The Inheritance and Protection of Shanxi Prints—Based on the Discussion of Song, Liao and Jin Dynasties

Tongyuan Zhang

Academy of Fine Arts, Shanxi University, Taiyuan, Shanxi, China.

Abstract

Traditional Shanxi printmaking has excellent content and high production level. It shows various production technology characteristics in different periods. Taking Pingyang woodcut in Shanxi as an example, it originated in the Song, Liao and Jin dynasties and flourished in the Ming and Qing dynasties. In the Song, Liao and Jin Dynasties, the papemaking, stereotyping and printing industries in the south of Shanxi had developed to a certain extent. As one of the birthplaces of the art of wood engraving and printing, Shanxi Pingyang Woodcut was born here. In 2019, Pingyang woodcut was officially listed as a national intangible cultural heritage project, which puts forward higher requirements for the local inheritance and protection of Pingyang woodcut in Shanxi. In this paper, we will simply study Pingyang woodcut art of Shanxi, which arose in the Song, Liao and Jin dynasties, understand its production process and characteristics, think about its inheritance status and causes in the field of folk art, and finally focus on the inheritance and protection path of Pingyang woodcut in the future.

Keywords

Shanxi Pingyang woodcut, Song, Liao and Jin Dynasties, Inheritance and protection

Introduction

As an important crystallization of traditional Chinese fine arts, Shanxi printmaking has a rough, bold, yet simple and rustic style. It pays great attention to symmetry and balance in composition. It is a classic folk art form integrating painting, engraving and printing, and an important product of Chinese "Nian culture". In discussing the inheritance and protection of Pingyang woodcut, we should also analyze its origin and artistic characteristics.

1. Origin and artistic characteristics of Shanxi Pingyang Woodcut

1.1 The origin of Shanxi Pingyang Woodcut

In the Song, Liao and Jin Dynasties, the papemaking, stereotyping and printing industries in the south of Shanxi had developed to a certain extent. As one of the birthplaces of the art of wood engraving and printing, Shanxi Pingyang Woodcut was born here. Shanxi Pingyang woodcut can represent the cultural connotation of the Yellow River cultural circle in Shanxi, and it has strong vitality. It originated in the Song, Liao and Jin Dynasties and has been passed down to the present.

In the folk of Song, Liao and Jin, Shanxi Pingyang woodcut prospered and flourished in Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties, so its development and maturity period is quite long. In the folk belief, Shanxi Pingyang woodcut is used
to exorcise evil spirits and bring good fortune to the town house. After the Song Dynasty, paper woodblock New Year pictures with color plates overprinted and appeared, which were carved with wooden boards, specially used for festivals and seasons. After entering the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the commercial industry in Shanxi was extremely developed, which also provided rich conditions for the artistic modeling and creative techniques of Pingyang woodcut and formed its unique artistic system style. From the perspective of the shape system, Pingyang woodcut can meet the real life needs of the general public, and its artistic content is quite rich. Especially in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, a large number of opera stories and characters have been presented in the artistic modeling content. The artistic form shown is quite popular, and it has become the most important model of folk culture education in the dynasties. It is also the biggest material treasure-house of Chinese New Year wood-block prints.

Shanxi Pingyang Woodcut, as the most important artistic achievement in the Song, Liao and Jin dynasties, mainly developed its artistic creation with Linfen, Shanxi as the center. There are many works, including the most famous "Four beautiful Pictures" in the Song, Liao and Jin Dynasties. This one reflects the high artistic standard of Pingyang woodcut at that time, and is known as the originator of traditional Chinese New Year wood-block pictures. For example, in the History of Chinese Printing, there is "the head of woodcut and the beginning of Pingyang".

1.2 The artistic characteristics of Shanxi Pingyang Woodcut

As mentioned above, most of the woodblock prints in Pingyang of Shanxi Province have opera themes, which are related to the prosperity of local opera art and culture in the Song, Liao and Jin Dynasties of Shanxi Province. In the Jin and Yuan dynasties, Linfen once became the cradle of drama and enjoyed a great reputation. Therefore, there were many Pingyang woodcut works with opera themes as the main content, which established the important position of Pingyang woodcut in the history of Chinese woodcut. One of the artistic characteristics of Pingyang woodblock prints is that it makes the dynamic opera static and this kind of beautiful art characteristics of the frozen moment has attracted people's attention and love.

In addition, Pingyang woodblock prints are vivid in the depiction of characters. For example, in the Yellow Crane Tower, the woodblock prints depict Liu Bei and Dongwu soldiers in a vivid way, fully presenting the tense and wonderful atmosphere intended to be rendered in the works, truly achieving a perfect artistic realm.

