

The Inheritance and Innovation Research of Zhuanghe Paper-cutting as a Non-heritage Project in Colleges

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Abstract: Paper-cutting has a wide mass base in China and is one of the folk fine arts with the most folk characteristics. Zhuanghe paper-cutting is the most representative folk art in Zhuanghe area of Dalian, Liaoning Province, and is also a non-heritage project. Zhuanghe paper-cutting is a combination of local people's wisdom and skills. The composition of paper-cutting breaks through the limitations of time, place, and space, creating artistic shapes and patterns with romantic colors, achieving vivid, simple, and innocent visual effects. However, with the development of the information age, traditional folk customs are gradually fading out of modern social life, and the survival and development space of Zhuanghe paper-cutting is also shrinking. Therefore, Zhuanghe paper-cutting is also facing the dilemma of losing its tradition. Colleges and universities have an unshirkable responsibility and obligation to inherit the excellent traditional Chinese culture. The introduction of Zhuanghe paper-cutting into university classrooms allows university teachers and students to showcase the charm of Zhuanghe paper-cutting to a wider audience with innovative thinking, preserving China's excellent culture in the form of "living inheritance". This article mainly discusses the inheritance and innovation of Zhuanghe paper-cutting-like non-heritage projects in colleges and universities.

1. Introduction

Zhuanghe, a jewel of the fertile Liaoning region, is renowned not only for its breathtaking natural scenery but also for its unique paper-cutting artistry. As the cradle and birthplace of Liaoning's distinctive paper-cutting, Zhuanghe plays a pivotal role in the preservation and transmission of intangible cultural heritage (ICH). On this land, the art of paper-cutting has been handed down through generations, embodying the wisdom and dedication of countless craftsmen, and shining as a brilliant gem of China's outstanding traditional culture.

Universities, as temples of knowledge and cradles of culture, also occupy an indispensable position in the inheritance and dissemination of ICH. With their profound academic foundation and rich educational resources, universities provide a vast stage for the inheritance and innovation of ICH projects. When ICH projects enter universities, it signifies a blend of tradition and modernity, a dialogue between history and the future.^[1]

Against this backdrop, exploring a path for university faculty and students to practice and

innovate ICH projects is particularly significant. This is not only a profound exploration and extensive expansion of ICH culture, but also a heritage and promotion of China's outstanding traditional culture. Through the joint efforts of university faculty and students, we can combine ICH projects with modern design concepts, creating more artistic treasures with contemporary characteristics, allowing more people to appreciate the unique charm and profound connotation of ICH culture.^[2] At the same time, university faculty and students can promote ICH culture to a broader stage through various forms of cultural exchange and promotional activities, enabling more people to understand and appreciate this precious cultural heritage.^[3]

2. The Significance of the Research Project

The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China underscored the importance of adhering to the path of developing socialist culture with Chinese characteristics in order to comprehensively build a socialist modern country. It emphasized the necessity of fostering cultural confidence and constructing a socialist cultural powerhouse by upholding the principles of raising the banner, rallying people's hearts, nurturing new talents, promoting culture, and presenting a positive image. The congress called for the development of a socialist culture that is national, scientific, and popular, oriented towards modernization, the world, and the future. This approach aims to stimulate the vitality of cultural innovation and creativity across the nation, ultimately strengthening the spiritual strength that propels the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

Against this backdrop, higher education institutions have actively responded to national policies and integrated intangible cultural heritage projects such as paper-cutting into their curricula. By doing so, they have not only ensured the dynamic inheritance of these treasured cultural heritage practices but also highlighted the unique characteristics of traditional Chinese art. This integration of traditional art into modern educational frameworks has further bolstered cultural confidence, as younger generations are exposed to and appreciate the rich tapestry of their country's cultural heritage.

Paper-cutting art boasts a long history in China, deeply loved by the broad masses of the people, and is known as one of the folk arts with the most folk characteristics. Zhuanghe paper-cutting, as the most representative and uniquely charming folk art form in Zhuanghe, Dalian, Liaoning Province, is also a national-level intangible cultural heritage project, shining with brilliant cultural radiance.

