

The Evolution and Development of Zhangpu Paper Cutting Art in the Modern Aesthetic Perspective

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Abstract: Paper cutting is a unique traditional folk art form in China. Zhangpu paper cutting forms its own unique artistic charm because of its different cultural, geographical, social nature in many paper-cut arts. In this paper, the paper analyzes and compares the works of Chen Paolai, Gao Shaoping, Huangsu, etc. With the passage of time, the artistic feature of Zhangpu paper cutting changes obviously, such as transformation of the theme, the diversity of cutting, and the relations of prints and so on. Through the excavation of its deep level, the author find out the common features of its culture, region, variation, and hope that plays a important role on the protection and inheritance of the folk culture.

About Zhangpu Paper-Cutting

Paper-cutting is a unique and traditional folk art form in China. It is a combination of traditional agricultural society and countryside culture. Fujian province Zhangpu county is famous as “paper-cutting countryside” because of its unique art style and Minnan regional characteristics. Zhangpu paper-cutting was confirmed as intangible culture heritage of Fujian province in 2006 and the first intangible heritage of China in 2008. Zhangpu paper-cutting as a special Chinese symbol, has frequently appeared on world stage with the development of tourism of Zhangpu and the effort of new paper-cutting artist Gao Shaoping, Zhang Zhengrong, etc.

A comparison of the Artistic Styles of the Former and Later Period of Zhangpu Paper-Cut

Paper-cutting is called “reaming flower” by Zhangpu people. Older generation women artists with a lofty virtue worthy of respect are called “huamu”, represented by Lin Tao, Chen Paolai, Huang Su etc. Their works style tends to tradition with strong local characteristics and local culture from the theme, composition, language and other aspects. Gao Shaoping, Chen Jin, Chen Qiuri as the representative of the new generation of paper-cut artists, use the modern art and language for reference and also absorb the traditional technique. Their works with the combination of modern technology and other means have a distinct sense of times. Then, the analysis of old and new generation paper-cut artists benefits our study. We can not only understand their work style and skills, but also excavate the cultural connotation behind the works and the culture historical background, cultural environment and many other elements contained in the process of development from tradition to modern.

Unadorned and Childish Kirigami of Old Generation

Lin Tao (1905-2010), Lin Tao was a representative of the old generation of Zhangpu paper-cut figures, with the Chinese folk Picasso title. Most of her works are based on folk customs, folk legends or fairy tales. Her style is just a few cut with random choice like nature itself. For example, her work for “*shrimps*” to marine life, the size of 17*17CM Doufang, is not big, but the 10 shrimps were full of wit and humor. 10 shrimps have different shapes, one swims with elongation of beard, one focuses on predation, one lies crooked in the side, and there are both fighting. Line thickness intersperses and the layout of primary and secondary distinct. Although the elderly did not learn the composition, design courses, the pattern arrangement is so clever and admirable. The most difficult part is that the shrimp is composed of circular curves, how to transform them in a square frame?

The problem is hardly handled properly even for people who learn composition and design, but the elderly cleverly arranges ten shrimps in a square, everything is so natural, like nature itself. She can correctly grasp the use of interspersed between the lines and understand a circle contains square and a square contains circle.



Picture 1 *shrimps*

There are some of her works such as *marriage, chicken, horsing for Theatre*. These works are all created on the base of rural local theme. These works are simple lines, simple composition of the random choice, but combine the shape and spirit perfectly. In the overview of paper-cut of the large-scale literature *Chinese folk art corpora, paper-cutting volume* published by Jiangsu Fine Arts Publishing House, says “Surprisingly imagination ability, and has a natural ability of feeling and understanding the form of paper cutting... Representing the highest state of Chinese folk paper-cut art”.

Huang Su (1908-2004), born in Zhangpu old town Shitou village. On the basis of inheriting traditional paper-cutting techniques, she integrates arts and crafts features, especially creatively embroidery technique of expression into paper-cutting skills. She uses a lot of *paijian* skills on feathers, filaments and forms an exquisite and elegant unique artistic style^[1]. Her representative works include mainly folk story "*cowboy and weaver girl*", "*double cat figure*", etc. As the work of "*cowboy and weaver girl*", a man and a woman with two children ride a deer, flying in the sky. The cowboy and weaver girl of the myth are in perfectly ordinary dress, adding a little life fun. The whole picture that cowboy and weaver girl with two children are a happy family is absolutely different from traditional myth story, embodying the people yearning for a better life. The birds and clouds under cowboy and weaver girl is cut by *paijian* technique again. The technique initiated by Huang su, evolves on the basis of the traditional embroidery technique of expression.



