

■ 發表人：吳億偉 / 青年學者論壇



吳億偉，台北藝術大學戲劇碩士，德國海德堡大學和學系博士候選人。博士論文為晚清民初的報刊中的新聞政治漫畫。

更多資訊請參考條碼



Constructing the Truth: History as Visual Strategies in The Truth Record's (真相畫報) illustrations

吳億偉

德國海德堡大學漢學系博士候選人

1. Introduction

On June 5, 1912, *Zhenxiang huabao* 真相畫報 (*The Truth Record*) made its first appearance in China.¹ An advertisement in *Shenzhou ribao* 神州日報 for “The Cause of the Birth of *Zhenxiang huabao*” (真相畫報出世之緣起), announced the advent of the new Chinese periodical to understand recent political changes. The advertisement sharply criticized the Chinese people for their ignorance of history, noting that limited knowledge of history made it impossible for the Chinese to understand the current political situation, much less the future of the nation. In an attempt to remedy this deficit, *ZXHB* promised to provide opportunities for people with lofty ideals to explore “the truth of the Republic” (民國的真相) by recollecting the past, spying on the present, and foretelling the future.

As the announcement suggests, China must uncover “the truth” that can transform it into a robust republican country. For the purpose, the people require sufficient knowledge of history. Based on the statement, the paper aims to investigate how *ZXHB* advocates the concepts of history as the avenue to the truth. I contend that *ZXHB*'s illustrations construct the truth that exposes China's socio-political disarray of the time and most crucially, a visual contradiction about Chinese national imaginations.

2. The Appearance of *The Truth Record*

ZXHB was founded in 1912 by two Cantonese painters, Gao Jianfu 高劍父 (1879-1951) and Gao Qifeng 高奇峰 (1889-1933), who were active revolutionists in southern China before 1911. The brothers, after the establishment of the Republican government, came to Shanghai for commercial opportunities. As the famous painters of the Lingnan School 嶺南畫派, they started their art enterprise in Shanghai and set foot in journalism. From 1912

¹ In the paper, I will use *ZXHB* as the abbreviation of *Zhenxiang huabao* (*The Truth Record*).

to 1913, ZXHB released 17 issues carrying many satirical drawings, contemporary commentary, art theories, artistic works, essays, and stories.

Despite the magazine's short life span of only one year, ZXHB is recognized as having set milestones in several fields. In Chinese journalism, for example, ZXHB was the first periodical that carried a number of news photographs, including those of Sun Yat-sun's inaugural speech as provisional president of the transitional government in 1912, and of the murder of Song Jiaoren 宋教仁 (1882-1913). It even published large full-length pictures, the largest being surprisingly 168 centimeters long. In the field of art, ZXHB was an important medium for promotion of Chinese paintings. Numerous essays imparted to its readers artistic knowledge and practical instructions for painting techniques. Also, the magazine carried many paintings, most in color, for the audience to appreciate and imitate for their own paintings. Through ZXHB, the Lingnan School 嶺南畫派, as a new-style of Chinese painting 新國畫, was introduced into Shanghai's art and cultural circles.²

Most scholarship of Chinese cartoons praises ZXHB's fearlessness in attacking the government. The graphic satire by the famous cartoonist, Ma Xingchi 馬星馳 (1873-1934), on Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 (1859-1916) became representative of ZXHB's political cartoons. However, research has overlooked the influence that traditional Chinese and western concepts of history had on its illustrations. As mentioned previously, the advertisement of ZXHB stressed the significance of using history to uncover the truth. It states that one of main factors that brought on political changes was Chinese habits inherited from the past/history (歷史遺傳之習慣). People without knowledge about history are fatal for the nation. For the sake of the country, therefore, ZXHB's editors decided to bring together a group of knowledgeable people to discuss "the truth of the Republic" (民國的真相) by recollecting the past, spying on the present, and foretelling the future.³

² For more information about ZXHB, see Ralph Croizier, *Art and Revolution in Modern China: The Lingnan (Cantonese) School of Painting, 1906-1951* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). Xu Li 徐立, *Guangdong yishujia zai shanghai: ershi shiji qianqi shanghai yueji meishujia huodong yanjiu* 廣東藝術家在上海：20世紀前期上海粵籍藝術家活動研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai daxue chubanshe, 2015), pp. 50-53.

