

Research on the Styles and Characteristics of Folk Paper Cuttings in the Yangtze River Basin

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ABSTRACT

This paper takes the folk paper cuttings in the Yangtze River Basin as the research object, selects the styles and characteristics of folk paper cuttings as the research perspective, and focuses on the information about folk paper cuttings in terms of customs, fashions, etiquette systems, as well as their impact on local social development. Methods such as typology, cultural factor analysis, and comparative research and so on are used to investigate the styles and characteristics and historical changes of folk paper cuttings in different regions of the upper, middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River Basin. By analyzing the similarities and differences between paper cuttings cultures and styles in various regions of the Yangtze River Basin, this paper summarizes the artistic styles of paper cuttings works, which can provide reference for the inheritance and development of paper cuttings in the future.

Keywords: *Folk paper cuttings, Folk culture, Yangtze River Basin.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Yangtze River Basin is the cradle and treasure bowl of Chinese culture, which not only nurtures intelligent and hardworking people, but also gives birth to countless rich literary and artistic works. The main stream of the Yangtze River flows through 11 provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities directly under the central government, with a total length of over 6,000 kilometers. Along the Yangtze River, there are successively distributed Ba-Shu-Dian culture, Chu culture, and Wu-Yue culture. Among them, Chu culture has the greatest influence.

2. CHARACTERISTICS AND ANALYSIS OF PAPER CUTTINGS IN THE UPPER REACHES OF THE YANGTZE RIVER

2.1 *Yilong Paper Cuttings in Northern Sichuan*

It is said that as early as the Jin and Tang Dynasties, Yilong paper cuttings have become a common practice. The folk customs at that time provided a broad world for paper cuttings. Yilong

paper cuttings are widely used, which will be reflected in all festivals in four seasons, birth, adulthood, weddings, funerals, birthdays, etc. Paper cuttings can be seen in the hanging of spring banners and window patterns on the first day of the first lunar month, lantern displays on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month, double happiness written in red in weddings of men and women, dowries, etc. In addition, articles in life, such as pillow patterns, shoes and hats patterns, apron patterns, bellyband patterns, etc., can not be separated from paper cutting patterns. Paper cuttings have a wide range of themes, including birds, animals, feathers, flowers, grains, the six domestic animals, local customs, etc. Among them, flower paper cuttings are the most representative and have auspicious meanings. Engraving techniques include yin-yang alignment and overlay, black-white paste carving, hidden-stitch parallel cutting, folding paper cuttings, hand tearing, high-heat drawing and other methods. For example, in terms of the door flower "mugwort leaf gourd" used during the Dragon Boat Festival, the intaglied mugwort leaves serve as a foil to a large incised gourd. The gourd is also decorated with double coins patterns and longevity character patterns, symbolizing "enjoying both felicity and longevity",

which is a virtuality and reality combination, complementing each other. In the countryside of Yilong in the old days, women were the inheritors of paper cuttings craft. In addition to the "flower competition" activities on weekdays, they also went to villages to sell "drilled flowers", which are patterns drilled on rice paper or Jiajiang paper using various knives, hammers, and wooden hammers. With the help of small scissors or carving knives, their techniques were flexible and natural. In a short time, beautiful paper cuttings in the symmetrical outline would appear vividly in front of them. There were various colors of flowers and poultry paper flowers symbolizing auspiciousness everywhere, such as door flowers, window flowers, door notes, cupboards, granaries, and corrals. Zhang Subi, a farmer in Qingshan Village of Juxing Township, cut paper with her bare hands freely. Her works are similar to the composition and image of Han portraits. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, Yilong paper cuttings have made greater innovations in form and content. On the basis of the original cutting techniques, they have developed the two-hand paper tearing method and flame-treated high-heat drawing method. Now, Yilong has included the construction of the "Hometown of Paper Cuttings" in the strategic plan of Yilong's cultural development, and its paper cuttings works have also participated in many art exhibitions at home and abroad for many times, showing a gratifying outlook.

2.2 Sichuan Paper Cuttings

Sichuan, known as the "Land of Abundance" in ancient times, is the center of Ba-Shu culture and advocates etiquette in terms of human relations and customs. Its folk paper cuttings styles vary from place to place. Chengdu, Zigong and Yilong County are representatives of Sichuan paper cuttings.

