

# Study on the Commercial Operation and Advertising Design of the Modern Hankow Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd.

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## ABSTRACT

Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd. was founded in Shanghai in 1906 by Vilhelm Meyer, a Danish businessman, and others. This foreign firm introduced a large number of European and American industrial machinery and became an important import firm and industrial contractor firm in modern China through systematic equipment selection, installation and operation of engineering management, and played an important role in the development of modern Chinese industry. By exploring the history of advertising of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd., this paper sorts out the content of advertisements and summarizes and analyzes their design techniques, themes, characteristics and styles to provide reference for the study of modern Chinese advertising.

**Keywords:** *Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd., Advertising, Design.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

A foreign firm referred to a firm opened by foreign capitalists in China before 1949, which specialized in trading with foreigners, as well as the national industrial and commercial enterprises run by Chinese. The establishment of foreign firms led to the prosperous development of China's modern economy. Especially after the Second Industrial Revolution, industrial manufacturers from various countries exported machinery, textiles and electrical appliances to the world through foreign firms, which promoted the renewal of Chinese industrial equipment in the early 20th century. Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd.'s advertising design was an important way to promote enterprise image, sell all kinds of goods and serve industrial production. The study of various types of advertisements of this foreign firm is conducive to a clearer understanding of the business model and advertising culture of the Republic of China.

## 2. THE FOUNDER OF ANDERSON MEYER & CO. LTD., MEYER, AND HIS EXPERIENCE

Vilhelm Meyer, the founder of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd. was a Danish Jew who graduated from Brock Commercial School. In 1902, he came to Shanghai from Denmark and worked for the East Asiatic Company and the Sino-Russian Daosheng Bank successively. In 1905, he started his own business in Shanghai in cooperation with his former colleagues Ivan Anderson and A Peidesheng. In October 1909, Meyer was appointed as Danish Vice Consul in Shanghai. With the expansion of business, in 1915, Meyer became the agent of the American General Electric Company in China, laying the foundation for the overseas operation of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd.. ("Figure 1", "Figure 2")

However, the ambitious Meyer was not satisfied with being a salesman and he entered the field of manufacturing, with operations in China, South Asia and the United States. Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd. was the first foreign-owned foreign firm to enter China as an individual company. A few years later, Meyer's leadership skills were second to none as he continued to expand the scale and scope of

Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd.'s operations to become a multinational conglomerate.



Figure 1 A family photo of Meyer as a teenager.



Figure 2 A black-and-white portrait of Meyer himself.



Figure 3 A group photo of close employees of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd., U.S.A., and a group photo of company staff and department heads in 1931.

### 3. BUSINESS SCOPE AND BUSINESS CLASSIFICATION OF ANDERSON MEYER & CO. LTD.

#### 3.1 Overseas Business Operations

In 1915, Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd. developed into an international trading company with branches all over the world and its headquarter in Shanghai. According to statistics, Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd. represented 171 European and American manufacturers in various fields of heavy and light industries, playing a very important role in the development of modern Chinese industry [1].

The earliest overseas branch of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd. was established in Copenhagen, Denmark. In 1915, as a result of a visit to the United States, Meyer, Stree, Bailus and Siddons reorganized Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd. into an American joint stock company and established branches in New York and Manila. Among them, there were three subsidiaries under the Pacific Exploitation Company in New York: Anderson & Meyer Company, New York; Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd., Shanghai; and Pacific Commercial Company, Manila. Anderson & Meyer Company was mainly a commercial agent with agreements with American companies; Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd., Shanghai, and Pacific Commercial Company, Manila were doing import and export trade and providing machinery installation and maintenance services. ("Figure 3")

#### 3.2 Business Operations in China

After being transformed into a U.S. joint stock company, Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd. established branches in Tianjin, Hankow, Jinan, Hong Kong, Shenyang and Guangzhou as the scope of trade gradually expanded. At its peak, Anderson Meyer

& Co. Ltd. had 1,200 employees, 100 of whom were foreigners. In China, it was mainly engaged in both general importing and industrial engineering businesses. It was also a supplier and builder of Chinese equipment for transportation, textiles, machinery, materials, passenger and freight vehicles, and power plants. Anderson Meyer & Co.

