

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words:

Chinese Political Cartoons and the Visualization of Politics

Author: Na Sha

Supervisor: Nicholas Loubere



Abstract

The main purpose of this was to examine the current Chinese satirical/political cartoons by studying anti-corruption cartoons. Also, to answer the question from an online discussion about “whether there are satirical cartoons (讽刺漫画) in China today”. The study follows the concept of political cartoons as a medium of politics and society. The information and the hidden meaning of the cartoons are explored by applying the conceptual metaphorical theory. A total amount of 61 cartoons from the government organized anti-corruption cartoon competition and 5 semi-structured interviews with Chinese cartoonists are collected in this study. Semiotic analysis of signs in the cartoons shows both universal and local cultural values in anti-corruption cartoons. The cartoonists that were interviewed in this research holds both similar and different opinions about Chinese political cartoons, which also provided more insight into this subject. From the analysis of cartoons, it suggests that the cultural background of the cartoons is an important part of understanding them. Further, the satirical feature of political cartoons (mocking the ugliness, judging the injustices, and bring thoughts to the audience) can be found from the study result. Therefore, I argue that there are satirical cartoons in China today.

Keywords: *Political cartoons, Satirical cartoons, China, Cartoonists, Metaphors, Semiotics*

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Abbreviations

World War Two – WWII

China Communist Party - CCP

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	1
1.1	BACKGROUNDS	2
1.2	ROADMAP.....	3
2	LITERATURE REVIEW	4
2.1	THE STUDY FIELD OF POLITICAL CARTOONS.....	4
2.2	PREVIOUS LITERATURE ON POLITICAL CARTOONS.....	5
2.3	PREVIOUS RESEARCHES ON CHINESE POLITICAL CARTOONS	8
2.4	RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	11
3	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	13
3.1	METAPHOR THEORY	13
3.2	THE DEFINITION OF POLITICAL CARTOONS	15
3.3	POLITICAL CARTOONS AS A MIRROR OF POLITICS AND SOCIETY	16
3.4	METHODOLOGY.....	18
3.4.1	<i>Ontology and epistemology</i>	18
3.4.2	<i>Research strategy</i>	19
3.4.3	<i>Data collection</i>	19
3.4.4	<i>Semiotic analysis</i>	21
3.4.5	<i>Ethical consideration</i>	24
3.4.6	<i>Limitations</i>	24
4	ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS.....	25
4.1	AUDIT CULTURE AND ABUSE OF POWER	25
4.2	BRIBERY AND BRIBE-TAKING.....	28
4.3	CORRUPTION IS A MORALITY MATTER AND GUILT	34
4.4	PRESTIGE PROJECTS	37
4.5	PARTY IDEOLOGY AND CARTOONS.....	39
5	DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	41
5.1	DISCUSSION	41
5.2	CONCLUSION	47
	REFERENCE:	48

TABLE OF FIGURES

<i>FIGURE 1 BOTH UNDER THE GROUND BY WEICHUN BAI (HUBEI PROVINCE)</i>	26
27	
<i>FIGURE 2 THE WORK FROM INSPECTION GROUP BY XUNYOU GAN (JIANGXI PROVINCE)</i>	27
<i>FIGURE 3 SIDESHOW BY YINGSHENG QUAN (BEIJING) (LEFT)</i>	28
<i>FIGURE 4 DAILY SCHEDULE OF GOVERNMENT VEHICLE BY JIANHUA LI (JILIN PROVINCE)(RIGHT)</i>	28
<i>FIGURE 5 RED ENVELOP - GAIN AND LOSS BY XIAOQIANG HOU (SHANDONG PROVINCE)</i>	30
<i>FIGURE 6 NO MATTER THE INTEREST OF THE LEADER BY JUNCAI WANG (INNER MONGOLIA)</i>	31
<i>FIGURE 7 EVOLUTION AND DEGENERATION BY YINTANG MIU (BEIJING)</i>	32
<i>FIGURE 8 MAY ALL YOUR WISHES COME TRUE BY SHUNHAI HONG (ZHEJIANG PROVINCE)</i>	33
<i>FIGURE 9 WIN AND LOSE BY ZHONG GUO (TIANJIN)</i>	34
<i>FIGURE 10 NO ONE CAN ESCAPE BY YIZENG SUN (BEIJING)</i>	35
<i>FIGURE 11 PEOPLE WHO LIKE DARKNESS ALSO NEED BRIGHTNESS BY BAOFA DONG (JIANGSU</i> <i>PROVINCE)</i>	36
<i>FIGURE 12 FOR THE POSTERITY BY JICHUAN LI (SHANGHAI)</i>	37
<i>FIGURE 13 PRESTIGE PROJECT BY WANSHUAI SUN (HEBEI PROVINCE)</i>	38
<i>FIGURE 14 PRESTIGE PROJECT BY ZHONGYE LIN (LIAONING PROVINCE)</i>	39
<i>FIGURE 15 CLEAN-GOVERNANCE AND GOOD DISCIPLINE INSPECTION BY JIZONG GUO (HEBEI</i> <i>PROVINCE)</i>	41

1 Introduction

1.1 Backgrounds

Ever since I was a child I have always been surrounded by cartoons and paintings. I am lucky to be surrounded by Chinese cartoon newspapers and magazines and be able to read them. The research idea started from an online discussion titled with “*whether there are satirical cartoons (讽刺漫画) in China today?*” from the Chinese website Zhihu (知乎). I found this online discussion while I was searching for Chinese political cartoons on the internet. I thought it is a good idea to start my research with Chinese political cartoons. To answer the question, I started to look into Chinese political cartoons from the beginning to the current period, and I found, there are many studies about the old political cartoons in China compare to the recent ones. Thus, this study aims to examine the current Chinese political cartoons.

Like the other countries and regions cartoon art was introduced due to the modern printing technology in China in the late Qing dynasty. Cartoons became the popular medium of expressing the dissatisfying feelings of the Manchu government and others (Lent & Xu, 2017). There were many satirical/political cartoons published in cartoon magazines and newspapers during this period (ibid). Later when it came to WWII, political cartoons became the weapon for cartoonists to express the feelings and anger. After the wartime, political cartoons were used for publicity for the communist party and Mao. According to Lent and Xu (2017, p. 79), “art was the ideological weapon to promoting the Communist and nationalist cause”. In a different time, the contents of the cartoons were different, and the use of cartoons was different. If the political cartoons were used as a weapon against the enemies, the theme of the political cartoons has changed after the wartime. Current affair cartoons also called “*shishi manhua*”(时事漫画) were the main cartoon types after 1949 (Gan, 2008; Lent & Xu, 2017). However, there are both international and domestic topics including global warming, environmental issues, refugees, anti-corruption policies in recent Chinese political cartoons. Environmental issues, global warming, and wars are the most mentioned issues in cartoons globally whereas anti-corruption campaigns are one of the most discussed recent topics in China. Therefore, I choose to research anti-corruption cartoons.

The current anti-corruption campaigns started under the role of Xi Jinping. The anti-corruption movements are not new to China, it could be traced back to the reform period (Keliher & Wu, 2016). However, the former anti-corruption movements were not as large as

the current one (ibid). The anti-corruption themed cartoons are not new to the public, Satire, and Humor (讽刺与幽默)¹ published some of the anti-corruption cartoons in the first volume in 1983. Under the current anti-corruption movements many anti-corruption themed cartoon competitions are organized by governmental institutions. In China, corruption is tightly connected to social norms like *Guanxi and gift-giving* (Li, 2011, 2018; P. Steidlmeier, 1999). Thus, the study aims to examine the current satirical cartoons in China by studying anti-corruption themed cartoons. Further, it helps us to discover how the anti-corruption theme is painted in the cartoons under the socio-political contents and related social norms.

The study applies the conceptual metaphor theory to discuss how the metaphors are used by cartoonists illustrate the corruption and what kinds of metaphors are represented in the cartoons. In Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory, the metaphor is not the poetic language, but also the thoughts and actions we make. Researchers (Bounegru & Forceville, 2011; Greenberg, 2002; Refaie, 2003; Schilperoord & Maes, 2009) has shown that political cartoon is rich in metaphors. Further, semiotic analysis is used for the analysis of cartoons. Semiotics is used for analyzing the visual documents and symbols which close to our daily life, the main terms of semiotics include signs, signifier, signified, denotative and connotative meanings, code, and sign-functions (Bryman, 2012). Hence, the conceptual metaphor theory and semiotic analysis would help us to examine how society and culture are reflected in political cartoons.

1.2 Roadmap

The thesis is divided into five chapters. This chapter (chapter 1) provides a brief introduction to the thesis. The following chapter reviews previous researches on political cartoon studies and Chinese political cartoons. This chapter also guides the research questions. In chapter 3, the theoretical framework and methodology are discussed. More specifically, the conceptual metaphor theory and semiotic analysis are presented in the third chapter. In the following chapter, the empirical analysis of interviews and cartoons are presented. A total number of 61 cartoons are collected during the research, in which 15 cartoons with in-depth analysis. The fifth chapter gives the discussion and the conclusion. Interviews from five Chinese cartoonists will be discussed in the last chapter to give a better understanding of political cartoons in China from their perspective.

¹ Satire and Humor (讽刺与幽默) is a supplement of People's daily (人民日报) since 1979.

2 Literature review

There is a growing number of studies related to political cartoons that are studied by scholars from different disciplines (Chen et al., 2017). Political cartoons are studied in different fields including media studies, political science, history, art. Chen, Phiddian, and Stewart (2017) discussed the field of political cartoons and they pointed out that there is a need for mapping the political cartoons studies' field. In this chapter, I will be discussing the previous literature on political cartoons. As I mentioned in the study field he political cartoons, the first section gives a brief discussion about the political cartoons' study field. The next part will give a review of previous research on political cartoon studies. The last part of the literature review will focus on the previous researches on Chinese political cartoons.

2.1 The study field of political cartoons

As I mentioned before, Chen, Phiddian, and Stewart analyzed the current political cartoon studies and by doing so they suggested that there is a need of defining the field of political cartoon studies (2017). However, the political cartoon has been studied broadly by different disciplines due to the unique feature of the political cartoon. Political cartoons could condense the information into images, it delivers the message by picture. Political cartoons could cross the language barrier, especially when it comes to international cartoon competitions or events, cartoonists who participate speak different languages. Nevertheless, Chen, Phiddian, and Stewart's study provide a good scope for scholars to navigate the political cartoons' study.

Based on Chen, Phiddian, and Stewart's analysis of 144 studies about political cartoons published in English, and they categorized these studies into six sub-fields, which includes: 1. Meta-studies of political cartoons, 2. The properties of political cartoons, 3. Political cartoons' function as a cultural mirror, 4. Political cartoons' impact, 5. Audience reception, 6. The political cartoon ecosystem (ibid, p. 129). In Chen, Phiddian, and Stewart's research, the main percentage of 144 political cartoons' studies are categorized into the second and the third sub-fields (political cartoons' function as a cultural mirror and the properties of political cartoons) (ibid, p. 129). Hence, the second and third sub-fields will be mainly focused on the literature review.

