

## Local Wisdom and Heritage in Contemporary Paper Cutting: A Decade-Long Literature Review and Analysis

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### **Abstract**

*Paper cutting, a revered component of China's intangible cultural heritage, is facing challenges in its inheritance and development. This study conducts a systematic review of research on paper cutting from 2013 to 2023. Despite a rise in international attention, numerous issues and challenges in the inheritance of paper cutting persist, including cultural discontinuity, a decline in interest among younger generations, commercial pressures, insufficient innovation, inadequate policy and professional protection, low international recognition, and marginalization within the educational system. The research identifies six key themes of paper cutting: history, education, international dissemination, folk paper cutting, and others. It proposes strategies for inheritance and innovation aimed at showcasing the indigenous wisdom of paper cutting, aiding in the better transmission and development of paper cutting as an intangible cultural heritage craft, and promoting its global spread and enhancement of influence.*

**Keywords:** Paper Cutting, Contemporary Paper Cutting, Local Wisdom, Intangible Cultural Heritage.

### **INTRODUCTION**

At the fourth meeting of UNESCO in 2009, the Chinese paper-cutting project proposed by China was inscribed on the "Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity." As a vital component of China's intangible cultural heritage, paper-cutting not only carries a wealth of historical and cultural information but also embodies significant local wisdom and artistic value. As an integral part of traditional Chinese culture, paper-cutting, despite its profound historical roots and cultural significance, faces numerous challenges in modern society. Professor Qiao Xiaoguang, through over a decade of multi-ethnic paper-cutting research, found that 33 ethnic groups in China use paper-cutting or non-paper material cuttings in their daily traditional customs (Qiao, 2024).

As a heritage inheritor, the author has organized numerous intangible cultural heritage activities and frequently conducted field investigations on paper-cutting. Taking Jiangsu paper-cutting as a sample, the study deeply explores various aspects of the field through qualitative research methods. The target population related to paper-cutting is meticulously classified in advance, and samples that meet the criteria are selected from these classifications for in-depth study according to the research purpose. Specifically, the research involves the following three main groups: Key information group: including paper-cut artists, master artists with profound expertise in the field, inheritors of intangible cultural heritage, and renowned scholars with significant contributions to paper-cutting, totaling 8 individuals. Incidental information group: consisting of scholars, paper-cut craftsmen, and artistic practitioners, totaling 20 individuals. General information group: including local residents interested in paper-cutting, general scholars, and paper-cut buyers, totaling 11 individuals. In addition, more than a hundred paper-cutting questionnaires were collected.

The study identified several key issues with paper-cutting, including the discontinuation of cultural heritage, a decrease in interest among the younger generation in traditional crafts, leading to difficulties in the transmission of skills; commercial pressures that have caused some paper-cutting to lose its original cultural connotations; a lack of innovation, making it hard to attract modern consumers, especially the younger demographic; insufficient policy support and protection from professional institutions, causing difficulties for paper-cut

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artists' livelihoods and the gradual loss of skills; limited international recognition, necessitating more promotion and publicity; marginalization of paper-cutting within the education system, with a lack of systematic education and training; and challenges in copyright protection and the protection of original works in the digital age. Additionally, the impact of cultural diversity in the context of globalization has posed new demands for the protection and development of paper-cutting. Based on these issues, this study employed a combination of bibliometric analysis and qualitative analysis methods. It conducted a systematic review and verification by searching for paper-cutting-related literature in the Web of Science database and China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) from 2013 to 2023, and selected and analyzed both Chinese and English journal articles. The CiteSpace software was used for quantitative analysis of publication trends, country/regional publication status, and keyword co-occurrence networks. Meanwhile, the NVivo software was utilized for qualitative coding and thematic analysis on themes such as the historical development of paper-cutting, education, international dissemination, introduction, folk paper-cutting, and Wei County paper-cutting. Further, visualization techniques were employed to reveal the core issues, academic networks, and development trends in paper-cutting research, systematically organizing the current state, development trends, and challenges faced by paper-cutting research, with the aim of providing a comprehensive research perspective and strategic recommendations for the inheritance and innovation of paper-cutting.

### **English Database Literature Research**

This study conducted searches with "paper-cutting" as the core keyword in both the WOS and CNKI databases, and analyzed the retrieved literature in Chinese and English respectively. The specific results are as follows.

### **Quantitative Analysis**

For the quantitative analysis, this study utilized CiteSpace software for bibliometric analysis. In terms of foreign literature retrieval, this study selected the most authoritative WOS (Web of Science) database for literature search. The search was restricted to the WOS Core Collection to ensure the quality of the papers. The indexing databases were limited to SCI and SSCI, two major authoritative indexes that essentially represent high-quality journal articles in science and engineering as well as humanities and social sciences. In the CiteSpace database, "Timeslicing" was set from January 2013 to December 2023; in "Years per slice," the value was set to 1 (one year per slice); in "Pruning," "Pathfinder" and "Merge similar" were selected, and then the "Keywords" box was checked.

