

A Study of the People's Nature in Woodcuts During the Anti-Japanese War in Shanxi

ZHANG Tong-yuan

Shanxi University, Taiyuan, China (030006)

The anti-Japanese woodcuts focus on the red revolutionary culture and describe the connotation of the Anti-Japanese War era, which is self-evident in the commemorative value of China's revolutionary struggle history. For example, in Shanxi, China, woodcut art activities and social practice promotion activities organized around the theme of the Anti-Japanese War are also everywhere, which all show the people's nature of the Chinese people during the revolutionary struggle from the two aspects of the red culture of the Anti-Japanese War and traditional art and culture, and its humanistic connotation is quite profound. In this paper, we first introduce the historical origin of woodcut during the Anti-Japanese War, and then show the people's value connotation of woodcut art activities in Shanxi. This paper mainly discusses the image narration, language and picture narration and construction significance of woodcuts in Shanxi's War of Resistance, fully reveals the narrative nature of image media, strives to arouse people's recognition of this period of Shanxi's War of Resistance culture and history, and reflects the realistic value and significance of Shanxi's War of Resistance Woodcuts art activities.

Keywords: people's nature, Shanxi anti-Japanese woodcarving, image media narrative, synergistic effect, construction significance, humanistic cultural identity

Introduction

Any form of artistic expression has its powerful people nature, because art comes from the grass-roots life of the people, and the brilliance it reflects is the brilliance of human nature. Especially in different historical periods, the performance of art and culture is not the same. This paper discusses the cultural expression of woodcut art in Shanxi during the Anti-Japanese War, which is a way to publicize the humanistic culture during the Anti-Japanese War, and also a kind of image symbol and media to record history. It organized the actions and events of the people at that time, formed a plot story, and constructed a complete and clear panorama picture of the people's revolutionary War of resistance at that time. So up to now, it is very commemorative and educational significance to organize and carry out social practice promotion and display activities of woodcarving in Shanxi.

Introduction to the Origin of Woodcuts During the Anti-Japanese War

The so-called woodcut is an artistic activity carried out on the board, the creator uses the board as the base to carve the image in reverse, and finally printed on the paper to form a positive picture, which is a special painting art. In fact, woodcut appeared in China in the fourth year of Hongshi (402 AD), as an ancient printmaking art form used to create the illustration of the Diamond Sutra, the core function of the time was to copy, the creator carved wood according to the text portrait, and finally printed on paper. The modern version of woodcut art originated in 1928, when Mr. Lu Xun founded the magazine "Rushing" with woodcut prints with pictures, at that time, Mr. Lu Xun's understanding of woodcut is "to use a knife instead of paper." The pursuit of modern woodcut art is unique, does not imitate, no moment, and the artistic content created can also directly reflect the reality of social life, and it was natural at that time to become a combative artistic expression form to publicize the revolutionary struggle ideology.

In 1931, Mr. Lu Xun organized and launched a "Woodcut Seminar", which was definitely the beginning of the rise of China's emerging woodcut art movement. At that time, the emerging woodcut art was given the task of propagating the revolution, because in the period of Anti-Japanese War, propaganda forms and painting materials were also scarce, so people used woodcut art to publicize the revolutionary struggle situation. Therefore, the woodcut art activities at that time were no longer mere artistic activities, but it was upgraded to an important representative of the vanguard movement and became a propaganda weapon of Chinese revolutionary struggle. The presentation of sharp social contradictions at that time was quite sharp, representing the voice of the public, and it was a sharp art fully in line with the social ideology of China at that time.

From the perspective of artistic expression, woodcuts during the Anti-Japanese War paid attention to the conformity of production and communication logic, and deeply discussed the interactive relationship between art creators and information receivers at that time. In the process of "making woodcut" and "interpreting woodcut", a complete narrative relationship is formed. Therefore, woodcut is not only an image symbol, but also a media, which made outstanding contributions to the transmission of the message of the Anti-Japanese War and the promotion of the spirit of the Anti-Japanese War. In other words, the connotation of people's nature shown by this humanistic narrative was highly respected at that time, and people hoped to show the spiritual attributes of the Chinese people's resistance to the end through woodcuts, and their will was resolute and unshakable. Throughout the history of China's War of Resistance, the appreciation and practice of woodcut art activities in Shanxi during the War of Resistance was quite in-depth. After the War of Resistance became a history, the local government also actively organized the exhibition and promotion of woodcut art to show the world the historical truth of Shanxi's War of resistance at that time.