First, in the second sub-field (political cartoons' function as a cultural mirror) political cartoons are studied as a cultural mirror that reflects the individuals, audiences, or society in

general (ibid, pp. 136–139). Further, the third sub-field (the properties of political cartoons) examined the researches about the functions, nature, and mechanism of political cartoons (ibid, pp. 132–136). For example, the term ‘caricature’ and the concept of caricature, the concepts of rhetoric in political cartoon studies (ibid, 2017). Recent research shows the two approaches to studying political cartoons (Walker, 2003). Walker (2003) pointed that the key to analyzing political cartoons is to find the theoretical framework and two approaches can be used which includes ‘using indicators like the subject portrayed, the source for the cartoon, the political regime and the corporate relationship’ and ‘the four rhetorical devices that mentioned by Morris’ (Morris, 1989, 1992, 1995 cited in Walker, 2003, p. 17). Although several studies have pointed out that the study of political cartoons is overlooked by the researchers, recent studies have shown there is a growing interest in political cartoons (references). Chen, Phiddian, and Stewart’s analysis provides a guide to understanding the current political cartoons’ studies. Based on their studies, how political cartoons are studied in the previous studies will be discussed in the next section.

2.2 Previous literature on political cartoons

Political cartoon/editorial cartoons are news discourse, and it has a tight connection with the newspapers, it can be used for giving visual illustrations for the verbal text or commenting on the current events. When it comes to elections, many newspapers and media would publish political cartoons/editorial cartoons. Many of the current studies on political cartoons have studied the election campaign (Barker, 2016; J. L. Edwards, 2001; J. L. Edwards & Ware, 2005; Shaikh et al., 2019). The study contents can differ from how the politicians are illustrated by the cartoonists, the public opinion towards the party campaigns, or the politicians in the election campaign cartoons.

Except for the election campaign themed political cartoons, several different themed political cartoons are also studied by researchers. For example, the foreign relation between different countries and regions (Jabeen & Ahmad, 2018), eurozone debit (Meijs, 2011; Van Hecke, 2017), refugees and immigrants (Dilmaç & Kocadal, 2018; Greenberg, 2002), September 11 (Diamond, 2002; Hoffman & Howard, 2007). Mocking or exaggeratedly painting politicians is one part of the political cartoons (Hoffman & Howard, 2007; Morris, 1993). According to Kemnitz (1973), cartoons can be broadly divided into two categories, which include cartoons

of jokes and cartoons of opinion. In the cartoons of opinion, there are domestic politics, social themes, and foreign affairs as the main themes (ibid, 1973).

Political cartoons can be a cultural medium, different than written words that might be limited in different languages, cartoons can express the message easily by visual content, except cartoons with text. In certain cases, it can be difficult to understand the cartoon without knowing the text in the cartoons (Müller et al., 2009). However, many recent studies have shown that political cartoon is a medium of culture (Domínguez & Mateu, 2013; Walker, 2003). Further, Pham (2013) examined the image of the EU from political cartoons in 2004 enlargement and the 2009-2012 Eurozone debt crisis. Political cartoons studies can help us to study how social issues has been illustrated by the cartoonist or how they express their or public opinions. Political cartoons can be understood as a communicative tool (Shaikh et al., 2019; Ulubeyli et al., 2015). Political cartoons can be used for educational propose. Construction incidents themed political cartoons suggested that cartoons can be used as a guide for both workers and workers' unions (Ulubeyli et al., 2015). More specifically, the construction incident themed cartoons could raise the social awareness of the construction place workers' health and safety issues (ibid). Political cartoons deliver the message simply and directly to its audiences, which makes it possible to understand the content easier (Plumb, 2004; Walker, 2003). The simple and direct feature of political cartoons makes it acceptable to more people no matter the social backgrounds (Ulubeyli et al., 2015). It is critical to say that, political cartoons could reach everyone, it is because of the differences of the individuals, people accept and receive the images differently. However, it can say that as a visual message, in certain cases, political cartoons deliver the messages easily.

Since political cartoons/editorial cartoons are tightly connected to modern printing technology and newspapers. The recent changes in the traditional printing media and the rise of the Internet and cyberspace brought direct influences on political cartoons and cartoonists. Several recent studies have shown that it has both negative and positive effects (Danjoux, 2007; Townsend et al., 2008). On the one hand, some think that the development of the media and the internet brings a new platform for political cartoons, which is other than the traditional print media (Townsend et al., 2008). From the view of the internet and technology is broadly used in worldwide, it might have positive influences on political cartoons and cartoonist to have a wider audience. On the other hand, some argue that under the new media platform there are influences towards political cartoons and cartoonists (Fiore, 2004; Oliphant, 2004 cited in

Townsend et al., 2008). The birth of political cartoons is because of the modern printing technology, if the traditional media got affected by the new media then it will bring changes to political cartoons as well.

Despite the influences of the changing media that brought to political cartoons and cartoonists, gender issues are also studied by the researcher in political cartoon studies. Researchers studied how different genders are illustrated in the cartoons. Aliefendioglu and Arslan's (2011) research shows that due to the media and the other institutions are dominated by masculine power in Cyprus, the women images are illustrated negatively in the cartoons. As Refaie (2003) pointed out, institutions are an important part to understand for the study of political cartoons. Gilmartin examined (Gilmartin, 2001) how the female politicians are illustrated in the media compared to the male politicians. However, more researchers have shown interest in how gender images are illustrated in political cartoons (Gilmartin & Brunn, 1998; H. R. Manning, 2005). Newspapers as a media, cartoons as a media language researcher could examine the society, culture, or politics by studying political cartoons/editorial cartoons in newspapers.

Research from Kemnitz (1973) shows that cartoons can be studied as historical resources. He pointed out that there have been a few studies about cartoons from a historical perspective and the lack of methods. Since political cartoons can be a cultural medium and express the verbal messages into visual messages, it would give us another approach to study history in this sense. The cartoonists and their works are also drawn the interest of researchers. Chatterjee (2007) studied Indian cartoonist Laxman' work, Ben-Meir (2018) analyzed the 'Shoshke' cartoon in Israel, Morris (1991) analyzed the cartoonist Len Norris' work, Koelble and Robins (2007) studied Zapiro's cartoons in South Africa. A special cartoon character or the cartoonist itself can be an icon and it creates an image in society (Ben-Meir, 2018; Chatterjee, 2007; Koelble & Robins, 2007; Plumb, 2004). Kemnitz (1973) mentioned the importance of cartoonists and their works. The popular international topics are often the subjects of the cartoons. Such as environmental issues, refugees, war, and human rights, etc. The environmental issue is one of the most concerning global issues. There are many environmental political cartoons, but researches on environmental political cartoons are relatively less. Recent researches (Barrow Jr, 2012; Domínguez & Mateu, 2014; Einsiedel et al., 2017; Goble et al., 2005; KAHRAMAN & UÇAN, 2017) analyzed how the environmental debt is illustrated in the political cartoons. Nevertheless, the political cartoon is not only limited to these topics, there is more to explore in the political cartoon studies.

In sum, from the previous literature on political cartoons, the different issues illustrated in the political cartoons drawn the interest of the scholars. Political cartoon as a visual news discourse, other than traditional verbal messages, it combines the visual and verbal images into single pictures. In other words, editorial cartoons/ political cartoons as a news discourse that express the message in condensed form. From this aspect, it can be said that political cartoons provide us another angle to look into our society, culture, and politics.

2.3 Previous researches on Chinese political cartoons

Kemntiz (1973) mentioned that political cartoons can be studied as historical resources. Many of the previous studies on Chinese political cartoons studied political cartoons as historical resources. Bi and Huang (2006) provide an overall history of Chinese cartoon art from the introduction of cartoon art in China to the civil war period (until 1949). Whereas, Lent and Xu (2017), and Gan's (2008) studies provide an overall history and background of cartoon art in China starting from the beginning of cartoon art to the current time. According to Lent and Xu (2017), 'modern cartooning was started in the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century and it was due to the development of modern printing technology, the dissatisfaction of domestic government, colonial and other foreign interfering nations'. Like the other parts of the world, political cartoons and cartooning were introduced to China due to modern printing technology. The beginning of modern cartooning and cartons started during the late Qing dynasty, from the late nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century (Bi & Huang, 2006; Gan, 2008; Lent & Xu, 2017). Other than the Chinese cartoons from historical content, Caschira (2017) and Wagner's (2011) researches examined cartoon techniques and the use of symbolization. For instance, animal symbolization in Chinese political cartoons is studied by Caschira (2017), which is broadly used in late-Qing political cartoons (Caschira, 2017; Wagner, 2011). Due to the dissatisfaction with the Qing government and foreign interfering countries, cartoonists used animal symbolism to show the different power relationships between countries.

The previous research on Chinese political cartoons focuses particularly on the 'golden age' of Chinese cartoons. According to Lent and Xu (2017), the golden age of cartooning was between the 1920s to 1930s. During this period the first successful newspaper and magazine comic strips appeared, and many cartoon magazines were published. Among the many

magazines and newspaper comic strips, Mr. Wang (Wangxiansheng) painted by Ye Qianyu and Sanmao painted by Zhang Leping were the most famous ones (Lent & Xu, 2017). Mr. Wang (Wangxiansheng) was first published in Modern Sketch magazine which was the popular and best-selling cartoon magazine during the golden age of cartooning (Caschera, 2018). Chinese cartoon magazines are also attracted researchers' attention. Caschera's (2018) research shows Modern Sketch (Manhua Shidai)² magazine as a product of transcultural dynamics. In Modern Sketch, there was not only publishing foreign cartoons but also the domestic cartoonists who adopt the different ways of cartooning to participate in the global scenario of cartooning, the coexistence of both the foreign cartoons and domestic cartoons resulted in the transcultural products (Caschera, 2018). Other cartoon magazines like Shanghai magazine, Shidai Huabao (Modern Miscellany)³ are mentioned by Lent and Xu (2017). Shanghai magazine was published by the Manhuahui (Cartoon Society)⁴, later in 1930, Shanghai magazine was united with Modern Sketch (Gan, 2008). There is no doubt that Sanmao is the most popular cartoon image in Chinese cartoon history (Lent & Xu, 2017). Sanmao first appeared in the Xiaochenbao newspaper (Small Morning Paper)⁵ in 1935 (Lent & Xu, 2017).

Later during the Second World War, Sanmao's image appeared on anti-Japanese cartoons. Further, many of the cartoon associations and exhibitions were built and planned during the golden age of cartooning. In 1926, several cartoonists⁶ formed Manhuahui (Cartoon Society) which was the first cartoon organization in China (Lent & Xu, 2017). After the short existence of Manhuahui (Cartoon Society) and the first national cartoon exhibition, the national cartoon association was organized by cartoonists in 1937 which was named as Zhongguo Quanguo Manhua Zuoqia Xiehui (All China Cartoon Association of Writers and Artists) (Gan, 2008; Lent & Xu, 2017). In 1936, the first cartoon exhibition was held in Shanghai which was supported by the cartoon association (Gan, 2008). Further, the first generation of Chinese cartoon artists and the clearer definition of cartoons and humor were introduced. Cartoon artists like Feng Zikai, Zhang Leping, and Lu Zhixiang and their works are studied by scholars. There is no doubt to say that Feng Zikai is the most well-known cartoon artist in China. Studies about Feng Zikai and his works tend to connect with his philosophy of cartooning and the poetic

² 漫画时代.

³ 时代画报.

⁴ 漫画会.

⁵ 小晨报.

⁶ In 1926, Ye Qianyu, Huang Wennong, Lu Shaofei, Zhang Guangyu, Zhang Zhengyu, Hu Xuguang, Ding Song and Wang Dunqing formed Manhuahui 漫画会 (Cartoon Society).

feature of his cartoons. Hung's (1990) studied the cartoons from Feng Zikai before the second world war and during the wartime. Yan (2019) analyzed the philosophical and ethical thoughts on non-human animals in Feng Zikai's cartoons. Additionally, Caschera (2019) studied Lu Zhixiang's cartoons, and the famous Chinese writer Lu Xun's articles about Manhua (Cartoon) are mentioned by Gan (2008) and Lent and Xu (2017).