All other parameters were set to default options. In node data, the larger the N value selected, the more comprehensive the generated network. This study set the selection criteria to "TopN=50," extracting 50 highly cited papers in each Timeslice. After format conversion, the required literature was obtained. Ultimately, this study collected a total of 121 research papers, which were then subjected to subsequent quantitative data analysis.

Through analysis, we can determine the annual trend of publication volume in the field of paper-cutting internationally. From 2013 to 2023, the overall publication volume showed a fluctuating upward trend, as shown in the figure 1. It can be roughly divided into two phases: a steady development period (2013-2019) and a rapid development period (2020-2023). In the first phase, the overall publication volume hovered in the single digits without significant growth. However, in the second phase, starting in 2020, the publication volume increased to 15 papers, and has remained high in the following years. This reflects the growing attention of the international academic community to the research topic of paper-cutting. Faced with the impact of the wave of globalization and the digital age, paper-cutting, as a symbol of traditional Chinese culture, its current status and future direction of protection, innovation, and dissemination, has become a focus of attention for both the academic and cultural communities. Between 2013 and 2023, academic research in the field of paper-cutting showed a significant increase, especially from 2020 to 2023, when international academic attention to paper-cutting rose sharply. This phenomenon not only reflects the revival of traditional culture in modern society but also reveals the important role of paper-cutting in international cultural exchanges.



Figure 1. Publication Annual Trend

The publication status of various countries and regions in the field of paper-cutting research is detailed in Table 1. China tops the list, with 57 English-language papers published between 2013 and 2023, indicating a significant contribution to the field and reflecting the emphasis Chinese scholars place on traditional paper-cutting and its status as an intangible cultural heritage. The United States follows with 25 publications, and Japan is noted with 12. Other countries have published fewer papers, with single-digit counts, which suggests that China, the United States, and Japan are the leading contributors to paper-cutting research globally.

Table 1. Publication Status by Country/Region

Rank	Country/Region	Publication Count
1	China	57
2	United States	25
3	Japan	12
4	Germany	6
5	South Korea	6
6	United Kingdom	6
7	Canada	3
8	Switzerland	4
9	Iran	4
10	Other	4

The keyword co-occurrence network reveals multiple terms or phrases and their centrality, demonstrating the hot keywords and their internal connections within a certain period of literature, thereby further analyzing the hot research content in that field. We can obtain the high-frequency keywords in these 121 papers and the co-occurrence network between the keywords. From Table 2, it can be seen that "design" is the most frequent keyword in all paper-cutting related research, appearing 25 times in 121 papers. This is equivalent to one-fifth of the paper-cutting studies focusing on the design and artistry of paper-cutting, which also reflects the design aesthetics and aesthetic pursuit of Chinese paper-cutting. Other keywords related to aesthetics and art include "surfaces" and "vision". "Surfaces" emphasizes that paper-cutting is a form of flat art, existing on a single plane in space, while "vision" emphasizes that paper-cutting mainly acts on the visual perception of the audience, emphasizing the visual impact.

Additionally, there are quite a few keywords that emphasize the craftsmanship and manufacturing process of paper-cutting, which would be more inclined towards science and engineering. For example, keywords such as "fabrication" and "device" would analyze the specific production process of paper-cutting in a more scientific and rational manner.





**Figure 3.** Author relationship

Additionally, a collaboration network among institutions can be delineated (Figure 4) . It is observed that within the international academic research on paper cutting, there exists a robust interconnectedness among institutions, with universities and research organizations worldwide forming an extensive academic network. At the heart of this network is Harvard University, which occupies a central position in the diagram and is emphasized with a prominent font, indicating its pivotal role. Harvard maintains close ties with institutions such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the Swiss Federal Institutes of Technology Domain, and Nanyang Technological University. Encouragingly, Chinese universities also hold significant positions within this academic cooperative network. For instance, Huazhong University of Science and Technology is situated at a core location in the upper right of the network diagram, reflecting its notable contributions to the study of paper cutting in China."

