



ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL HERITAGE OF RUICHANG PAPER CUT IN JIANGXI PROVINCE, THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

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Abstract

The objective of analysis of Cultural Heritage of Ruichang Paper Cut in Jiangxi Province, the People's Republic of China were: (1) to study of Cultural Heritage of Ruichang Paper Cut in Jiangxi Province, the People's Republic of China; and (2) to analysis of the cultural heritage components of Ruichang Paper Cut in Jiangxi Province, People's Republic of China. The findings were found that: (1) Ruichang paper-cut has a long history and profound cultural heritage. Its unique artistic techniques and symbolic meanings demonstrate its important value as an intangible cultural heritage. and (2) Ruichang paper-cut is a carrier of local culture and social functions its protection must take into account both traditional inheritance and modern development.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage; Ruichang Paper Cut; the People's Republic of China

Introduction

In 2009, Chinese paper-cutting was listed in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO (UNESCO, 2009). Ruichang paper-cutting, as a traditional art inherited from the Han Dynasty and approved by the State Council of the People's Republic of China to be included in the second batch of national intangible cultural heritage (project number: VII-16), was influenced by the integration of Chu culture and Wuyue culture, forming a unique style that combines femininity and masculinity, and the interweaving of classic and modern. In recent years, with the aging of paper-cutting inheritors, limited cultural and educational levels, and the impact of the market economy, Ruichang paper-cutting is facing the dilemma of inheritance and innovation pressure in the process of modernization (Feng Longmei & Feng Yabin, 2009). This paper aims to systematically analyze Ruichang paper-cutting from multiple perspectives such as definition, characteristics and cultural composition, and provide theoretical references and solutions for the protection and inheritance of this valuable achievement.

Definition of Cultural Heritage of Ruichang Paper Cut in Jiangxi Province

Cultural heritage can be divided into tangible cultural heritage and intangible cultural heritage. Intangible cultural heritage refers to the spiritual and cultural achievements that are passed down from generation to generation in a traditional way and are closely related to the lives of the masses. It has multiple values such as historical inheritance, aesthetics, social harmony, economic development, and educational research (Peng Dongmei, 2009). Ruichang paper-cutting, as a national intangible cultural heritage, not only reflects the local traditional lifestyle and aesthetic concepts, but also is a vivid expression of a specific historical period and regional culture.



Characteristic of Cultural Heritage of Ruichang Paper Cut in Jiangxi Province

Ruichang paper-cutting has multiple unique characteristics, which not only reflect its artistic aesthetics, but also its status in cultural inheritance and social functions.

Artistic expression: As an intangible cultural heritage of Jiangxi Province, Ruichang paper-cutting has a unique artistic style and regional characteristics. Its artistic expression is mainly reflected in themes, techniques, colors and cultural connotations, forming a distinct "Ruichang imprint".

(1) Themes and themes

Ruichang paper-cutting takes the reproduction of life, love, marriage and the union of yin and yang as its core themes, reflecting the praise of vitality and human emotions. In addition, it also involves children's themes and special contents such as festivals and religious ceremonies, and is created according to specific occasions.

(2) Artistic style

Ruichang paper-cutting retains traditional symbols and patterns, and also reflects local characteristics. In terms of tradition, artists respect the patterns and techniques passed down by their predecessors; in terms of local characteristics, they show unique aesthetics through free composition and asymmetrical design.

(3) Techniques and knife techniques

Ruichang paper-cutting combines the characteristics of northern and southern paper-cutting, combining the roughness and heaviness of the north with the delicacy and delicacy of the south, and has developed a unique partial non-hollowing technique, which has become its iconic feature.

(4) Color expression

Traditionally, red is the main color to symbolize auspiciousness and joy, while modern paper-cutting with multiple colors and spray colors has appeared, giving the works richer visual effects and modern artistic appeal.



(5) Cultural connotation

Paper-cutting is not only a visual art, but also a cultural carrier. Through the expression of life, folk customs and beliefs, it embodies the multicultural connotation of combining tradition and modernity.

Symbolic meaning: Chinese traditional patterns “have meanings, and meanings are auspicious” . The combination of patterns (artistic symbols) and their “referent” conceptual content in Ruichang paper-cutting are crucial, reflecting socialized conceptual emotions. The “signifier” of a symbol is only a concrete reality, while the “referent” contains a vivid connection between subject and object, conceptuality and reality (Figure 1).