Except for the golden age of cartooning in China, wartime cartoon is also studied broadly by researchers. As mentioned before, political cartoons can be a weapon towards social injustices or enemies. During the anti-Japanese war, cartoonists organized wartime associations to work together (Lent & Xu, 2017; Pozzi, 2015). Children were the main image of Chinese cartoonists' propaganda during wartime and 'San Mao' was one of the most famous Children characters created by Zhang Leping (Mo & Shen, 2006; Pozzi, 2015). In construct to Pozzi's study, Edwards (2013) studied the sexualized and gendered human body especially the female body in political cartoons during the WWII and he argued that the propaganda use of this theme was doubtful because of the female refers to the weaker side, it creates a contrast between the enemy who's role stands on the strong masculine image.

After wartime, art is used for publicity propose by the Chinese Communist Party and Mao Zedong (Lent & Xu, 2017). As previously mentioned political cartoons deliver the message simply and directly to its audiences, which makes it possible to understand the content easier (Plumb, 2004; Walker, 2003). Manhua' magazine which was published in June 1950 in Shanghai. According to Altehenger (2013), 'although the 'Manhua' magazine survived shortly, it played an important role in the form and content of popular cartooning during the first ten decades of CCP'. Lent and Xu (2017, p. 79) conclude that cartoon was an ideal medium of party ideology and the use of cartoons made it easier for illiterate masses. According to Lent and Xu (2017), the government policies were reflected by Shishi Manhua (current affairs cartoons)⁷ and Lianhuanhua⁸ during the 1950s. Later during the anti-rightist campaign, both cartoon artists and cartooning were influenced, many cartoon artists had to stop cartooning due to the political situation. However, the political cartoons were still created with the political movements until the Cultural Revolution. Lent and Xu (2017, p. 105) pointed out that 'the shifting relation between art and politics brought much confusion, ambiguity, and apprehension

⁷ 时事漫画, current affair cartoons.

⁸ 连环画, a traditional form of cartooning in China.

among cartoonists'. However, cartoons and artists started working slowly after the Cultural Revolution. Newspapers including People's daily⁹ and Worker's daily¹⁰ expanded cartoons into special supplements (Croizier, 1981). Lent and Xu (2017) write that 'changes in how connected with society underlined cartooning at the time'. During wartime, the enemies were mostly painted in political cartoons, whereas after wartime political cartoon reflects the social issues more. According to Croizier (1981), the theme of cartoons includes not only the cadres of the Party but also the general social problems during the liberalization in China. Further, Croizier (1981) mentioned that corruption in bureaucracy is illustrated as obstacles to modernization, still, these themes can be found in current Chinese political cartoons including anti-corruption, environmental issues, food safety issues, etc. Although Chinese cartoons experienced a difficult time, liberalization brought Chinese cartooning into a new era (Gan, 2008).

A recent study about food safety issue themed cartoons are studied by Lan and Zuo (2016). In this study 120 editorial cartoons are collected from China Daily's websites by applying metaphor theory they discussed how the food safety issues are painted in the Chinese news cartoons. Another recent research has studied the Eurozone crisis issues in Chinese newspapers' cartoons (Bain et al., 2012). The Chinese state plays an important role in art. According to Lent and Xu (2017), Manhua and Cartoon competitions have carried social consciousness-raising themes induced by the government. Chinese political cartoons are always connected tightly with society and politics and in different periods, it served for different proposes (Lent & Xu, 2017). Although, there is a growing number of researches related to political cartoons, there are relatively few researches are conducted on current Chinese political cartoons. Namely when it compares to the wartime cartoons and the 'golden age' of political cartoons in China. Thus, this study aims to look into the current Chinese political cartoons. The next section aims to introduce the research questions.

2.4 Research questions

The previous literature on Chinese political cartoons is mostly about wartime cartoons and the golden age of cartoons (the 1920s to 1930s). Compare to the cartoons from the golden age there are fewer studies about the cartoons after opening up and reform. Therefore, this study aims to

⁹ Renminribao 人民日报.

¹⁰ Gongrenribao 工人日报.

examine the recent Chinese political cartoons. Among the recent Chinese political cartoons, environmental cartoons and anti-corruption cartoons are the most drawn cartoons. The concept of studying society and politics from political cartoons are not new in this field. However, due to the anti-corruption campaigns and policy from the CCP, anti-corruption themed cartoons got strong support from the government, many anti-corruption themed cartoon competitions are held both at the national level and local (provincial) levels. This study aims to analyze how the anti-corruption and corruption are illustrated in the current Chinese political cartoons, by doing this it could provide an understanding of anti-corruption culture in China. Moreover, as the political cartoon is a relatively small field, the view from cartoonists could provide more insight into the study of political cartoons.

There are two main research questions which are: *1. How the anti-corruption is illustrated in Chinese political cartoons? 2. What are the depictions of Chinese cartoonists on Chinese political cartoons/satirical cartoons?* For further analysis, there are sub-questions are divided into two categories which are:

- 1. What are the most painted images in the anti-corruption cartoons? What kind of symbols/signs are used in the anti-corruption cartoons? What metaphors are represented in the anti-corruption cartoons?*
- 2. What are their opinions of current political cartoons/satirical cartoons (讽刺漫画) in China? What are their depictions of anti-corruption cartoons?*

To answer the research questions and analysis the theory of metaphor is used in this study. Recent studies have shown that political cartoons are metaphor strong language (Refaie, 2003; Schilperoord & Maes, 2009). A metaphor is broadly used for the cartoonist to illustrate the objects indirectly. In other words, the signs that are painted in the cartoons does not fully represent the signs itself, it can be used for the metaphorical meaning. Further, the concept of political cartoons as a mirror of society and politics is used for this study. Political cartoons/editorial cartoons are a form of visual news discourse, it reflects the related topics in a condensed form. Based on this view, political cartoons are a medium of culture and politics, and it often carries meaning and information. Lastly, semiotic analysis is used for the analysis of cartoons. Namely, signs, symbols, and metaphorical images.

3 Theoretical framework

According to Chen, Phiddian, and Stewart (2017), although political cartoons are studied widely by different scholars from different fields, the study of political cartoons is not central to any of these fields. Greenberg (2002) mentioned that the study of political cartoons is overlooked by scholars. However, there is a growing number of researches and more researchers have shown interest in visual metaphors (Schilperoord & Maes, 2009). Further, there are two fields of studies that have built the theories about political cartoons are the metaphor theory and theory about audience reception (Chen et al., 2017). Many recent studies have shown that political cartoon is a metaphorically rich, metaphor is not only in languages but also in visual information (Chen et al., 2017; Schilperoord & Maes, 2009). Due to the growing number of studies in political cartoons, the theory, concepts, and methods of cartoon study are discussed by many scholars. For example, Greenberg (2002), Morris (2002), Domínguez (2015), Refaie (2003), Streicher (1967), and (Schilperoord & Maes, 2009). This chapter will discuss the theoretical framework and the concepts that are applied in this study.

3.1 Metaphor theory

Metaphor theory is broadly used in political cartoon studies. The political cartoon is metaphor rich art, it condenses the texts into images. Metaphor theory is used primarily in communication studies. Nevertheless, in the cognitive theorists' perspective, the metaphor does not only exist in verbal messages but also in visual messages. When we say metaphor we might think of poetic languages rather than ordinary words, we might think about metaphor exists in a place where away from our daily life metaphor exist in our daily life (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) mentioned that metaphor is not only about languages but also about thoughts or actions we make in our daily life, these actions and thoughts are operated in our conceptual system. In classical theory, metaphor is just a term that refers to poetic linguistic expression(Lakoff, 1993). Further, Refaie (2003), Schilperood, and Maes (2009) mentioned that before the view of the metaphor as a cognitive phenomenon, the metaphor was seen as a poetic way of writing and saying rather than the ordinary words that exist in other daily life. Seitz (1998) mentioned that in the traditional metaphor theory, metaphor is related to language or language behavior rather than thoughts or actions. The recent study shows that metaphor is not only limited to the language and verbal form but also in visual form like films, paintings, architectures, music, photography (ibid). As Lakoff (1993, p. 38) mentioned, metaphor can be

found in imaginative products including cartoons, dreams, myths, literacy works, and visions (see also in Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 460).

Cartoons: Conventional metaphors are made real in cartoons. A common example is the realization of the ANGER IS A HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER metaphor, in which one can be “boiling mad” or “letting off steam.” In cartoons, anger is commonly depicted by having steam coming out of the character’s ears. Similarly, social clumsiness is indicated by having a cartoon character “fall on his face.” (Lakoff, 1993, p. 38).

By taking an example of Australian newspaper cartoons, Refaie (2003) made three main arguments about the visual metaphor. First, the visual metaphor should not only be defined in the formal term but also visual metaphor should be understood in the conceptual metaphor theory’s frame, it must be considered as visual metaphorical thoughts or actions (ibid). Second, Refaie (ibid) criticized the basic conceptual metaphor theory, the metaphors connect to our common physical experiences which cannot be described generally, instead, she pointed out the metaphor should be studied under the specific socio-political context (ibid, p. 76). Audiences receive the message differently based on their social experiences which might be not the original idea of cartoonists. Thus, having a coherent knowledge of the socio-political context would help us to understand the metaphor. The metaphor is connected with the culture, under the different cultural influences the metaphors are different (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Regarding the metaphor is culturally connected, Lakoff and Johnson (ibid) made an example of using the term ‘argument’ and metaphor ‘argument is war’, if there is a culture that seen argument as other instead of war, there will be other metaphor based on ‘argument’. Based on this view, metaphor concepts are connected to our cultural backgrounds.

In the third argument, Refaie (2003) states visual metaphor is overlooked compared to the verbal metaphor, it is difficult to define that verbal metaphor expresses more than the visual metaphor, instead, the content in the cartoons should be studied. The visual metaphor might have more advantages than the other regarding the content expressed through. In other words, the visual metaphor might be able to express some meanings more than verbal metaphor whereas verbal metaphor might be more suitable to express other meanings. As we usually see, there are two kinds of political cartoons, which include both verbal and visual messages, and only visual messages. Based on this view, some contents might need the help of a verbal message to express the idea clearer. There is a certain kind of expressions that can be addressed

through visual messages. Whereas, verbal messages are used when the messages cannot be fully expressed by visual form. Helping does not mean that verbal metaphor is secondary in the cartoons. On the other side, some contents of cartoons can be expressed only by the visual message.

As previously mentioned, political cartoons are metaphor rich language. Yet, it might be critical to say that all political cartoons have metaphorical meanings. According to Lakoff (1993), there is both existence of metaphorical concepts and non-metaphorical concepts. Therefore, there are both non-metaphorical and metaphorical cartoons. The metaphoric and not metaphoric features lead us to the criteria of selection of data which will be discussed in the next chapter. Last but not least, the analysis of metaphor in cartoons has to follow the “mapping” (Lakoff, 1993; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Here is an example of metaphor ‘love is a journey’ made by Lakoff (1993, p. 5). The mapping process is illustrated in table 1.

The love as journey mapping.	
The target domain is ‘love’.	The source domain is ‘journey’.
The lovers correspond to travelers.	
The love relationship corresponds to the vehicle.	
The lovers’ common goals correspond to their common destinations on the journey.	

Table 1 Mapping the metaphor 'The love as a journey'.

