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Research on the Artistic Characteristics and Aesthetic Connotations of Folk Paper-Cutting in Northern Anhui

YuanYuan Chen
Anhui University of Finance and Economics, Bengbu 233030, China
Email: 3326128717@qq.com

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Abstract

Northern Anhui folk paper-cutting, a treasure of Chinese folk art, has a unique artistic charm. This study takes paper-cutting among the northern Anhui folk art as its object, comprehensively utilizing the research methods of literature col-la-tion, field study, and in-depth analysis from both art and sociological per-spec-tives. The unique artistic style of folk paper-cutting in northern Anhui Prov-ince, along with its remarkable aesthetic characteristics, is discussed in depth. The analysis of its historical origin, artistic characteristics, and aesthetic inner value further reveals the important value of northern Anhui folk paper-cutting in the field of art, in order to enhance awareness of its inheritance and protection

Keywords

Northern Anhui folk paper-cutting; artistic characteristics; aesthetic connota-tion

1. Introduction

As one of the popular folk art forms in China, paper-cutting has a long history. Due to the wide range of our country, folk paper-cutting is greatly influenced by the liv-ing customs and historical and geographical environments of different places, and then it has developed various styles and genres. Northern Anhui paper-cutting is one of the most representative ones.

Northern Anhui is located in the Huaihe River basin, which has been an active area of north-south exchanges and population migration since ancient times. The unique geographical conditions and the profound influence of Taoist culture have given northern Anhui paper-cutting a unique artistic charm. Compared with the southern Anhui paper-cutting, the northern Anhui paper-cutting takes the strengths of the southern and northern paper-cutting and forms a unique artistic style, which is characterized by its simplicity elegance, and atmosphere. Its unique artistic style and deep historical and cultural deposits have a high research value. An in-depth study of northern Anhui folk paper-cutting will help people more deeply appreciate

its charm and promote the inheritance and innovative development of northern Anhui paper-cutting in the new era.

2. Historical Traceability of Northern Anhui Folk Paper Cutting

The history of folk paper-cutting in northern Anhui can be traced back to the period of the North and South Dynasties. In the familiar "Mulan Poem", there is the description of "taking care of the cloud bun in the window, and posting the flower yellow in the mirror". During the Northern and Southern Dynasties, in the ancient Qiao County, now Bozhou, local people would put "flower yellow" on their foreheads, which was a kind of personal decoration in the shape of paper cuttings. This is a kind of personal decoration in the shape of paper-cutting. This is an early written record of paper-cutting in the northern Anhui region, indicating that paper-cutting was already used in practical life at that time and was closely related to people's daily lives. In the ancient ceramics unearthed from the canal site of Liuzi Town in northern Anhui, paper-cutting patterns are found on the ceramics of Shouzhou Kiln in the Tang Dynasty and Jizhou Kiln in the Song Dynasty. These artifacts are not only of high aesthetic value but are also the most important physical remnants of the original paper-cutting patterns of ancient times in the region of An'ao. At that time, the paper-making industry had made great progress, which provided a better quality of paper-cutting materials for the art of paper-cutting.

At that time, the paper-making industry had made great development, which provided better material conditions for the art of paper-cutting, and paper-cutting art also ushered in a great opportunity for development.

Since then, especially after the opening up of the grass, the folk paper-cutting in northern Anhui ushered in a new opportunity for development. The government has attached great importance to it and introduced a series of protection and support measures. Paper-cutting art organizations have been set up in various places, such as the Fuyang Paper-cutting Research and Adaptation Association established in 1980, which was the first paper-cutting art organization in China, setting up a platform for paper-cutting artists to communicate and display. The cultural department also actively organizes exhibitions, holds competitions and other activities, and vigorously encourages the creation and training of talents, prompting the folk paper-cutting in northern Anhui to revitalize its vitality.

3. The artistic characteristics and aesthetic connotation of northern Anhui paper-cutting

3.1. Artistic characteristics

3.1.1. Integration of the North and South, strong and flexible

Chinese folk paper-cutting art is usually divided into the north and south, the paper-cutting in the north is bold and vigorous, and the southern paper-cutting is in