³ The advertisement further utters that individuals who are able to comprehend these factors, the advertisement notes, will acquire a profound perspective on the nation's future. Such knowledge will enable them to discern right from wrong, to weigh advantages and disadvantages in civil affairs, and, most importantly, to know how to steer the nation in a positive direction for the benefit of all Chinese

Besides, ZXHB underscored in its essays the significance of paintings in the quest for truthfulness. The first paragraph of the opening statement cites a well-known story of the English militarist, Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658). In order to make Cromwell look better, a painter erased a black spot from the portrait of Cromwell's face. Noticing the change, Cromwell ordered the painter to give a faithful rendition of his appearance. ZXHB pays tribute to Cromwell's famous words "Paint me as I am," praising him as a true hero who knows and forever maintains his genuine self.⁴ The story of Cromwell alludes to the function of paintings as representing reality. Numerous other ZXHB essays regarding both Chinese and foreign art emphasize the influence of paintings in historical as well as aesthetic terms. In a column entitled "New Painting Technology" 新畫法, ZXHB stresses faithfulness as a crucial skill and spirit for drawing, a quality that maximizes the effectiveness of a painting.⁵ To sum up, the marriage of history with the truth and paintings is manifest in ZXHB essays that underscore the magazine's intent to record and communicate the truth.

3.Revealing the Truth

As the title asserts, ZXHB is meant to "record the truth". For the purpose, several cartoons are published in the name of "truth". For instance, a four-panel cartoon in the first issue discloses current situations in Shanghai, Beijing, and inner China and exposes conflicts among the various political parties. "The Truth in Shanghai 上海之真相" illustrates Shanghai as a prosperous city, attracting thousands of people who arrive by ship and train [Fig. 1]. While rejoicing upon their arrival and admire the magnificence of the modern city, the visitors fail to realize the entire city is under a vast cape of a gigantic foreigner, who watches all newcomers with satisfaction as if the giant were the city's authoritarian ruler. The analogy of a cape covering the city and the body size of the gigantic foreigner suggests that Shanghai has already become subject to foreign control. "The Truth in Beijing 北京之真相", ironically likens Beijing to a spacious sports field where many people stand in lines and run toward boards that symbolize different government posts. They all strive to enter the presidential palace (總統府) on the right of the field. Beijing, the

people. "Zhenxiang huabao chushi zhi yuanqi 真相畫報出世之緣起", ZXHB1, No. 1 (June 5 1912).

⁴ Yingbo 英伯, "Fakanci 發刊辭", ZXHB 1, No.1 (June 5 1912):4.

⁵ Shuren 樹人, "Xinhuafa 新畫法", ZXHB 1, No.6 (August 7 1912):15-17.

cartoon implies, is a place where people scramble for fame and monetary gain. The sports they play are power struggles for official positions.