3.2 The definition of political cartoons

In cartoon studies, there are different types of cartoons, it includes animated cartoons, caricatures, comic strips, editorial cartoons, and political cartoons. According to Streicher, caricature refers to the exaggeration of individuals or events in a satirical way, and “cartooning or cartoon refer to both debunking and build-up techniques of graphic presentations of the actors on human stage” (1967, p. 431). The difference between the caricatures and cartoons is often blurring, both of them are often used interchangeably (ibid, p. 432). According to the Oxford advanced learner’s dictionary of current English (Hornby, 2010), cartoon refers to humorous drawings in newspapers or magazines, especially the one about politics or events in the news whereas caricature refers to exaggerated funny drawings or pictures of somebody and their features. Also, Kemnitz (1973) states that cartoon is a better word than caricature which describes the techniques of cartooning. Therefore, it is more suitable to apply the term ‘cartoons’ in the current study rather than ‘caricature’.

There are two types of caricatures are mentioned by Streicher (1967) including social caricature and political caricature, in political caricature, the individual, group or organization who has the power in society are the target, whereas social caricature deal with the non-political theme. This kind of classification can be found in Gan's study (2008), in which, Manhua (cartoons) are divided into different categories according to their theme. For example, cartoons for internal affairs¹¹, non-editorial (non-news) cartoons, and news cartoons. Also, there are two types of cartoons are mentioned by Kemnitz, it includes cartoons of opinions and joke cartoons (1973). It is often difficult to recognize the difference between these two, one point may tell the distinction is that whether the cartoon address the important social questions (ibid, p. 83). Further, Kemnitz (1973) states that there are domestic politics, foreign affairs, and social themes are included in the cartoons of opinion.

The cartoons were introduced to broadly to the public due to the modern printing technology. The cartoons that we see from the newspaper are editorial cartoons. Except for the traditional newspaper, there are cartoons on the internet webpages like cartoon competitions or online newspapers. In this thesis, cartoons are collected from the cartoon competition from an online cartoon competition website. According to Chen, Phiddian, and Stewart (2017), in the political cartoon, the term 'political' refers to the studies of electoral politics, influences of direct politics, and the impact of public policy. Hence, it might be more suitable to use the term 'political cartoons' in this study. Lastly, the use of satirical cartoons and political cartoons are often interconnected. Satirical cartoons can be translated as “讽刺漫画” in Chinese, whereas political cartoons refer to the one type of editorial cartoons and satirical cartoons.

3.3 Political cartoons as a mirror of politics and society

Recent studies have shown that political cartoons are metaphorically rich. Cartoonists use metaphors in the cartoons to deliver the message to audiences (H. R. Manning, 2005). According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphor is not the poetic words but also the thoughts, actions that we make and it exists in our daily life. If metaphors are our thought and actions, then we can assume the way we think, act, and our daily life are connected with our cultural, political, and social context. Other than the written text or other verbal expressions, cartoons can express the meaning by condensing the information into image (Müller et al., 2009). Like

¹¹ 内部讽刺漫画。

the other kinds of art, cartoons also express the meaning (ibid; Streicher, 1967). Further, Domínguez (2015) analyzed the cartoons that are published after the death of French cartoonist, he found different metaphors from the cartoons, also he mentioned the metaphoric founder effect. The metaphoric founder effect starts with the metaphors from the cartoons generate new metaphors and eventually, the metaphors become cultural values. Therefore, political cartoons not only deliver messages through metaphors but also cultural values. The conceptual metaphor theory can be used for analyzing the metaphorical meaning of the cartoons.

Kemnitz (1973) argues that the study of cartoons should not be limited to cartoons itself, but also cartoons can be studied for the propose, and he studied political cartoons as historical resources. As a visual news discourse, political cartoons deliver the information, it records the current events. For example, the wartime cartoons in China show the situation at that time, also the thoughts of the cartoonists and people. Hence, political cartoons can be a source of history. Regarding the anti-corruption cartoons, it helps us to see how anti-corruption is illustrated. Political cartoons are used in this study is collected from cartoon competitions. In the traditional printing media, the editorial cartoons appear in the newspaper might have chosen based on the media or institutions' interest (Walker, 2003). In this sense, the selected cartoons in cartoon competitions are might be influenced by media or institutions' interest. Walker (2003) pointed out that under the different political regimes, the controls over the media is different. In this sense, it could be said that the range of expression of thoughts is restricted. On the other way, it can be understood as the publicity of the institutions to society. One of the propose of this study is to figure out how the political cartoon is illustrated under a certain political frame. Alternatively, the connection between politics and political cartoons. Namely, the anti-corruption policy and anti-corruption cartoons.

In conclusion, this study applies the concept of political cartoons as a mirror of society and politics. The objects of political cartoons can be expressed by using metaphors. The cognitive theory of metaphor explains metaphors not only exist in languages but also in our thoughts. Many recent studies have shown that political cartoons are bonded with its socio-political context, the meaning it expresses is based on its cultural values (Müller et al., 2009; Refaie, 2003). Following the concept of political cartoons are the mirror, in which, society and politics are reflected in a condensed form.

3.4 Methodology

In the last section, I have discussed the conceptual metaphor theory and concepts are used in this study. The methods and methodological approaches are discussed in this section. First, it will start with ontology and epistemology, and research design. The second section will focus on the data collection which includes two types of data (semi-structured interview and cartoons). After the data collection, the analysis methods will be discussed. In the current study, I used political cartoons from Chinese cartoon competition as main data resources and interviews as sub-data resources. Lastly, ethical considerations and limitations will be addressed. Before the next section, the critical approaches of visual methodology should be addressed. Rose (2016) suggested three approaches to the critical visual methodology which is 1. Takes images seriously, 2. Think about the social conditions and effects of visual effects, and 3. Considers your way of looking at images.

3.4.1 Ontology and epistemology

Our understanding of reality and the social world drives us to define how the research should be studied. Namely, the methodological positions and social theories. Here I will discuss the ontological and epistemological stands in this research. Positivists believe that social reality can be studied by applying the methods of natural sciences. Whereas, interpretivism believes that the methods of natural sciences cannot be used in social sciences. According to Norman (2004, p. 767), “in interpretivism, social reality is the product of processes by which human beings together negotiate the meaning of actions and situations.” In this view, it can be assumed that cartoons are the interpretations of cartoonists. The analysis of the cartoons is subjective, and the interpretation of the reality that is illustrated by cartoonists. The interpretation of the cartoons might differ from one to one due to personal experiences. In other words, audiences receive messages from the cartoon differently.

As mentioned previously, in the conceptual metaphor theory, metaphor is not only poetic language but also our thoughts. Lakoff and Johnson (1980, pp. 466–467) state that our value is connected to our daily life, it is connected with our culture, and values are not independent. The metaphorical thoughts originate from our values which are connected with the culture. Further, the explanation of the metaphor ‘argument is war’ mentioned by Lakoff and Johnson proves that metaphors differ in the different cultural context. In other words, one might not understand the other without the corresponding knowledge. Refaie (2003, p. 75) suggested that

the metaphor should be studied into the socio-political context. This study adopts the constructivists' ontological view, in which, institutions and cultures are constantly renewed by the social actors. The personal view of the researcher might involve in this study. In social research interviews, researchers and participants are involved together in the interview. Further, the selection of cartoons for analysis might be chosen by personal bias. However, I am the interpreter of the cartoonists and their work, it is important to view the analysis critically.

3.4.2 Research strategy

The propose of this study is to examine the messages from political cartoons. Political cartoons as a medium, it delivers messages and reflects the society at large. This study applies multi-qualitative data, including semi-structured interviews and visual documents (political cartoons). A recent study shows that semiotic analysis needs to rely on other forms of data collection to support the analysis of meaning because of semiotics analysis only a particular text or a group of text individually (Aiello, 2020). For example, interviews, focus groups, or historical research. Hence, the interview does not only support the analysis of cartoons but also provides a coherent background of Chinese cartoons.

3.4.3 Data collection

There are two types of data are collected for this study. First, political cartoons as the main data are collected from the anti-corruption themed cartoon competition in China¹². This cartoon competition has been organized three times from 2007 to 2013. The organizing institutions of this cartoon competition are the Chinese National Artists' Association and several governmental organizations including the Chinese Discipline Inspection and Supervision news agency, Zhejiang Provincial Commission for Discipline Inspection, Jiaxing Municipal Commission for Discipline Inspection, and Tongxiang Municipal Party Committee and Government¹³. One interesting point to notice is that the host city is the famous Chinese cartoonist Feng Zikai's hometown¹⁴. More than ten thousand works were sent to the cartoon committee in a total of three times competitions. I collected 61 cartoons from three years'

¹² [中国桐乡廉政漫画大赛, China Tongxiang Anti-corruption Cartoon Competition.](#)

¹³ 从2007年开始, 由中国美术家协会, 中国纪检监察报社, 浙江省纪委, 嘉兴市纪委, 和桐乡市委市政府主办的中国桐乡廉政漫画大赛已经举办了三届。

¹⁴ Feng Zikai was born in Tongxiang city Zhejiang province in China in 1898.

competition on the cartoon competition’s official website¹⁵. This competition is not the only one that has the anti-corruption theme in China, and there are many other cartoon competitions with different themes in China. I found the cartoon competition’s link by searching anti-corruption cartoons on Baidu. Several criteria were considered when selecting cartoons. First, this competition has been held more than one time compared to the other competitions. Further, different from the other cartoon competitions, the theme of the cartoon competition is fixed which makes it possible to study the cartoons into a different period. Lastly, this competition is highly recognized by domestic cartoonists. Namely, the standard of the works and the number of participants has higher quality in this competition. Choosing the anti-corruption cartoon competition’s cartoons helped me to avoid unrelated cartoons which can be found when using searching engines like Baidu and Google.

First-year	26 cartoons
Second-year	19 cartoons
Third-year	16 cartoons

Table 2

Second, a semi-structured interview is used as a sub-data in this research. Five Chinese cartoon artists were interviewed during the fieldwork. The one key advantage of using the semi-structured interview is that different from the structured interview in quantitative research, the semi-structured interview is more flexible and less structured (Bryman, 2012). Moreover, in the semi-structured interview, researchers are concentrated on the interviewees’ views (Bryman, 2012). In other words, due to the semi-structured interview is less structured, the questions asked from the interviewers' changes according to the respond from interviewees. All interviews are conducted face-to-face during the fieldwork in Beijing. All of the participants are cartoonists from Beijing.

Cartoonist 1	11.03.2019	Face-to-face
Cartoonist 2	11.03.2019	Face-to-face
Cartoonist 3	11.03.2019	Face-to-face
Cartoonist 4	20.03.2019	Face-to-face

¹⁵ Student group cartoons are not included, only professional cartoonists’ cartoons are collected for the current research.

Cartoonist 5	20.03.2019	Face-to-face
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Table 3

3.4.4 Semiotic analysis

The critical discourse analysis and semiotic analysis are mostly in political cartoon studies. Semiotics is a study of the sign; it is both the method and theory. Semiotics not only studies the symbols and signs but also the process and system of symbols and signs (P. K. Manning, 2004; Matusitz, 2018). The modern semiotics theory is founded by Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce. Nowadays, semiotics is used in various disciplines, such as media studies, cultural studies, biology, architectural theory, or social psychology (Nöth, 2020). This section will start to look into Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) and Charles Sanders Peirce’s (1839-1914) models of semiotics. Further, visual semiotics will be discussed.

Saussure mentioned that there are two parts in semiotics which include ‘signified’ and ‘signifier’ (P. K. Manning, 2004). The signified is absent, whereas, the signifier is visible (Matusitz, 2018). It is a sign that makes signified and signifier connected. Here is an example of signified and signifier: if there is a written paper, the words are signifier and the meaning behind the texts are signified (Matusitz, 2018). The relation between the signified and signifier is not always directly connected. Belgium artist René Magritte’s painting is a good example of the relation between the signified and signifier, the signs can represent a different thing than it represented on the paintings (see in Aiello, 2020, p. 368). In other words, signs can represent other things than they showed on the pictures. Further, Aiello (2020, pp. 368–369) states that we tend to see the signs as what they are, instead, studying semiotic would help us to know the language and images.