Zigong, located in the south of Sichuan, is a region with a long history of paper cuttings. Paper cuttings there have various forms and rich contents. In the local area, folk paper cuttings are also called pattern cuttings. In the custom, when a daughter gives birth to a child, her parents must send eggs and paste some paper cuttings patterns such as "happiness characters", "butterflies" and "bats" in red paper on the eggs to show festivity. Influenced by folk customs, paper cuttings here have also formed their own creative style. Paper cuttings here are simple and plump, fresh and lively, simple and skillful, and lively, which combine movement and

stillness, yin and yang, line and surface, sparsity and density, as well as single painting, group painting, monochrome and colors and other forms of expression, and integrate various folk arts into paper cuttings works. Paper cuttings artist Yu Manbo has made great contributions to the paper cuttings art in Zigong. Yu Manbo was born in Zhushan County, Hubei Province. When he was young, he wandered to Zigong City, Sichuan Province to make a living. He studied folk paper cuttings and made friends with folk artists. While painting and carving, he collected and imitated folk paper cuttings and made innovations to make his paper cuttings closer to the people and more interesting to life. Yu Manbo's disciple continued to carry forward the folk paper cuttings art, making Zigong paper cuttings flourish and become one of the "three wonders" of Zigong.

3. CHARACTERISTICS AND ANALYSIS OF PAPER CUTTINGS IN THE MIDDLE REACHES OF THE YANGTZE RIVER

3.1 Hubei Folk Paper Cuttings

Hubei, located in the middle reaches of the Yangtze River, is the birthplace of Chu culture in China. Hubei folk paper cuttings have a long history. In ancient times, witchcraft prevailed in Hubei, providing conditions for the development of paper cuttings. For example, in order to exorcise evil spirits during the Spring Festival, in addition to pasting colorful door gods and peach wood charms against evil, every household also needed to cut paper money and hang it on the door head and even on indoor utensils. When sweeping tombs during the Qingming Festival, five colored money and paper banners would be cut and inserted in the grave mound, which was called "Qingming condolence" or "inserting greenness". In addition, the rise of the lantern watching custom and the development of the coloured-lantern making art have also given a favorable position for the use of paper cuttings. For example, the gauze sandwiched lamp made during the Jiajing reign of the Ming Dynasty carved the paper into the shape of flowers, bamboo, animals, and birds, which were colored lightly or thickly, and coated and painted with melted candles, and sandwiched in the light gauze, making the gauze sandwiched lamp bright and translucent, dainty and exquisite. At the end of the Qing Dynasty and the beginning of the Republic of China, Hubei also organized paper cuttings guilds,

which was rare in the country. In the area of Jingchu, paper cuttings are usually carved, so they are generally called carving or pattern. Carving is widely distributed in Hubei, with Wuhan, Xiaogan, Huangpi and other places being the most widespread. In the past, carving artists used carving knives to carve, commonly known as "carvers" or pattern sellers. After the patterns were carved, the carver carried a carving box on his back, shook a rattle drum, and travelled through the streets and alleys selling patterns. While rural women with dexterity could use scissors and fold paper to create their favorite patterns. On the whole, paper cuttings in Hubei have the advantages of combining north and south, which are beautiful in simplicity and free and easy in steadiness, with the characteristics of full composition, delicate beauty and slimness, line and surface combination, sparsity and density, neatness and smoothness, simpleness and grace, giving people a healthy and lively feeling, with a strong local color.

From a practical point of view, Hubei carving paper cuttings can be divided into embroidery patterns, festive patterns, gift patterns, window patterns, lantern patterns and other categories. Among them, there are the most types of embroidery patterns, with countless patterns, including shoe patterns, pillow patterns, door curtain patterns, hat patterns, curtain patterns, bib patterns, etc. Patterns can be roughly divided into single, double, continuous, and segmented patterns in form. Their composition pattern and pattern deformation achieve balanced changes, symmetrical unity, and are rich in decoration and practicality. Among them, there are also varieties of shoe patterns, such as shoe head patterns, shoe edge patterns, full shoe patterns, slipper patterns, cotton shoe patterns, and so on, with each variety having hundreds of patterns. Festive and gift patterns are often used as decorative patterns for the Spring Festival, weddings, birthday ceremonies, gifts for children at the age of one, food, and doors, windows, and utensils. For example, when giving two fishes to celebrate a happy event or sending a blessed fish for the Spring Festival, there are paper cuttings with "abundance year after year" and "auspicious chime of two fishes" characters. Door notes will be hanged on the door head and patterns will be pasted on lanterns during the Chinese New Year day. On the box, cabinet, mirror, tea set, and other items along with a girl's marrying, they are all pasted with festive patterns, making them burst with happiness. Their theme content is mostly auspicious "lucky words" passed down from