Zhuanghe paper-cutting embodies the wisdom and skills of local people, boasting exquisite compositions that transcend the limitations of time, place, and space. With rich romantic colors and patterns, it showcases a vivid, rustic, and innocent visual effect. Through these exquisite paper-cutting works, we can feel the Zhuanghe people's aspirations and prayers for a better life, experiencing their love and dedication to traditional culture.

However, with the rapid development of the information age, traditional folklore has gradually faded from the modern social stage, and the survival and development space of Zhuanghe paper-cutting has also been increasingly squeezed. Meanwhile, a group of master artists of Zhuanghe paper-cutting, represented by Han Yueqin, are getting older, and the force of inheritance is gradually weakening, posing a severe challenge to the inheritance of Zhuanghe paper-cutting.^[4]

In this context, universities and colleges, as important fronts for cultural inheritance and innovation, shoulder the unshirkable responsibility and obligation of inheriting China's excellent traditional culture. The introduction of Zhuanghe paper-cutting into university classrooms not only allows more young people to understand and appreciate this unique art form, but also injects new vitality and charm into Zhuanghe paper-cutting through the innovative thinking and creativity of university teachers and students. By combining teaching with practice, Zhuanghe paper-cutting can

be preserved and developed in the form of "live inheritance," while inspiring more people in and around Zhuanghe to develop an interest in and participation in paper-cutting creation, jointly promoting the inheritance and promotion of this traditional culture.

3. Research on the Inheritance and Innovation of Zhuanghe Paper-cutting Intangible Cultural Heritage in Colleges and Universities

3.1. Establish a Teaching Model Combining Modern Apprenticeship with in School Mentors

In the process of inheriting intangible cultural heritage, while family inheritance is indeed an ancient and precious model, a broader and deeper dissemination should undoubtedly focus on the cultivation of young talents. As the palace of knowledge and cradle of culture, universities gather numerous students with excellent cultural literacy and knowledge structure, especially those in higher vocational colleges, who tend to focus more on learning and practical skills. Universities naturally possess an attraction to culture, serving as both disseminators and guardians of culture.

Zhuanghe paper-cutting, as an intangible cultural heritage, is remarkable for maintaining its unique cultural essence in the fierce market competition. This uniqueness provides vast room for universities to play a role in the inheritance process. Comprehensive universities can rely on their profound academic background, with research-oriented subjects as the mainstay, to cultivate professionals with in-depth research capabilities, providing strong support for the academic research and theoretical innovation of paper-cutting art.

However, local universities, especially higher vocational colleges, should focus more on the teaching of skill inheritance subjects. These colleges can utilize their own resources and advantages to invite master artists of Zhuanghe paper-cutting into the classroom, conducting practical operation demonstrations to allow students to experience the charm of paper-cutting art firsthand. Meanwhile, on-campus mentors are responsible for imparting the development history, artistic features, and theoretical knowledge of paper-cutting skills, ensuring that students not only master the skills but also deeply understand their cultural connotations.

The apprenticeship system, a traditional "mentor-mentee" model, is also applicable to the inheritance of paper-cutting intangible cultural heritage. Through a dual-mentor guidance system, namely the combined guidance of master artists and on-campus mentors, we can cultivate applied talents who possess both profound theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Such talents can not only inherit and promote paper-cutting art but also promote and apply this precious intangible cultural heritage in a wider range of fields.^[5]

3.2. Establish a Healthy Order for Folk Art Creation

Under the guidance of master paper-cutters, faculty and students from universities have delved deeply into the folk communities, engaging in close exchanges and interactions with residents in Zhuanghe and its neighboring areas to jointly formulate a series of practical measures for the orderly development of paper-cutting, a non-material cultural heritage project. They are fully aware that every non-material cultural heritage project is a treasure of local culture, a crystallization of art handed down through generations. Therefore, in promoting the inheritance of paper-cutting art, they have always maintained respect for local folk customs and traditions, striving to preserve its inherent artistic features.^[6]