Ltd. played a very important role in assisting China's modern industrial development, bringing numerous advanced equipment and technologies to China.

The office of Hankow Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd. was located at the intersection of Kelemansa Street (now Station Road) and Detomey Consular Street (now Shengli Street) [2]. In addition, the Hankow Water and Electric Light Company, the warehouse of the Hankow branch of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd., and the water supply tower for

the locomotive of the Pinghan Railway were all designed independently by the construction engineering department of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd.. In 1916, Hankow Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd. set up a warehouse next to the Pinghan Railway to centralize, transfer, and sell goods, as well as a large-scale shell-breaking factory and a tung oil refining factory, and the three buildings were located at the west end of Linzhi Road in the former Japanese Concession. ("Figure 4", "Figure 5", "Figure 6", "Figure 7")



Figure 4 The 1930 historical map of Hankow with the three warehouses of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd. clearly marked.

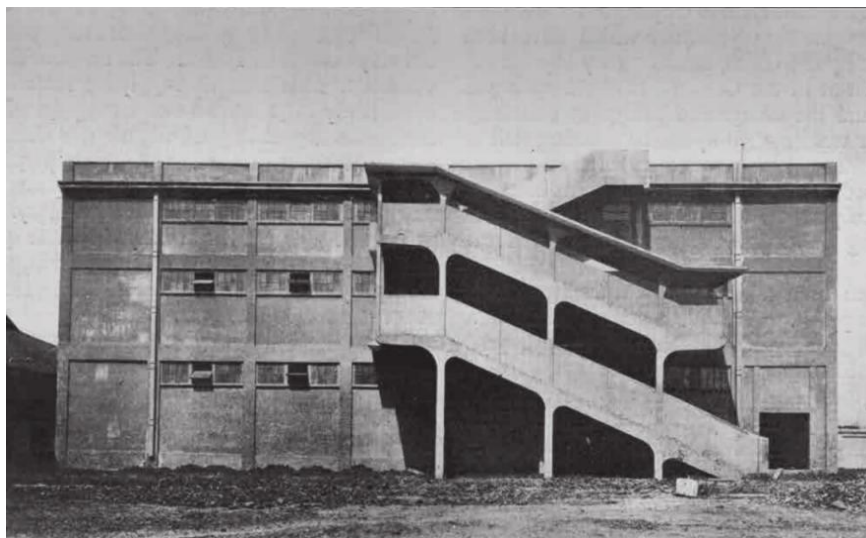


Figure 5 Building elevation of the Hankow warehouse of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd..





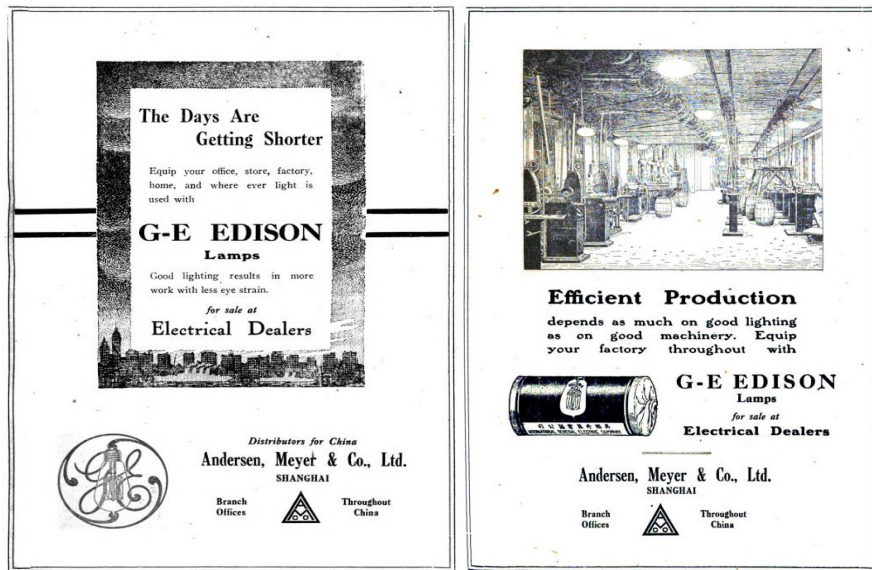


Figure 8 Various types of electricity advertisements of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd..