the warm water and soil under the nourishment of the beautiful and delicate, this is because of the influence of the regional culture and folk style of the city. The northern part of Anhui is located in the north of Huaihe River, which is the birthplace of Taoist culture, so Taoist thought also deeply influences the way of life of the people in northern Anhui and the culture of the city. The unique geographical location of northern Anhui, coupled with the Taoist culture, the two intermingled, giving birth to the unique artistic style of northern Anhui paper-cutting, that is, there is north in the south, south in the north, northern Anhui paper-cutting Bo Fu Cai the strengths of the north and the south, will be the south and the north of the school of paper-cutting Fengge fusion and development of the great. As can be seen from the masterpiece of paper-cutting "Danfeng Chaoyang" created by Fuyang farmer paper-cutting artists Chen Zhiren and Wang Jiahe, the two paper-cutting artists skillfully blend the majesty of northern paper-cutting with the subtlety and elegance of southern paper-cutting. They use thick and powerful lines to portray the main images of the phoenix and the sun, thus showing the atmosphere and boldness of the northern school of paper-cutting, and then use more delicate lines and exquisite hollowing art to deal with the details of the phoenix's feathers and the sun's rays, thus resting on the subtlety and sophistication of the southern school of paper-cutting. The combination of thick and thin lines and the alternation of yin and yang carvings make the works both strong and soft and make the Northern Anhui paper-cutting adapt to the changes of the times and meet people's aesthetic needs.

3.1.2. Variety of themes, eclecticism

Folk art is often closely linked to the people's culture, paper-cutting art is no exception. Northern Anhui folk paper is a unique way for the working people to express their beauty, which contains the feelings and wisdom of the working people. Therefore, most of the subjects of paper-cutting in northern Anhui are taken from the real life of the creative people.

The first and foremost of them are the auspicious and symbolic themes based on the festivals and celebrations of life, and most of them are based on flowers, birds, insects and fishes, myths and stories, daily life, folk culture and folklore, and so on. And because northern Anhui is located in the quasi-river basin, floods are frequent, living in such a difficult bad situation in northern Anhui people have extraordinary hope for a stable and happy life, so the northern part of the courtyard.

Therefore, one of the important themes in paper-cutting is to pray for a better life. In addition, most of the creators of paper-cutting in northern Anhui are ordinary people living in rural areas, so paper-cutting in northern Anhui is an important theme for praying for a good life. In addition, the creators of paper-cutting in northern Anhui are mostly ordinary people living in rural areas, so the style of their works is full of the flavor of life and folklore. Therefore, paper-cutting has become a medium for these farmers to express their vision of a better life in the future. Paper-cutting in

Northern Anhui is not only a part of people's cultural life, but also a carrier for people to express their feelings and emotions, and it is a work of art with aesthetic value.

In addition, nowadays, a significant part of the themes in northern Anhui's paper-cutting art comes from the regional architectural landscapes and local distinctive cultures. For instance, "The Ming and Qing Garden", which showcases the unique style of this ancient architectural complex in Anhui, and "Suzhou Eight Scenes", which presents the representative humanistic and natural landscapes of Suzhou such as Suixiang Ancient Road, Fushui Morning Ferry, Yansi Morning Bell, Xiangling Continuous Greenery, Qiaolou Evening Drum, Fu Shu Residual Sounds, Xu Garden Beautiful Trees, Min Tomb Pine Wind, etc., and "Five Animal Exercises" created based on the health preservation culture resources of traditional Chinese medicine. With a diverse and extensive range of creative themes, all of them, under the excellent traditional art technique of paper-cutting, invariably present the unique regional culture and local customs of northern Anhui.

3.2. Aesthetic connotation

3.2.1. Symbolism and folklore

The creation and development of art cannot be separated from the production life of human beings. The folk paper-cutting of northern Anhui is a concentrated display of the daily life and ideology of the working people, and the creators often use their feelings, practices, and production life as the basis for creation, with beauty and love as the pivot, which is a product used by the working people to beautify the material life and enrich the world of essence.

Nature worship and ancestor worship are the core elements of Chinese folk beliefs. Based on this, from the symbolism of the folk paper-cutting in northern Anhui, we can find out the lineage of Chinese folk totems and religious beliefs, and at the same time, we can also get an insight into the cultural psychology of the local people, as well as their desire for a better life and their unique aesthetic interests.

The rich spiritual connotation of folk paper-cutting art in northern Anhui shows the diversity of folk beliefs. From the reverence for heaven and earth, celestial phenomena, and natural objects, to the longing for animals and plants, to the belief in imaginary gods, ghosts, and elves, to the veneration of figures endowed with supernatural powers, gods, immortals, saints and even sorcerers, all of them show the diverse nature of folk beliefs in northern Anhui, a quality that, like the blood that flows through the body, is tightly intertwined with the daily life of the people in northern Anhui. The art of paper-cutting, like the bearer of this bloodline, penetrates into every corner of the people's lives silently but firmly in its unique form, deeply influencing and regulating the spiritual world of the people of northern Anhui and becoming an indispensable part of their lives.

Many works of paper-cutting in northern Anhui carry deep faith and folklore signif-

icance. Among them, the dragon and phoenix and the pine and crane symbolize good luck, pomegranates, and grapes symbolize good fortune, ears of grain and stacks of wheat carry the symbol of praying for a good harvest, and there are also treasure bottles that carry the hope of peace.