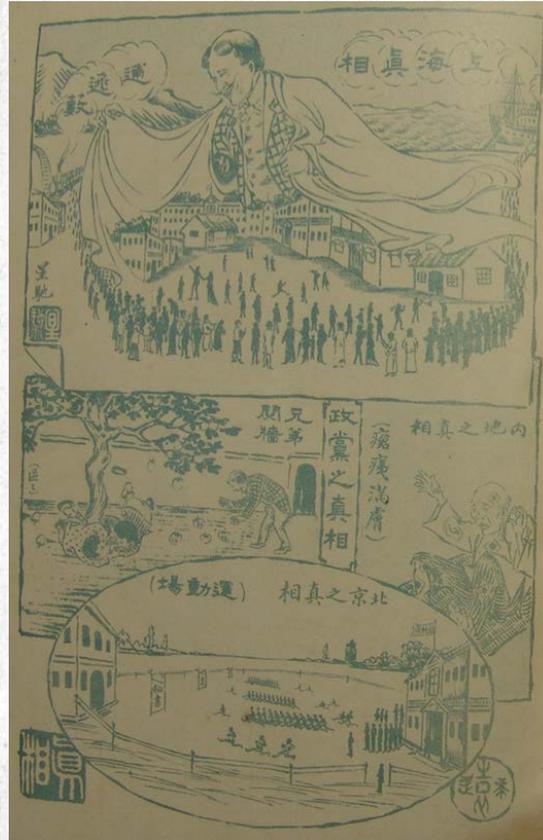


Fig. 1. “The Truth in Shanghai” 上海之真相, ZXHB, June 5, 1912

“The Truth of Parties 政黨之真相” equates conflicts between China’s political parties with conflicts between kids, battling each other for one apple without realizing that many apples have fallen on the ground and that a foreigner is effortlessly picking them up. As a result, the cartoon warns, the political parties struggle between themselves and only the foreign powers benefit. Another cartoon, “the Truth of Inner China 內地之真相”, shows human devastation across inner China, represented by Miserable conditions embodied in an impoverished old man who sits on a straw mat, his countenance gloomy and his body feeble and covered with bandages, the epitome of the miserable lives of ordinary Chinese people.

4. History Paintings

In promoting its belief in history as a means to reveal the truth, ZXHB relied on textual discussions as well as visual presentations. The essay entitled “The Specialties of the Pictures of the Newspaper 本報圖畫之特色”, published in the first issue, asserted that ZXHB intend to carry seven types of pictures with

themes ranging from history to current affairs. In enumerating the types of pictures to be selected, ZXHB ranked at the top history paintings 歷史畫, described as follows:

China has existed for more than four thousand years. Over its long history, Chinese historiographies have recorded numerous ages of prosperity and turbulence as well as the nation's rise and fall. Countless historical incidents had the ability to evoke praise and tears, worthy of emulation. These incidents enhanced the people's patriotism and fostered [the] law and order that are conducive to social development. Because of their significance, ZXHB will draw scenes of those incidents. The paintings can be treasured either as a piece of an art collection or as a hanging screen. They serve as nearly as possible as a mirror of the past to the present, stirring viewers' patriotic sentiments.

中國四千餘年，治亂得失，鑑於歷史所載，不啻汗牛充棟，而其中可歌可泣，可師可法，喚起人群愛國之思想，扶植社會進行之秩序者，必圖會成幅，可作冊頁掛屏之用，庶幾以古為鑑，藉資觀感。⁶

ZXHB's definition of history paintings emphasized the relationship between past and present by clarifying what historical facts the magazine would concentrate on and how they will impact on readers. While employing historical events to arouse Chinese people's patriotism and advance social development, ZXHB also focused on the artistic essence of paintings. For example, viewers were advised to keep the published paintings for their personal art collections.⁷

By contrast, during the late Qing, many illustrated newspapers carried "history pictures" featuring influential figures and events in Chinese and western history. ZXHB's history pictures stood out in terms of their pictorial style. Most history pictures in the late Qing were illustrations of news or of novels; what distinguished ZXHB's illustrations was its advocacy of public appreciation for Chinese traditional paintings. Another distinguishing characteristic of ZXHB's history paintings were the brief commentaries written by Gao Qifeng that included details of the story and its historical and contemporary significances. ZXHB viewers were able to enjoy the paintings as artistic creations while at the same time reflecting on China's current events.

⁶ "Benbao tuhua zhi tese", ZXHB 1, No.1.

⁷ Ibid.

ZXHB's history paintings featured important political topics. The first four issues each carried one large history painting, printed in full color as a foldout on an oversize page. The size of the page, much larger than others in the magazine, required readers to unfold the page to get a full view. In keeping with the publication's promotional statement, the history pictures were intended to excite the people's patriotism. Two themes were emphasized: one, a call for the public to make philanthropic donations to the nation and the other, to satirize corrupt government officials under the new Republican regime.