Picture 2, cowboy and weaver girl, Huang su

Exaggerated and Innovative Kigigami of New Generation

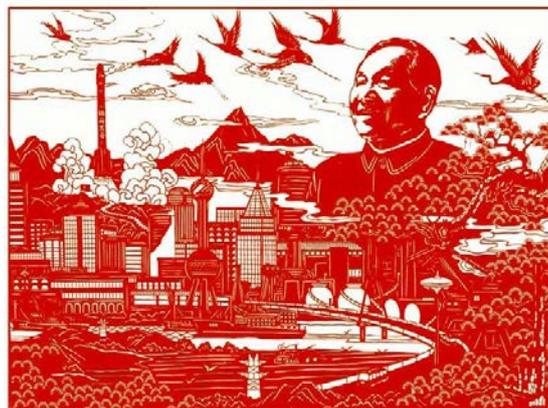
Gao shaoping, born in an artistic family with strong cultural atmosphere in Zhangpu county. Her father Gao Qianhou used to be a full-time art cadre of cultural centre of Zhangpu county. Mother was an actress of county troupe. Her teachers are the old generation paper-cutting artists, Lin

tao,Huang su,etc. When she was young, works have been showed to the international exhibition. In long-term learning process, she learned many forms and features of arts, and created a large number of excellent paper-cut works, such as “*continue with the past and open to the future*”, “*ode to a great man of century*”, “*both sides of the Taiwan Straits are one family*”, “*four beauties*”, “*my grandfather and my grandmother*”, etc.

From these works, Gao shaoping makes a breakthrough innovation on the base of the older generation of paper-cut artists. Such as “*ode to a great man of century*”, 110 cm long, 90 cm wide, so big size work is not in the past of the older work. The older paper-cutting artists works are small size, generally done alone. A new generation of paper-cut artists, they have started their own school, studio etc. Their works condense more than one person's work. Such as Gao shaoping's large paper-cut work, “*Along the River During the Qingming Festival*”, 6m long , 0,8m wide. There are 517 characters in the work and different cars, boats, palanquins, bridges, buildings and other scenes. From another point of view, paper-cut works of artists in the new generation compared with the old ones are less innocent and natural, but more massive and atmospheric.

The new generation works with respect to its subject matter is also a kind of breakthrough. In the past, the old generation paper-cut artists drew materials on folk tales or rural local theme, but Gao shaoping mixes the great avatar, high-rise buildings, Shenzhou 5, auspicious clouds, white cranes and other materials together. These elements seem to be totally unrelated, but the combination itself across the space, not only highlights the theme of the work, but also increase the expressiveness of the work.

In addition, from the paper-cutting techniques she draws on the art of engraving techniques. Such as “*Chinese nation*” is reference to the “left in the black” technique in the prints. She makes a special treatment with the form of the figures, and integrates the engraving art truly into the paper-cut art. The characters in the picture look around charmingly, full of wit and humor, which both retains the unique artistic interest of paper-cut art, and adds a sense of painting and artistic sense of the art of engraving. Especially the processing of auspicious clouds is drawn on the dragon robe patterns in the qing dynasty of China. Influenced by modern design elements, a new design symbol is deduced, which is both modern and classical.



Picture 3, ode to a great man of century, Gao shaoping

The Cause of the Difference of the New and Old Style

The Background of the Era Plays A Decisive Role in the Formation of Style of Paper Cutting Art

Folk paper-cut art as an ancient art form, its existence has a certain cultural significance. In the era of Lin Tao, Chen Paolai, lack of material resources, the level of people's life was low, people made a living by fishing. People need to pray for nature, hoping have no natural disasters, to protect the safe return of the people from sea. So their paper-cut art was endowed with the special significance of hastening lucky avoiding disaster, poetical justice, encouraging people to pray for

safe, and meaning auspicious, etc. Such as Lin Tao interim work "Matsu", Matsu is believed in the coastal area of Southeast China, also known as the "Virgin Mary" and celestial queen " and "Maejo mother". Matsu of Lin Tao cut completely subverted the immortal modeling in the concept of people, and created a familiar secular women's image. She wore a jacket and pleated skirt, wearing earrings, behind her was modeling of temples which were very familiar with people. These reflect the author's Matsu is a God that have fun with the citizens, amiable and easy of approach, and hope the goddess Matsu to bless people safe return, as well as the desire for good weather.



Picture 4, Matsu, Lin Tao

In addition, the old Huamu was born in the old society, the women's status was low. They were unequally treated from birth. Like Chen Paolai, Lin Tao in infancy was as a child bride, this phenomenon is a common social phenomenon at the time. Most of them were ill fated, very young to be a widow. Lin Tao's husband died in the shipwreck, Chen Paolai's husband was arrested and died in the war. And they were all raising a child alone. The cruel reality made them have to live strong. Without a dependence on men, paper cutting was the only spiritual sustenance in their loneliness, long time. So their works are pure, holy, like a pool of clear spring water^[4].