Based on Matusitz’s (2018, pp. 1588–1590) study Peirce’s three-part framework of signification includes 1. the representamen, 2. the objects, and 3. the interpretant. First, the representamen refer to the sign itself, it is based on the objective, impartial, and detached description. It is also independent of the consciousness, outside of the desire, emotions, bias, and, personal experiences (ibid). Second, the object refers to the meaning and concepts. The representamen only represents the object but not the meaning. Lastly, interpretant refers to the meaning what audiences receive from the signs. The representamen and the objects of Peirce’s model can refer to the signified and signifier in Saussure’s model (ibid). In Peirce’s theory, the

signs are not necessarily material, but also it can be mental (Nöth, 2020). Hence, the signs can be words, visual images, or abstract ideas. As mentioned before that political cartoons are metaphor strong art. Similarly, signs are used in cartoons to convey meaning. In this sense, if we see the two forms of political cartoons, visual or both visual and verbal, the meaning can be both signified to visual and verbal forms. The distinction between their theory is that the main focus of Peirce's was the relation between signs and its object, whereas, Saussure's focus was the relationship between the signified and signifier (Aiello, 2020).

The recent development of applied semiotics shows interest in other subjects, in which we can find visual semiotics (Nöth, 2012). There are different schools and trends of visual semiotics including the Paris school, Halliday's social semiotics, and Peirce's semiotics (ibid). Roland Barthes was the first person that focused on non-linguistic signs. Unlike Saussure, Barthes focused on the changes of meaning in terms of cultural and historical contexts (Aiello, 2020). According to Van Leeuwen, social semiotics is not only a theory or self-contained field, it has multi-disciplinary features (2005). Kress and Van Leeuwen's social semiotics is developed based on Halliday's theory of social semiotics. The difference is that the traditional semiotics is structuralism and social semiotics is functionalism. Van Leeuwen (2005) states that semiotic resources are important in social semiotics. Whereas, in traditional semiotics, the sign is the fundamental concept of semiotics. Resources are the signifier in social semiotics, and semiotic resources are not restricted to speech, writing, or pictures (ibid, p. 4). The relation between the conceptual metaphor theory and social semiotics is mentioned in Van Leeuwen's study, he states that metaphor is the key principle of semiotic innovation because semioticians not only study the semiotic resources but also study the semiotic change (ibid, p. 26). The metaphors are rooted in our culture when we see the metaphor, we tend to understand it from our concrete experiences. The signs and semiotics are also connected with our culture. Further, social semioticians believe that semiotic action is social action rooted in power relations, economic, cultural practices (Aiello, 2006). Therefore, we see the common feature of metaphors and semiotics. Van Leeuwen (2005, p. 33) states that this feature of metaphor can be directed to the new concepts, new ideas can be built according to the concrete experiences. Further, a recent study has shown that the combination of social semiotics and metaphor theory is significant for studying visual semiotics (Feng & O'Halloran, 2013).

According to Ailleo (2020, p. 378) "semiotic analyses are often discounted as being merely individual readings of a particular text or set of texts rather than evidence-driven studies." The

reason is that we could examine the imagery both critically and systematically by using semiotics in visual analysis, but the traditional semiotics could not examine the providers' and viewers' roles in meaning-making (ibid). Therefore, the limitation of semiotics is that other forms of data collection are needed to support the analysis of the meanings of the images (ibid). The semi-structured interview is used as a sub-data to support the analysis of Chinese political cartoons. For the analysis, the interviews are coded according to their themes and meanings.

As both methods and theory of signs, there are many concepts and ideas in the social semiotics, but there are three layers of meanings that are the fundamental of the social semiotic analysis: 1. Representational meaning (the stories presented), 2. The interpersonal meaning (the interaction of image and the viewers), and 3. Compositional meaning (the interaction between the representational meaning and interpersonal meaning) (Halliday, 1978; Jewitt & Oyama, 2020; Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996 cited in Pham, 2013). Further, the analyzing framework will follow Aiello (2006, pp. 374–376) and Harrison (2003, pp. 50–59) guide of social semiotic analysis:

1. *Representational meaning: what is the 'story' (or stories) that is represented? Who are the key 'participants' (the people or objects portrayed)?*
2. *Interpersonal meaning: how do the images interact with the viewer, for example by means of a portrayed person's gaze, a certain camera angle, and frame size?*
3. *Compositional meaning: how are particular images laid out or organized?*

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) states that their grammar of the visual design is based on contemporary Western societies. However, recent studies applied social semiotics in non-western contexts (Aiello, 2020; Aliakbari & Tarlani-Aliabadi, 2016; Jewitt & Oyama, 2020). Oyama's (1999) study demonstrated that social semiotic can be applied in a cross-cultural study. Therefore, social semiotics is applied for the visual analysis of this study. In sum, semiotics is both methods and theory of signs, signs represent the meanings which connected to the cultures and socio-politics. The propose of the study is to examine the current Chinese political cartoons, by doing so, the society, politics, and cultural values can be discovered. As we know there are many signs in political cartoons, each of them represents a different meaning, and the meaning builds the metaphors. Hence, semiotic analysis can be used for this study to discover the meanings from the signs in cartoons.

3.4.5 Ethical consideration

The whole research process is followed by the ethical guidelines from the Swedish Research Council. It is important to inform your research to the participants. During the interviews, I informed all my interviewees about the propose of the research and the use of the interview data. All the contents that might bring harm to the interviewees are avoided for the study propose. Interviewees have their right to not answer the questions which they think is harmful to them or too sensitive to them and I respect their privacy. The interview data is only used for this study and it would not be used for other propose. The personal information of interviewees is protected by using code cartoonist 1 to 5 instead of their real names. Anonymous cartoons should not be used due to the representativeness (Giarelli & Tulman, 2003). Therefore, the cartoonists' names should be carefully checked and represented.

3.4.6 Limitations

The number of cartoons can be the first limitation of this study. Although there are more than ten thousand works were sent to the competition committee, the cartoons selected for the websites for the exhibit are relatively few. Further, the number of cartoons chosen for the exhibit on the official websites are divided unevenly among the three years. I tried to use the searching engine Baidu or Google to search the anti-corruption cartoons, but the results show many unrelated cartoons. Therefore, using the cartoons from the official website is more reliable than using searching engines, and I do not need about the unrelated cartoons to showing out from the research. Further, 15 cartoons out of 61 cartoons that are collected in this research are chosen for the in-depth analysis. However, further research into the anti-corruption theme cartoons would give a more comprehensive study into this theme. Also, the anti-corruption theme is one of many themes of the cartoon competitions, it does not represent the political cartoons and cartooning in China in general.

The second concern is that all of the interviewees work and live in Beijing. Four of the five cartoonists are over 60 years old. The advantage of interviewing the older generation of cartoonists could be the experiences of them in political cartoons. Despite that, younger generations of cartoonists might provide a different angle to look into Chinese political cartoons. Alternatively, they might have a different opinion than the older generations of cartoonists.

4 Analysis and findings

In this chapter, 15 cartoons were selected from 61 cartoons to give an in-depth analysis. All 61 cartoons are divided according to their themes (in table 4). Each theme is interconnected to each other, some of the cartoons can be categorized into more than one theme. However, all the 61 cartoons can be divided into these five categories according to the meaning of the cartoons. Since there are multi-qualitative data in this study, the semi-structured interviews will be discussed in the discussion chapter.

Themes	Explanation
Audit culture and Abuse of power	Using public funds for personal pleasures,
Bribery and bribe-taking (贿赂)	The person who provides bribes and who take bribes are painted in the cartoons. Also pulling strings (找关系) can be found in this category of cartoons.
Corruption is Morality matter and guilt	Signs like handcuffs and prisons are used in the cartoons. Judging the corruption from moral aspects.
Prestige project (形象工程, 面子工程)	Governmental officials use public funds to build projects for political achievements, it is not for the needs of the public but for personal profits. Prestige projects often refer to the things that are like eye candies.
Party ideology and cartoons	Party ideologies like clean governance and self-cultivation are described in the cartoons. Cartoons in this category can be less metaphorical than the others.

Table 4

4.1 Audit culture and Abuse of power

In this category, many cartoons illustrated eating and using public resources for personal use. Further, some cartoons illustrated the abuse of power as playing with power (see figure 3). Recent studies have suggested the importance of the patrician culture and audit culture in corruption in China (He & Jiang, 2020; A. B. Kipnis, 2008; Osburg, 2018). The inspection groups (审查团/检查团) are established to inspect the institutions or bureau, it is one of the key part of audit culture in China (Osburg, 2018). A series of schedule and checklist would be designed for the inspection group by the evaluated institutions or bureau, which are often

perfectly designed to meet the requirement, the schedule often includes dining and wining in fancy entertainment places (ibid). An example from Kipnis (2008) shows how the audit schedule works, he mentioned that what happened on the morning of inspections come to the school that is chosen for the evaluation.

On the morning of the visit, the students were taken out of their regular classes and placed into a wide variety of activity rooms for the delegation to observe. the best basketball players were on the basketball court, the best Ping-Pong players were at Ping-Pang tables, the best Chinese chess players were in the Chinese chess room, a troop of dancers dressed in tights and tutus was in the dance hall, the school band was playing in the music hall, the computer room was full of students practicing PowerPoint, and so on (see more in Kipnis, 2008, p. 275).



FIGURE 1 BOTH UNDER THE GROUND BY WEICHUN BAI (HUBEI PROVINCE)

Figure 1 illustrates two groups of people are doing different underground activities at the same time. On the left side of the cartoons shows a group of construction workers is planning their work, one of the workers is holding a map and the other worker is pointing the sign on the right upper side of the wall which says, safety first. Whereas on the right side of the cartoon there are people dressed in black and grey suits accompanied by several ladies, there is a bundle of

money in the middle of the dining table, the sign on the money refers to public funds. On the left side of the cartoon, there is a red sign on the upper side of the wall that also shows first safety. Further, the title of the cartoon is both under the ground, refers to two kinds of activities construction work and hiding from something. The red sign ‘safety first’ is a common sign for the construction works, it refers to be prepared from the risks, when the sign appears on the right side of the cartoon (dining), ‘safety first’ become dining with the public funds under the ground. The ground here meets the corruption activities are done in the ‘ground’, it supposes to be private and secret. Thus, the metaphor in figure 1 can be “using public fund is underground activity”.



FIGURE 2 THE WORK FROM THE INSPECTION GROUP BY XUNYOU GAN (JIANGXI PROVINCE)

In figure 2, the title plays an important role to represent the meaning. The name of the cartoon is ‘works from inspection group’, works refer to the two sculptures/specimens and there are two verbal signs shows on the bottom sides of the sculptures. The sculpture on the left side is a rooster, the sign means Chicken farmer. On the right side of the

cartoon, there is a fish sculpture with a sign of a fish farmer. Both of the animals left with bones without meat refer to the meat that was taken by the inspection group. In other words, inspection groups ate the chicken and fish from the farms. Compare to figure 1, figure 2 did not illustrate the inspection groups in the cartoon, instead, it writes the inspection group into the title. The metaphorical meaning in this cartoon could be the inspection groups are the eaters, eating refers to corrupting.