For example, the first three magazine issues published paintings of historical figures noted for their selflessness by contributing their wealth and savings to the country during times of crisis. Featured in the first issue is "Pu Contributes His Wealth to Strengthen the Border Defense 卜氏輸財助邊" [Fig. 2]. Upon learning about escalating border clashes between the Han government and the Huns, Pushi offered half his wealth to strengthen the national border defenses.⁸ ZXHB equated patriotism with individual financial

⁸ In April 1912, Huang Xing 黃興, a leading politician of the time proposed regulations for operation of the National Contribution campaign after which the general association of the National Contribution 國民捐總會 was established in Nanking. Later, when Dr. Sun Yat-sen consented to serve as the top leader, support was elicited from all the provinces. Although Huang strongly urged the Yuan government to act in concert with the political sentiment and pass legislation there was no response. Chinese journalists and newspapers supported the movement as well. *Minquanbao* 民權報 (People Rights Daily), for example, published a number of essays and cartoons soliciting donations for the campaign. The newspaper even dedicated a special page for readers' articles, scholarly discussions, and personal experiences related to the National Contribution.

support, nudging readers to make contributions and become heroes like the three patriots pictured in ZXHB.



Fig. 2. “Pu Contributes His Wealth to Strengthen the Border Defense” 卜氏輸財助邊，
ZXHB, June 5, 1912

5. In the Name of History

Along with history paintings, ZXHB also published cartoons in the name of history. The first issue of ZXHB carried a cartoon strip entitled “A History of Pain in Making Foreign Loans in the Republican Era 民國借債之痛史” [Fig. 3]. The title for the cartoon was borrowed from the famous late Qing novelist, Wu Jianren 吳趸人 (1866-1910), who, like other writers, often incorporated current political events in his fictions with titles such as, “history” 史 or “small history” 小史. In Wu’s novel “A History of Pain” 痛史, he tells of a turbulent time in the late South Song and Yuan dynasties. The latter period was the first time in Chinese history when an alien sovereignty took full power. By making the reference, Wu intended to unmask rising concerns about the danger of Qing dynasty being subjugated by foreign powers. By extension, ZXHB’s cartoon strip alludes to the danger under the Republican administration of China’s losing its economic autonomy as the result of unrestrained indebtedness to foreign banks.



Fig. 3. “A History of Pain in Making Foreign Loans in the Republican Era” 民國借債之痛史, ZXHB , June 5, 1912

Two main characters dominate the nine-panel cartoon strip. Yuan Shikai, the Chinese Republican leader is portrayed as the bald man in the western suit; the other man, a foreigner with a top hat, wears a tuxedo symbolizing foreign banks. Displaying the process of China’s making the foreign loans, the cartoon shows the foreigner’s gigantic wallet representing foreign banks while dwarfs, emblems of foreign countries, run in and out of the wallet signifying their collusion and conflicts of interest. The cartoon further criticizes Yuan for permitting foreign powers to oversee China’s financial policies. Despite widespread condemnation in China’s social circles, Yuan refuses to change his financial strategy, as shown in the final panel.

6.China in D/Evolution

It is noteworthy that ZXHB applied evolutionism to the cartoons and thereby visualized Chinese future in the presentation of Chinese history. The introduction of evolutionism into China has drawn much academic attention in terms of how Chinese people absorbed, reacted to, and even utilized this western concept as evidenced from multiple aspects. Arguably, one of its important influences in China is the change in how Chinese people perceive

history. The linear view proclaims that history proceeds in a linear manner and that things evolve into an advanced condition in contrast to the Chinese traditional cyclical view of history.

Such conviction leads the idea of history to conclude not only past events but also the future. Various categories of periodization were proposed, sparking scholarly disputes. Whatever the outcome, process of periodization had the effect of transforming China's future from unknown to known. Most importantly, histories of western nations, in the opinion of Chinese intellectuals, offered a formula of development applicable to all civilizations. What cannot fit into the rule will be eliminated from human history.