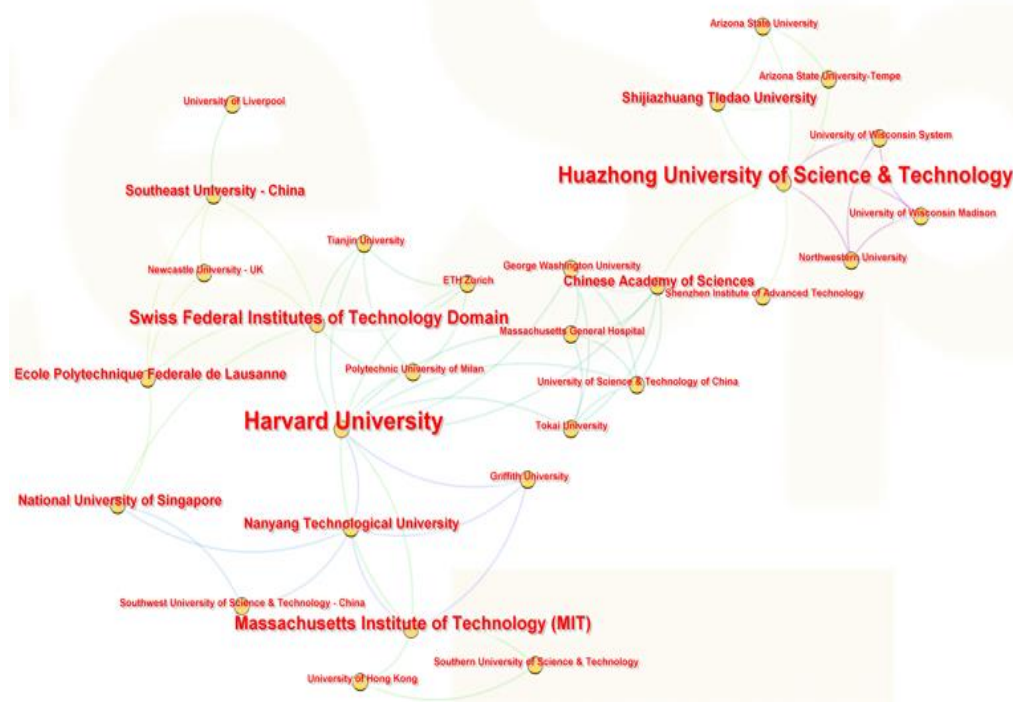


Figure 4. Collaboration network among institutions

### Results of Qualitative Analysis

In the qualitative analysis phase, this study utilized Nvivo software for coding the literature and identifying corresponding research themes. The literature search for qualitative analysis differs from the quantitative analysis previously mentioned, necessitating a more focused scope. This study conducted a literature search through the WOS (Web of Science) database, specifically limiting it to the WOS Core Collection. Considering the humanities and social sciences background of this research and the potential for confusion between the English term "paper-cut" and specialized terminologies in molecular biology such as DNA splicing techniques or production processes in mechanical engineering, the search was restricted to the SSCI, AHCI, and CPCI-SSH indexes. This approach allowed for a more precise extraction of literature related to the design field. Ultimately, a total of 12 highly relevant papers related to paper-cutting were obtained.

Based on these documents, a word cloud of high-frequency keywords was created (Figure 5). It can be observed that the literature on paper-cutting pays considerable attention to words such as "art," "paper," "cuts," "China," "culture," and "Chinese," which occupy the central part of the word cloud. On the periphery are high-frequency keywords directly related to the article's themes, such as "learning," "education," and "curriculum." This reflects the inseparable connection between paper-cutting and Chinese culture and China itself. As a treasure of Chinese culture, Chinese paper-cutting has increasingly attracted the attention of researchers internationally.





21 primary school students. The results showed that integrating STEAM activities into project learning has a significant positive effect on the cultivation of students' creative thinking abilities. This finding confirms the positive role of the art-oriented STEAM curriculum in primary school education and learning outcomes, where the "Micro Paper-cut Sculpture Lamp" project is a beneficial attempt at innovating STEAM curriculum content.

The third major theme is the international dissemination of paper-cutting and Chinese culture, focusing on the spread of paper-cutting as a symbol of Chinese culture overseas, especially through paper-cutting courses offered by Confucius Institutes (Hartig, 2018). As an important part of traditional Chinese culture, paper-cutting is more readily accepted by the international community because it does not contain political propaganda. Hartig analyzed the application of paper-cutting courses in Confucius Institutes, demonstrating how paper-cutting has become a bridge and messenger for cultural exchange with China.

Paper-cutting, with its unique artistic form and profound cultural connotations, plays an important role in international cultural exchanges. It not only conveys traditional Chinese aesthetics and craftsmanship but also promotes mutual understanding and respect between different cultures. Through cultural exchange platforms such as Confucius Institutes, the international dissemination of paper-cutting helps to build a positive international image of Chinese culture and enhances its global influence.

### Chinese Database Literature Research

#### Quantitative Analysis

Using the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database for the search, the retrieval fields were limited to "Topic," "Title," or "Keywords," with search terms including "paper-cutting," "Chinese paper-cutting," and other related keywords for paper-cutting. The search time span was limited to the 11 years from 2013 to 2023. To ensure the quality of the literature, the source of the literature was restricted to the Peking University Core Journals, and a total of 500 papers related to paper-cutting were retrieved. The specific publication trend by year is shown below. It can be observed that the years with a higher number of publications are 2013, 2014, and 2020, with the number of papers published exceeding 60 in each year. The years 2019 and 2022, on the other hand, represent the low points in the number of articles published, with just over 20 articles each. Looking at the overall publication trend from 2013 to 2023, we believe that it generally shows a fluctuating pattern, with unstable numbers of published articles. This indicates that research related to paper-cutting may not have solidified to date.