generation to generation, such as "Dragon and Phoenix Bringing Prosperity", "Six Livestock Prosperity", "Two Phoenixes Facing the Sun", "Carp Playing with Lotus", "Happiness Appears on the Eyebrows", etc. This is exactly what the saying goes: "To please someone, one must begin with lucky words". There are also folk stories, dramatic characters, fairy tales, and other content that reflects rural life. For example, there are abundant fruits, fisher, woodcutter, and farmer reading, flowers, birds, insects, and fish, all of which are praises of life and nature.

The main tool of Hubei carving paper cutting is the carving knife, which has various shapes. In addition, there are wax plates, needles and awls and other auxiliary tools. When carving, artists emphasize the importance of holding the knife straight and always moving the knife edge inward when cutting. The force should be even, and the knife trace should be smooth and neat when moving, in order to show one's skills. The block surface of the pattern needs to be applied with "breaking skill". Only when the "breaking skill" is used well can neatly-arranged knife edge patterns be left on the picture, such as serrated patterns, dogtooth patterns, dot patterns, internal patterns, etc. There is a fine connecting line between the patterns to avoid them from falling apart. The pattern effect after the artist's master skillful carving is simple, bright, clean, and beautiful, with a neat knife edge. For example, Jiang Zaipu, a famous paper cuttings artist in Hubei, is famous for his knife skills.

Hubei carving paper cuttings are good at combining practicality and decoration perfectly. Taking embroidery patterns as an example, they often make full use of their appearance to cleverly conceive and fill patterns in limited space, and express themes with auspicious meanings under practical conditions. Pattern changes have rich imagination and are not bound by the reality of objects. They can grasp the most important features of the object, remove tedious details, and make the pattern more simple and typical. Traditional patterns in Hubei also affect Hubei paper cuttings. For example, the tiger-head shoe patterns in Fangxian County clearly have the characteristics of the gluttonous pattern style of bronze ware, with a rough, dignified, and vigorous and simple shape. In addition, Hubei paper cuttings are also applied to other practical folk utensils. For example, there is a kind of decal pottery among the people in Macheng and Qichun, Hubei Province, which is made by sticking paper cuttings on the greenware, spraying glaze, removing the patterns and firing. In this way,

pottery has decorative patterns in the style of paper cuttings.

In terms of expression technique, Hubei paper cuttings mostly adopt the method of plane spreading through branches and leaves. The paper cuttings patterns in Hubei generally have a fixed shape. They are full, orderly, and interspersed in a certain shape. The balance and symmetry, dynamic and static, empty and full, thick and thin, hollow and solid are all arranged properly. For example, the pattern of children's tiger-head shoes is filled with patterns of flowers, fruits, birds, and butterflies incised or intaglioed in the shape of the upper and sole. For another example, when making a children's tiger-head bib, the principle of scattered formation is used. The tiger head is made into the front piece of the bib, the tiger tail is made into the back piece, and the tiger body is made into two left and right pieces, cleverly interspersed with the flowers and fruits of the four seasons. In terms of color, differences can be made as needed, such as using bright red paper to carve festive patterns for weddings and using white paper to carve funeral decorations for funerals.

3.2 Hunan Folk Paper Cuttings

Paper cuttings styles are diverse in Hunan. The beautiful and graceful Miao paper cuttings, the bold and unconstrained Tujia paper cuttings, and the graceful and elegant Han paper cuttings in central Hunan all make Hunan paper cuttings present a colorful and diversified style.

Hunan chiseling pattern paper cuttings are also known as chiseling paper patterns. They are mainly spread in the minority areas in western Hunan and the areas where Miao and Han live together, which are mostly used for embroidery patterns and decorations in celebrations and sacrificial activities. The theme of chiseling patterns is extensive, including flowers and plants, birds and animals, insects and fish, and nuo masks. Among them, red paper is used for weddings, and white, yellow, and blue paper is used for funerals. Western Hunan has beautiful natural scenery, honest local customs, and lives with ethnic minorities such as Miao and Tujia. The various clothing embroidery of the Miao and Tujia ethnic groups generally have specific external shapes. For example, there are circular, triangular, elongated, polygonal shapes, as well as other shapes such as horseshoe and bell, and the specific position is determined by the embroidery position it is located in. For example, hat patterns are circular or polygonal. The jumper skirt patterns are

