

Analysis on the Evolution of the Four Tropes of Semiotic Rhetoric of Chinese Cigarette Labels

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ABSTRACT

Cigarette labels are the commodity signs. As a form of advertisement, the text of cigarette labels, which is composed of words and patterns, is culturally branded because of its different times and regions, and has obvious characteristics of the times. The cigarette label in China has a history of more than one hundred years, and the style of the cigarette label has also undergone great changes. From the perspective of semiotic rhetoric, this article analyzes the evolution of the four tropes of ideographic way of cigarette label in China, and discusses how the ideographic way of cigarette label will evolve after entering the era of irony based on the current tobacco control in China.

Keywords: *semiotic rhetoric, cigarette labels, evolution of the four tropes*

I. INTRODUCTION

Cigarette label is the packaging of tobacco products, commonly known as cigarette box or cigarette shell. It is one of the tobacco culture representatives in the process of cigarette commercialization. It can not only represent the image of tobacco products, explain the connotation of tobacco brand, but also play a positive role in the spread of tobacco culture. The well-designed cigarette label is an important judgment basis for people to consume cigarettes. It can be said that the cigarette label is the carrier to publicize tobacco products and an advertisement to attract consumers. Therefore, a fine cigarette label can not only become a trademark symbol, but also play a subtle role in promoting communication and beautifying the soul. At present, cigarette labels, stamps, matchbox stickers and wine labels are known as the four major plane collections worldwide.

The collection of cigarette label not only includes the cigarette box, but also the text composed of the words and patterns on the cigarette label. From the perspective of symbol expression, the cigarette label achieves its different rhetorical purposes through words and patterns. Cigarette label has the attribute of advertisement, which is the transmission of cigarette commodity information and the presentation of brand concept of cigarette enterprises. From a diachronic point of view, cigarette labels reflect the imprint of the development of the times, and condense the different cultural characteristics of different periods. Cigarette label is the epitome of an era. Therefore, it is also

branded with the cultural brand. The development and change of the style of the cigarette label is also reflected in the change of rhetorical skills.

II. THE EVOLUTION OF THE FOUR TROPES OF SEMIOTIC RHETORIC

At the beginning of the 18th century, Vico, an Italian thinker in the age of Enlightenment, first proposed the evolution of the four tropes. He divided the world history into four stages: the "God period" dominated by metaphor, "hero period" dominated by metonymy, "man's time" dominated by synecdoche and "decadent period" dominated by irony. [1] In China, Professor Zhao Yiheng clearly put forward the process of the evolution of the four tropes. He believes that the way of expression used by human beings generally starts from metaphor, then goes through metonymy, synecdoche, and finally enters the stage of irony. "Any dogma, any concept, even any career, is essentially a mode of symbolic expression. As long as it is a way of expressing meaning, it is difficult to be out of the evolution law." [2]

After the evolution of the four tropes was put forward, Chinese scholars applied it to various fields of research. From the perspective of symbolic expression, the evolution of the four tropes is a universal evolution law.

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III. THE EVOLUTION OF THE FOUR TROPES OF THE IDEOGRAPHIC WAYS OF CHINESE CIGARETTE LABELS

There are different opinions on when and where tobacco was introduced into China. Tang Qiyu pointed out that tobacco was introduced into China not once, but in three stages. [3] Cigarettes (also known as paper cigarettes) were introduced into China in the late Qing Dynasty. With the appearance of cigarettes in China, cigarette labels also entered the vision of Chinese people. Because the initial cigarette was imported from foreign countries, the earliest cigarette label in China was also imported.

The earliest cigarette label in the world appeared in 1880. The "Neil" cigarette box produced by the Austro-Hungarian Empire printed a flying eagle and a corner of an ancient street. [4] "Since the cigarette was imported into China by American merchant in 1890, China began to see cigarette labels." [5] All kinds of cigarettes imported into China have attracted the people with their unique packaging patterns. With the advantages of being easy to smoke and carry, cigarettes spread rapidly in China and entered the daily life of Chinese people.