### 3.3.2 Heavy Industry Field

After the reorganization of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd. into a U.S. joint stock company, it became the largest U.S. machinery exporter to China at that time. It seized the opportunity of China's fledgling industry and focused on the export of heavy industry. For example, Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd. was a supplier of railroad tracks, locomotives, passenger cars and wagons, and public infrastructure to China. Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd. was an agent of 202 locomotives from the American Balwin Locomotive Company for sale to China.

Products sold by Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd. in the heavy industry field included textile machines, hosiery machines, looms, knitting machines and transmission equipment.

It included generators, boilers, pumps, fresh water generators, etc. for waterworks, and pulverizers for flour mills. In addition, it also included construction machinery, instrumentation equipment, etc. used in housing construction, railroad, road and airport projects, water conservancy and power construction, and mine development. What's more, Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd. also engaged in building materials such as steel, glass, asphalt, paint, bricks, roofing, tile, and tar. ("Figure 9")



Figure 9 Advertisement of mechanical apparatus of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd..

#### 4. IMPORTANT ACHIEVEMENTS AND ADVERTISING DESIGNS OF ANDERSON MEYER & CO. LTD.

##### 4.1 Important Achievements of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd.

As a major industrial contractor in modern China, Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd. built up a

comprehensive foreign firm from machinery and equipment selection, installation, operation to construction design through systematic organization. It provided advanced equipment and high-end technology for the modern development of modern Chinese industry.

From 1905 to 1931, the important achievements of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd. were shown in "Table 1" below.

Table 1. Important achievements of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd. from 1905 to 1931

Time	Significant events	Significant achievements
1905	Meyer started the business in cooperation with his former colleagues Anderson and Peidesheng from the former East Asiatic Company.	They operated a small-scale cotton cloth import business and marketed Danish products.
1906	Anderson and Peidesheng quit and Meyer became the sole proprietor of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd..	He acted as agent for the sale of textiles in Manchester. At the same time, he began to act as agent for American General Electric Company's electrical products.
1907	He began joint venture with Xielong Foreign Firm.	They distributed products of American and European industrial manufacturers such as American General Electric Company.
1908	They contracted with Mukden Electric Light Factory for electric light house and undertook large industrial projects for the factory.	They supplied and installed large-scale mechanical equipment.
1911	Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd. was reorganized as a joint stock company and registered in New York.	Three areas of textile importing, general importing and industrial engineering.
1915	Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd. became a subsidiary of the Morgan Financial Group, i.e., International General Electric.	The focus was on imports of industrial goods and transportation, and the proposal was to "assist China in developing its industries". They provided a comprehensive set of service measures from design, construction of plant, purchasing of machine, installation, commissioning to repair.
1929	The shareholding was bought by General Electric Company, but the name of the company remained unchanged.	Engineering design activities increased: for example, construction of the Great Northern Telegraph Company building and the Guangzhou Dr. Sun Yat-sen's Memorial Hall.
1931	The number of subordinate departments increased, and the company became the exclusive agent of the world famous manufacturing company in China.	Ministry of Works designed hundreds of projects.

##### 4.2 Logo Design and the Origin of Its Chinese Name

"In 1916, Vilhelm wanted to have a trademark logo for Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd. to print it on letterhead and on the machines produced in Shanghai for the Chinese factories. He asked about 300 employees and their families to submit their designs and the winner received a prize of 500 yuan. He received a total of 40 design drawings and the names of the participants were sealed in envelopes.