FIGURE 3 SIDESHOW BY YINGSHENG QUAN (BEIJING) (LEFT)

FIGURE 4 DAILY SCHEDULE OF GOVERNMENT VEHICLE BY JIANHUA LI (JILIN PROVINCE) (RIGHT)

Figure 3 and figure 4 delivers the same meaning, which is “corruption is the abuse of power” but in a different way. In figure 3, a man is wearing a traditional custom of government staff from the Qing dynasty and making an acrobatic show. A clock is painted in figure 4, there is a black car in the middle of the clock with a verbal sign shows government vehicle. There are many pictorial signs are used in both of the cartoons. Following the clockwise, we see Yuanbao (shoe-shaped gold ingot), women underwear, head of Qing Dynasty style government stuff, money, high heels, and again Yuanbao in figure 3. Simply all signs direct to the dissolute life and playing with the power is like an acrobatic show (also refer to the metaphor). In figure 4, there are a lady, dice, wine glass, musical note, hearts, penguin (QQ Chinese social media application logo), light, and a boy by clockwise order. The use of public resources for personal propose is illustrated through a 24hours daily schedule of the government vehicle in figure 4. Both cartoons draw the different signs in a circle shape, in the center of the circle are cadre and government cars which refer to the government officials are surrounded by the life of seeking pleasures.

4.2 Bribery and bribe-taking

For the corrupted cadres, public offices are the place for earning the private profits, they obtain the promotions, profits, and protections through the networks, and the networks are consolidated through certain practices including red envelopes, gift-giving, and banqueting (Keliher & Wu, 2016). These practices slowly became the norm in politics, one who does not

participate in these practices are not only seen as alien to the others, but also a failure in political careers (ibid). Red envelopes, gifts, and banqueting are the unwritten roles of politics (A. B. Kipnis, 2008). According to He and Jiang (Qi, 2002 cited in He and Jiang, 2020), “official-oriented consciousness” is a universal value deeply rooted in peoples’ minds in China. Further, party officials often hold the power, wealth, and resources that can determine certain things (Li, 2018). Therefore, building personal networks is important in social practices, Guanxi (关系) means the networks or social connection. Guanxi is a fundamental part of the political culture (Li, 2018). Recent studies have shown that Guanxi is the burden of anti-corruption work because of the huge economical cost are involved (Li, 2011). However, Guanxi is not only one part of the political culture, but it is also a fundamental part of the social life in China (Kipnis, 2002). Guanxi can be warmed-up through the briberies, and bribes can be gift-cards, red envelopes, or mahjong-gambling (Li, 2011). It is also important to look into Chinese gift-giving culture. According to Steidlmeier (1999), gift-giving is a universal social custom in all areas including families, political institutions, and social institutions. Gift-giving is a way of showing honor and respect to others, it represents the values of the relations (P. Steidlmeier, 1999). However, the gift-giving and Guanxi should not be only understood in the context of corruption, yet, gift-giving and Guanxi are deep-rooted social customs and social life norms. One might be seen as rude and lack of social knowledge if there are no gifts with the visit of family, friends, acquaintance, leaders, etc. Further, the word “Li Shang Wang Lai” can be translated as one good turn deserves another which describes the importance of Guanxi and gift-giving. There are signs like red envelopes, gifts, or gift cards that are illustrated in many of the cartoons.



FIGURE 5 RED ENVELOP -
GAIN AND LOSS BY
XIAOQIANG HOU (SHANDONG
PROVINCE)

Figure 5 describes the red envelope become the burden instead of the benefit. On the upper side of the cartoon, one person is kneeling on the ground and holding the red envelope-shaped kite (the verbal sign writes red envelope) by his two hands, from the right side there is a

person jumped towards the kite with a big smile on his face. On the bottom side of the painting, the person who was kneeling on the ground now running with the kite and the person who accepted the kite is holding the kite tight, and from the sweat, we could see that he is very nervous and afraid of falling onto the ground. There is a dramatic change in the cartoon, the person who was kneeling on the ground controls over the situation, whereas, the person who was bribed loses the control and the kite (red envelope) became his burden. There are metaphors like a red envelope is the kite, bribery is risky (the person is holding from the kite carefully to not fall onto the ground), and red envelop is the burden (this burden can refer to the political career).



FIGURE 6 NO MATTER THE INTEREST OF THE LEADER BY JUNCAI WANG (INNER MONGOLIA)

The typical gift-giving and warming up Guanxi are described in figure 6. As we can see the old man in hospital dress is laying on the bed and he got injured on his one finger on the right side of the cartoon. On the left side, many people are holding different kinds of gifts. There are other details which are the sign on the hospital bed and the bed is surrounded by many gifts. On the bed, the verbal sign means the patient: leader and case of illness: scald on one finger. The title of the cartoon says leaders' interest is important, it can be understood as although the leader is not seriously sick (scald on one finger) still he needs to be visited. It is criticizing the ridiculous social relation and custom of gift-giving and Guanxi, especially when it relates to the person who has power. Also, the small injure of the finger and visitors with gifts shows the great contrast of the whole event, it also mocks the ridiculous of the gift-giving.



FIGURE 7 EVOLUTION AND DEGENERATION BY YINTANG MIU (BEIJING)

Exaggeration is used in figure 7, the man's feet evolved into hands and he is sitting on an office chair holding money on his "three hands", the other hand is making a position of asking for something. There are two verbal signs on the money, one on the table shows corruption and the other one under the table shows bribe-taking. The exaggeration is used as the person's feet turned into hands because of the constant bribe-taking and bribery motions. One who corrupts has to use hands to constantly receive and give the bribes. From the title evolution and degeneration, the information of the cartoon describes the four hands of the person is abnormal, it is both the evolution and the degeneration, which the negative meanings. MetaMetaphor this cartoon can be bribery taking is degeneration or evolution.

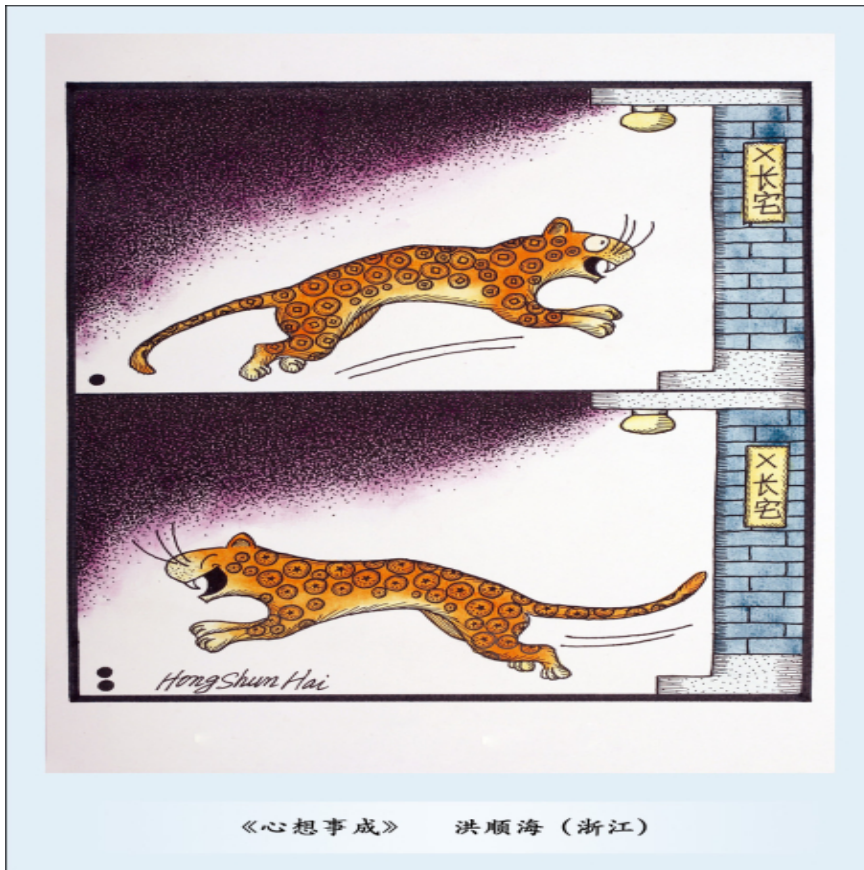


FIGURE 8 MAY ALL YOUR WISHES COME TRUE BY SHUNHAI HONG (ZHEJIANG PROVINCE)

Figure 8 uses animal symbolism to describe the bribery. In traditional Chinese culture, the leopard is a symbol of luck and wealth, on the upper side of the cartoon, the leopard runs towards the door with ancient coin patterns on its body, the sign on the door means the cadre's house. On half of the cartoon, the leopard goes out happily with stamps shaped patterns on its body. First, the coin patterns represent the money/bribes, stamps represent the permission is approved. Further, the eye of the leopard is drawn in one line on the bottom side of the cartoon, it represents happiness, when we smile our eyes tend to turn pointed or line shapes. As a result, the cartoon describes the bribery and bribe-taking by using the animal symbolism to represent the bribes. Moreover, bribery can be also understood as exchange or trade, the person who bribe uses bribes/money to accomplish the goal.



FIGURE 9 WIN AND LOSE BY ZHONG GUO (TIANJIN)

As mentioned before the bribes can be gifts, gift cards, and mahjong-gambling (Li, 2011), in figure 9 mahjong-gambling is illustrated as bribery. The person is holding a sheet of paper walked out happily from the mahjong room and he used all of his money to gamble, the first sign in red color means the approved, the sign

on the bottom shows the signature of the cadre. Behind the door, several men are playing mahjong, all men in the cartoon are wearing grey business suits that represent their work (government officials). Although the person lost his money (empty pockets) in mahjong gambling (bribery) the sign of a smile shows that he is satisfied because he got what he wanted.

4.3 Corruption is a morality matter and guilt

Corruption and bribery are the matter of the morality, both of the words in Chinese (*tanwu* 贪污 and *huilu* 贿赂) are negative, it refers to the social actions that transfer the public resources wrongly between the parties (P. Steidlmeier, 1999). The current anti-corruption campaigns are launched out by Xi, there are several actions were taken from the regulations in governmental anti-corruption institutions ¹⁶ to the public speeches and party documents about moral guidelines (Keliher & Wu, 2016). Further, many of the anti-corruption cartoons illustrate the corruption as guilty and immoral to give a direct view to the audiences that the wrongness of corruption. Signs like handcuffs and prisons are mainly used in this theme.

¹⁶ CCDI the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, CDI the provincial-level Committee for Disciplinary Inspection.



FIGURE 10 NO ONE CAN ESCAPE BY YIZENG SUN (BEIJING)

Figure 10 illustrates the guiltiness of bribery and bribe-taking. Both of the men are holding money in the handstand, the man with the black suit represents party official and the other one represents the briber. The party official is bigger than the briber and the briber is hiding behind the party official. Talking about the anti-corruption, the corrupted cadres appears often the public rather than the bribers. The meaning of figure 10 is to say both bribers and grafters are guilty. There are two verbal signs in the cartoons are bribery (the money the hands the man with the blue suit) and bribe-taking (the money on the cadre's hands). Another point in figure 10 is both of the men has sweat from their head which represents the feeling of the people (ashamed). The grafters are illustrated mostly in the bribery theme cartoons than the bribers. There are three reasons mentioned by Li (2011, p. 16), that can address the reason the bribers are mentioned less than grafters. First, the legal responsibility of the one who takes bribes is higher than the bribers. Second, the public tends to be more sympathetic toward the bribers. Third, the public expectations of the cadres make them experience stronger cognitive dissonance. Nevertheless, the representative meaning of figure 10 is both the grafters and bribers are guilty, the relation between them is interconnected.