triangular, and the shoe head patterns are horseshoe-shaped. For another example, the patterns and shapes of purses, bracelets, clothing edges, cuffs, aprons, and children's bibs are all different. The pattern themes are mostly auspicious patterns such as dragons and phoenixes, birds, butterflies, and bats. The embroidery pattern on the high waistband of Miao women in western Hunan is in the shape of a hanging bell, cleverly interspersed with flowers, branches and leaves, birds and butterflies, creating a full, harmonious and vivid composition. The chiseling patterns in western Hunan are mainly completed with a carving knife, which involves processes such as drawing, mounting, needle piercing, chiseling, and unfolding. And scissors are only auxiliary tools, usually used for trimming after final completion. Because chiseling patterns are mainly used for embroidery, after carving with a knife, fine needles are also used to pierce pinholes in the patterns to indicate the embroidery technique, giving it a unique decorative taste.

As for the style of pattern cuttings in western Hunan, Mr. Shen Congwen once described the relevant scenes in detail in his "Flowers, Pots and Pans: Shen Congwen on Art and Cultural Relics", describing the folk paper cuttings in Tahu Township, Luxi County, western Hunan today. There is a folk song circulating here: "To get married, one should marry a pattern cutter, as such a man carries a burden and walks all around, goes out with nothing but comes back with baskets of money". "Pattern cutter" here refers to the local paper cuttings artist. After carving embroidery patterns, they carry a burden and wander around, relying on their own skills for a living. Huang Kaotian, a famous chiseling patterns artist in Tahu Township, was known for his paper cuttings skills in the local area. He was born into a family of carving and learned how to carve from a young age. He not only inherited the skills of his ancestors, but also learned from the strengths of other schools. His works mainly include traditional themes such as flowers and plants, birds, beasts, insects, fish, and nuo masks, as well as creations of rural real life. Such works as "Butterfly", "Chinese Zodiac", and "Fish Playing with Lotus" are exquisitely carved with smooth lines, simple in complex composition, harmonious in layout, and have the unique slim, delicate and beautiful style of southern paper cuttings.

In addition to paper cuttings of ethnic minorities, there are festival paper cuttings all over the country. Paper cuttings are also indispensable for the

festivals in four seasons, life rituals, clothing and residences, folk games, and sacrifices and prayers. For example, every family needs to chisel paper door notes for the New Year, cut lantern patterns for the Lantern Festival, and stick festive and gift patterns for marriage. If a woman gives birth to a child, her mother's family should send red eggs as a gift, and the eggs should also be pasted with egg flowers. Egg flowers are mostly patterned with lotus and osmanthus flowers, symbolizing the concept of "having babies in a row". Dressing in life is even more inseparable from clothing patterns. In addition, for funerals held by the people, the necromancy banners should be hung or posted. During religious activities such as praying for rain and nuo for longevity, people should stick Zhizha like doors and pavilions. In Zhongyuan Festival, "Paper will be cut into clothing" to be burned in memory of ancestors. Now, Hunan chiseling pattern paper cuttings are mostly used for decoration. For example, they are used to decorate walls, doors and windows, room columns, mirrors, lanterns, etc., and can also be used as decorative decorations of gifts, or even directly as gifts to others.

Hunan customs are influenced by witchcraft and most of its paper cuttings are mysterious and romantic. Patterns of dragons, phoenixes and other supernatural birds and monsters loved by Chu people frequently appear in Hunan paper cuttings. These peculiar and imaginative images also deeply reflect the traces of Hunan's inheritance of Chu folk witchcraft.

4. CHARACTERISTICS AND ANALYSIS OF PAPER CUTTINGS IN THE LOWER REACHES OF THE YANGTZE RIVER

4.1 Anhui Paper Cuttings

Anhui folk paper cuttings in Fuyang area in the north and Huizhou area in the south are the most distinctive. They mainly focus on common folk themes such as auspiciousness and festivity, abundant grains, six livestock prosperity, and abundant resources every year. Their expressive techniques include monochrome, coloring, or dyeing. Some of the works are rough and simple, while others are meticulous and complex. Some also draw inspiration from Western painting and line combinations, which are full of charm and strong decorative taste. Anhui folk paper cuttings mostly belong to carving paper cuttings, with large

picture size, exquisite style and strong craftsmanship. Representative figures include Lv Fengmao, Wang Binghua, and others. Their works have a rich composition, vivid images, and strong craftsmanship. In addition, these carving paper cuttings can also be cut with scissors, such as paper cuttings by Cheng Jianli in Fuyang.