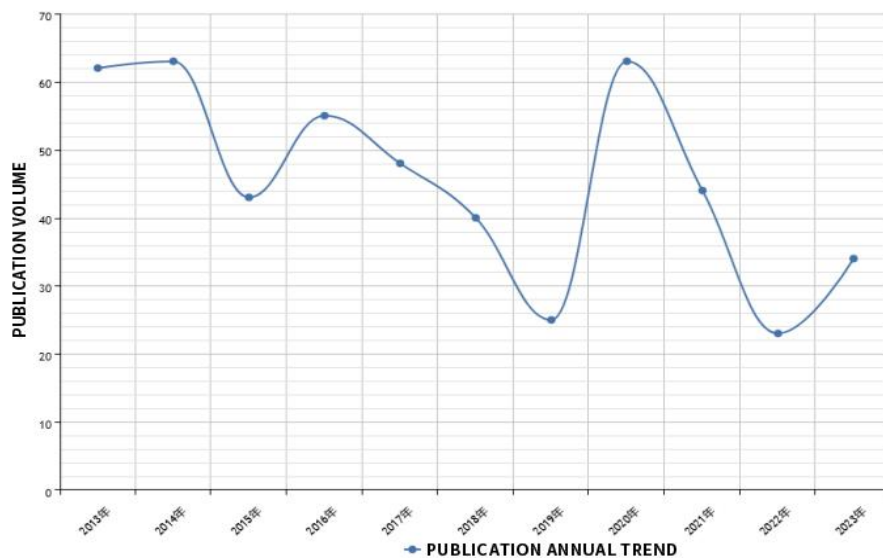


Figure 6. Publication Annual Trend



Proceeding with the visualization analysis of the keywords from the 500 documents, as illustrated in Table 3, three key terms stand out prominently. The foremost keyword is "paper cutting", which is interconnected with the highest number of other keywords, such as packaging design, application, development, Dai paper-cutting, etc., focusing on analyzing paper-cutting from an artistic design perspective. The second significant keyword is "folk paper-cutting," with directly related keywords including Yu County paper-cutting, traditional culture, group flower art, etc., emphasizing the cultural characteristics of paper-cutting from the aspect of folk culture and traditional cultural heritage. The third major keyword is "paper-cutting art," with directly associated keywords such as industrialization, embroidery, plastic arts, etc., concentrating on the application and current state of development of paper-cutting.

Table 3. Keyword Analysis

Keyword	Frequency	Centrality	Year of Appearance
Paper Cutting	23	0.14	2013
Folk Paper Cutting	18	0.17	2013
Graphic Design	7	0.17	2013
Folk Art	6	0.01	2017
Application	5	0.00	2013
Yu County Paper-Cutting	5	0.03	2013
Industrialization	5	0.01	2014
Packaging Design	4	0.02	2013
Heritage	4	0.03	2013
Innovation	4	0.03	2016



Figure 7. Keyword Visualization Analysis

If a cluster analysis is performed on the basis of keyword visualization, six distinct clusters can be clearly identified, as shown in Figure 8.

Cluster #0 emerges from keywords such as "paper-cutting," "industrialization," "embroidery," and "plastic arts," and is named "Introduction to Paper-Cutting." It focuses on providing an introductory overview of paper-cutting itself, including aspects of the embroidery techniques, plastic arts, and the current state of industry development in paper-cutting.

Cluster #1 is generated from keywords like "paper-cutting," "application," and "graphic design," and is termed "Paper-Cutting." It emphasizes evaluating paper-cutting from the perspective of artistic height and the form