All the design drawings were posted on a blackboard for employees to vote on. Eighty percent of the votes were concentrated on a triangular design with the four letters AMCO." It is interesting that the designer for this triangle logo turns out to be Kirsten Meyer, Meyer's wife. This logo was used from 1916 until 1961 and was an essential symbol in every advertisement, and in some layouts, it was even used repeatedly in the lower left and right corners to reinforce the visual effect [4] .

The logo of Anderson Meyer & Co., Ltd. has the following connotations: Capital "A" and "M" stand for the initials of the founders of the company. The letter "A" is the initial of Ewan Anderson; the letter "M" is the initial of Vilhelm Meyer; the three sides of the triangle symbolize China, Denmark and the United States; the three sides of the triangle symbolize China, Denmark, and the United States who have long traded with each other. ("Figure 10" )



Figure 10 The logo of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd. and the form of its use in advertising.

Unlike in the West, it is rarely customary in China to have the owner's name as the name of a foreign firm. In order to develop the Chinese market and establish a corporate image, Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd. also needed an authentic Chinese name. After discussing with his Chinese friends, Meyer came up with a name that respected Chinese traditions and at the same time contained the meaning of development and progress, namely, "慎昌". The two characters mean "to be prudent" and "to develop" respectively. Meyer paid attention to absorbing traditional Chinese culture. The four characters "慎昌洋行" have been printed on the company's letterhead and on advertisements in various newspapers ever since.

#### **4.3 The Characteristic Design of the Advertisement of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd.**

The design of the commercial advertisement of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd. was to strengthen the identifiability as the main body. The advertisement's intuitive image, real information, and accurate text all effectively expressed the various types of information in Anderson Meyer &

Co. Ltd.'s import and export products. These advertisements appeared frequently in major Chinese and English newspapers, professional journals, and pictorials in China in the early 20th century, such as *The China Weekly Review* and the *Sino-American Engineering Monthly*. They not only promoted the trade development of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd., but also played an important role in the development of China's modern advertising industry.

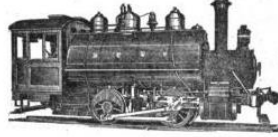
The simple stylistic language was the main feature of the visual design of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd.'s advertisements. Both Chinese and English advertisements revealed the business scope, product characteristics and corporate culture of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd. in a general, refined and essential manner. The type setting of the advertisements included distinctive texts, simple line drawings, and figurative black and white graphics, all of which were expressed in depth around industrial product design.

In the typeface design of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd.' advertisements, the English headlines were mostly in serif Roman type, capitalized, and usually three times the height of the texts. For example, the headlines in Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd.'s railroad equipment advertisements were in serif Roman type. ("Figure11" ) The typeface was eye-catching and powerful, and was more suitable for Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd.'s expression of machinery, construction materials, and other types of products. In addition, the headlines, explanatory texts and company information in Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd.'s advertisements had no more than three font styles, which were simple and holistic, giving readers a sense of stability. Some of the advertisements used italics and decorated letters for the names of manufacturing companies, such as the *SHERWIN WILLIAMS* paint advertisements distributed by Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd., which were dotted with italics. The texts of the advertisement were designed to form a simple and neat block, being concise and bright. ("Figure 12" )

## Railway Equipment

In the Railway Division of our Engineering Department, our special railway engineers and home connections equip us admirably to assist in solving China's railway problems.

We take preliminary surveys on railway projects, and furnish any equipment and material in connection with railway work.



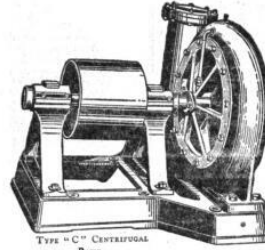
Locomotives, Passenger and Freight Cars, Trucks, Tramway Cars, Rails, Bridges, Springs, Couplers, Wheels, Axles, Tires, Electrical Equipment, Telephone and Telegraph Installations, Water and Cooling Stations, Railway-Shop and Roundhouse Equipment, Construction Equipment and Materials, Derricks, Cranes, File Drivers, Truck Tools, Pumping Installations, Engineering Instruments and Drawing Materials, Tubes and Fittings, Graphite, Packing, Hose, Valves, Glass, Railway Paints, etc.