They visit villages, listen to the narratives of elderly paper-cutting artists, record and compile the historical context and cultural connotations of paper-cutting art. At the same time, they engage in in-depth exchanges with local people, understanding their cultural aspirations and aesthetic preferences, and incorporating these elements into the creation of paper-cutting art, making it more local in character and contemporary in feel. Faculty and students from universities are not only committed to the inheritance and promotion of paper-cutting art, but also strive to integrate this art

form with local economic and social development. They organize exhibitions, lectures, and hands-on experiences related to paper-cutting art, attracting numerous participants and attention from the public. These activities not only enrich people's cultural life but also enhance their understanding and interest in paper-cutting art. Through the efforts of faculty and students, Zhuanghe and its surrounding areas have gradually formed a positive atmosphere for active participation in the cultural construction of paper-cutting. The public begins to cherish their cultural heritage more, seeing it as a symbol of pride and self-confidence. At the same time, paper-cutting art has also become a calling card of local culture, attracting an increasing number of tourists to come and admire its beauty.

In conclusion, faculty and students from universities play a significant role in the inheritance and development of paper-cutting as a non-material cultural heritage project. Through their deep engagement with the folk community, respect for local culture, and integration of modern elements, they have injected new vitality and momentum into the inheritance and development of paper-cutting art. At the same time, their efforts have also made positive contributions to the prosperity and development of local culture.

3.3. Mobilize the Active Participation of Teachers and Students in Colleges and Universities

Amid the vast cultural ocean, intangible cultural heritage stands out like sparkling pearls, carrying the memory of the nation and narrating tales spanning millennia. As an essential front for cultural inheritance, universities shoulder the sacred duty of passing down and promoting such heritage. Against this backdrop, the protection of Zhuanghe paper-cutting stands out as particularly significant, as it is not only a treasure of local culture but also a vivid embodiment of the fine traditional culture of the Chinese nation. Zhuanghe paper-cutting, with its unique artistic charm and profound cultural connotations, has become one of the important missions of local universities. To better inherit and promote this intangible cultural heritage, universities have opened relevant courses and research projects, inviting paper-cutting masters to campus to impart their skills and guide teachers and students to delve deeply into the essence of paper-cutting art. Through these courses and activities, the consciousness and enthusiasm of teachers and students in universities have been greatly enhanced, and they have begun to actively participate in the inheritance and protection of paper-cutting art.^[7] The introduction of paper-cutting intangible cultural heritage projects into universities has not only opened a window for teachers and students to understand traditional culture, but also broadened their understanding of paper-cutting to a certain extent. By studying the historical origins, technical characteristics, and inheritance significance of paper-cutting art, teachers and students have gained a deeper understanding of the breadth and depth of traditional culture as well as its unique charm. At the same time, these activities have objectively promoted the participation of teachers and students, inspiring their love and awe for traditional culture.

Under the active promotion of universities, the protection of Zhuanghe paper-cutting has achieved remarkable results. More and more teachers and students have joined the inheritance and protection of paper-cutting art, demonstrating their respect and love for traditional culture through practical actions. We believe that in the near future, Zhuanghe paper-cutting, as an intangible cultural heritage, will radiate even more splendid glory under the joint efforts of teachers and students in universities, becoming one of the treasures of China's fine traditional culture.

3.4. Cultivate a Wide Mass Base

In today's educational environment, offering paper-cutting courses as school-based curricula in primary and secondary schools has become a norm, effectively passing down the intangible cultural heritage to younger generations. However, to promote this precious cultural heritage more extensively and profoundly, introducing paper-cutting art into higher education has become a wise

choice that aligns with the current trend. As the cradle for cultivating future pillars of society, universities and colleges possess faculty and students with high cultural literacy and innovative capabilities, as well as a unique perspective in integrating traditional culture with modern elements. Therefore, promoting paper-cutting art in higher education not only allows faculty and students to learn the basic skills of paper-cutting, but also stimulates their innovative thinking to explore more artistic expressions fused with paper-cutting elements. These new art forms retain the charm of traditional paper-cutting while incorporating modern aesthetics and practicality, making them more accessible and appealing to younger generations. It is worth mentioning that paper-cutting art has been rejuvenated through university students' innovation and entrepreneurship projects. Students can apply paper-cutting elements to various entrepreneurial projects, such as cultural and creative products, decorations, artworks, and so on. This not only effectively promotes local intangible cultural heritage projects but also transforms these projects into practical economic benefits. This approach, which combines traditional culture with modern business, injects new vitality into the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage, while providing students with a path to turn their interests into careers, achieving a win-win situation for cultural inheritance and economic development.^[8]

In summary, introducing paper-cutting art into higher education is not only a powerful way to promote intangible cultural heritage but also an effective means to inspire youth's innovative spirit and achieve the integration of cultural inheritance and economic development. We look forward to seeing more faculty and students from universities and colleges explore and progress on the path of paper-cutting art, contributing their strength to the inheritance and development of intangible cultural heritage.

