

# Analysis of the Influence of Woodcut Works of Anti-Japanese War on the National Spiritual Identity of Young People

ZHANG Tong-yuan

Shanxi University, Taiyuan, China (030006)

As one of the important art forms during the Anti-Japanese War in China, woodcut is not only a tool for literary and artistic workers to express the spirit of Anti-Japanese War, but also a medium to inspire the people and arouse patriotic feelings. Through a systematic analysis of the historical background and artistic characteristics of woodcuts of the Anti-Japanese War and their impact on the national spiritual identity of young people, this paper aims to explore how woodcuts enlightens and inspires young people's national consciousness through visual language and spiritual connotation, and enhances their sense of belonging to the country and the nation.

*Keywords:* anti-Japanese woodcut, national spirit, teenagers, identify with, artistic influence

The War of Resistance against Japan was an extremely difficult period in Chinese history and full of the spirit of national struggle. In this process, the artists expressed their protest against the invaders and their love for the country in various forms. Woodcut, as an important category of visual art, was greatly developed during the Anti-Japanese War and became an important tool to publicize the anti-Japanese spirit and stimulate the morale of the people. Especially for young people, woodcuts of the Anti-Japanese War not only convey patriotic feelings through their direct art form, but also plant deep seeds of national self-esteem and collective memory in the spiritual world of young people.

## First, the Historical Background and Development of Woodcarving in the Anti-Japanese War

### (1) The Origin and Background of Woodcarving in the War of Resistance

Woodcuts can be traced back to the 1930s, when the Japanese war of aggression against China intensified and the national crisis deepened. The Communist Party of China advocated the mobilization of the masses into the war of resistance through literary and artistic propaganda, and woodcut became an ideal propaganda tool because of its easy production and wide dissemination. Lu Xun's strong support for the woodcut movement in the 1930s promoted the rise and development of this art form. The woodcuts show the cruelty of the war, the atrocities of the invaders and the indomitable struggle spirit of the Chinese nation through exaggerated lines, rough style and simple and powerful composition.

## **(2) The Artistic Characteristics of Woodcuts in the War of Resistance**

The style of woodcut works of Anti-Japanese War is distinctive, usually through the strong effect of black and white contrast, showing the tragedy of war and the cruelty of reality. Artists are adept at using simple compositions and exaggerated lines to depict the bravery of soldiers, the suffering of civilians, the destruction of homes, and the passion of battle. For example, artists often use heavy carving lines to outline the strong faces and upright posture of soldiers and civilians, as well as the war-torn mountains and rivers in the background. This visual impact not only directly shocks the viewer's mind, but also allows teenagers to naturally have emotional resonance in the process of appreciating the work.

## **Second, the Influence of Anti-Japanese Woodcuts on the National Spiritual Identity of Young People**

### **(1) The Stimulation of Patriotism**

The cultivation of patriotism is one of the important influences of woodcutting on young people. Woodcuts in the War of Resistance against Japan directly express the tragic scenes of the war of resistance against Japan and the heroic deeds of national heroes, and stimulate the patriotic feelings of young people. This kind of emotion can not be achieved through simple text narration or oral education, but through the visual display of images and deep resonance of emotions. In woodcuts of the Anti-Japanese War, it is common to depict battle scenes, heroic images and the difficult life of the people. For example, in the famous woodcut work "Five strong Men on Langya Mountain", the artist uses simple and powerful lines to outline the heroic image of five strong men fighting against the enemy on the edge of the cliff. This work conveys a strong sense of tragedy and determination through the heroes' firm eyes and resolute posture. When watching such works, teenagers can not only feel the visual impact, but also resonate in the heart, and their love and responsibility for the country and the nation are deeply stimulated. Woodcuts in the war of resistance also arouse young people's compassion and sense of justice by depicting the hardships and plight of ordinary people in the war (LI, 2024, pp. 67-69). For example, the Nanjing Massacre shows the tragedy of the massacre site and the suffering of the people through a series of carved knife lines. Such visual shock makes young people realize the cruelty of war, but also ignites a strong desire to fight against aggression and defend their homeland. This kind of patriotism is a long-term emotional education that goes deep into the hearts of young people, and has a lasting and far-reaching impact.

