

**A World of Asymmetry: Caricatures in Chinese Illustrated Newspapers and Periodicals (1867-1918)**

In the mid-19th century, China was confronted for the first time with the invasion of imperialism from the West. Though China was not colonized completely, concession territories and unequal treaties made it a “semi-colonized” country. For the country itself, a number of asymmetries arose. Politically, it had to choose between eastern dignity and western reform. In life, although it desired to learn new concepts, new knowledge, new lifestyle, China could not shake off its ancient cultural burdens. Owing to this tension, many satirical works surfaced in the society.

In the past, studies on Chinese satires of modern times have mostly focused on texts. As a matter of fact, pictures are equally worth our attention. In a nation that had a high degree of illiteracy, pictures might play an important role to influence and educate the common people. Furthermore, since newspapers, a new product from the West, become news carriers for China in Modern times, they developed a persuasive power of speech and lead public opinion at that time. Therefore, I will focus on the caricatures in representative Chinese pictorials and cartoon magazines mostly from 1867 to 1918, when the Chinese cartoon was growing.

In my doctoral project, I will approach the investigation of pictures from a perspective of asymmetry. Since asymmetry is the appearance that something has when its two sides or halves are different in shape, size or style, satirical works are always a good medium through which we can examine the conflict and integration in it. Particularly, in the Chinese case, the target’s pictures satirized were wide and various, including imperialists’ invasion, current politics, Chinese traditions and culture, habits, even the Westerners and their culture. A contradictive attitude, such as this, helps us understand how the Chinese identified with themselves and how they might seek a balanced path for a change under this asymmetric presence.

Simultaneously, the West’s colonialism and imperialism led to an exchange between East and West, though it was not an equal relationship. However, I argue, asymmetry continues building from one place to another not only forwards, but also backwards, and may even spread unexpectedly in direction not previously thought of. Take for instance the satirical cartoon magazine “Punch”; it originated in Britain in 1841. Later a similar periodical “Puck” published in 1904 in America. Afterwards, the trend began to flow over East Asia. “Tokyo Puck” was initially published in 1908 in Japan, while “Shanghai Puck”, after ten years, was published in 1918 in China. Their diversity of content and pictures, as well as the fact that similar images were being shared amongst them, became very valuable. In this dissertation, I will explore how these images were presented in different contexts and what mechanisms and ideologies were hidden by tracing the “journey of pictures”.

When this project is completed, the research relevant to the concept of asymmetry and Chinese caricatures can be expanded and more findings may be discovered through the case of Chinese caricatures: how asymmetry provokes the Chinese adjust themselves, demonstrates their sentiments and eventually creates an internationally distinctive network of images among caricatures among countries and cultures.