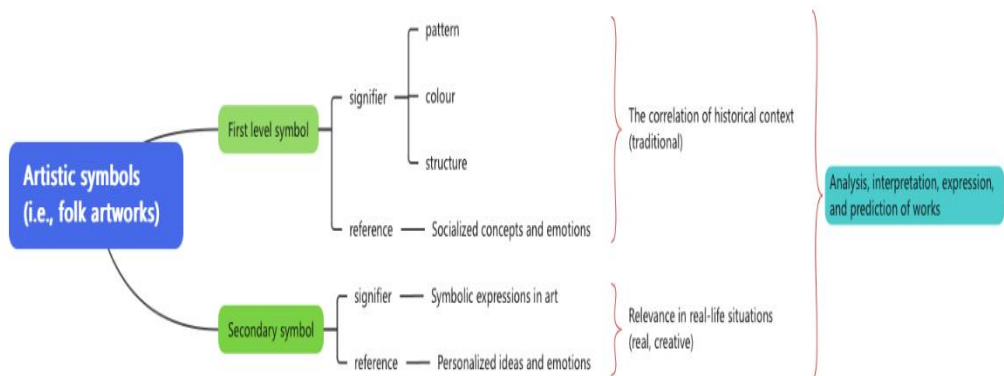


Figure1: The Use of Patterns (Artistic Symbols) Source: Xu Chi. 2025.

Ruichang paper-cutting works not only have visual beauty, but also deeply express the artist's emotions. Commonly used patterns and symbols have specific meanings (Table 1). At the same time, the paper-cutting contents, such as drama characters, stories, legends, etc., can be freely created by artists based on their creativity or information, without a fixed pattern.

Patterns	Symbolize
Female	plum blossom, lotus flower, peach blossom, lotus, hibiscus, chrysanthemum, osmanthus, golden melon, golden toad, weaver girl
Male	fish, butterfly, bee, immortal, golden rooster, phoenix, dragon, magpie, bangs, cowherd
Child	Peanut, dice, pomegranate, monkey
The elderly	immortal, longevity star, pine, cypress, white crane
Good luck	chicken, horse, sheep, bamboo, wine pot, jujube, peony, peach, cockscomb, peanut, bat, osmanthus, pomegranate, gold ingot, lily, hibiscus, magpie, dragon, phoenix, deer, fish, dog, apple, vase, bergamot
Avoid disaster	lion, tiger, Zhong Kui, Qin Qiong, Jing De, Rooster, Vase, God, Yu Lei

Table 1: Traditional Chinese Sensory Organ Symbolic Associations,
Source: Xu Chi. 2005.

Ruichang paper-cutting art has a variety of pattern combinations, which cleverly integrate natural elements, traditional culture and modern aesthetics. They not only demonstrate the superb skills and creativity of the craftsmen, but also deeply express people's yearning and blessings for a better life (Table 2).

Pattern combination	Metaphorical connotation
Gold ingot, copper coin, cornucopia, lotus root	Bring wealth into the treasure
Peanut, sweet osmanthus, dice, lotus flower	Consecutive birth of a noble son
Jujube, peanut, sweet osmanthus, dice	Have a baby early
Golden pheasant, peony	The icing on the cake
Lily, cornucopia	A hundred years of harmony
Bamboo, firecracker, vase	I wish you peace

Goldfish, fish tank	Full of gold and jade
Bergamot, peach, two copper coins	Both good fortune and longevity
A monkey rides a horse	Seal the Marquis immediately
Cranes are flying on the waves	First rank in the imperial court
Plum, orchid, bamboo, chrysanthemum	Peace all the year round
Lotus root, wine cup, three gold ingots	Three yuan in a row
Deer, Crane, Toon	Six contracts spring
Magpie ascends plum blossom	Be happy on one's brow
An open pomegranate	The pomegranate opens a hundred seeds
Bat, peach, two copper coins	Both good fortune and longevity
Pomegranate	The pomegranate has many seeds
Pomegranates, Buddhist books	More children, more happiness
White cranes, pine trees	Pines and cranes prolong life
Monkeys, peach trees	Monkeys steal peaches
Chicken, carp	There is more than enough good luck
Peony, vase	Wealth and peace
Peony, bergamot, sweet osmanthus	Peony is rich
Liu Hai, Toad	Liu Hai plays with Jin Chan
Lotus root, carp	More than one year in a row
Lotus root, lotus	Lotus blossoms and stems
Rooster, cockscomb	An official on top of an official
Chrysanthemum, quail	Live and work in peace
Stones, roosters	Good fortune in the room
Dragon and Phoenix	Prosperity brought by the dragon and the phoenix
Hibiscus, peony	High position and great wealth
Chinese rose in a vase	Seasonal safety
Fish, lotus	Fish playing with lotus
Bees, chrysanthemums	Bees gather chrysanthemums
Pumpkin, butterfly	Butterfly Play Golden Melon
Immortal, sweet-scented osmanthus	Immortal picking osmanthus
The cowherd and the weaver girl	The Cowherd and the Weaver Girl
Liang Shanbo, Zhu Yingtai	Butterfly Lovers' Marriage

Phoenix Sun	Shuangfeng Chaoyang
Phoenix, peony	Phoenix Play Peony

Table 2: Some pattern combinations and metaphorical meanings

Source: Xu Chi. 2025.