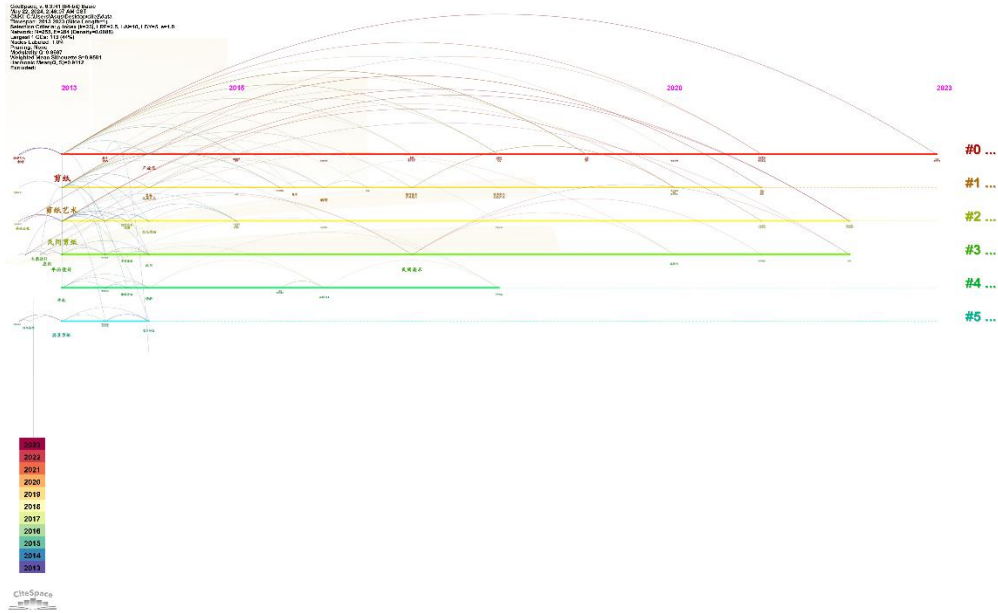


Figure 9. Timeline Analysis of Keyword Clustering Results

Continuing with the visualization analysis of the publishing institutions, as shown in Figure 10, this represents the most prominent set of connections between author institutions among the 500 documents. The central node in the network is the China Folk Artists Association, especially its subsidiary, the China Paper-cut Research Center of the China Folk Artists Association, which is a specialized institution dedicated to the study of paper-cutting and its culture, occupying the most central position among all publishing institutions. The most important node is the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA), particularly the various secondary institutions under it, such as the Academic Affairs Office of CAFA, the Silk Road Art Research Collaborative Innovation Center of CAFA, and the Intangible Cultural Heritage Research Center of CAFA. This indicates that paper-cutting has garnered the attention of multiple secondary research centers at CAFA, suggesting that paper-cutting can serve as an intangible cultural heritage and can also play a unique role in the dissemination along the Silk Road.

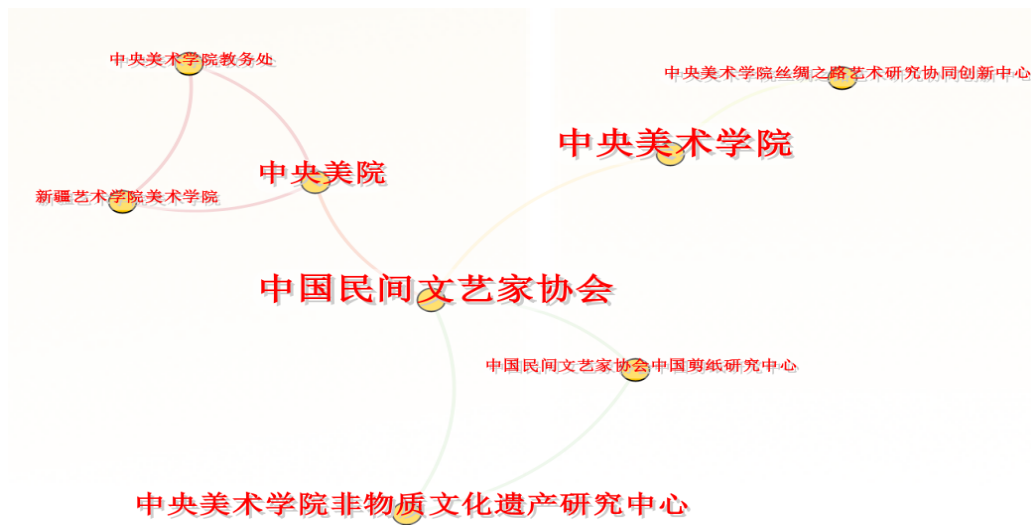


Figure 10. Visualization Analysis of Publishing Institutions

## **Qualitative Analysis**

Based on the results of the aforementioned quantitative analysis, we have identified six themes in the research papers related to paper-cutting, and we will analyze them according to the specific content of the papers:

### **Theme One: Introduction to Paper Cutting**

The first major theme in paper-cutting related research is the introduction of paper-cutting, focusing on the introduction of paper-cutting itself and its derivatives. The research by Wu Jianlin and Huang Yuzheng provides us with profound insights.

In his research, Wu Jianlin emphasized that traditional paper-cutting has been widely applied not only in the field of graphic design but also in advertising, interior decoration, packaging, and logo design (Wu, 2020). He suggested that the elements of paper-cutting are ingeniously integrated into the design, creating artworks that have both national characteristics and conform to modern aesthetics. He conducted a detailed analysis from three aspects: First, the application of paper-cutting modeling language, which mainly includes characters, birds and beasts, flowers and trees, fruits and vegetables, landscapes, and modern objects, and focuses on the combination of virtual and real, and the importance of association in composition, creating many excellent works. Graphic design refers to the virtual and real and association methods in paper-cutting techniques; second, the penetration of paper-cutting imagery, graphic design takes paper-cutting as the main performance element, inspired by the unique window lattice of paper-cutting, and then based on local traditional folk culture, for more innovative artistic transformation; finally, the extension of the law of change, the static elements are dynamic, and the dynamic elements are vivid, thereby enhancing the visual appeal and depth of impression of the works.

Huang Yuzheng's research focuses on the application of paper-cutting in modern packaging design (Huang, 2016). He emphasized that the beauty of Chinese paper-cutting patterns and its abstract summarization are in line with the minimalist style in contemporary design. The characteristic of paper-cutting to shape according to the form, and its aesthetic orientation of leaving blank space, brings unique aesthetic value and cultural depth to packaging design. Huang Yuzheng believes that these characteristics of paper-cutting can not only enhance the visual appeal of products but also enhance the cultural grade of the products.