Second, the Basic Overview of Woodcut Art Activities in Shanxi's Anti-Japanese War

In September 2024, the Shanxi Anti-War Woodcarving Art activity was launched at the former site of Lu Xun Art School in Wuxiang County, and was named "Walking Woodcarving of the Anti-Japanese War—Social Practice Promotion Activity". The art event commemorates the 79th anniversary of the victory of the Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression. It aims to vigorously inherit and carry forward the history of the red Revolution in Shanxi, and publicize woodcut art and culture at the same time.

In this activity, not only includes social promotion content, but also educational exchanges in the exhibition, including ideological and political propaganda and professional education, on-site demonstration and technical guidance of Shanxi anti-Japanese woodcut art works in the activity, while guiding the students and teachers participating in the activity to experience the production and printing process of woodcut, and learn the basic production techniques and technological operation flow of woodcut. It also deeply felt the red cultural spirit carried in the woodcut art of Shanxi's Anti-Japanese War. In the activity, the spread of red culture and the spirit of the Anti-Japanese War was presented through the woodcut art form, which was undoubtedly a vivid ideological and political education lesson for the teachers and students participating in the exhibition. Among them, the presentation of the people's nature in woodcuts is particularly prominent, because the cultural content of the Anti-Japanese War period presented in woodcuts art works is the ideological embodiment of the people's defense of the country and the Anti-Japanese War to the end, and a large number of revolutionary heroes bravely sacrificed in exchange for the happy life of the Chinese people, so the woodcuts art activities in Shanxi are also activities that show the value connotation of the people's nature (Pang, 2023, pp. 97-104).

Narrating and Displaying Woodcut Images of Anti-Japanese Base Areas Through Woodcut Image Media

The people's display of woodcut art activities in Shanxi Anti-Japanese War is all presented by woodcut image media narrative, which shows the anti-Japanese base areas in Shanxi, connecting the elements of the Anti-Japanese War and the elements of natures and events, forming an adequate collection of image symbols. Although the woodcut itself shows a flat image symbol, it is quite in place for the organization of nature actions and events, and the world is rich in content. If it rises to a higher level of value significance, it is the portrayal of Shanxi people's ideology at that time, and spread through the form of woodcuts. Therefore, the people's story told by woodcuts is not static presentation and one-way transmission, but the people's story told by it is a two-way dynamic exchange and flow, which is quite profound in reflecting the resistance of Shanxi people against the people.

Narrating through woodcut image media to publicize Shanxi Anti-Japanese War culture to others is a transmission of popular ideology, and different observers will have their own interpretation of people's nature because of different understandings. For example, the woodcut art works have clear content and clear meaning for the Anti-Japanese War images at that time, which can realize the communication function of the meaning of the images. When displaying the content of the memorial Hall of the Hundred Corps War, there are woodcuts to show the real scene of the Hundred Corps War at that time, such woodcuts are shocking, because the woodcuts are vivid and real for each soldier of the Eighth Route Army. In the face of the formidable military power of the enemy, they did not flinch, choosing to fight to the end and defend their homes. The woodcuts show the people's nature of the Chinese people to protect their home and country. The soldiers of the Eighth Route Army were brave and tenacious, and they fought bravely against the enemy for six days and nights, killing more than 400 enemies even in the poor environment with insufficient food and clothes, which dealt a heavy blow to the ambition of the Japanese invaders to destroy China (Lena, 2021, pp. 179-180).