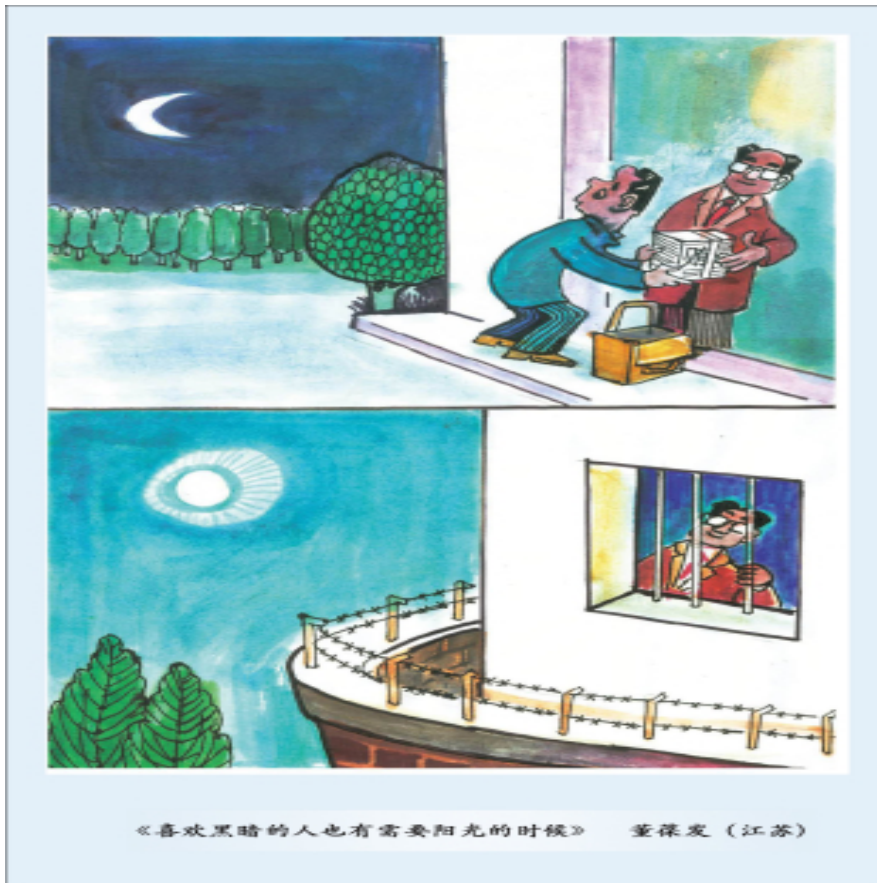


FIGURE 11 PEOPLE WHO LIKE DARKNESS ALSO NEED BRIGHTNESS BY BAOFA DONG (JIANGSU PROVINCE)

The immorality of the bribery is represented by the night (darkness), in the title people who like darkness represent the corrupted cadre. Whereas, the sunlight (brightness) represent justice. When the cadre is arrested there is no more need of hiding from the sunlight. As we see from the upper side, one person is bribing the other (cadre with red tie and glasses) in front of the cadre's house (cadre is wearing pajamas), this happens during the night which also represents activity is secret (immoral, injustice). In the next scene, the cadre is in jail standing in front of the window to get sunshine which represents there is no more secret to hide. The contrast between the brightness and darkness represents the injustice and justice are used in figure 11. Both the title and cartoon have a strong metaphorical meaning.



FIGURE 12 FOR THE POSTERITY BY JICHUAN LI (SHANGHAI)

The central meaning of figure 12 is corruption is guilty. There are three different people in the cartoon, starting from the left is farmer, a construction worker, and a cadre. All of them are saying the same word that is ‘for my posterities’, although the motivations are the same the results are different. Compare to the farmer and construction worker cadre’s work is immoral therefore he is wearing a handcuff. Figure 12 simply represents the metaphor corruption is guilty, expect that there are no other metaphorical meanings.

4.4 Prestige projects

Prestige projects in Chinese are *Xing Xiang Gong Cheng* (形象工程), the word *Xing Xiang* refers to the image and *Gong Cheng* refer to projects. Alternatively, it can be also translated as image and vanity projects. It might be difficult to relate prestige projects directly to corruption. To answer what is prestige projects and how does it connected to the anti-corruption theme, the cultural background should be introduced. *Xing Xiang* (形象) can be also understood as *Mian Zi* (面子), literately *Mian Zi* means face. *Mian Zi* is one of the most important parts of social life in China (P. Steidlmeier, 1999). The concept of face in Chinese culture refers to the

reputation, status, and dignity. Having *Mian Zi* could be understood as you have good social relationships with others who have power, money, and wide social relations. Alternatively, the wide social relation, power, and money bring you a good image in social life. Since the image is important in social life, people might take any kind of action to protect their images. *Mian Zi* is like a bargaining counter in social life. When it comes to politics, it also connects the party officials would make an effort to create a good image to the higher levels of the officials. Consequently, the good image that created by the local officials would bring them the achievements to their career. In other words, the propose of making prestige projects are driven by their benefits.

The other reason for making a prestige project is due to the government achievement performance system. The inspection groups (考察团) are the center of the audit culture in CCP (A. Kipnis, 2002). To gain higher achievement performance, local officials and governments would plan out the whole schedule for the inspection groups. It could also say that the prestige project is an action of gaining good political achievement performance. Often public funds are taken for implementing the prestige projects, which makes the connection to corruption. Thus, the prestige projects waste the public funds, it is only built due to the personal interest not for the demand of the public.



FIGURE 13 PRESTIGE PROJECT BY WANSHUAI SUN (HEBEI PROVINCE)

From figure 1, we can see the broken tree is decorated with red balloons which can be the representational meaning. Red balloons have the same color as the fruits on the tree, the rabbits are confused by this view. Without reading the title of the painting, it might be difficult to connect the prestige project with this cartoon.

Thus, the title is a verbal sign which explains the content of the cartoon. There are no verbal signs used in this painting, expect the title. As we could imagen if the tree is not fixed by the other part, it would stay broken, broken refers to the negative image. Although the broken tree

is fixed by red balloons, balloons are not permanent and not natural, it refers to the inspection group only visit for a short period, not for a long time. Further, it might look beautiful when we just look at the tree once, but like the balloons are not permanent, it does not solve the problem from its origins. The fakeness of the prestige project refers to the fruits from the tree, the artificial side of the tree has no fruits on the ground whereas there are fruits under the other side of the tree. The metaphor from figure 1 can be a prestige project is a tree decorated with balloons. In this sense, this cartoon is criticizing the prestige projects is fake, as the meaning of the word 'face', only decorates the facial side, not from the origins.



FIGURE 14 PRESTIGE PROJECT BY ZHONGYE LIN (LIAONING PROVINCE)

There are two verbal signs are used in figure 2. The first verbal signs refer to prestige projects and the second one refers to funds for poverty alleviation. There is a gap on the bottom side of the new building (prestige project) and several men brought a piece of building (poverty alleviation funds) to fill up the new building. The bottom part is the foundation of the

building, without the foundation it is not possible to build up the building. The representational meaning in this cartoon is the prestige project is built by the poverty alleviation funds. Compare to figure 1, the meaning of figure 2 is illustrated clearer and more direct.

4.5 Party ideology and cartoons

In this theme, cartoons are rather descriptive than metaphorical compare to the other themes of cartoons. The other feature is that most of the cartoons are multi-paneled instead of single-panel cartoons. Lianhuanhua (连环画) style is multi-paneled, it often promotes the social and political campaigns and educates people (Lent & Xu, 2017). However, the tradition of using Lianhuanhua for publicity traces on the media has a long history in China in which Dianshizhai huabao (点石斋画报) was the first newspaper (ibid, p. 12). Moreover, cartoons are used for

publicity propose during Mao's era (Lent & Xu, 2017). Unlike single-panel cartoons, multi-panel cartoons apply less metaphorical languages. In other words, the storytelling methods are direct, and the meaning of cartoons is easier to depict. According to Keliher and Wu (2016), the propose of Xi is to build a new political culture and ideology from the understanding of Chinese traditions. Moreover, the ideology reform still has a significant effect on the CCP leadership, and the ideology reform has a deep connection with the traditional value, namely, self-cultivation (*xiuyan* 修养) in Confucianism (CHEEK, 2019). As education and publicity tools for social and political campaigns, the party ideology and slogans are often illustrated in the multi-panel cartoons. For example, the standard of clean-governance, the words for clean-governance, elements of being self-disciplined. Figure 15 is a multi-panel cartoon; it describes a good example of clean governance. The title of the cartoon has no difference from the party slogans. The story in the cartoons is from the left upper side to the right bottom can be translated as 1. Walking instead of using the government car, 2. Say no to bribery, 3. No small matter for the interest of people, 4. Serve the public and full fill their requests, 5. Say no to Guanxi, 6. Donating the money for the need (the sign on the box means a donation for a disaster area).



FIGURE 15 CLEAN-GOVERNANCE AND GOOD DISCIPLINE INSPECTION BY JIZONG GUO (HEBEI PROVINCE)

5 Discussion and conclusion

5.1 Discussion

The former chapter analyzed the cartoons from anti-corruption cartoon competitions, the cartoons are divided into five themes according to its contents and meaning. The perspectives from Chinese cartoonists could help us to understand the background knowledge of the political cartoons in China. Further, their opinion also provides a basis for the interpretation of Chinese political cartoons. This chapter aims to provide further analysis and discussion of cartoons by analyzing the interviews. Five cartoonists are interviewed in this study and the analysis shows that the cartoonist holds both similar and distinct opinions about Chinese

political cartoons. The analysis will start with the cartoonists' depiction of cartoons and political cartoons.

Cartoonist 1: Cartoons are special in paintings, there is no restriction of space and time, it beyond reality. The cartoon is thought-provoking art, it has the function of publicity and education people. There are different types of cartoons including romantic cartoons and political cartoons. However, political cartoons can be quite sarcastic.

Cartoonist 2: The development of modern cartoons is due to modern printing technology. Namely, the birth of newspapers and magazines.

Cartoonist 3: The modern printing technology was introduced to China from the West; it also brought modern cartoon art to China in the late Qing dynasty. Cartoons are unique and it is an art full of thoughts, it criticizes the ugliness.

Cartoonist 4: Cartoons are a form of condensed art, it reflects the society, politics, and economics in large, there can be several meanings in the cartoons. Cartoons record history. For example, cartoons about reform and opening-up are the social and political dynamics of reform and opening-up, it describes the history.

Cartoonist 5: Cartoons are unique art. Cartoon art follows the development of newspapers, it gives comments to the current affairs in society, represents the feature of the objects.

All cartoonists believe that cartoon art is unique, it can be a historical resource, condenses the information into pictures, and delivers the message from society, politics, and economics. The opinion of the cartoonists about political cartoons meets the concept of cartoons as a mirror of politics and society. Gan's (2008) study has demonstrated that there are different types of cartoons. Cartoons express poetic feelings are poetic/lyrical cartoons (抒情漫画), cartoons criticize the injustices of the society or comment the politics are political cartoons. These different types of cartoons can be found in anti-corruption cartoons as well.

Among the 61 cartoons that are collected from the competitions, most of the cartoons criticized the corruption and some cartoons represented the party ideology or painted more for the publicizing propose without judging the corruption. However, according to their images and contents, 61 cartoons can be categorized into five themes, as I discussed in chapter 4. Further, the features of different types of cartoons can be found from the metaphorical aspect

as well. Metaphors can be found in most of the cartoons except the multi-panel cartoons. In the 15 cartoons, metaphors are described by applying different target domain and source domain. Both of the domains have either a direct theme of the corruption or an indirect theme. For example, a prestige project (target domain) is a fake tree (source domain), a red envelope (target domain) is a kite (source domain), bribery (target domain) is darkness/ the night (source domain), justice (target domain) is the sunlight (source domain), party officials (target domain) are clowns (source domain), etc. However, most of the metaphors found in the selected cartoons are negative because corruption (*huilu* 贿赂) is a negative theme. More specifically, both the source domains and target domains can be neutral, when it comes to the context of corruption it becomes negative. However, not all cartoons are metaphorical, some cartoons are rather descriptive than poetic (see figure 15 party ideology). Cartoons without metaphors tend to be non-criticizing rather be descriptive cartoons.