### **Theme Two: Paper Cutting**

The second major theme in paper-cutting related research is paper-cutting itself, returning to the aesthetics of paper-cutting. Yu Chao, taking Fuyang paper-cutting as an example, analyzed its modeling characteristics and aesthetic structure. Fuyang paper-cutting not only shows unique regional characteristics but also integrates the styles of paper-cutting in the north and south of China, forming a unique artistic expression. He pointed out the diversity in subject selection and the novelty in conception of Fuyang paper-cutting, these works not only capture the rich elements of nature and social life but also through the artist's skillful hands, these elements are transformed into realistic images with planar characteristics (Yu, 2016). Fuyang paper-cutters are good at refining the essence of real things, and through the art form of paper-cutting, they achieve imitation and reproduction of natural images.

In addition, Fuyang paper-cutting also integrates painting elements in artistic expression. Artists pay attention to capturing the main structural features of objects in modeling, and in composition, they draw on perspective skills, making the paper-cut works not only visually three-dimensional but also enhanced in the sense of space and scene. The use of this artistic technique makes Fuyang paper-cutting not only maintain the characteristics of traditional paper-cutting but also show the aesthetic pursuit of modern art.

Wang Yu's research discusses the application of traditional paper-cutting patterns in modern design. Paper-cutting has a rich form and content, from customs to opera novels, from poetry and prose to flowers, birds, fish, and insects, and most have profound implications such as auspiciousness, blessing, evil-averting, and encouragement. Paper-cutting patterns are not only a visual art but also a medium that carries auspicious meanings and deep cultural symbols (Wang, 2019). These patterns are usually divided into three types: metaphorical objects, phonetic explanations, and symbolic categories, each conveying specific cultural

information and aesthetic value in its unique way.

In the field of modern fashion design, the aesthetic characteristics and cultural connotations of paper-cutting have received great attention and importance from designers. Wang Yu pointed out that designers are no longer just copying traditional paper-cutting patterns but using them as a source of inspiration to create new design styles. For example, some designers have integrated animal and plant patterns from paper-cutting into cheongsam designs, using the strong visual impact of red paper-cutting to enhance the oriental charm and feminine soft temperament of the clothing. In addition, Wang Yu also mentioned how designers transform paper-cutting patterns into flat patterns and use modern design techniques such as ironing and pasting to achieve a more diversified decorative effect. In some evening dress designs, the use of paper-cutting patterns not only reflects the traditional charm of the cheongsam but also shows a modern fashion sense through simple but elegant design.

### **Theme Three: Folk Paper Cutting**

The third major theme in paper-cutting related research is folk paper-cutting. It focuses on combining the form of paper-cutting with folk culture and local China, and is rooted in the vast Chinese local areas to study paper-cutting. Deng Shiwei's research takes Mei Shan paper-cutting in Hunan Province as an example, showing how this art has become a treasure in intangible cultural heritage. Mei Shan paper-cutting, as a carrier for craftsmen to express local folk beliefs and cultural systems, not only reflects the development of the original aesthetics of the area but also embodies cultural heritage and aesthetic value. Faced with the dilemma of inheritance and development of Mei Shan paper-cutting, Deng Shiwei proposed an innovative solution, that is, the development of an online paper-cutting database platform, and the launch of small programs and APPs, providing a new channel for paper-cutting enthusiasts to watch, browse, and appreciate Mei Shan paper-cutting, which is not only conducive to promoting Mei Shan paper-cutting but also provides new ideas for the digital preservation and dissemination of paper-cutting (Deng et al., 2020).

Li Yuanlin starts from the perspective of artistic form, emphasizing the essence of folk paper-cutting as a kind of hollow-out art. He pointed out that the foundation of paper-cutting is the use of lines, by cutting or carving the unnecessary parts on the paper, leaving the solid lines to form decorative patterns (Li et al., 2013). Paper-cutting holds a unique position in Chinese folk art, not only because of its extensive application in folk activities but also because the paper-cutting in different regions has its own characteristics, showing a strong sense of region. The hollow-out art of folk paper-cutting requires the work to be "liftable and attachable" after cutting, and this intuitive visual effect makes paper-cutting a powerful visual communication medium. Liu Haisu once described the decorative nature of folk paper-cutting with "there is painting in the cut, the taste is endless", which not only highlights the aesthetic value of paper-cutting but also shows its important position in folk culture.

### **Theme Four: Yu County Paper-Cutting**

Yu County paper-cutting, as a unique genre within Chinese paper-cutting, is one of the most representative subcategories deserving focused study. This art form originated in Yu County, Hebei Province, and historically dates back to the Chenghua period of the Ming Dynasty, with a heritage spanning over five centuries. It is an artistic practice among the local populace for embellishing daily life or complementing folk activities, creating designs on raw Xuan paper using scissors or carving knives. Renowned not only for its ancient lineage and distinctive artistic style but also for its innovative applications in the modern design field.

In its early stages, Yu County paper-cutting was presented in monochromatic forms, exhibiting a simple and rustic appearance, primarily serving as homemade embroidery works. However, by the late Qing Dynasty to the early Republic of China, Master Liu Laobu introduced the traditional Chinese theory of five colors and employed dot coloring techniques, transforming Yu County paper-cutting from monochrome to polychrome, aligning more closely with folk aesthetics and emotions. This carving craft, combining the simplicity of the north with the delicate beauty of the south, has shaped the unique artistic style of Yu County paper-cutting.