3.5. Digital Innovation to Promote the Development of Intangible Cultural Heritage Projects

The traditional paper-cutting culture, as a part of the long history of the Chinese nation, essence lies not only in the handing down of skills from generation to generation, but also in continuous innovation and development. Innovation is precisely the inherent driving force that keeps this traditional excellent culture alive and vibrant. In today's society, with the rapid development of technology, we should not only uphold the traditional charm of paper-cutting art, but also actively explore innovative paths that integrate with modern technology. Laser engraving technology, as an outstanding representative of modern technology in the manufacturing industry, has been widely used in various production fields in the market. For students in vocational schools, they usually already possess a certain foundation in modeling and can quickly grasp the characteristics of paper-cutting craftsmanship and relevant software production skills after a short period of learning and training. This combination not only greatly improves the production capacity of paper-cutting art but also injects modern technological vitality into traditional handicrafts. In addition, with the rise of short video and live streaming economy, we have a brand-new platform to popularize and showcase paper-cutting art. Through live streaming, we can convey the exquisite and charming paper-cutting skills to every household, allowing more people to understand and love this traditional culture. At the same time, directly selling paper-cutting works during live streaming not only brings considerable economic income to craftspeople but also injects new momentum into the inheritance and development of paper-cutting art. In today's rapidly changing technology era, digital technology also provides strong support for the protection and development of paper-cutting-related intangible cultural heritage projects. We can utilize advanced digital technology to establish a database for paper-cutting intangible cultural heritage projects, record and explain the process of paper-cutting, and store them as digital video materials in the archive. This not only provides valuable historical resources for future research and learning but also enables more people to understand and appreciate the charm of this traditional culture through online platforms.^[9]

In summary, the inheritance and development of traditional paper-cutting culture require keeping pace with the times and continuous innovation. We should actively explore innovative paths that

integrate with modern technology, enabling paper-cutting art to radiate new vitality and vigor in modern society. At the same time, we must also focus on the protection and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage projects, utilizing modern means such as digital technology to record and disseminate the essence and charm of this traditional culture.

4. Summary

With the development of social economy, many intangible cultural heritage projects have gradually faded from people's vision, except for their inheritors. To enhance cultural confidence, introducing Zhuanghe paper-cutting projects into college classrooms and inviting national-level intangible cultural heritage masters to teach traditional skills and cultivate inheritors of paper-cutting techniques can play an active role in the protection and inheritance of these intangible cultural heritage projects. Meanwhile, for teachers and students in colleges and universities, they can not only master a skill, but also innovate by using the forms of paper-cutting to create new forms of art that conform to current aesthetic trends. Therefore, introducing paper-cutting projects into college classrooms has certain cultural significance and social value.

Intangible cultural heritage has its unique regional and ethnic characteristics. Many intangible cultural heritage projects rely on the nurturing of the local environment and ethnic culture for their inheritance and development. Zhuanghe paper-cutting reflects the simple folk customs and exquisite craftsmanship of the local people. This traditional handicraft is closely related to the environmental conditions and natural resources of Zhuanghe. This is also an objective factor that cannot be ignored in promoting the inheritance and development of intangible cultural heritage projects in local colleges and universities. Promoting the practice and innovation of intangible cultural heritage such as paper-cutting in colleges and universities, guiding students to understand the essence of traditional cultural arts through folk arts, and cultivating their practical abilities and cultural confidence. By combining relevant content with professional courses and summarizing experience into teaching cases, the popularization of similar intangible cultural heritage projects in colleges and universities can be achieved. The introduction of intangible cultural heritage into colleges and universities aims to uphold the inheritance and innovation of traditional skills, establish a system of combining folk arts with college culture, and allow students to exercise their active subjective initiative and creativity while learning intangible cultural heritage skills.

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