Although all cartoonists have a similar opinion about the origins of the modern cartoon art. Regarding the current political cartoons /satirical cartoons 讽刺漫画 (mocking, laughing, or criticizing the objects) in China, cartoonists have different opinions.

Cartoonist 1: Political cartoons were weapons against foreign countries during the late Qing dynasty, as well as during the W.W. II. Also, political cartoons were used for publicity propose during the civil war. After 1949, the current affair cartoons (时事漫画) were on-trend. Also, anti-imperialist cartoons were created as well. There are many different themes of cartoons appeared after 1949, but the number of satirical cartoons was decreased. There are many cartoon magazines and newspapers mostly with humor cartoons. The current situation of political cartoons and cartoon art is not as good as before.

Cartoonist 2: The current situation in political cartoons and cartoon art is bad in China because of the influence of the Cultural Revolution and the decline of the international print media. The change of the traditional print media influences political cartoons, due to the newspapers are the main vehicle of political cartoons.

Cartoonist 3: After the reform and opening-up, political cartoons and cartoons art entered the new era. There are many foreign cartoons are published, many cartoon exhibitions are held, but the development levels are different because of the regional differences. Different from the before (wartime cartoons) the cartoons after the reform and opening-up are relatively less aggressive.

Also, the subjects of satire are different (before is the enemies and reactionaries), whereas it becomes the conflicts and injustices in society. After 2000, there are fewer cartoons are published due to the decline of international paper media. The feature of the Internet renews faster than traditional paper media.

Cartoonist 4: The transformation of the media from traditional paper to Internet cyberspace has influenced cartoon art.

Cartoonist 5: The time is changing, and technology is changing. The cartoon art also has to change according to the time. The feature of Chinese political cartoons is that it expresses more of the collective sense and universality. Whereas Western political cartoons tend to express more of self-perception.

Researchers discussed the recent changes in global cartooning and traditional printing media. Cartoonists believe these changes have both good and bad influences on cartoons. Since the beginning of the modern cartooning in China, cartoons have experienced a lot under different periods and political situations. Cartoonists believe that cartooning has its different functions at different times, from the late Qing dynasty till now. Regarding the recent online discussion about the satirical cartoons in China, some believe that there are no satirical cartoons in China, it existed during the Chinese golden age of cartooning (the 1920s-1930s). But others believe that it still exists in China, different from the wartime the need for society to cartoons has changed, in the peaceful era there are no more enemies. However, all cartoonists agree with the current situation of Chinese cartoons, the cartoon's art is in its period.

As cartoonist 5 said, *“the feature of Chinese political cartoons is that it expresses more of the collective sense and universality which is different from Western political cartoons”*. From the analysis of 15 cartoons, there is no real person is painted directly. Instead, the cartoonists used the general features of the objects to represent. For example, the corrupted cadres are illustrated with black or grey suits and slightly fatter bodies, whereas in figure 15, the uncorrupted cadres are slimmer. Here the fat body often connects to the rich (rich also directs to corruption), the slim body connects to the person who works hard. There is no doubt that, although cartoon art is from the West, the Chinese cartoons also have their features in terms of the culture, society, and politics in the cartoonists' perspective.

The anti-corruption movements are not new in China, it can trace back to the Maoist era. The new anti-corruption campaign has become one of the most influential political actions. Under the anti-corruption policy influences, there are many cartoon competitions are organized by the officials.

Cartoonist 1: The number of satirical cartoons is decline after 1957. Wasting became legal nowadays which was illegal in the past and anti-corruption movements are organized by the governments, hence, there is no need for anti-corruption cartoons.

Cartoonist 2: Compare to the older generations of cartoonists, the young generations of cartoonists are less skilled in cartooning, and the standard of the cartoon skill are low domestically which brings negative effect to the cartoon art and political cartoon. The other aspect might be attributed to the aesthetic standards that have changed.

Cartoonist 3: The techniques of cartooning are important for cartoonists including cartooning thought and languages. After 2000the s, anti-corruption cartoons become the trends, cartoons are the combination of politics and art, it reflects the feature of the era. Not everyone could understand the meaning of the cartoons, it is an art of minority.

Cartoonist 4: Each year many international cartoon competitions are organized in China. There are cartoons competitions are organized by governmental institutions. Therefore, we have satirical cartoons in China now, a good example is the anti-corruption cartoons. However, each country has its censorship system, the unhealthy, violent, and negative contents are not allowed to publish. Everyone's understanding of cartoons is different based on their experiences and cultural backgrounds which is the feature of cartoons, cartoons make people think.

Cartoonists 5: Chinese people have their sense of humor which is culturally constructed. There are differences between the cartoons based on the different regions in China. For example, cartoons from Inner Mongolia might have Mongolian features. The difference between Western cartoons and Chinese cartoons is like the Bel canto and Beijing Opera.

As mentioned previously, there are two distinct opinions about the current political cartoons in China on the online discussion, and there are different opinions among the cartoonist as well. The contents of the cartoons change according to time and socio-political backgrounds. The wartime cartoons can be rather radical than the current cartoons due to socio-political situations. But it does not mean there are satirical cartoons. As cartoonist 4 states that anti-corruption

cartoons are a good example of the current political cartoons/satirical cartoons. Moreover, from the analysis of the cartoons, we could see the features of political cartoons (mocking the ugliness, judging the injustices, and express thoughts to the audience). Therefore, I argue that anti-corruption cartoons can be one of the examples of current Chinese political cartoons, and it shows the satirical features of political cartoons.

Refaie (2003) pointed out the importance of studying the metaphor within the socio-political contexts. The result shows that the understanding of the anti-corruption policy, party ideology, and slogans are the important background of the cartoons. Both of the metaphors and signs are connected to cultural values. A variety of signs are used in the anti-corruption cartoons. Signs like handcuffs, prisons, money, moon (dark), sun (light), sweat from the head, the smile on the face, balloons are applied in the anti-corruption cartoons to represent the different meanings. Despite the visual signs, there are also many verbal signs are used in the cartoons to give further explanation to the contents of cartoons. For instance, bribery, bribes, red envelopes, public funds, and safety first. Further, party cadres/corrupted persons, money are the most illustrated images in the 61 cartoons. Some of the signs can be understood universally whereas some of the signs have strong cultural roots. For example, the leopard is the symbol of wealth in traditional Chinese culture. Roland Barthes believes that signs are embedded with cultural value (Aiello, 2020). The analysis shows that the signified is not always directly represented by the signifier. For example, in figure 13, the signifier is a fruit tree and the signified is a prestige project which is described in a more metaphorical and hidden way.

Others like animal symbolism and exaggeration have also appeared in the selected cartoons. Exaggerations and mocking the others are the typical features of political cartoons (Hoffman & Howard, 2007; Morris, 1993). Animal symbolism is broadly used in Chinese political cartoons from the late Qing dynasty until now (Caschera, 2017). The title plays an important role in some of the cartoons, especially the linguistic meanings of Chinese, the titles can represent the whole meaning of cartoons. When the meaning of the cartoons is a blur, the title might represent the meanings. Especially when there are cartoons without verbal signs, as verbal text title can be the key for the meanings.

From the interpersonal meaning, there are nine out of fifteen cartoons structured the objects (corrupted cadres) on the right side of the cartoons. From the compositional meaning comparisons like darkness and brightness, immoral and moral, fake and real, incomplete and

complete, bribers and grafters, left and right are used in the cartoons. The comparison between the different signs provides a direct sense of the metaphorical languages as well. Further, the features of certain people and things can be outlined. For example, from the most painted image, the party officials wear grey or black office suits with glasses or without in most of the selected cartoons. The corrupted cadres' faces are illustrated mostly with sweats from their heads with faces of regret. The people who are not guilty are often painted with a smile on faces to give a strong contrast to the corrupted ones. There are party ideology and slogans are illustrated in the anti-corruption cartoons. In figure 15, the multi-paneled cartoon shows the standard of being a good party official (non-corrupted officials). More cartoons represent the party ideology that can be found in this cartoon competition (in a total number of 11 cartoons from 61 cartoons). Lastly, cultural practices like Guanxi, gift-giving, and bribery are described in many of the cartoons, all of them are connected with the corruption in China.

The study examined how the anti-corruption is illustrated in the cartoons, by doing so, it could answer the question from the online discussion about political cartoons/satirical cartoons in China. Also, the anti-corruption cartoons provide an insight into anti-corruption culture and policies. Cartoonists believe that cartoons are socially constructed even the sense of humor. Chinese cartoonists think that the feature of Chinese political cartoons is not to paint the specific political person directly in the cartoons which differ from other countries. For example, political leaders like Hilary Clinton and Jorge Bush are painted in many of Western cartoons. This feature of Chinese political cartoons might lead to the conclusion of there are no satirical cartoons in China. Further, different from the wartime the objects and the use of political cartoons have changed. If the satirical political cartoon's definition is to criticize the injustice and social or political issues, from the 15 anti-corruption cartoons, it could say that it still exists in China.

5.2 Conclusion

Under the global decline of traditional print media and the surge of new media, political cartoons are experiencing a different time than before, it might have brought both positive and negative effects. Compare to the wartime cartoons and the golden age of cartooning, people hold more critical opinions about the current satirical cartoons. Under these situations, the online discussion about current Chinese satirical cartoons emerged, which is "*whether there*

are satirical cartoons in China today?”. The propose of this study is to examine current Chinese political cartoons by using the concept of politics as a medium of society and politics.

Researchers (Domínguez, 2015; Refaie, 2003) has shown that political cartoons are metaphorically rich. The metaphors represent the hidden meaning of the cartoons and the cartoons also creates metaphors. As we know semiotic analysis is used for studying visual documents. Cartoonists describe their subjects through the signs. Social semioticians believe that signs are constructed culturally. The connection between political cartoons, politics, society, and culture can be found in the anti-corruption cartoons. In other words, all of them connected to each other. The anti-corruption cartoons are illustrated in the context of China and its cultures, but the signs, metaphorical languages, and symbolism are the universal features of political cartoons. The analysis of cartoons shows that most of the cartoons have metaphors except the multi-paneled cartoons. Signs are used for representing the themes and concepts, which are also culturally connected but not all signs. For example, the leopard represents the wealth, the red envelope is bribing are connected to the traditional culture and social norms in China. Whereas, signs like handcuff, money, and prisons has universal meaning. Five cartoonists have different opinions about the current cartooning and satirical cartoons in China, but they all have the same perspective as the cartoon is a thoughtful art. Further, the satirical features can be found from the anti-corruption cartoons. Therefore, I answer the question of the online discussion that there are satirical cartoons in today’s China. The history of using cartoons as publicity can be traced back to the Maoist period. Under the influence of the anti-corruption policy, it can say that the anti-corruption cartoons became one of the publicity of CCP.

Anti-corruption cartoons are selected from the cartoon competition that organized by governmental organizations in China, except this cartoon competition there are various cartoon competitions, newspapers, and websites that publish Chinese political cartoons. As mentioned before anti-corruption movements are not new and anti-corruption cartoons can be found in the 1980s newspapers, the further study of Chinese political cartoons could bring more insight into this field. Namely, the comparison between the former anti-corruption cartoons and the current one.

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