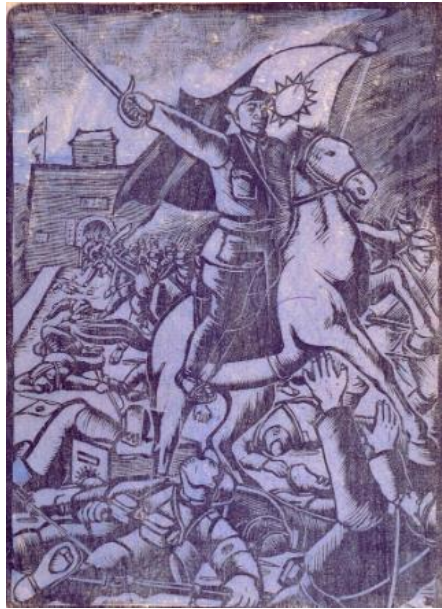


Figure 1. Woodcut of the War of the Hundred Regiments.

In the woodcut art works of the Shanxi Anti-Japanese War, each work is mainly displayed in a single piece, and each image shows a story of the Shanxi Anti-Japanese War, just like the depiction of the heroic behavior and spirit of the Chinese people in the Hundred Corps War Woodcut is very penetrating and intuitive, showing the great and glorious people's nature of the Chinese people, including the profound interpretation of the people's nature by the woodcut creators. This kind of narrative through the media image, showing the people's side is regrettable, all the people's narrative is presented in the subtle flow of woodcuts, which has a deeper emotional connotation deep into the viewer's heart. In fact, this is a kind of exchange and communication between the people of Shanxi's Anti-Japanese War and the art creators and connoisseurs in the people's ideology, which combines the people's nature of history with that of contemporary people. The sexual connotation is connected, forming a stronger emotional resonance.

It can be said that the woodcuts in the anti-Japanese base areas of Shanxi during the Anti-Japanese War period are rich in content and themes, such as the depiction of the "red sun" in some works to symbolize the motherland, the hidden connotation of which is that the Chinese people are shining. The connotation of the people's nature presented by this red symbol is more profound, because the red sun summons the deep national emotion of the sons and daughters of the Chinese people to save the nation. In woodcuts, the image of Chinese anti-Japanese heroes is magnified, because they can represent the Chinese people, and their muscle lines are clear and prominent, which is the best representative of the image of the Chinese people (Chang, 2024, pp. 95-102).

Show the Synergistic Effect of Language and Picture Narration and Publicize the Value of the Anti-Japanese War

The narrative content of language and picture shown in woodcuts of Shanxi Anti-Japanese War is very rich, and the synergistic effect between different narratives is established. At that time, woodcuts mainly cooperated with newspapers to report news events, such as "Protecting the little soldiers against aggression"

and “The experience and lessons of the anti-Japanese United Forces in the hard struggle” reported in *Xinhua Daily* were relatively representative woodcuts at that time. It can be said that the language information conveyed by these woodcut image narratives is true, and the woodcut image narrative core is specially set in presenting the life of the people’s War of Resistance, and the people’s nature is relatively concentrated. In the process of highlighting the theme of the story, the people’s ideology in the plane image is also deeply depicted to ensure that the viewpoint is tilted, focus on the main body of the story, and finally complete the woodcut art creation. All the synergistic effects of the language and picture narrative are clearly presented, and the value of the people’s resistance in the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression is publicized. Specific to woodcut art works, the following two points would like to talk about (Xing, 2024, pp. 108-113):

Highlight the Theme to Highlight the People’s Nature

First of all, it is self-evident that the Shanxi Anti-War woodcuts highlight the theme of the people. All the woodcuts are narrating the stories of the people during the Shanxi Anti-War period, which have specific structural symbols and are relatively distinct in the presentation of narrative rules. At a deep level, the presentation of the woodcut theme is positively related to the visual subject of the picture. In the woodcuts of the War of Resistance in Shanxi, the subject object is the Chinese soldiers and civilians in the War of resistance, and their participation in the war of resistance and resistance against foreign enemies has the nature of *The Times*, which is exactly what the woodcuts art works at that time advocated. It is a summary of the experience of the Chinese people in the War of Resistance, and the experience is combined with the spirit of *The Times*. Highlight the theme of creation and highlight the main connotation of people’s nature.