Since the appearance of national cigarette factories around 1905, cigarette labels in China have a history of more than 100 years. As a form of advertisement, cigarette labels have experienced four stages of development: metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony.

A. Metaphor stage: patriotic feelings and national spirit conveyed by cigarette labels

"There is a certain openness in the interpretation of symbolic metaphor, and the connection between the metaphorical objects and the tenor is relatively vague, which is often only in the intention of the sender." [6] The metaphorical relationship is often the fixed point of intention, and the sender hopes that the interpreter's decoding activities can be carried out according to his own intention. Metaphor plays a role mainly through association. It requires an imaginative decoding behavior. The interpreter finds a certain feature and carries out meaningful replacement. However, the cooperative behavior expected by this way of expression does not always happen.

At the beginning of the 20th century, national tobacco enterprises began to start. It can be said that at the beginning of its birth, national tobacco was in the fierce competition with foreign enterprises. In order to compete with foreign cigarette market, the words and patterns in the cigarette labels showed strong patriotic spirit and national feelings, and showed patriotic feelings and national feelings through metaphor, so as to fight against foreign tobacco.

After the May 30th Movement, China launched a boycott of foreign goods. People are proud to buy Chinese products. Therefore, the expression of tobacco labels in this period was mainly through "Chinese products". In the middle of the logo, there is a mouse with a pointed beak. The mouse is the first in the traditional Chinese Zodiac, and represents that the "golden mouse" cigarette was born in the year of the mouse. In 1925, "Meili" cigarettes appeared. In the center of the cigarette label, there is the image of Oriental beauty represented by Lv Meiyu. The cigarette label of "Meili" brand mainly takes Oriental beauty as a picture, which not only expresses the meaning of beauty, but also metaphors the characteristics of "Chinese products". The slogan of "有美皆备,无丽不臻" (beauty) became the advertisement propaganda at that time example. Whether it is Oriental beauty or mouse, the meaning of such cigarette labels is to convey that they are "Chinese products".

In addition, there is also a very clear metaphorical relationship in the cigarette signs of this period. "The two symbols have a forced metaphorical relationship in the expression level, and no other interpretation is allowed, which is called simile." [7] There are three striking numbers of "918" on the label of "918". There is a picture of Zhang Xueliang in the label. The metaphorical relationship between this label and the September 18th Incident is very clear.

The representative cigarette label of a period is the condense of Chinese history. Before the founding of new China, national tobacco enterprises experienced nearly half a century of turbulence. In order to compete with foreign cigarette enterprises and compete for the consumption market of cigarettes, most of the characters in the cigarette labels in this period were fighting heroes and Chinese celebrities, and the expression of cigarette labels was more related to the fate of the country and the nation, so as to realize the meaning connection with the brand.

B. The stage of metonymy: the spirit of the times and daily emotion conveyed by the cigarette label

Metonymy emphasizes the externality of things, which is characterized by adjacency. And the adjacency refers to a cultural meaning. During this period, the characters in the cigarette labels were no longer national heroes or celebrities, but more labor workers and farmers. They expressed the common people's celebration of the liberation of the motherland, their love for labor, their joy for harvest and their pursuit of bravery. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, China is in the initial stage of economic construction and national development, and the cigarette label has obvious characteristics of the times, so as to complete the "grafting" of cigarette and brand image.

In order to celebrate the liberation of the motherland, there were many words in the cigarette labels, such as "jubilation", "peace", "liberation" and "happiness", and the pictures were mostly peace dove, yangko and worker and peasant alliance, showing strong characteristics of the times.

In the 1950s, the state-owned Shanghai tobacco company changed the brand of "Laodao" to "Laodong". On the label, a worker and a farmer stood side by side with a sickle hammer, and there was also a famous saying "labor creates the world" [8]. Sickle and hammer are the metonymy of workers and farmers. Through workers and their tools, the concept of cigarette brand is conveyed by metonymy.