The pomegranates and grapes symbolize good fortune, the ears of grain and the stacks of wheat carry the wish for a good harvest, and there are also the vase and the ruyi, which are the symbols of peace. There is also a wide variety of myths and legends,

such as the Cowherd and the Weaving Maiden, Meng Jiangnu weeping on the Great Wall, Chang'e running to the moon, and the Eight Immortals crossing the sea.

In addition, there are also paper-cutting patterns of farming and marketplace, which reflect the worldly life of the people, and all of them contain the people's longing and expectation for a good life. In the face of calamities, there are also tigers and lions with the function of driving away evil spirits and analyzing blessings, which are meant to get rid of calamities and bless peace; while the two immortals of harmony and the happy dolls convey the wish for family harmony and happy marriages. These seem to have only aesthetic value of the art form, in fact, the northern Anhui folk letter folklore of the vivid embodiment of the carrier of paper-cutting is deeply integrated into the daily life of the people.

Therefore, the folk spiritual beliefs in northern Anhui have long been integrated into the people's lives and become an inseparable part of them. It has been passed down from one generation to the next by word of mouth and has continued from generation to generation without interruption. At the same time, the unique charm of the art of paper-cutting has been preserved for a long time and has been handed down until today. Over the years, this folk belief has continued to support the people of northern Anhui, accompanying them through the storms of life and giving them solace and spiritual strength in the difficult days and nights.

3.2.2. Fusion of simplicity and romance

The people of northern Anhui have a simple aesthetic view, which really influences the style of paper-cutting and the subject matter of the folk artists. Northern Anhui folk paper-cutting was born in the background of subsistence farming culture, and is closely related to all aspects of rural life, such as festivals, weddings and funerals, and birthday and gift-giving scenes have its figure. It originates from the creators' attention to the common things in rural life and their sense of nature, and the original intention of creation is not to pursue utilitarianism. Since most of the creators are farmers with limited literacy, their paper-cutting works deeply reflect the unique social and folk culture of the rural areas in northern Anhui during the closed period and contain the creators' desire to communicate their spiritual needs.

The paper-cutting works of northern Anhui fully demonstrate the simplicity of farming life. In many paper-cutting works, you can often see the farmers working

hard in the fields, the harvest crops in good condition, and the lively poultry and livestock in the houses, etc. These designs are simple and clear. These motifs are simple, clear, and straightforward, sketching a picture of the daily life of the people of northern Anhui, with a very strong sense of life.

In addition, the paper-cutting of northern Anhui is not only limited to the plain depiction of reality, but it also skillfully uses the artistic technique of special sheet deformation and incorporates the color of romanticism. Paper-cutting artists often make elaborate carvings of the characters' clothes and ornaments, with complex and varied patterns and flowing and dynamic lines, which are difficult to see in real life but can bring a strong visual shock. This way of handling, instead of destroying the overall beauty of the work, makes the characters more vivid and full of artistic infectivity. In the process of appreciating the work, the viewers can deeply realize the passionate love of the people of northern Anhui for life and their longing for beautiful things.

4. Conclusion

The folk paper-cutting art of northern Anhui has profound cultural connotations, and with its distinctive shapes, rich and diverse themes, and diversified artistic expressions, it shows the people's knowledge and interpretation of nature, rituals, and life culture in northern Anhui. The creation of paper-cutting in northern Anhui not only originates from the natural flow of folk beliefs but also contains a wealth of cultural symbols and imaginations, with distinctive characteristics of the regional city, overflowing with the spirit of honest and simple art. The folk paper-cutting of northern Anhui is closely related to the life of the local people, and it runs through all aspects of life, such as clothing, food, housing, transportation, festivals, and rituals, as well as religious beliefs, etc., and it is the essence of the history, culture, and folk customs of northern Anhui, which have been precipitated through thousands of years of teachings. Its value involves aesthetics, philosophy, art, and other sociological categories, far beyond the scope of art itself. However, in the process of globalization and modernization, the folk paper-cutting of northern Anhui Province has encountered serious challenges. The impact of foreign culture and the phenomenon of cultural convergence have gradually weakened the cultural characteristics of the city, and the rise of industrial civilization has also compressed the survival space of the art of paper-cutting in the context of agricultural civilization.

In this context, it is of great significance to study the original folk paper-cutting art in northern Anhui. It is of great significance to study the original Minwen paper-cutting art in northern Anhui Province. By exploring its original artistic characteristics, cultural connotations, and spiritual values, and restoring the ancient classic artistic phoenix appearance, more people can recognize and understand this precious cultural heritage. It is expected that under the guidance of the state and the government, people's attention will be aroused to the folk paper-cutting in northern

Anhui.

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