With the establishment of the new China and the arrival of the reform and opening to the outside world, times have changed over. Zhangpu paper-cut has changed both in function and style. The traditional meaning of the function can not meet the needs of modern people's aesthetic , people pay more attention to art and aesthetic of the paper cutting. Early in the 80 s of the reform and development of China, the western art collided with the traditional Chinese art, many artists natural turned to traditional folk art. The paper-cut combined with modern painting and modern design, appears in people's field of vision with a new form of art. Such as Chen jin's work "flower in teapot", Still life is created based on the teapot, only a teapot in the picture. The composition is also very clever and original. Peony and bird are the common theme in the previous work, the author puts them inside the teapot. This is not only a very strong sense of modeling, but also a strong decorative.



Picture5, flower in the teapot, Chen jin

Environmental Factors Have A Direct Impact on the Art Style

Mr. Guo Moruo has said in the poem, “Have seen the North window flower, its style is naive and vigorous, now see this southern paper-cut, whether exquisitely carved or not”, which hits the northern and southern paper-cut style differences. According to the geographical division, the South is the southern part of the monsoon region of East China, mainly in the south of Huaihe -Qinling Mountains line. Among them, the paper-cut art of Hubei, Zhejiang, Guangdong, Fujian, is a representative of the art of the South. However, under the influence of the marine culture, Zhangpu paper-cutting has a place in the southern paper-cut with its own unique features.

A side soil and water raises a side people. Geographical environment to some extent determines personality preferences^[5]. The northerners are many bold and vigorous characters, southerners more graceful and exquisite. Some of these characteristics are not innate. I think it is gradually formed under the influence of the environment. Most of the northern culture follows the Central Plains civilization in the Yellow River basin. The agricultural economy has been regarded as the economic basis of the development of civilization. For thousands of years, we always adhere to the "agriculture oriented" legislation in the country. Under the influence of the Central Plain culture and Confucianism, a lot of works sing the praises of loyal men. Most of the northern paper-cut theme is given priority to character subject and local conditions and customs. Their god is the god in Taoism, such as thunder, guan emperor, door god, the god of wealth, mammy god, etc. These works are influenced by the local cultural environment and geographical environment. As shown in the northern paper-cut Return after grazing, the family sitting happily on the kang after hunting in the evening. Heated kang is a peculiar northern furniture, the equivalent of the southern sleeping bed. Because of the cold winter environment, people construct heated kang for warm when they build a house.



Picture 6, Return after grazing

And Fujian Province is located in the border of China, the agricultural environment is relatively poor, the agricultural economy can provide relatively limited resources for social development. Zhangpu is located in the south of Fujian, for many years with the sea as a companion. During the course of long-term work people form strong thought the sea is the resource of their food and clothing. Therefore, under the influence of the cultural and environmental factors such as the marine custom and marine belief, etc, there have been a series of works of marine culture as the theme the Zhangpu paper cutting. All of these works are influenced by a certain geographical environment and cultural environment, for example, paper-cut work “out to sea”, “catch shrimp”, “fishing”.

The State's Protection and Promotion Have Indirect Impact on the Change of the Style of Paper Cutting

In 1993, the Ministry of culture awarded Zhangpu as "the hometown of folk paper cutting art", Zhangpu paper cut in 2006 was identified as the Fujian provincial intangible cultural heritage project. In 2008, Zhangpu paper cut was designated as the first batch of national intangible cultural heritage by the State Council. The attention of the country undoubtedly brings ZhangPu paper-cutting to a new heaven and earth. Zhangpu paper-cut is no longer confined in the wedding, funeral, and ancestral-temple, etc. In 1999, zheng-rong zhang visited Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne,

and Brisbane. In March of the same year, Chen Qiuri with Gao shaoping went to France, Germany, Belgium, Austria, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and other countries for paper-cut art show. This means that Zhangpu paper cutting has been out of the country, into the world stage.

So, I think now can combine ZhangPu paper-cut with tourism culture, costume design, graphic design, even art education to make Zhangpu paper cutting has a more broad space for development. It is also a kind of protection and inheritance of folk culture. Therefore, the government can give some help and support in terms of policies and funds according to the above points. As Mr. Zhang Zhengrong said, Zhangpu paper cut in the future can be built "three P" development model, that is, the government pull, folk (artists) play, and the operation of market push[5].

Conclusion

Art comes from life, and it is higher than life. The formation of artistic style comes from the accumulation of social culture, which reflects the features of social life. From change of the paper-cut style from the old generation of artists to new generation, we can be learned from the side, in the modern people's aesthetic vision, Zhangpu paper cutting both from the subject matter, function and significance has had a substantial change. From this conclusion can be seen, the future development of Zhangpu paper cutting road is diverse. We can not only use the traditional paper cutting techniques to shape the people and things of the times, but also can apply Zhangpu paper cutting in modern design, tourism development, art education and other areas. Zhangpu paper cutting is our national treasure, and Fujian and Taiwan faces each other across the sea, born in the blood. For the development of Zhangpu paper cutting not only can make the traditional culture protection and inheritance, but also can give us some economic benefits, enhance exchanges and cooperation between the two sides of the Taiwan Straits, and promote national unity.

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