In the anti-Japanese base areas of Shanxi, all the woodcut art works created are based on the real military and civilian revolutionary practice life, and the spirit of the people’s revolution is internalized in the form, which is a true presentation of the ideological form of military and civilian life in Shanxi and even the whole China. For example, “Where is Home” (Jiang Feng) depicts the hardships of the exiled people at that time, which to a certain extent shows the Chinese people’s deep desire for the motherland to drive out the invaders and peaceful liberation. Similarly, “Strong Effort” (Wozha) also reflects the hard-working and courageous spirit of the Shanxi people at that time, and the presentation of people’s values is clear and clear. In addition, “Election” (Xu Ling) and “Learning Culture” (Luo Gongliu) depicted a wide range of Chinese democracy propaganda activities and cultural education activities carried out in Shanxi at that time, symbolizing the images of the people in Shanxi base areas to show the nature of the people, and also taking the spirit of the People’s War of Resistance as the core of artistic creation. It is hoped to establish a social consensus based on the anti-Japanese national united front.

Focus on the Subject of People’s Nature with Image Narration

As mentioned above, the image narrative art in woodcuts is quite strong, which also shows that the creator himself has a deep understanding of image narrative and can actively perceive the value connotation of people’s nature, which is a process of visual observation, but also a psychological perception process. When the image narrative focuses on the main body to interpret the content, the story interpretation of the image is also quite profound, which is very accurate in the presentation of image color, composition and form. For example, in the woodcut work “Comrade Ma Xiwu Mediation Litigation” (ancient Yuan), the creator specially placed

Comrade Ma Xiwu wearing cadre clothes in the center of the woodcut picture, behind him is the common door blank, in order to highlight his subject status, in addition, the eyes of other natures in the picture are focused on him, creating a central subject atmosphere of Comrade Ma Xiwu. Let the viewer see at a glance who is the central figure in the crowd. This woodcut also reflects the social spiritual core of the government represented by Comrade Ma Xiwu in promoting the freedom of marriage and advocating women's liberation during the revolutionary War of Resistance, and it is also an artistic presentation of the spirit of the people, as shown in Figure 2 (Li, 2022, pp. 65-67).



Figure 2. "Comrade Ma Xiwu's Mediation Lawsuit" (Ancient Yuan).

Construct the Consistency of Meaning and Show the Logic and Purpose of Woodcut Humanistic Narrative Across Media

Focus on the Multi-media Narrative of Images and the Logical Presentation of People's Nature

In the woodcuts of the Anti-Japanese War in Shanxi, the narration of images is to tell stories, and it pays special attention to the multi-media narration of woodcuts art images, which also establishes the diversified and multi-directional interaction between the people and the people in woodcuts, and between the people and the audience inside and outside woodcuts, realizes the coordination of media narration (multi-media narration), and jointly completes the effective construction process of historical memory.

Throughout the various woodcuts of the Shanxi War of Resistance, the image transmission is mainly based on the role to narrative the central story, while showing the identity of the people, stimulating emotions, and finally achieving emotional resonance and a clear position.

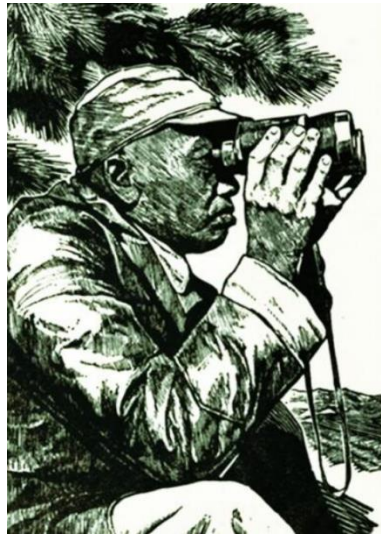


Figure 3. General Peng Dehuai in Front Command (Yanhan).