The label of "Dalianhuan" cigarettes is the metonymy of the Chinese people's big get-together. On the label of "Jiefang" cigarette, there is a laborer who holds a spanner and carries his labor tools on his shoulder. He walks on the map of the motherland, expressing the joy of the Chinese people to stand up. In addition, there are also pictures of workers and peasants with chimneys, tractors, gears, hammers, sickles and ears of wheat. Here, chimneys, tractors, gears, hammers, sickles and ears of wheat are metonymies of workers and farmers, presenting a new era of worker and peasant alliance. It can be said that the cigarette labels of this period are also the transmission of the spirit of the times.

C. Synecdoche stage: regional characteristics and individuality conveyed by cigarette labels

The relationship between metaphorical objects and tenor of synecdoche is the same as that between the part and the whole. It emphasizes the internality of things. If metonymy is the adjacency, the synecdoche is the part that represents the whole. With the reform and opening up and the rapid development of economy in the new century, cigarette labels have also entered a new period of development. In the face of fierce competition in the cigarette market, cigarette labels have entered the stage of design and development. Tobacco enterprises have begun to strengthen their own brand characteristics. Some old tobacco companies have also begun to design new cigarette labels. The design of cigarette labels pays more attention to artistic features and increases the recognition of their brands through personalized cigarette labels.

Since the late 1970s, tobacco labels began to show the representative landscape, historical figures and cultural characteristics of the place where the tobacco enterprises are located, and expressed the uniqueness of the tobacco brand by means of the whole. There are yurts, prairie, grazing sheep, herdsmen on horses in "Daqingshan" cigarette label of Huhhot cigarette factory, and there are birds flying on the famous bird island in "Qinghai Lake" cigarette label. In addition,

there are "ten scenes of West Lake" on "West Lake" cigarette label and "Ashima" in "Yunnan" cigarette label.

Cigarette companies began to design cigarette labels with local cultural allusions, and launched a series of complete sets of cigarette labels. With the help, "five Emperors", "five Mausoleums" and "five Marquises" were set up by Chenggu tobacco factory in Shaanxi Province. The cigarette label of "Twelve hairpins of Jinling" was put forward by Nanjing tobacco factory in Jinling, the ancient city. This kind of label is closely related to the historical and cultural characteristics of the place where the tobacco is located, and refers to the regional characteristics of the tobacco label through the cultural heritage of the place where the cigarette enterprise is located.

In this period, the text of cigarette label showed and highlighted the advantages of cigarette brand by emphasizing its uniqueness. Because of its historical and cultural value, cigarette labels began to become important collectibles, especially the carefully designed labels and commemorative cigarette labels became the objects of the collection. The usability of the cigarette labels began to decrease, and the symbolic significance increased.

D. Irony stage: entertainment attitude and self-entertainment conveyed by cigarette labels

Irony is a rhetorical way that transcends figures of speech. Whereas other rhetorical formats try to bring the two sides together, irony places two incompatible meanings in the same expression. [9] In irony stage, literal meaning and practical meaning are completely opposite. Literal meaning expresses "yes", while practical meaning expresses "non". There are obvious conflicts and contradictions between the two levels of meaning. Irony is the negation of the first three stages. In the first three stages, the meaning of the cigarette label shows patriotic feelings, the spirit of the times and regional characteristics. At the beginning of the 21st century, the text of cigarette labels entering the stage of irony is full of various symbols with contradictory meanings, which shows a kind of entertainment attitude and self-entertainment.

Smoking and tobacco entered China as a way of life. Smoking used to be positive and non-marked in China. At the birth of the tobacco label in China, "Baique" cigarette label once featured a 50-word advertisement praising cigarettes. With the harm of smoking and being smoked deeply rooted in the hearts of the people, and with the introduction and implementation of various tobacco control policies, smoking has become an obvious difference and marked item. Since the 1980s, cigarette labels in China must be marked with "smoking is harmful to health". The changes of propaganda words on cigarette labels record the debate between

"smoking" and "anti-smoking", and also present the process of "marking" smoking.

The label of a cigarette produced by a company has the words "wonderful life, and loving to fight and win". The words and patterns are mostly the goal of struggle, full of inspirational color. In the era when smoking is marked, it is difficult to associate struggle with cigarette. Obviously, this way of expressing meaning refers to "what is said but not what is meant", which seems to have nothing to do with commodities and brands. However, this way of ideographic expression can make the interpreter think about its meaning more seriously and increase the tension between expression and interpretation.