As a believer of evolutionism, ZXHB asserts that seeking the truth requires a pair of evolutionary eyes. Many articles and images feature the evolutionary concept. For instance, an essay, "The Truth of Celebration on National Day 國慶紀念之真相" describes China's recent political transition from a monarchy to a republican form of government and challenges China to respond with an evolutionary mindset. The essay is divided into four parts: origin of the National Day 國慶紀念之由來, pessimism about the National Day 國慶紀念之悲觀, optimism about the National Day 國慶紀念之樂觀, and prospects for the National Day 國慶紀念之未來. The first three parts discuss the past and present of the new republican government. With recourse to foreign examples, such as the founding of the United States, the author informs readers of China's current stage in the context of world history. After enumerating the nation's achievements as well as its challenges, the essay moves forward to predict a bright future for China as a world power, evidenced in multiple arenas: political, economic, cultural, and even colonial. In these various ways, the essayist applies the rule of evolutionism to the narrative structure as well as the content. The cartoon, "The Truth of Citizen 國民之真相," depicts the development of people's rights in China[Fig. 4]. In the past, people were oppressed and voiceless subjects, trembling under a colossal foot that signified despotism. In the present, however, Chinese people have learned how to claim their rights by standing up together and protesting against an official who, judging from his facial features, may have represented then-President Yuan Shikai. The tall male figure, then, embodies the Chinese people in the future. His arms outstretched out as if he were a scale, metaphorically balancing people's freedom and responsibility, releasing from days of government suppression.



Fig. 4. "The Truth of Citizen" 國民之真相, ZXHB, June 21, 1912

"The Reason Why China Always Appears Weak 中國不振的由來" similarly uses the evolutionary model. It urges the Chinese people to act independently for the purpose of breaking away from the nation's inferior status in the world [Fig. 5]. According to the cartoon, in the past the people relied on others: the poor on the rich, the rich on the capitalists, and the capitalists on the government. Even the government relied on the "sky" 天 (Tian), depicted as the Qing official's recliner. By contrast, in the Republican era, the situation is reversed with the new government depending too much on popular opinion 民氣, depicted by a huge man, symbol of the government, leaning back on the people as if pressing them down. On a whole, the two panels display a tilting nation, always on the verge of falling due to everyone's tendency toward reliance. To reinvigorate China, the last panel urges the Chinese people and the government to cultivate a spirit of independence and to stand tall and upright in the world with the Five-Color Flag (China's national flag).

happened while the people standing behind him laugh at both the travesty and the ignorant painter, alluding to Yuan Shikai. The cartoon emanates a sense of doom that was seemingly hanging over the entire country.



Fig. 6. “The Way of Adopting the Republican Governments” 摹仿共和之手段,
ZXHB, July 11, 1912

The eighth issue of ZXHB carried a series of cartoons, “Regarding affairs of the past year 一年來之回顧,” that reversed the sense of optimism and instead of looking forward, took a “retrospective” view of what happened in China a year after the Revolution in 1911. Take the first illustration, for example. It depicts a man holding a paper announcement of the anniversary. Looking back to events in China, he sees the before and after of politics and bureaucrats: people who fought against despotism in the past versus a government in the present trying to restore the previous regime. Bureaucrats, who disappeared during the Revolution, brag about their experiences in gaining official positions. The series of cartoons ostensibly express extreme satire regarding ZXHB’s evolutionary vision for the nation. Considering the background of the cartoons, when “the future” arrived, the political turbulence in domestic and foreign affairs told a different story from that of the evolutionist version. The huge men in western suits symbolizes the new Chinese citizens, who had to accept the

truth about what used to be regarded as the truth is not the truth after all.



Fig. 7. “Regarding Affairs of the Past Year” 一年來之回顧, ZXHB, August 21, 1912

7. Conclusion

The paper argues that the concept of history is one of the central motifs for ZXHB to construct the truth. Knowing the truth, as implied by its textual and visual materials, denotes the realization of the political turbulence, the preclusion of the despotism’s restoration, and the normalization of the republican government. ZXHB contends that the primary access to the truth is the knowledge of history. Employing history as a visual form and as a pictorial content, ZXHB’s illustrators utilized not only the historical events but also the philosophical frame of history (the newly-introduced evolutionism). The illustrations covered the national salvation, sarcasm on the political figures, and the future of the nation. In brief, the exploration on the images demonstrates the process in which the Chinese intellectuals use history to fulfill their political causes and most importantly, unfolds their national imagination under the banner of “the truth.”

關鍵字：Visual Culture, History, Cartoons, The Truth Record, Reality

發表人之會議資料皆為初稿，如需引用須徵得本人同意。

Presenters' materials are working drafts;
to cite, please ask for their permissions.