Besides being the sole representative for the Baldwin Locomotive Works of

Philadelphia, who have been building locomotives for all parts of the world for eighty-five years, we represent Fairbanks Morse & Co., Railway Supplies; J. G. Brill & Watson Co., Tramway and Passenger Cars and Trucks; McCoway and Toller Co., Couplers; Keuffel & Esser Co., Engineering Instruments and Drawing Materials; Sherwin-Williams Co., Paints; Crescent Products Corporation, Roofing; Pressed Steel Car Co., Standard Steel Works Co.; General Electric Co., of America; Hercules Powder Co.; Worthington Pump and Machinery Corporation; U. S. Graphite Co.; U. S. Rubber Export Co.

## Hand and Power Pumps

To meet the extensive and increasing need for Pumps in the various industries of China, we have a complete line of Pumps of every kind and size. We have engineers who are qualified to handle Pumping Installations, and represent the leading manufacturers of Pumps and Accessories.



TYPE "C" CENTRIFUGAL Pump

Our line includes Pumping Plants, Hand and Power Pumps, Triplex Power and Centrifugal Pumps, Duplex Steam Pumps, Special Sinking and Mining Pumps, Pipes and Fittings, Hose, Packing, Valves, and other Rubber Goods required in connection with Pumping Machinery, as well

as all forms of Accessories for complex Waterworks and Pumping Installations. We are the sole representatives for the Worthington Pump and Machinery Corporation, Goulds, Scottish Tube Co., Chapman Valve Co., and other reliable manufacturers along the same line.

Andersen, Meyer & Co., Ltd.



慎昌洋行

Head Office—Shanghai  
 Branches—Canton, Changsha, Hankow, Harbin, Hongkong, Kalgan,  
 Peking, Tientsin, Tsinan, Uru, Vladivostok, Yunnanfu.



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Figure 11 Advertisements for railroad equipment and machinery of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd..

# Flat-Tone



**THERE IS NOTHING SO DESIRABLE AS PAINTED WALLS.**

The soft, rich, restful effects that FLAT-TONE produces cannot be secured with any other kind of wall covering. A heavy, durable oil paint that can be cleaned, when soiled, is not easily marred, and does not crack or loosen, has much in addition to its artistic appearance to recommend it.

Although when measured by years of service given, and by general standards of economy, FLAT-TONE has always led, it is now under existing conditions almost invariably lower in initial cost than ordinary wall covering.

**INVESTIGATE FLAT-TONE BEFORE YOU DECORATE.**

## SHERWIN-WILLIAMS

**PAINTS & VARNISHES**

Andersen, Meyer & Co., Ltd.  
 6 Yuen Ming Yuen Road, Shanghai

Canton, Changsha, Hankow,  
Harbin, Hongkong, Kalgan,



Peking, Tientsin, Tsinan,  
Uru, Vladivostok, Yunnanfu.

Figure 12 Advertisement for paint by Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd..

The standard style was the main layout form of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd.'s advertising layout. It consisted of two types: one had the illustration directly above the layout, followed by the title, and then the explanatory text with the logo graphic. ("Figure 13") The other had the headline at the top, the illustration at the top and middle part and the explanatory text at the bottom. "Most standard-type layouts were composed of three main blocks: top, middle and bottom, which were in turn mostly arranged in parallel, so they were also called

horizontal division layouts.[5]" The standard type as a whole consisted of three main blocks: top, middle, and bottom, which in turn were mostly arranged in parallel. For example, the radiator advertisement of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd. was a standard-type advertising layout[6].



