

## Comparison of Hero Images between “Li Yunlong” and “Dick. Winters”

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**Abstract:** The two military literature works: “Drawing Sword” and “Band of Brothers” are both very popular with the military fans, this paper makes comparisons between “Li Yunlong” and “Dick Winters”, who are war heroes in these two novels, and finds out the similarities and differences in different aspects, such as their identities, reputation, images and personal characters etc. It also makes an analysis of the causes of these differences with the consideration of the different values.

### 1. Introduction

The TV series of the same name, which are adapted from the contemporary realistic military literature works "Drawing Sword" and "Band of Brothers", have been deeply loved by the public since their broadcast in this century, which has aroused a large number of fans of military literature to read the original works. Up to now, there have been a lot of discussions and comments on the representative role of "Drawing Sword", Li Yunlong, head of the independent regiment in the Eighth Route Army, in domestic academic circles. But there has been little domestic commentary on Dick Winters, commander of “Easy” Company, 506<sup>th</sup> regiment, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division in the U.S. Army (later promoted to battalion commander in 506<sup>th</sup> regiment), and no comparative analysis of Li Yunlong and Winters. As a matter of fact, they respectively represent the images of war heroes in the anti-fascist battlefield under different cultural backgrounds between China and the west, which are very comparable. The creation of these two characters by Chinese and western authors reflects the difference in values and aesthetics between them under the different cultural background. Therefore, the similarities and differences between the two in image and character, also the Chinese and American culture and values reflected by them are worthy of study and reflection.

### 2. Identity and Reputation of Li Yunlong and Winters

The hero of "Drawing Sword", Li Yunlong, takes the famous general Wang Jinshan as the original form. In "Drawing Sword", the story of Li Yunlong begins as the leader of a regiment<sup>[1]</sup> and ends as a lieutenant general. In “Band of Brothers”, Dick Winters begins as a second lieutenant<sup>[2]</sup> and ends as a major and a battalion commander. Although Li Yunlong is much higher than Winters in terms of military rank, their performance on the battlefield is very similar, both like to take the lead and charge forward. As the leader of a regiment, Li Yunlong even participated in the brutal hand-to-hand combat in the ambush of the Japanese army.<sup>[3]</sup> As a junior officer, Winters was personally involved in almost every battle of E company. Not long after the Normandy invasion, Winters led his men to attack a German artillery position that threatened the “Utah” beach, and destroyed the artillery position at minimal cost. In the battle, Winters charged at the first, but withdrew at the last.<sup>[4]</sup> Thus it can be seen that the primary characteristic of a war hero respected by his peers is not identity and rank, but extraordinary courage.

Li Yunlong and Winters are both renowned in their respective teams. Although Li Yunlong has many shortcomings, he was loved and respected by his peers, especially his subordinates. Chen Geng said of him, "this man is really a genius in the war..."<sup>[5]</sup> "Monk" is willing to give up his position as a platoon leader to work as a guard for Li Yunlong. Later, in order to avenge "Monk", Li Yunlong led his men to eliminate bandits who had been accepted by the Eighth Route Army. After that, he was demoted to battalion commander. However, in the independent regiment, he was still "performing his duties as usual". The higher officers turned a blind eye to this, and did not appoint a

new leader, leaving Li Yunlong to continue to command the independent regiment. From assistant regimental commander, Xing Zhiguo and the political commissar, Zhao Gang to the soldiers, all think "In the independent regiment, even if Li Yunlong was demoted to a cook, he's always the boss."<sup>[6]</sup> even the bandit who was cut down by Li Yunlong and then saved by Zhao Gang, the political commissar, became a local celebrity, often "slanting his neck, showing scar to others, 'look, this is what chief Li left'".<sup>[7]</sup> Li Yunlong's prestige and personal charm can be seen in this. Dick Winters also has a very high prestige in E company "Nor at any time did Dick Winters pretend to be God, nor at any time did he act other than a man.", "You liked him so much you just hated to let him down, he was, and is, all but worshiped by the men of E company."<sup>[8]</sup>