Since the 1980s, cigarette labels in China have been marked with the admonition that "smoking is harmful to health", there was no great change in the printing and paper of cigarette labels at that time. Nowadays, influenced by consumption culture and packaging culture, exquisite cigarette labels have become a kind of consumption with symbolic meaning. As the main body of the economy, tobacco enterprises take the promotion of commodity sales to obtain economic benefits as the main purpose. As a form of advertising and publicity of tobacco enterprises, cigarette labels can better attract the attention of consumers and improve the sales of cigarettes. At the beginning of the 21st century, there are still warnings such as "smoking is harmful to health" on cigarette labels, which have the nature of compromise and express that their business is morally constrained in a literal sense. "Today's cigarette labels, with careful design, exquisite printing and paper, have become a practical product of today's packaging culture." [10] There is an obvious conflict between the text meaning and the intention meaning of the cigarette label. Although the text meaning is to advise smokers to quit smoking as soon as possible, the intention meaning conveyed by the exquisite cigarette label is completely opposite. The meaning of text is negative, but the meaning of intention is not negative.

IV. THE EVOLUTION OF IDEOGRAPHIC WAYS OF CIGARETTE LABELS AFTER THE AGE OF IRONY

The evolution of the four tropes generalizes the law of the evolution of symbolic ideogram, but does not point out what the next step of irony is. Professor Zhao Yiheng summed up two solutions. The first is to start with a new way of expressing meaning, and reconstruct the evolution from metaphor to irony; second, irony is an ideal cultural state and should be extended as far as possible. [11] Wang Lihui believes that there is a third way, that is, "before the two situations mentioned above, the meaning of symbolic text is more in a state of four tropes." [12]

It is the result led by cultural selection whether to start the cycle again, or to maintain the irony stage continuously, or the four-trope synchronic of symbolic representation. But this choice is not made by culture alone, but subject to political, economic and social influences. Due to the diversity of cultural forms, the external factors influencing its evolution and the degree are different. Therefore, after the evolution of different cultural forms to the stage of irony, the next development will be different.

Since the introduction of cigarettes into China, there has been a debate between "smoking" and "health". At first, because people could not accurately judge the harm of cigarettes to human body, they first opposed tobacco not for health reasons, but for moral considerations. Until the medical community clarified the harm of smoking and second-hand smoke, people began to control tobacco from the perspective of health. The process of tobacco control in the world has also experienced a process from slow to rapid progress, from local control to comprehensive control.

China's tobacco control started relatively slowly, but in recent years, with the revision and introduction of relevant laws and policies, China has begun to ban smoking completely. However, because smoking is a personal choice, cigarettes will not disappear completely in the future, and cigarette labels will always exist with cigarettes. In this context, the author believes that after the stage of irony, the expression of cigarette labels will start from metaphor again. In the symbolic metaphor, the connection between the vehicle and the tenor is relatively vague, and the interpretation is open to some extent. In the era of comprehensive tobacco control and "smoking" being marked, and the concept of health will be more deeply rooted in the hearts of the people. It is easier for tobacco enterprises to express their meanings by virtue of this fuzzy connection relationship, and the cigarette labels that re-enter the metaphorical stage will no longer express national feelings and spirit, but is to transmit the brand concept.

V. CONCLUSION

In the history of more than 100 years of the development of cigarette labels in China, the ideographic ways of cigarette labels begin from the metaphorical stage, go through the metonymy stage and the synecdoche stage, and then develop to the current irony stage. From the perspective of the development history of cigarette labels, the changes of the ideographic methods of cigarette labels are closely related to the changes of the times. Under the current situation of comprehensive tobacco control in China, the ideographic way of cigarette labels may start a long process of evolution from the metaphorical stage. As an universal law of evolution, an ideographic form will

eventually go to self-deconstruction, but this kind of self-denial only aims at an ideographic form, and different cultural types will evolve in different ways.

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