**BALDWIN LOCOMOTIVES**



**Special Mikado Type Locomotive for China**  
 Used on the Peking-Mukden Railway

The record of the Baldwin Locomotive Works covers more than 85 years of continuous operation, during which approximately 47,000 locomotives have been built. They are of all types and sizes, and are found in practically all parts of the world.

With this unusual experience as a guide, and with complete manufacturing facilities, the Baldwin Organization is ready to solve China's most difficult railway haulage problems.

**THE BALDWIN LOCOMOTIVE WORKS, PHILADELPHIA, PA.**

**Andersen, Meyer & Co., Ltd.**

Shanghai, Tientsin, Peking, Kaigan, Harbin, Tsinan,  
 Urga, Changsha, Hankow, Hongkong, Vladivostok.

Figure 13 Shenchang Baldwin steam locomotive advertisement.

Left-right type was another form of layout for Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd.'s advertisement layout. The illustration was placed on the left side of the picture and the text was placed on the right side of the picture. For example, a left-right advertisement layout was adopted by an Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd.'s paint advertisement. The biggest advantage

of these two modes of compositions was that the subject was prominent and clear, and it was easy to achieve a balanced effect on the left and right side of the picture. The use of a more simple composition in advertising design can better highlight the image and visual identifiability of industrial products. ("Figure 14")

Illustrated booklet sent on request.



**An ARCOLA Radiator Is Like a Fine Piece of Furniture**

Can be placed in living room, parlor or any room of the house where it makes an attractive addition to the furnishing.

Can be painted any color to harmonize with the system of decoration. Good appearance. Neat design. Gives the home or office an air of prosperity.

The ARCOLA fits itself out of the class of "stoves" and "boilers" and deserves to be placed on the same level with high grade furniture.

**Andersen, Meyer & Co., Ltd.**  
 4 Yuen Ming Yuen Road Telephone Central 778  
 SHANGHAI

September 3, 1921 THE WEEKLY REVIEW 31



**PAINT THE INTERIOR AS WELL AS THE OUTSIDE**

We think of the ravages of the weather as applied to the exterior of buildings, and quite rightly. However, the wear and tear to which the inside of houses is subjected causes the property to go back equally as fast as the action of the elements outside.

Think of the effect on the floors due to constant walking and the moving of heavy furniture, the knocks received by the furniture, and the dirt which accumulates on the walls. These all require attention and

**SHERWIN-WILLIAMS**  
 PAINTS & VARNISHES

will insure their protection and provide them with beautiful decorative effects.

**FLOORLAC** provides a protective covering and retains the natural beauty of the wood.

**Mat-Jone** A beautiful washable oil paint for the walls in a variety of colours.

**SCAR-NOT** A clear varnish which can be used on the finest pieces of furniture and which will not spot or whiten from boiling water or hot dishes.

**Andersen, Meyer & Co., Ltd.**  
 4 Yuen Ming Yuen Road Telephone Central 778  
 Agents in China SHANGHAI  
 Canton—Fuzhou—Hankow—Harbin—Hongkong—Kalgan  
 Mukden—Peking—Tientsin—Yenan—Yerg—Vladivostok

Figure 14 Advertisement for radiator by Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd.; Fig. 14 Advertisement for paint by Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd.

There were three types of graphics in Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd.'s advertisements: One expressed the qualities of the product itself, which was expressed in a realistic way. One showed the use of the product in a human way and one showed it in an exaggerated way.

The graphics of this type of advertisement showing the product features themselves were large

and would take up at least half of the layout, such as Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd.'s tire advertisement, automobile advertisement, cotton spinning machinery advertisement and railroad equipment advertisement. Combined with the advertisement texts, it would make the readers have an intuitive understanding of the goods and can directly see the real face of the goods, thus arousing consumers' interest. ("Figure 15", "Figure 16")



Figure 15 Advertisements for tires and automobiles by Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd..