Cultural Symbolism: Ruichang paper-cutting is mainly created by rural women in their spare time. Its inheritance relies on word of mouth, on-site demonstration and family teaching:

(1) Inheritance method: Traditional artists pass on the basic patterns, symbol combinations and personal creativity of paper-cutting to the next generation through informal and non-fixed teaching. Although this open and spontaneous inheritance model lacks systematic documentary records, it ensures the flexibility and liveliness of the skills.

(2) Dynamic balance between inheritance and innovation: Although the traditional model has advantages in ensuring the continuity of inheritance, it may also restrict innovation. In recent years, many artists have begun to incorporate modern elements (such as the image of Lei Feng and Young Pioneers) while maintaining basic traditional techniques, realizing the organic integration of tradition and modernity.

Socioeconomic Impact: Ruichang paper-cutting is a core component of folk activities. It is widely used in ceremonies such as festivals, religions, weddings, birthdays and funerals, and has become an important medium for expressing blessings, prayers and commemorations. Secondly, Ruichang paper-cutting is also of great significance in terms of social recognition and identity symbolism. Ruichang paper-cutting also provides people with spiritual comfort and psychological sustenance. As an important carrier of local cultural heritage, Ruichang paper-cutting has been passed down through oral transmission in families and communities. The patterns and symbols in paper-cutting works carry rich cultural information and are important tools for cultural education. Paper-cutting works are used for home decoration, daily necessities and festival gifts, which enhances the aesthetic quality of life and indirectly promotes the development of the local economy. Ruichang paper-cutting has strong

adaptability and shows vitality in social changes. By integrating tradition and innovation, Ruichang paper-cutting not only preserves cultural roots, but also promotes the innovation of local culture.

Analysis of the Cultural Heritage Components of Ruichang Paper Cut in Jiangxi Province, People's Republic of China

Historical Significance: Ruichang paper-cutting has a long history, and its origin can be traced back to the Han Dynasty. It has been evolving with the integration of northern and southern cultures. Ruichang is located in northern Jiangxi. As a channel for cultural exchanges between the north and the south, its paper-cutting art is deeply influenced by Wuyue and Chu cultures (Figure 2). Archaeological discoveries (such as the Ruichang Tongling mining site, prehistoric rock paintings, and Shang and Zhou patterns) have all confirmed the ancient origins of this art form. After entering the feudal society, Ruichang paper-cutting, as an important part of folk art, has been widely used in festivals, weddings, funerals and other social life, and has gradually formed a tradition of "no household without paper-cutting, no woman without embroidery". Overall, Ruichang paper-cutting not only records the development of Chinese paper-cutting art, but also witnesses the changes in local culture and the evolution of folk beliefs.

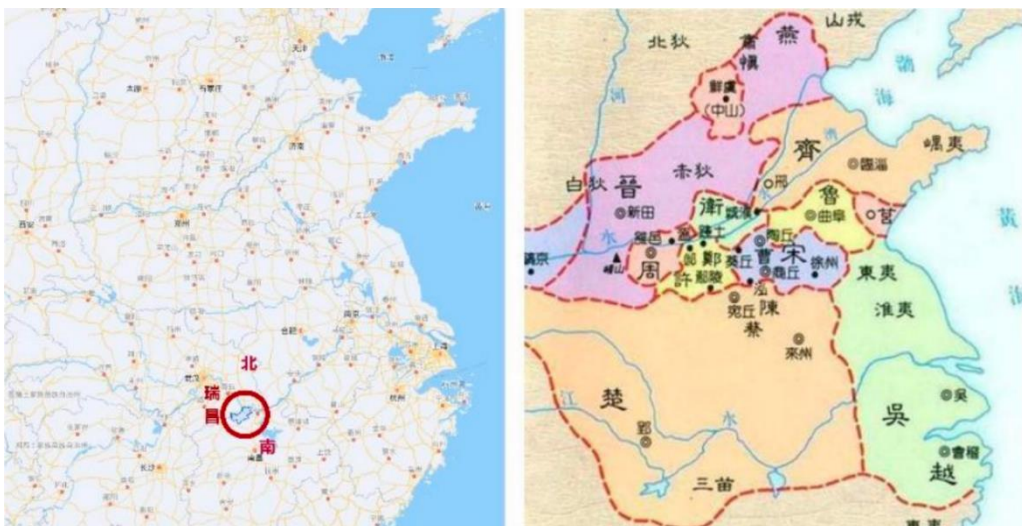


Figure 2: Ruichang Geographical Location, Source: Baidu Pictures. 2024

Cultural significance: Ruichang paper-cutting is not only a form of artistic expression, but also an important symbol of local cultural identity and spiritual beliefs:

(1) Cultural identity and identity symbol: Ruichang paper-cutting is a direct manifestation of Jiangxi Province's traditional culture. Through its unique patterns and color designs, it has become a symbol that distinguishes it from folk art in other regions. The historical narratives and traditional meanings contained in its patterns enhance the local residents' sense of cultural belonging and pride.