### 3. The Image and Character of Li Yunlong and Winters

Li Yunlong in "Drawing Sword" has an extremely distinct personality, which is embodied in the following aspects: First, he went forward courageously in the battle and did not fear the strong enemy, but he was repeatedly punished or even demoted because of his unauthorized actions. Second, he stays a high profile, and sticks to the principle "tooth for tooth, eye for eye", for that he dared to take his troops without authorization to siege a Japanese occupied town, attempting to rescue his newly married wife, who was captured in a Japanese raid.<sup>[9]</sup> Also he dare to revenge for his subordinate "monk" and wiped out a bandit group which had been accepted by the Eighth Route Army.<sup>[10]</sup> In order to overcome the weakness of the eighth route army's lack of heavy fire, he tried to be creative. He ordered his men to dig tunnels to get close to the Japanese army, and then they threw a large number of grenades to annihilate the Japanese Yamasaki Battalion.<sup>[11]</sup> He also disregard his own colonel identity, disguised as a puppet army officer, took only one man "Monk" and infiltrated in a Japanese occupied town, and shot almost all the Japanese officers in the Jap officer Hirata Ichiro's birthday party, including Hirata himself.<sup>[12]</sup> On the other hand, as Li Yunlong comes from a poor farmer's family in Dabie mountain, he lacks education, thus he also has the characteristics of being vulgar, unreasonable, selfish, undisciplined, yet warm-hearted and kind.<sup>[13]</sup> In personal life, he's always swearing with dirty words and arbitrary and argued many times with the political commissar Zhao Gang because of military and personal life issues. It can be said that Li Yunlong in "Drawing Sword" has completely discarded the ideal image of the revolutionary soldiers in the early military works. He made a hero no longer an empty symbol, but a real, flesh-and-blood person. He has both the qualities that a revolutionary soldier should have, such as loyalty to the Communist Party and the country, loyalty to the people, determination and courage, as well as the real characteristics of ordinary people and various "defects". Li Yunlong embodies the interweaving and interpenetration of the dual characters. From the perspective of character aesthetics, it is his "defects" that make him more authentic, more in line with the psychological demands of contemporary Chinese people who dare to pursue individual expression, and conform to the standards of contemporary aesthetic taste and human evaluation.<sup>[14]</sup>

In "Band of Brothers", Winters is greatly different from Li Yunlong in image and character. Compared with Li Yunlong's unruly and rude behaviors, Winters is a "shy" person who is "very friendly to subordinates". "Neither humorous nor stubborn", even "never say dirty words".<sup>[15]</sup> Such a character seems to lack individuality and is not suitable for a military literature hero as an infantry commander, yet he not only becomes the protagonist of "Band of Brothers", but also the core soul of "Easy company". As the head of E company, he led his men to charge forward in the European battlefield. In Carentan, when E company was suppressed in a drainage ditch by German machine guns, he "Got up in the middle of the road and screamed 'Come on! Move out! Now!'"<sup>[16]</sup> In the time of crisis, the usually "shy" commander had no regard for his own safety, under his inspiration, the soldiers of E company "moved out as one man".<sup>[17]</sup> In Netherlands, during a battle with the German SS, Winters was again "first to the road..., firing on a large number of enemies just 15 metres away, then under the cover of artillery fire, with extraordinary courage and excellent tactical command ability, they defeated two German ss companies (300 men) with a platoon (35 men).<sup>[18]</sup> It can be seen that on the battlefield, Dick Winters has the same courage and tactical command quality as Li Yunlong. Mark Bando, an American historian of world war II and a veteran of the US

Army's 101st airborne division, said: "Damien Lewis (who played Winters in HBO's 'Band of Brothers') was a great success in his interpretation of Dick Winters, and he captured his character and leadership."<sup>[19]</sup> Although the image of Winters is not as distinct as Li Yunlong's, it does not affect his leadership and the role of team spirit.

Compared with Li Yunlong, Winters seems to have more personal "sparkle" in his personality, but he was more rational. In the battle of Bastogne in Belgium, Winters, who had been promoted to the position of commander of the 2nd battalion, 506 regiment, commanded the whole battalion to attack Fova. Major Winters saw that the men of E company, who had been with him all the time, had suffered unprovoked death and injury under the terrible command of the new company leader, Lieutenant Dyke, he "grabbed an M - 1 carbine and started to run across the field, and head for the stationary company and its pinned down 1st platoon. He intended to take command, get those men moving. But as he ran down, he thought, geeze, I can't do this. I'm running this battalion. I can't commit myself. He turned and raced back."<sup>[20]</sup> But instead of letting things go, he immediately appointed the gung-ho Lieutenant Speers to succeed Lieutenant Dyke and take up Fova. Compared with Li Yunlong's excitement when received the battle order, who often asked for a fight or even made the attack unauthorized, showing extreme bravery, Winters is not so "combative". "When word came down for this attack, it pissed me off, I could not believe that after what we had gone through and done, after all the casualties we had suffered, they were putting us into an attack."<sup>[21]</sup> Also because of this, always strictly abide by the discipline, Winters had a disobedience behavior, but not because of fear, but sympathize with his subordinates. When E company was in Haguenau Town, Alsace, they had a confrontation with the Germans across a river, and was ordered by regimental headquarters to send a reconnaissance team to cross the river and catch a prisoner, the first reconnaissance was very successful, but Private Jackson died. When the regiment ordered a second reconnaissance, Winters told his men not to prepare, and the next day they reported that the unit had crossed the river into German positions for reconnaissance, but no one was captured alive.<sup>[22]</sup>