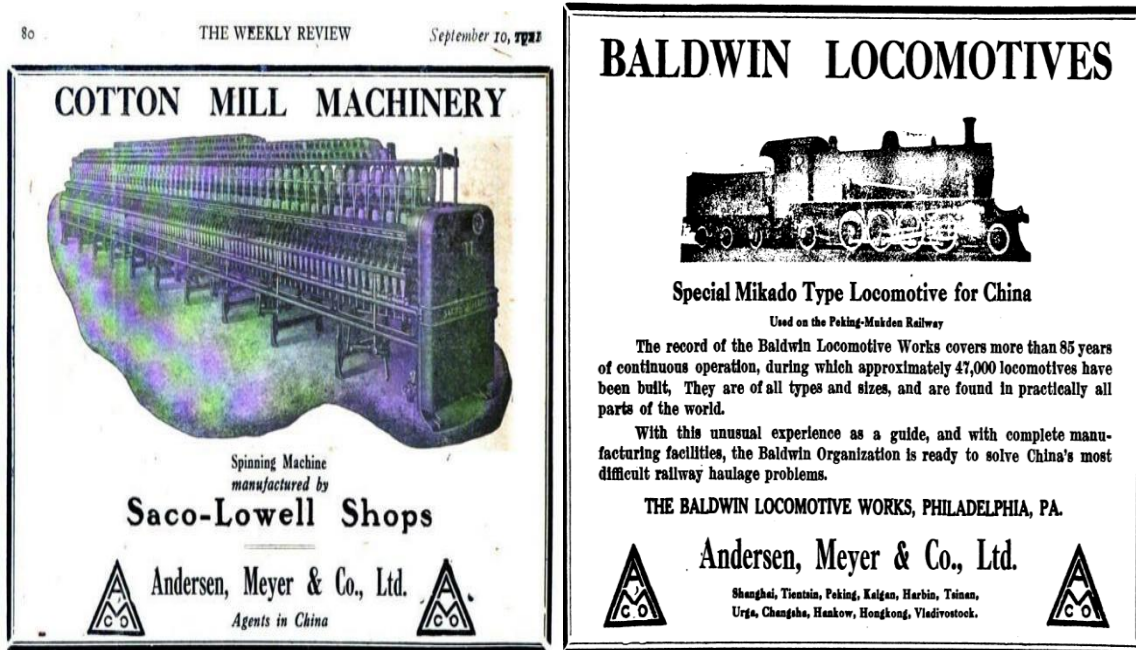


Figure 16 Advertisement for cotton spinning machinery and railroad equipment of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd..

Another illustration showed the scene where the goods were being used. This type of advertisement mostly used line drawing and flat painting to clearly reflect the function and construction method of the product. The character scenes were richer,

with obvious perspective effects; the close, medium and distant scenes were richly layered, and the relation between blankness and actuality was well grasped, such as the paint and roof advertisements of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd. A product in

stillness can only leave a limited impression on the reader. If a product is shown in use, the reader can feel through the illustration what convenience and

benefit the use of the product can bring to him or her. ("Figure 17")



Figure 17 The paint and roof advertisements of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd..

The third type of illustration was often exaggerated, such as the advertisement for the construction work recruitment of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd. By exaggerating the appearance and

nature of the product, it left a strong impression. At the same time, the text echoed the illustration very clearly and the whole was coordinated. ("Figure 18")



Figure 18 Advertisement for the construction work recruitment of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd..

## 5. CONCLUSION

As an important part of the business activities of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd., advertisements of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd. played a significant role in the development of the commodity economy. Through an in-depth analysis of the business scope and important achievements of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd., this paper summarizes, analyzes, and categorizes the design techniques, visual design features, advertising themes, and advertising methods of old advertisements of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd., and discusses them separately, making it possible to provide a deeper understanding of the contents of the advertisements of Anderson Meyer & Co. Ltd. at that time, as well as a deeper understanding of its development at that time,

providing reference for those who are engaged in the study of the history of foreign firms and advertising design.

## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper is independently completed by Meng Yao.

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