There are also many New Year paintings in Pingyang woodcut, among which most depict the paintings of the central hall, kitchen God, door God and the god of heaven and earth. Therefore, it is also called "Leng paper" by Shanxi people, which means that it has excellent decorative effect and belongs to the type of woodcut that local farmers can make themselves. Of course, Pingyang woodcut belongs to the comprehensive art in the folk, because its color rendering techniques, wood carving techniques are quite outstanding performance, is an important crystallization of the wisdom of folk artists. After the founding of New China, the development and inheritance of Pingyang woodcut has been further recognized, because it has made great achievements in the inheritance of folk customs, operas, history, literature and culture, and has accumulated a large number of precious image materials and works of high value, outstanding in the expression of Chinese traditional folk aesthetic concepts and aesthetic orientation. It has become an important cultural symbol of the Song, Liao and Jin Dynasties and even the whole Chinese historical era (Liu Wenhua, 2019).

2. Shanxi Pingyang woodcut production technology and production characteristics

2.1 Shanxi Pingyang woodcut production process content

Shanxi Pingyang woodcut originated from Linfen, Shanxi, and it is widely distributed in Shanxi. In the early stage of Pingyang woodblock printing, it was mainly used in official printing, such as printing Buddhist, Taoist and other religious books. With the overall popularity of papermaking in China, woodcut technology gradually matured, and it gradually began to enter the people and become a popular form of folk art expression. Therefore, more and more works related to "year culture" of Shanxi Pingyang New Year wood-plank pictures are produced. The main production process of Shanxi Pingyang woodcut is as follows (Wu Ruirui 2020):

First of all, the use of traditional white painting techniques to depict the target object for artistic modeling, after the completion of modeling and then use tools to carve, determine the style of the bottom plate. In the floor style of color collocation is quite casual, color contrast requirements are not high.
2.2 The production characteristics of Shanxi Pingyang Woodcut

Shanxi Pingyang woodcut is rich in production characteristics. Generally speaking, the following four points can be discussed:

First, its regional performance is strong. As Shanxi folk art, all its creative materials are from the local, so the work itself is very strong regional characteristics. For example, Linfen is rich in pear wood, jujube wood, walnut wood and so on dense wood, so if taking these woods as wood carving material, effect is excellent. With mangosteen as paper and Jiangzhou ink, the artistic expression of Pingyang woodcut with unique regional characteristics has been formed (Shang Lijuan, 2021).

Second, its primary performance is strong. Because folk art itself has a strong ability to copy things in nature, it also makes Pingyang woodblock prints more life-like in content expression and particularly outstanding in grasping the origin of life.

Third, its mass performance is strong. Because the subject of Shanxi Pingyang woodcut is the folk living group, and with the generation of a large number of workers, the folk art has a higher degree of life, which makes the woodcut itself closer to the common people, the fit degree and the spread degree of the masses improved. Since the rise of woodcut in the Song, Liao and Jin Dynasties, Shanxi began to vigorously publicize and promote woodcut. As the main artistic and cultural audience of woodcut, the public naturally became the main body of its inheritance and protection.

Fourth, its inheritance performance is strong. Because it directly reflects the regional cultural connotation through Pingyang woodcut, it has experienced a very long historical process, and is a very distinctive form of local art expression. Shanxi Pingyang woodblock prints pursue teaching by words and deeds, and their sample inheritance methods are diversified and the inheritance efficiency is very high (Liu Xia, 2020).

3. The inheritance and development status of Shanxi Pingyang Woodcut and the causes of development problems

3.1 The inheritance and development status of Shanxi Pingyang Woodcut

In the current information age, people's way of life and production has undergone great changes, especially for the form of artistic expression of values and aesthetic consciousness has undergone a sudden change. However, objectively speaking, people's cognition of Chinese traditional folk art is relatively poor, which makes folk art forms seriously ignored. Taking Pingyang woodcut as an example, its current inheritance status in Shanxi and outside Shanxi is relatively bleak, and the corresponding protection policies are relatively few, and even the whole Shanxi folk art can not really recover. It should be noted that inheritors of Shanxi Pingyang woodcut are quite scarce, because many learners cannot patiently learn woodcut technology for a long time, and the learning cost is high, but the income level is quite low, which makes Shanxi Pingyang woodcut stuck in a pattern in terms of inheritance and development, and the development speed is very slow (Wang Yi, 2020).

3.2 Causes of inheritance and development of Shanxi Pingyang Woodcut

There are many problems in the inheritance and development of woodcut in Pingyang, Shanxi. The reasons are as follows:

First, the number of folk artists responsible for the inheritance and development of woodcut itself is small and still decreasing. At present, folk artists with exquisite skills are generally older, more than 70 years old, and there are few social activities related to woodcut, and the profit level of activities is not high, which also makes folk artists fall into the survival predicament of inheriting and developing woodcut.

Secondly, people's aesthetic habits have changed in the society. With the rapid development of The Times, people's aesthetic concepts are also changing. Compared with folk art, people prefer professional art works with bright colors, resulting in the decline of the attention of folk art and the loss of the best "soil" for development (Li Min, 2022).