### **(2) The Establishment of National Pride**

By carrying forward national heroes and historical achievements, anti-war woodcarving helps young people build a strong sense of national pride. This sense of pride stems from a deep understanding of the Chinese nation's unyielding struggle and glorious history in the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression. Through the heroism and national verve shown in the works of art, young people can draw spiritual strength from them and enhance their identity and pride as a member of the Chinese nation. A good example is the woodcut "Tunnel Warfare", which depicts the wisdom and courage of the Chinese military and people to use the tunnels to fight the enemy. In the works, the people fought bravely and skillfully in the dark tunnels, showing strong adaptability and combat effectiveness. Looking at such a painting, the young people will not only feel proud of the wisdom and bravery of their ancestors, but also cherish the hard-won peaceful life today. Woodcuts also enhance the national pride of young people by depicting the glorious deeds of anti-Japanese heroes. For example, the work Liu Hulan

shows Liu Hulan's firmness and fearlessness in the face of the enemy through delicate depiction. Her unyielding posture and resolute expression deeply shocked the hearts of countless young people, making them respect the hero at the same time, and enhance the pride of the Chinese nation (Sun, 2023). This kind of pride is not only a kind of emotional identity, but also a profound cultural identity, which encourages young people to inherit and carry forward the national spirit more firmly.

### **(3) The Transmission of Collective Memory**

The transmission of collective memory is another important influence of woodcarving on young people. Through the woodcuts of the Anti-Japanese War, young people can more intuitively understand the history of the Anti-Japanese War and feel the heroic deeds and the spirit of hard struggle of the predecessors. This transmission of historical memory not only helps teenagers to form a correct view of history and values, but also enables them to strengthen their sense of identity for the country and the nation in the infiltration of historical memory. Woodcuts of the War of resistance, such as *The Country Breaking the Mountains and Rivers*, evoke the youth's deep thinking about the past suffering history by showing the tragic scene of the destruction of homes and the displacement of people. With their touching power and vivid history, these works help young people to remember the lessons of history and cherish a peaceful life. Through the representation of these visual arts, woodcuts help teenagers internalize historical knowledge into their own emotional memory, so that they can more consciously inherit and carry forward the spirit of the Anti-Japanese War in their daily lives. Woodcuts also enhance young people's collective consciousness and social responsibility by showing the spirit of unity and sacrifice during the Great Patriotic War. For example, the woodcut work "Bethune" vividly shows the spirit of voluntary aid and selfless dedication of Norman Bethune, an international friend. Through the depiction of Dr. Bethune's adherence to the front line of treatment, the work not only conveys the profound friendship between Chinese and foreign friends, but also inspires young people to understand and practice the spirit of collectivism and internationalism. This transmission of collective memory is not only a review of history, but also a revelation for the future, so that young people can find the strength to move forward in history.

## **Third, the Application of Woodcarving in Contemporary Youth Education**

### **(1) As an Artistic Carrier of Patriotic Education**

As a part of visual art, woodcut has unique educational value because of its simple form and profound content. Compared with other types of literary and artistic works, woodcuts of the War of resistance through direct and strong image expression, so that patriotic education can be displayed in a more vivid and intuitive way. This has a strong appeal and appeal for young people who are more sensitive to visual feelings and are still in the cognitive development stage. Woodcuts of the Anti-Japanese War reappear the key historical moments of the Anti-Japanese War through figurative historical scenes and characters, so that young people can intuitively feel the thick history and the cruelty of reality. For example, the *Bloody Battle of Tai'erzhuang* shows the tenacious struggle of the Chinese nation in the face of life and death with fierce battle scenes and exciting heroic images. Through this kind of works with strong emotional tension, young people can deeply perceive the firm belief and heroic spirit of the people to protect the country during the Anti-Japanese War. This kind of intuitive visual impact transforms patriotic education from abstract idea to concrete perception, which greatly improves the effect of education. Woodcuts of the Anti-Japanese War depict the great suffering brought by the war to the ordinary

