

**COMPARATIVE STUDY OF
GRAPHIC ARTS IN PRINT FOR
POLITICAL PROPAGANDA
BETWEEN MALAYSIA AND CHINA**

CHEN SIN MIN

**UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA
2017**

**COMPARATIVE STUDY OF
GRAPHIC ARTS IN PRINT FOR
POLITICAL PROPAGANDA
BETWEEN MALAYSIA AND CHINA**

by

CHEN SIN MIN

**Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Arts**

January 2017

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to gratefully and sincerely thank Dr. Muhizam Mustafa for his guidance, mentorship, and most importantly, his understanding during my research studies at Universiti Sains Malaysia. His patience and kindness have given me the opportunity to develop my own research schedule, particularly his untiring efforts in correcting my errors over the years.

I also wish to thank Mr. A. Rahman Mohamed who has been very supportive and always there to give valuable advice. I also wish to thank Dr. A.S. Hardy Bin Shafii, Dr. Sarena Binti Abdullah and all other staff at School of Arts for organizing the invaluable seminars and activities that had helped a lot in my studies, including staff from School of Arts Administrative Office, especially Cik Sabariah who had been very helpful and providing her kind assistance to us.

Also wish to extend my gratitude to Mr. Ezal Ezham Bin Azami, Assistant Registrar (Data & Records Unit), for his assistance, and all others at the Institute of Postgraduate Studies (IPS), Universiti Sains Malaysia for their kind assistance during at time in need.

Last and not least, I beg forgiveness of all those who have been with me over the course of the years and whose names I have failed to mention.

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**KAJIAN PERBANDINGAN SENI GRAFIK
DALAM CETAK UNTUK PROPAGANDA POLITIK
ANTARA MALAYSIA DAN CHINA**

ABSTRAK

Penyelidikan ini tertumpu kepada penggunaan seni grafik dalam media cetak dan propaganda antara Malaysia dengan China sejak 1950-an hingga 2015. Objektif utama adalah mengkaji sama ada negara mempunyai tata cara tadbir yang berbeza menggunakan visual seni grafik yang sama untuk media cetak dan propaganda, masa depannya dalam konteks globalisasi tanpa sempadan dan kesan-kesan dari kemunculan teknologi seperti komputer, internet dan alat-alat komunikasi digital, atau sebaliknya. Dengan penumpuan kepada '*data atau fenomena*' yang boleh dibandingkan, empat aspek kajian telah di guna pakai untuk membuat perbandingan penggunaan seni grafik dalam cetak dan propaganda di kedua-dua buah negara. Ia adalah, '*Kempen Nasional, Kesetianegaraan, Perjuangan Dalam Kepemimpinan dan Tentang Kerajaan*'. Berdasarkan kajian perbandingan dan analisa, ia menunjukkan sistem tadbir kerajaan tiada ada implikasi secara langsung dengan peranan seni grafik dalam media cetak kerana kedua-duanya menggunakan alat strategi dan teknik yang sama untuk propaganda politik. Walaupun seni grafik mempunyai peranan yang penting dalam media cetak dan propaganda di Malaysia dan China, aplikasi dan implikasinya dilihat dipengaruhi oleh kemunculan teknologi digital yang baru.

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF GRAPHIC ARTS
IN PRINTS FOR POLITICAL PROPAGANDA
BETWEEN MALAYSIA AND CHINA

ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the use of graphic arts in prints and propaganda between Malaysia and China since the 1950s until 2015. The main objectives are to investigate whether different country of different governing system uses the same visual graphic art for print and propaganda, its future within the context of an increasingly borderless world and the effects of an emergence new technology in digital communication tools. By focusing on the issues of ‘comparable data’ or search for comparable phenomena, 4 major aspects of study have been established for comparative analysis on the roles of graphic arts in prints and propaganda between these two countries. They are “*National Campaign, Patriotism, Leadership Struggle and Anti-Establishment*”. Based on the comparative study and analysis, it showed that government system has no implication on the development of graphic arts in both countries as they adopted the similar strategies and techniques in print for political propaganda. Although graphic arts will continue to command an important role in print and propaganda for Malaysia and China, its application and implications will be no longer be the same due to the emergence of new digital technology.

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF RESEARCH



Pic. 1
The Death of Marat

In Schama's *'The Power of Art'*, broadcasted in a BBC series in 2006, on the Death of Marat by Jacques-Louis David, he argues,

"It is also a powerful piece of political propaganda".