Ji Xianghong and Liu Xu's research further explores the application of Yu County paper-cutting elements in

modern packaging design. They note that under the current trend of "national tide" fashion, the aesthetic taste and artistic style of Yu County paper-cutting have been widely welcomed (Ji, Liu, 2020). Designers, in their exploration of design directions that align with the times and culture, increasingly integrate folk elements into packaging design, creating packaging works with ethnic charm. As an intangible cultural heritage, Yu County paper-cutting originates from the daily lives of working people and carries the most sincere aesthetic pursuits and emotional expressions. Its unique themes, colors, and meanings provide rich inspiration and innovative ideas for modern packaging design. In-depth study of the application of Yu County paper-cutting in packaging design can promote the inheritance of this traditional art form and add the unique charm of folk art to modern design language.

### **Theme Five: Paper-Cutting Culture**

The fifth major theme in paper-cutting related research is paper-cutting culture, focusing on the interpretation of paper-cutting as an intangible cultural heritage and its connection to traditional Chinese culture and folk culture.

He Jia and other researchers, through case analysis of Nanjing paper-cutting, demonstrate how to transform paper-cutting into a marketable cultural and creative brand. They first established a professional design team to delve into the heritage elements of Nanjing paper-cutting, such as local customs, legends, historical sites, and geographical environment, to tell the stories behind the paper-cutting and evoke cultural resonance. They also advocate for cross-border collaboration with other cultural resources, such as partnering with scenic spots, local folk activities, special holidays, and other cultural resources to design specific cultural and creative products, creating diverse and novel forms (He et al., 2018). In addition, He Jia and others also advocate the use of new media and technological means for brand promotion, utilizing low-cost but efficient marketing strategies such as Weibo, WeChat, and APPs to expand the dissemination channels of paper-cutting culture.

Jiang Juanli and others believe that intangible cultural heritage, as an important carrier of human civilization, is the crystallization of wisdom created by humans over thousands of years in survival practice, fully reflecting their production and living attitudes, and its existence and development are deeply rooted in the people. Taking Chongqing paper-cutting as an example, they analyzed its exquisite patterns, realistic techniques, and unique regional characteristics (Wang, 2017). Chongqing paper-cutting, with its rich expressive techniques and sense of the picture, shows the folk customs and regional characteristics of the Bayu area, while also integrating techniques from other genres to form a unique artistic style. They are good at imagining, combining, processing, and creating various objects, which is a typical artistic expression form of "implying meaning through imagery" and "constructing imagery through meaning," and in the connotation of the theme culture, they pay more attention to the expression of humanistic history and cultural forms. Jiang Juanli and others believe that the inheritance and development of paper-cutting should focus on its humanistic history and cultural forms to enhance the presence and vitality of paper-cutting culture.

### **Theme Six: Inheritance of Paper-Cutting**

The sixth major theme in paper-cutting related research is the inheritance of paper-cutting, which studies how to protect paper-cutting culture in the Internet era, and how to develop and inherit paper-cutting culture innovatively, making more young people like paper-cutting culture, and ensuring that the next generation can continue to promote and develop paper-cutting.

Li Guanghua's research takes the Dai paper-cutting of Mang City, Yunnan as a case to deeply analyze the inheritance and protection issues of paper-cutting culture. With its distinctive Southeast Asian Dai style, bold and powerful shapes, and simple artistic style, Mang City Dai paper-cutting stands out among the many ethnic traditional paper-cuttings in China (Li et al., 2014). This skill has been passed down for thousands of years and is closely linked to the Theravada Buddhism, playing a key role in the emergence, development, and inheritance of Dai paper-cutting. In 2006, with the approval of the State Council, Mang City Dai paper-cutting was officially included in the first batch of national intangible cultural heritage protection catalogs. In August 2010, UNESCO officially included Chinese paper-cutting in the world "Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity," and Mang City Dai paper-cutting, as a sub-item of Chinese paper-cutting, was also included in



the UNESCO "Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity." However, despite its rich cultural heritage and international honors, the inheritance of Dai paper-cutting faces the dilemma of the loss of the main body of inheritance. Modern rural youth often regard traditional paper-cutting craftsmanship as backward and fail to fully recognize its cultural and economic value; in addition, the status of folk artists and artists lacks sufficient recognition and affirmation, leading to the inheritance of handicrafts mainly among the middle-aged and elderly population. In response to these situations, Li Guanghua proposed three paths for the inheritance and protection of paper-cutting: First, protect specific groups, and when inheriting intangible cultural heritage, not everyone needs to participate, just complete it through specific groups. For example, a large number of local Dai students in Mang City, as well as student groups led by non-legacy inheritors. Second, inherit through the school education system, such as making paper-cutting an elective course and adding it to students' art classes. Third, build a teaching team for paper-cutting, such as compiling special teaching materials, hiring professional paper-cutting inheritors as teachers, and strengthening ties with paper-cutting workshops, etc. Chinese paper-cutting is an overall concept, which includes different regions and types of paper-cutting in China, including Manchu paper-cutting, such as the paper-cutting of the Xianzu Mountain in Western Liaoning and the paper-cutting of Xinbin in Eastern Liaoning. As a unique branch of Chinese paper-cutting, Manchu paper-cutting is mainly popular in the northern regions of China, especially in Liaoning Province and Jilin Province. Yu Fujie and others' research focuses on the inheritance issues of Manchu paper-cutting, revealing the development dilemmas and potential innovative paths of Manchu paper-cutting in contemporary society (Yu,Zhang,2018).

