-Japanese boycotts in 1908 and 1915, as the Japanese pressured China into treaty concessions. When Japan was awarded the former German concession in Shantung province at the end of World War I, Chinese students took to the streets. More massive protests erupted against Japanese products in 1919. Following an incident in which the British police killed Chinese workers in 1925, anti-British boycotts began, with some apparent help from BAT's largest local competitor, Nanyang Tobacco Company (Yeh 1997). While these and other anti-foreign boycotts, lasting into the 1930s, helped shift the fortunes of local and foreign advertisers in China, in Bergère's (1986) assessment they were not so much about patriotism and xenophobia nor “a rejection of the West but, on the contrary, an attempt to come to terms with it both as a model and as a threat” (p. 51). Crow (1937) reports that advertisers were torn between attempting to pass their products off as Chinese and appeal to patriotism and attempting to claim that their goods were made in England or America and therefore of superior quality. As time progressed the protests were directed more against Japan. BAT turned this against (Chinese) Nanyang cigarettes by disclosing the company’s affiliations with Japan (one of the co-owners had acquired Japanese citizenship in order to facilitate doing business there). Thus foreign-owned BAT actually used nationalist and anti-Japanese feelings to its own advantage.

Besides protesting against the foreign presence in Shanghai, the Guomindang (GMD) or New Life Movement opposed the tide of consumerism that engulfed the city (Benson 1999). Its slogans were simplicity and economy (Warra 1999). It was a left-wing anti-capitalist movement that eventually led to the Chinese civil war and the establishment of the People’s Republic of China. Its particular target was often the new Shanghai woman, who

Anti-Foreign Product Boycotts

At the same time, boycotts of foreign products periodically swept the city and the nation in the first half of the 20th century. Boycoting was a traditional means used in China by guilds wishing to pressure recalcitrant merchants and corrupt officials (Bergère 1986). But the 1905-1906 anti-American boycott took on a more political character. It was largely directed against the most prominent American consumer goods companies, BAT and Standard Oil. Cochran (1980) characterizes the boycott as an effort “to bring an end to a period of national humiliation ... from the Opium War of the early 1840s to the Boxer Uprising of 1900” (p. 45). In the treaty ports, and especially Shanghai, this humiliation was provoked daily by the racist condescension of the foreign community in the city (Dong 2000). Anticipating the brand relationship literature that has recently become popular in marketing, one protest song lamented a failed relationship and was sung in the form of a Cantonesse love song:

You are really down and out,
American cigarette.
Look at you down and out.
I think back to the way you used to be.
was characterized as self-indulgent, materialistic, and unable to control her love of fashion (Benson 1999). The New Life Movement, using *kaipan* broadcast on the radio in the 1930s, as well as other media, urged women to sacrifice their selfish longings for the latest fashions in the interests of the nation. These appeals were also tied to nationalism in an effort to reduce China’s foreign debt and oppose the importation of luxury goods from the West and Japan. The GMD called for buying only national goods and chastised the merchants who stocked foreign silks, perfumes, shoes, and other fashion goods. However, as we have seen, these merchants were largely able to claim in their advertising to be supporting the New Life Movement while still advocating consumption of the latest styles and foreign goods (Benson 1996, 1999). Foreign cigarette manufacturers (Cochran 1989, 1999b) and makers of foreign medicines (Cochran 2000) were also able to turn the nationalist New Life Movement to their advantage via patriotic advertising themes.

**Conclusion**

While these conditions helped shape global versus local emphasis of advertising in Shanghai, they are perhaps not entirely different from today when the West is both a source of admiration and antipathy in China (Belk and Zhou 2001). Of course, it was not solely the invasion of global brands in Shanghai that precipitated the Chinese civil war that formed the PRC and ROC. The humiliation of Western pseudo-colonization and the occupation by Japan were significant factors as well. But the association of branded promotions with Shanghai, decadence, greed, and foreign oppression were significant factors. This opposition continues in contemporary China, despite market socialism. The simultaneous tendencies of foreign brands to insinuate themselves as being local and local brands to pass themselves off as foreign are other practices that continue in contemporary China, especially in large cities (Belk and Zhou 2001; Zhao and Belk 2002). Other similarities between the two periods can be found in the importance of investments by overseas Chinese, people’s love/hate relationships with Western luxury goods, rapid economic growth, rapidly escalating consumerism and cosmopolitanism, corruption and an anything-goes atmosphere, growth of local Chinese brands, individual and national questions about what it means to be Chinese, and backlash against the global. So the current encounter with globalizing consumption in China may well have something to learn from Old Shanghai.

Quite unlike earlier periods in Chinese history, when the nation was quite assured of its cultural superiority, it is now struggling to catch up with the West. At the same time, years of communism have inculcated a fear that first arose in Old Shanghai: the tendency to “worship things foreign” (*chongyang*)—Lu (1999, p. 310). As Belk and Zhou (2001) demonstrate, this combination of forces has resulted in a simultaneous love/hate relationship with the global/foreign in contemporary China. However, this time there is little desire to boycott the foreign or reject the forces of consumerism.

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