(Schama, 2006)

David was asked to depict Marat as a martyr to keep the French Revolution going after Marat was murdered by a rival political sympathizer of Girondin, Charlotte Corday. David attempted to immortalize Marat, a member of Jacobin by glorifying his death, with painting details of him holding a pen and a paper sitting in a bath tub while writing for the people during the assassination. As the painting was created for a specific function to bring maximum emotional effect by selectively presented with details that may be false and carry intent to misled as his final moment of dead may not be the truth after all, particularly 'died holding a pen and a paper in a bathtub'. In this context, Schama argues that the painting of Marat has a propaganda motive and is probably one of the best examples of using art in propaganda.

As described by Toby Clark (1997), in his book, *Art and Propaganda in the Twentieth Century*, art is often devoted to the pursue of truth and beauty while propaganda, in

contrast, is a systematic manipulation with intend to persuade the masses. As most people viewed and understand paintings at subconscious level, the artist could deliberate and systematically manipulate to shape the perception of the audience. This means, the painting of Marat could have been used as a propaganda tool instead of depicting the truth and beauty based on Clark's arguement. However, this research is not about the murder of Marat or his political role in the French Revolution but the use of art as a political propaganda tool.

According to Berger (2001), people are often affected by what they see. He states;

“It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it”

(Berger, 1972)

Since seeing enables us to relate with our environment and helped to establish our place in this world as suggested by Berger, then visual images will always play a major role in our daily's lives. In this context, it is also possible that politicians seeking political power will make use of visual images in propaganda that may eventually control our lives.

This research explores the use of graphic arts in print for political propaganda in

Malaysia and China since 1950s until the year 2015, as both countries were established almost at the same era. The Federation of Malaya was established in 1957 while The People's Republic of China was established in 1949. The objectives of this comparison are to investigate its applications and implications of these graphic arts under different government systems, in the age of borderless nations brought by globalization and its impacts under the era of new communication technology.

1.1 IMPETUS FOR RESEARCH

Abraham Lincoln, in the Lincoln-Douglas debate states:

“With public sentiment on its side, everything succeeds; with public sentiment against it, nothing succeeds.”

(Lincoln-Douglas Debates, 1858)

This statement is as crucial as it can be extended to marketing politic as a commercial product as well. In simplicity, this means, with public sentiment against it, the product will not sell. Public sentiment is the key to success.

As a graphic designer with more than 30 years of experience in the advertising and marketing industry, promoting consumer products in the Asia Pacific region, it is also been a great motivation to investigate how graphic images play a similar role in politic.

In politics, graphic images are often not only used to change public opinion or to support of a particular politician but could also be used to ostracize a political opponent as well. For an example, during the Cultural Revolution, graphic art was one of the main tools used to ostracize an opponent, as in the case of Chairman Mao against Liu Shaoqi. Huge posters were created and produced to condemn Liu as a bourgeois, capitalist and a traitor to the Chinese revolution. (Kristof, 1992)

Hence, as designer, a burgeoning question always arises:

- 1) Could the same visual strategy or design concepts used in marketing consumer products applied to designing political graphic images?
- 2) What are the factors that need to be considered? In designing for marketing consumer products, there are some guidelines such as branding, market positioning, pricing, trends, etc. to be considered.
- 3) In political posters, is it possible to use the same strategy?

Being a Malaysian who has nearly a decade residing in China, exposing myself to a total different social political culture as compared to my previous years in Malaysia and Singapore gave me intense interests to investigate how and what visual design strategy could be used to achieve political objectives. From this interest, I decided to investigate the difference between Malaysia and China in social, historical and political landscape which itself is a real challenging task. Adding to this, new emerging technologies, such

as internet and mobile phones, in which I believe, plays an important role and inspiring new graphic design visual strategies that may affects or change public opinion in the coming future protecting those who are remaining in power or assisting those seeking for political power.

1.2 AIMS AND SCOPE OF RESEARCH

This research looks into graphic arts in print for political propaganda between Malaysia and China since the 1950s. The aims of the research are:

- To explore and identify the various types of political graphic prints used in Malaysia and China since the 1950s.
- To analyze the differences and similarities practices in using graphic arts as political tools between Malaysia and China.
- To investigate the future use of graphic arts for propaganda, particularly in the age of digital communication.

This scope of this research investigates the impacts of graphic arts within the social-historical context of Malaysia and China, based on the various political events that had taken place. One of the main objectives is to evaluate its applications and implications since the 1950s, as both countries obtained its independence almost at this period, with Malaysia in 1957 and the China in 1949. Focus will be on issues such as the visual