

and previously active participation through embodied performance, but is also grounded in the fact that “propaganda soundscapes were determined by the rules of popular culture” (p. 262).

Listening to China's Cultural Revolution is based on newly accessible material, interviews and ethnographic research. It is a highly inspiring book that connects China's sonic experience between 1966 and 1976 with the past and the present. It emphasizes continuities and alternative readings as well as the different musical genres that were employed and performed, illustrated by numerous examples that are often easily accessible on the internet (also for classroom use). Most of all, however, the volume highlights the political and cultural importance of music throughout that period, indirectly arguing that we need to listen carefully to those sounds to understand the past and present popularity of Cultural Revolution propaganda music as well as future remediations.

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Folk Art and Modern Culture in Republican China

FELICITY LUFKIN

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Studies of folk art in modern China have come a long way. In the 1980s and 1990s, the focus was mostly on the historical origins and intellectual-cultural nature of folk art. However, scholars have turned their attention increasingly to folk art's artistic representations as well as its wider impact in the political world. Felicity Lufkin's *Folk Art and Modern Culture in Republican China* falls into the latter category. This well-researched book is an excellent contribution to our understanding of the visual and stylistic developments of folk prints (primarily New Year pictures, woodcuts, Door God prints) in the Republican era. It also offers a nuanced analysis of folk art in the construction of Chinese national identity before 1949.

Lufkin's argument is divided into two, chronologically organized, parts. The first half of the book examines how folk art thrived during the Nanjing decade (1928–1937). She rightly traces this efflorescence to the folklore movement in the May Fourth era of the late 1910s, when scholars at Peking University launched a study to reassess the importance of China's long-ignored folk culture (e.g. folk songs). Lufkin shows how, in the 1930s, interest in folk art began to move beyond academic circles into popular publications (the public domain), as in the case of the art magazine *Yifeng* (Art wind). Local organizations (such as the Modern Print Association in Guangzhou) were established to promote contemporary folk printmaking, and the influential Folk Picture Exhibition was held in Hangzhou in 1937. These resulted in folk art gaining recognition and respect.

The second part of the book deals with the Anti-Japanese War (1937–1945), which was a time when folk art understandably took on a more political and nationalistic cast, given that the country was facing a foreign invasion. The author first looks at how Door God prints turned into a propaganda tool to be used against the invading enemy in the Nationalist areas. She continues with a discussion of a new style of New

Year picture that was created to propagate socialist goals in the Communist-controlled base areas from Yan'an to the Taihang Mountains.

In addition to discussing their political use, Lufkin points out that folk prints, based on old forms and familiar motifs but infused with new content, were appropriated by social reformers as a tool to educate peasants and the unschooled. She contends that they formed a critical part of “a larger nation-building project” (p. xxvi).

Lufkin's central thesis is that folk art has been a contested intellectual terrain. Its ambivalent nature has generated anxiety and provoked debates among artists, scholars and politicians. On the one hand, it has been viewed as a repository of original indigenous virtues – those associated with innocence, purity and sincerity. On the other hand, it has been criticized as backward and entwined with the superstitions of popular religions, and thus a hindrance to modernity. The author defines this dual aspect as “a source of both pride and shame” (p. xiv).

The book is based on prodigious research, and it shines in several areas. Lufkin asks big questions about the fundamental nature of Chinese folk art and places these questions in the historical context of Chinese intellectuals' search for a modern national culture. For her, folk art serves as a means of access to larger political currents. She presents a fascinating account of the spread of folk prints in the Nationalist-controlled territories, an area often slighted by scholars, whose attention has tended to be drawn more to the Communist-held territories. As such, the book provides a needed balance in the treatment of the subject.

As an art historian, Lufkin is adept at analysing the images and colours of folk prints with a great deal of sensitivity. She also demonstrates a discerning eye for the vivacity of regional diversity. Her careful analysis of the varied styles of prints produced in Foshan (Guangdong province), Zhuxianzhen (Henan province), Linfen (Shanxi province), and Wuqiang (Hebei province) underscores the richness and complexity of local cultures and regional differences.

This is a splendid book. Nevertheless, there are some lacunae. For her part, Lufkin does not claim that this is a comprehensive study of folk art in the Republican era, and her “folk art” refers almost exclusively to visual materials – namely, New Year pictures and woodcuts, with a brief discussion of papercuts and folk toys. Other key genres such as folk songs and dance are not covered. In addition, the development of folk art during the civil war period (1946–1949) is barely mentioned (p. 189). In fact, propaganda folk art print production continued to thrive in the areas under Communist control, especially in the Shanxi–Chahar–Hebei base area and territories in the Northeast.

Lufkin explains that her principal concern is “intellectuals' encounters with folk art, rather than the experiences of folk artists themselves” (p. xii). But the artists' voices ought to be brought in, even if only briefly, in order to treat the story in full. Finally, the book ends a bit too hastily. The brief conclusion fails to re-engage with the issues that the author has raised in the early part of the book concerning the contradictory nature of folk art and its conflicting meanings as read by artists, scholars and propagandists across the political spectrum. Has the question of the ambivalent nature of the pride and shame of folk art been resolved? Did the interested parties ever come to a consensus on the exact nature of folk prints? Some final reflections on these major questions will help us understand better the overall value of folk art in modern Chinese history.

These quibbles, however, do not diminish the merits of this impressive book. It will be read with benefit by scholars and students who are interested in Chinese art and folk culture.

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