Li Yunlong and Winters also differ widely in their attitudes towards their enemies, especially those who have laid down their weapons. Li Yunlong has a chivalrous spirit, and often used cold weapon to have "duel" with the enemy officers, while cleaning the battlefield he also ordered a nice burial of an enemy officer who refused to surrender and fought to the death, because he believed that it was "courage" and worthy of respect.<sup>[23]</sup> But as for the captured Japanese soldiers, he chose to have them shot directly, and was punished for that.<sup>[24]</sup> He thought, "soldiers should die in battle, a soldier who surrenders when he is captured is not a good soldier, why keep him alive?" "My regiment never wanted Japanese captives. I was demoted for this, and I was punished, and I still had them shot when they were caught".<sup>[25]</sup> Contrary to Li Yunlong's undisciplined behaviors, Winters strictly abides by military discipline. In Netherlands he routed two German SS companies and captured 11 enemy prisoners. Winters ordered a soldier Liebgott to escort the captives back to the battalion headquarters, but because of Liebgott's "reputation" for mistreating captives and showing "excessive excitement" after receiving the order, he ordered "Liebgott, drop all your ammunition and empty your rifle" "Now, you can put one round in your rifle. If you drop a prisoner, the rest will jump you." After that, Winters confirmed with the battalion that all the captives had arrived safely.<sup>[26]</sup> Later, the U.S Army won a victory and captured a large number of German soldiers and let them do some work. At the end of each evening, the German prisoners would march back to their barracks, "singing the march with pride and spirit." And Winters felt like "and it was beautiful. By God, they were soldiers!"<sup>[27]</sup>

#### **4. Analysis on the Connotation of the Role Images of Li Yunlong and Winters**

In the two works, the characters of Li Yunlong and Winters are quite different, but they are highly praised, which fully reflects the cultural differences between the east and the west and the aesthetic differences between the authors of the two works. Chen Min, a professor at the Central Academy of Drama, believes that a script character is actually a two-dimensional structure consisting of two elements: "objective life characteristics" and "writer's subjective emotional

characteristics". The "constitution" here is not a physical combination of quantity. The most basic characteristic of them is not simply to restore the original appearance of life, nor to convey the author's emotions, but a kind of assumed structure formed by the combination of "objective characteristics of life" and "writer's subjective characteristics of emotion" in the author's imagination. Among them, "the writer's subjective emotion characteristic" occupies the dominant position.<sup>[28]</sup>

Under the influence of Confucianism, eastern culture has a hierarchical view of dignity with the content of human identity, property and power.<sup>[29]</sup> In this context, shaped by Du Liang, Li Yunlong is autocratic, and even very rude, but is also loyal, righteous, brave, and smart, and no matter his subordinates or readers, all love him very much regardless of his flaws because the people affected by the hierarchical view of dignity in fact are already accustomed to the hierarchy of personal authority. In the United States, influenced by individualistic values, people believe that "individual interest is, or should be paramount, it emphasizes individual initiative, independence, action and interests."<sup>[30]</sup> As a result, soldiers prefer Winters, who is gentle and does not overpower by rank and authority but lead them by personal conduct. "He provided not only brains but personal leadership. 'Follow me' was his code. He personally killed more Germans and took more risks than anyone else."<sup>[31]</sup> It is worth mentioning that Sobel, the first company commander of E company in "Band of Brothers", also made a lot of contributions to the growth of E company, but because of his autocratic behavior and absolute personal authority, he was deeply disliked by the officers and soldiers of E company, including Winters. The soldiers even said, "Sobel would not survive 5 minutes in combat, not when his men had live ammunition. If the enemy did not get him, There were a dozen and more men in Easy who swore that they would."<sup>[32]</sup>, and eventually Sobel was transferred because of soldiers' anger and disobedience, and Winters took E company over.

In addition to the values of individualism, the western world, especially the United States, was also influenced by anti-war thoughts after the Vietnam War. Therefore, Stephen E. Ambrose deliberately emphasized the anti-war elements in his works. Winters' treatment of captives and appreciation of prisoners, as well as disobedience to protect the lives of subordinates, reflected his anti-war thinking. As J. Glenn Gray put it: "soldiers on the front line are often called upon to carry out the orders given to them by those who are far from the scene. It is often possible for soldiers on the front lines not to carry out such orders. Many conscientious soldiers could explain such orders to themselves before they are executed."<sup>[33]</sup> In the minds of soldiers and readers in the west, this is an act of conscience that has nothing to do with personal interests. But in China, which is deeply influenced by Confucian collectivism and shame culture, people advocate glorious martyrdom rather than avoiding war or even surrendering to save their lives.<sup>[34]</sup> Especially in the second world war, when the battlefield is in China, the Chinese people were deeply hurt by the Japanese fascist, the resentment for the Japanese invaders was serious. Therefore, Li Yunlong's unauthorized attack on the Japanese (even it might endanger his men's life) and the execution of the Japanese prisoners of war are understood by most Chinese readers.

Therefore, although the heroes in the two works are totally different and have different characters due to the differences between Chinese and western cultural values and writers' aesthetics, they do not affect readers' love for them. Such differences exactly reflect the characters' aesthetic orientation and value orientation under different cultural systems.

## 5. Conclusion

The characters and images in the two realistic military literary works, "Drawing Sword" and "Band of Brothers" fully reflect the different cultural backgrounds, value systems and aesthetic differences between China and the west. The comparative study of the two can not only strengthen the readers' understanding of the cultural differences between the east and the west, but also enhance the intercultural communication.

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