Third, the strong invasion of foreign culture makes the domestic culture gradually diversified, showing the development trend of global cultural integration. Under such influence, people are more willing to spend more energy and time to experience new cultural things, and their interest in traditional cultural things is greatly reduced. Therefore, Shanxi Pingyang Woodcut loses the reason for its development, inheritance and protection.
Fourth, social production technology has been innovated. As mentioned above, traditional Shanxi Pingyang woodblock prints are mostly made with ancient methods, which cannot be compared with modern printing industry in terms of production methods and levels. Considering that the current printing technology has greatly simplified the production and application process, it consumes less time and cost. However, driven by interests, folk art forms such as woodcut in Pingyang, Shanxi have gradually faded out of people's view and even been forgotten (Zhang Ruishu, 2021).

4. Inheritance, protection and development path of Shanxi Pingyang Woodcut

4.1 Increasing government support

Shanxi local government should strengthen the inheritance and protection policies of Pingyang woodcut, maintain its important status as local intangible cultural heritage, and consider the protection system and material conditions. First of all, the protection system is formulated. The government needs to increase the number of designated personnel to make statistics on the number of local woodcut inheritors in Linfen and the areas where they live. With reference to the statistical results, the relevant protection system is formulated to analyze the job responsibilities of the artisans and the responsibilities of subordinate management units. In terms of the responsibilities of management units, it is necessary to clarify the management tasks of different institutional departments, reflect the various inheritance and protection operation forms of strict compliance with the system in the work, and improve the management efficiency of Pingyang for them, such as the Pingyang Woodcut Folk Artists Association in Linfen, and introduce subsidy policies to assist the folk artists to ensure that the artists feel the kind care from the government. In this way, they are more capable and energetic to inherit culture, improve the folk attention of Pingyang woodcut, and effectively promote the benign development of Shanxi folk art (Tang Hualan, 2021).

4.2 Creating a stable environment for development

Pingyang woodcut in Shanxi needs a stable development and inheritance environment. Since the Song, Liao and Jin dynasties, this art form has been highly respected. On the whole, the development and inheritance environment of all dynasties is quite good. However, at present, due to the impact of diversified foreign cultures, its influence has declined, and the development, inheritance and protection of the environment have gradually deteriorated. Therefore, it is necessary to establish local folk art institutions dedicated to the inheritance and protection of woodcut. The association should encourage both folk artists and the general public to participate in the association, regularly carry out technical and cultural exchange activities, and jointly discuss new techniques and methods of integrating new elements into woodcut. In short, it is to ensure that woodcut can cater to the current new era, showing a diversified form of development. In order to fully expand the development scale of the association, it is also necessary to establish associations, which are specially used to organize and carry out various woodblock print publicity activities, and unite with folk art associations to continuously improve the social influence of woodblock prints. At present, associations and associations are making full use of information technology to build the website of "Shanxi Pingyang Woodcut", producing and promoting works on the website, and cooperating with the production of micro-videos and other new media platforms for publicity, which makes Pingyang woodcut known to more people and greatly improves the stability of the development of Shanxi folk art (BAI Yuan, 2021).

4.3 Integration of modern craft folk art content

Moreover, it is necessary to integrate the content of modern craft folk art in Shanxi Pingyang woodcut, integrate the woodcut engraving and coloring techniques in Linfen, including all parts of Shanxi, to clarify its development rules and the core content of cultural inheritance. Centering on the core content, the academic demonstration of craft is carried out to determine the unified method of inheriting orthodox craft skills, constantly strengthen the academic research content in all aspects, and clarify its important direction for the development of folk art. Moreover, it is to reflect its practical value, integrate the annual culture printed prints produced under the contemporary cultural background, increase the compatibility of contemporary woodcut artworks with Shanxi Pingyang woodcut artworks, and enhance their competitiveness in the folk art market. For example, in the process of making Pingyang woodblock prints, the producer can fully consider introducing various fashionable elements in the current society,
such as performance art and so on. All these can meet the aesthetic needs of contemporary people and ensure that woodblock prints themselves attract more audiences and fans (Yan Yumeng, 2021).

5. Conclusion

Shanxi Pingyang woodcut in Song, Liao and Jin Dynasties has its unique artistic charm, which has been developing smoothly for a long time and has a high social attention. But now, Pingyang woodcut, which has been included in the intangible heritage project, is facing a crisis of inheritance, development and protection, and its stability as a folk art is also reduced. Therefore, this paper deeply discusses its artistic characteristics and the status quo of inheritance and development, so as to find answers based on the problems, find a way out for the future development of Pingyang woodblock prints, and truly realize the development of traditional culture.

References

Liu Xia, Lv Qiongwen. Inheritance and Development of Traditional Folk Woodcut in Hebei -- Taking Wuqiang New Year Wood-Block Prints as an example [J]. Art Observation, 2020(7):73.