(2) Symbolic meaning in religion and rituals: Paper-cutting is widely used in ancestor worship, sacrificial ceremonies and temple celebrations. Patterns such as "door gods" and "gods of wealth" not only decorate the altar, but also symbolize warding off evil, bringing in blessings and praying for peace. Through these ritual applications, Ruichang paper-cutting further strengthens society's recognition of traditional beliefs and moral ethics.

(3) Community cohesion and spiritual comfort: Paper-cutting creation is often carried out in a collective form, especially in rural areas. Women work together and exchange skills during their slack season, which not only conveys cultural knowledge but also enhances community cohesion. Paper-cutting patterns reflect collective wishes, such as family harmony and a good harvest, and have become an important medium for maintaining social harmony.

(4) Contemporary innovation and cross-border application: In recent years, Ruichang paper-cutting has continued to innovate on the basis of inheritance, incorporating modern design elements and applying them to fashion, cultural and creative products and cultural tourism. Through cross-field cooperation, this art form has not only maintained its traditional cultural roots, but also gained wider market recognition and international influence.

Current situation and challenges: Although Ruichang paper-cutting has a profound cultural heritage and unique artistic value, it still faces multiple challenges in the development of modern society, and it also contains opportunities for transformation and upgrading.

(1) Current situation: At present, Ruichang paper-cutting has achieved a certain balance between inheritance and innovation. Modern artists such as Zhu

Puguang have successfully integrated modern elements while inheriting traditional techniques, making this traditional art revitalized in art exhibitions, cultural festivals and tourism promotion. At the same time, Ruichang paper-cutting still enjoys a high reputation in the local society and has become an important part of community culture and the main carrier of folk activities.

(2) Challenges: Although Ruichang paper-cutting has made certain achievements in inheritance and innovation, it still faces many challenges, such as the lack of database and standard system, lack of social participation enthusiasm, insufficient talent reserve, and marginalization in the context of globalization.

(3) SWOT analysis: In order to comprehensively evaluate the internal and external environment of Ruichang paper-cutting cultural heritage, this paper adopts the SWOT analysis method to summarize its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (Table 3).

Strengths	Opportunities
Unique artistic style Profound cultural heritage Recognition by local communities	The rise of the cultural tourism industry Government support for intangible cultural heritage Integration of modern design and cultural creativity
Weaknesses	Threats
Shortage of inheritance talents lack of social awareness lack of systematic database	The impact of globalization on traditional culture The younger generation's interest has weakened Market competition has intensified

Table 3: SWOT Analysis of Ruichang Paper-cutting Cultural Heritage
Source: Xu Chi.2025.

(4) Development strategies: In response to the above challenges, the following strategies and suggestions are proposed:

1. Create a good inheritance atmosphere: Increase the government and society's publicity and investment in the protection of intangible cultural heritage, and enhance the public's awareness and attention to Ruichang paper-cutting through policy support, special funds and cultural promotion activities.

2. Promote marketization and industrialization: In line with modern market demand, develop cultural and creative products, cultural tourism and cross-border cooperation projects to enhance the economic benefits and sustainable development capabilities of Ruichang paper-cutting.

3. Improve the inheritance mechanism: Establish a systematic database and a standardized inheritance system, and promote the professional training and skill inheritance of practitioners through training, apprenticeship and college courses.

4. Promote innovation and cross-border cooperation: Encourage artists to explore modern forms of expression, combine fashion, art exhibitions and international cultural exchanges, promote Ruichang paper-cutting to a wider international market, and enhance its global influence.

New Knowledges



Figure 3: Diagram show the process of Ruichang paper-cut has a long history and profound cultural heritage.

Ruichang paper-cut has a long history and profound cultural heritage. Its unique artistic techniques and symbolic meanings demonstrate its important value as an intangible cultural heritage. Ruichang paper-cut is a carrier of local culture and social functions its protection must take into account both traditional inheritance and modern development.

Conclusions

As an important representative of China's intangible cultural heritage, Ruichang paper-cutting has a profound historical background, unique artistic charm and rich cultural symbolic significance. This article systematically analyzes the definition, artistic expression, symbolic significance, inheritance model, current situation and challenges of Ruichang paper-cutting, revealing its multiple values in local cultural inheritance and social functions. In the future, through policy support, market operation and cross-border innovation, Ruichang paper-cutting is expected to achieve innovative upgrading in inheritance, rejuvenate new vitality, and show its unique charm on the global cultural stage.

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