As shown in Figure 3, this woodcut depicts General Peng Dehuai in person at the front line, while observing the battlefield ahead with a telescope, while commanding the battle scene. In the war-filled battlefield, General Peng is not only calm and clear, but also clear, leading the soldiers to win the battle, which depicts the image of General Peng Dehuai deeply rooted in the hearts of the people, he is able to represent the people's great revolutionary soldiers, is the key turning point of the Anti-Japanese War, General Peng Dehuai's visit to the battlefield for the Chinese army and people to win the war of resistance to save enough confidence. In fact, the presentation of this scenario of military and civilian unity is very touching, and it is the highest interpretation of the people's logical thinking and value consciousness (Chen, 2024, pp. 115-118).

Develop Multi-media People's Narrative Based on Historical Memory Goals

The multi-media people's narrative of woodcut images is also an important means of woodcut art expression, because it creates the atmosphere of Anti-Japanese War and triggers the rich and diversified contents of Anti-Japanese War memories, which enhances people's ability to understand the scene at that time. In the narrative content, it not only has narrative symbols with full performance of people's value, but also produces a large number of Shanxi anti-Japanese revolutionary stories, constructing history in the process of spreading memory, forming artistic and cultural thinking.

In the woodcuts of the Anti-Japanese War in Shanxi, the life style of the people is real, they are tortured by the war, oppressed by the invaders, and displaced in reality, and their families are destroyed and killed. Therefore, woodcut can present the multi-media people's narrative content based on the historical memory goal, hoping to awaken the Chinese people through woodcut art creation and create associations in woodcut images. For modern Chinese people, the memory atmosphere created by woodcuts during the Anti-Japanese War in Shanxi is real and profound, which also sublimates the spiritual power in the process of recording history, and also connects the historical Chinese military and people with the contemporary Chinese people through woodcuts (Chen, 2024, pp. 164-165).

Reveal the Narrative Nature of Image Media and Evoke Humanistic Cultural Identity

Arouse People's Cultural Identity Based on the Expression of Image Content

During the Anti-Japanese War in Shanxi, woodcuts were powerful political media, because the visual objects depicted in the images were real and down-to-earth, showing the people's suffering and valiant resistance. Also based on this, it evokes the people's cultural identity, because the Chinese army and people are the same hatred, in the realization of self-identity at the same time can also achieve group cultural identity. Therefore, woodcut artistic creation is quite true to the artistic depiction of Chinese military and civilian life and battles during the Anti-Japanese War in Shanxi, which also forms a cultural metaphor representing the connotation of people's values. It expresses language in a specific ideology, not only conveys the ideological and cultural intention of the Anti-Japanese War, but also shapes people's values. It aroused the cultural identity of the Chinese people in the history at that time and even in the new era.

Promote People's Collective Action by Combining Image Emotional Narration

Combined with woodcut images, the emotional narrative content created by the creators also promotes the collective action of the people. For example, woodcut New Year pictures in Shanxi during the Anti-Japanese War had a more profound and extensive influence on the military and the people at that time, and were the best tool for cultural propaganda and ideological mobilization activities. For example, "Military and Civilian Cooperation, Victory in the War of Resistance" (Yanhan) is the case, the creator of the traditional door god painting transformation is very distinctive, replacing the traditional old door God with the new door god of the Eighth Route Army soldiers and militiamen, symbolizing the army and people united to defend the country, looking forward to an early victory in the war of resistance. This kind of woodcut New Year picture creation, which highlights the value connotation of people's nature and encourages the morale of the Anti-Japanese War, also forms the unified collective consciousness of the Chinese army and people, and shows full life art in the image emotional narrative.

Conclusion

The works exhibited by the woodcarving activities of Shanxi Anti-Japanese War are rich in content and profound in social practice value, and their intertextuality, epochal nature and value meaning are also quite in place. From the description and discussion of the works in this paper, it can also be found that the people's value presented by woodcuts in Shanxi's Anti-Japanese War has profound connotation, and the image symbol expression has far-reaching significance. They fully connect history, culture and personal memory, and the interpretation of people's character truly realizes cross-media, cross-culture and cross-era. It is the best embodiment of the thought and behavior of the Chinese army and people in the Shanxi War of Resistance.

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