people, prompting young people to think more deeply about the fate of the country and the future of the nation (Wang, 2023, pp. 50-87). For example, *The Great Bombardment* depicts the ruins of a bombed city, showing the harm and horror that war brings to innocent civilians. Such works, through tragic scenes and strong visual contrasts, arouse young people's thoughts on peace and war, thereby inspiring their concerns about national security and the fate of the nation. This kind of concern is not only an emotional resonance, but also a seed of concern for the future of the country and cherish peaceful life.

## **(2) Stimulate the National Spirit in Artistic Creation**

Woodcut is not only an important tool for patriotic education, but also an important source for inspiring young people's artistic creation and inheriting the national spirit. In modern art education, Anti-war woodcuts provide young people with a unique example of expressing the national spirit, inspiring them to incorporate historical thinking and understanding of the national spirit into their artistic creation. Through simple and powerful formal language, woodcut shows how to express profound ideological connotation in the most direct way in artistic creation. In the process of learning and imitating woodcuts of the Anti-Japanese War, young people can not only improve their artistic skills, but also learn how to express their thoughts and emotions through art forms. For example, many woodcuts of the Anti-Japanese War use minimalist lines and black and white contrast, and through these seemingly simple visual elements, convey extremely complex emotions and historical backgrounds. Through the appreciation and analysis of these works, teenagers can learn how to express complex social themes and profound spiritual connotations through artistic works. The national spirit expressed in the woodcuts of the Anti-Japanese War provided important spiritual guidance for the artistic creation of young people. Woodcuts not only depict historical events, but also convey the spirit of resistance, collectivism and sacrifice of the Chinese nation. For example, the work "Battlefield Medic" shows the heroic deeds of front-line medical personnel who persist in saving lives under extremely harsh conditions. Through watching such works, young people can not only feel the power of artistic creation, but also understand the sense of responsibility of dedication to the country. The infection and inheritance of this spirit has important implications for the artistic creation of teenagers. The woodcut of Anti-Japanese War provides a realistic way for the contemporary youth to embody the national spirit in their artistic creation. By imitating the creation method of anti-Japanese woodcuts, young people can combine the spirit of Anti-Japanese War with the realistic problems of modern society to create art works with epochal significance. For example, they can use modern woodcuts to reflect on the challenges and opportunities in the modernization process of the country, or to present the complex relationship between the individual and the collective, the state and the nation. In this way, the artistic spirit of anti-Japanese woodcut can be revitalized in the hands of young people in the new era, and also provides them with infinite possibilities for artistic creation (Ai, 2019, p. 10).

Woodcut is not only a witness to the history of the Anti-Japanese War, but also an important art form that can span time and influence contemporary young people. In the patriotic education, the anti-war woodcuts stimulate the national identity and historical responsibility of the young people through their intuitive image language and deep emotional resonance. At the same time, as a model of artistic creation, through its simple and powerful expression forms, it inspires young people to express their understanding and love for the country and the nation in art. In contemporary education, anti-war woodcuts are indispensable resources in both patriotic

education and artistic creation guidance . Through the continuous learning and inheritance of woodcuts, young people can better inherit and carry forward the great spirit of the Chinese nation, and show a new style on the stage of *The Times* (Zhang, 2018, p. 4).

### Conclusion

As an important form of artistic expression during the Anti-Japanese War, anti-war woodcuts not only recorded the tragedy and tenacity in that difficult time, but also left precious national spiritual wealth for future generations. For young people, these works have a profound impact on their national spiritual identity through visual impact and emotional resonance. Woodcuts can not only stimulate patriotism and establish national pride, but also enhance young people's sense of historical responsibility and cultural identity in the transmission of historical memory. In today's education and cultural communication, the anti-war woodcuts still have important practical significance, which is worth further research and promotion.

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