However, despite the state having strengthened policy protection for the art of paper-cutting and promoted it through expos and other forms, there are still deficiencies in financial investment and the establishment of professional institutions. Many paper-cut artists, although intent on focusing on the protection and inheritance of paper-cutting, face financial constraints in their material lives. The lack of dedicated support funds from the state for paper-cutting in various regions not only affects the artists' confidence in preserving paper-cutting but also impacts its sustainable protection and inheritance. The state's minimal investment in establishing professional institutions for the study of paper-cutting has not provided a platform for artists to professionally protect and inherit the craft, hindering the development and dissemination of contemporary paper-cutting. This lack of support restricts the next generation's understanding and exposure to paper-cutting, making the task of inheriting and innovating even more challenging.

For Manchu paper-cutting, which is a niche within the field, there is almost no special funding allocated by the state. Therefore, Yu Fujie suggests that to better protect Manchu paper-cutting culture, it is necessary to recognize the abundance of Manchu cultural resources, including Manchu paper-cutting, music, attire, cuisine, and more. These elements are crucial for propelling the development of China's cultural industry, and there is a need to integrate and develop these Manchu cultural resources effectively.

Against the dual backdrop of globalization and informatization, the inheritance and development of paper-cutting are no longer confined to a specific region or country. Instead, it has become an essential component of global cultural exchange and dialogue. This study hopes to contribute to the promotion of traditional culture's dissemination and enhancement of its global influence by conducting an in-depth analysis of the current state and trends of paper-cutting research. Thereby, it aims to foster mutual understanding and respect between different cultures and jointly safeguard the diversity and richness of the world's cultural heritage.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research, integrating bibliometric and qualitative analyses, has dissected the scholarly trajectory of paper-cutting from 2013 to 2023, with the aim of offering strategic insights into its preservation and innovation. Findings indicate that, while paper-cutting as a Chinese intangible cultural heritage has been increasingly recognized internationally, numerous challenges remain for its propagation and evolution.

Initially, the transmission of paper-cutting is encountering a generational gap, with diminishing interest among the youth leading to significant barriers in skill inheritance. This study posits that there is an imperative need to reinforce the integration and promotion of paper-cutting within educational curricula, employing innovative

pedagogical approaches to engender cultural affinity and enthusiasm among younger demographics. Subsequently, the commercial pressures have resulted in some forms of paper-cutting losing their intrinsic cultural essence, with insufficient innovation to captivate contemporary consumers. It is suggested that innovation in paper-cutting should transcend traditional confines by amalgamating conventional aesthetics with contemporary design sensibilities, yielding novel products that resonate with modern tastes and market demands.

Moreover, the global awareness of paper-cutting is limited, necessitating enhanced promotion and publicity. This research underscores the importance of leveraging international cultural exchange platforms such as art festivals and exhibitions to amplify the global reach of paper-cutting, fostering cultural reciprocity and communality.

Additionally, the digitization of paper-cutting for preservation and dissemination emerges as a critical avenue for future advancement. Advocated herein is the augmentation of digital initiatives for paper-cutting, including the establishment of online databases and the creation of virtual exhibitions, employing technological methodologies for the safeguarding and propagation of this traditional art form.

The perpetuation and innovation of paper-cutting are systemic endeavors that necessitate collaborative efforts across governments, academia, education sectors, and cultural industries. Through a multifaceted approach encompassing educational outreach, market-driven innovation, international promotion, and digital construction, paper-cutting is poised to rejuvenate its vibrancy within contemporary society, serving as a cultural bridge connecting China with the world, and antiquity with modernity.

Paper-cutting transcends its status as a precious asset of Chinese traditional culture; it is an integral component of the global cultural heritage. In the context of globalization and the information age, the preservation and innovation of paper-cutting are of paramount significance. The conclusions drawn from this study are anchored not only in data analysis but also in profound insights into prevailing cultural development trends. It is believed that the future of paper-cutting lies not solely in the preservation of its traditional techniques but, more critically, in exploring its integration with contemporary society.

In this process, upholding tradition while fostering innovation is pivotal. This implies that paper-cutting must maintain its unique cultural essence while adapting to modern aesthetic sensibilities and technological advancements. Furthermore, expanding an international perspective is equally vital for the long-term development of paper-cutting. Through international exchange and collaboration, paper-cutting can transcend geographical boundaries, becoming a vivid embodiment of global cultural diversity. Ultimately, the preservation and innovation of paper-cutting will promote the establishment of cultural confidence and enhance the international influence of national culture, contributing a unique cultural strength to the construction of a shared human destiny.

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