Fuyang, Anhui Province, is located in the north of Anhui Province, on the Huang-Huai Plain. It has always been a place of honest folk customs and prosperous folk culture, and folk paper cuttings art is widely spread among the people. Fuyang paper cuttings have their own local characteristics, combining thickness and thinness, being simple and beautiful, combining the robust paper cuttings in the north with the delicate and beautiful paper cuttings in the south, giving off a strong rural flavor. Cheng Jianli is the most representative figure of paper cuttings in Fuyang. Cheng Jianli learned paper cuttings from his grandmother when he was young. He was very intelligent. At first, he cut flowers voluntarily. Later, he used paper cuttings as a means of livelihood. Cheng Jianli has mastered many paper cuttings skills. No matter whether they are rare fowls and strange animals or flowers, birds, fish or insects, he doesn't have to track his brain, but has a well-thought-out plan and cuts them easily. When cutting paper, he also sang a flower song: "There's a family up on the hill, with three sisters in this family. The eldest sister likes to cut *ganoderma lucidum*. The second sister likes to cut peonies. But the little sister cut poorly and can just cut a butterfly playing on the pumpkin". His paper cuttings style is rough, vigorous and elegant, with traces of the bronze culture of the Central Plains. When making a living in Guizhou, he was influenced by local folk art and his works also had a mysterious color of Guizhou minority art.

Huizhou has been an independent folk unit since ancient times, known for "having a style of its own". In this relatively closed geographical environment, the people of Huizhou scrupulously abide by their own folk customs, and their folk paper cuttings have also formed their own unique style. Huizhou paper cuttings are thick, simple, colorful, and don't pay attention to symmetry in composition. They retain more ancient interest than plain paper cuttings, and have a little flavor of portrait bricks. The main forms are folk paper cuttings and embroidery patterns. Folk paper cuttings are decorations for giving gifts during festivals, weddings, funerals and birthday celebrations, such as door notes, gift patterns, festive patterns, birthday patterns, etc. Embroidery

patterns refer to the embroidery patterns of clothing and daily necessities, such as shoe patterns, hat patterns, bellyband patterns, apron patterns, pillow patterns, etc. The Anhui-style paper cuttings craft is different from the northern window flowers. It is a folk art form that integrates the natural scenery and ethnic customs of Huizhou.

4.2 *Jiangsu Paper Cuttings*

Jiangsu is divided in two by the Yangtze River from the middle, and although the southern and northern regions of Jiangsu are separated by a river, there are significant differences in geography and culture. Paper cuttings in southern Jiangsu are exquisite and beautiful, while paper cuttings in northern Jiangsu are simple and honest. However, the representative paper cuttings style still belongs to Jiangnan characteristics, mainly concentrated in Nanjing, Yangzhou, Nantong, Wuxi, Jintan and other places.

Nanjing paper cuttings were popular among the people in the Ming Dynasty, which were developed from traditional embroidery patterns, between the northern and southern styles. Their paper cuttings are beautiful, elegant, appropriately sparse and dense, exquisite and clear, with a simple, vigorous and full style, with a history of more than 300 years. Among them, it is famous for festive patterns and Douxiang patterns, and patterns are the most distinctive form of paper cuttings in Nanjing. Paper cuttings with festive patterns of Nanjing were seen among the people in the Ming Dynasty. The so-called "Jinling people's betrothal presents" and "cutting colorful paper to make mandarin ducks" are the origins of the later paper cuttings with festive patterns. Folk artists summarize the characteristics of festive patterns in three sentences, called "joyful, chubby, and round". Otherwise, it is not enough to express a festive atmosphere. Among them, festive patterns are cut with scissors, while fragrant patterns and door notes are mostly carved with knives. The artists are very skilled and able to cut freely, and their works are neat and powerful. Because festive patterns are used in folk festive rituals, they are often made from traditional mascots, borrowing objects to symbolize and express themselves. In the old days, people in Nanjing used to decorate their dowries with various bright red paper cutting patterns, such as suitcases, quilts and pillows, for weddings. Within the large outline of the flower and fruit shape, craftsmen fill it with interesting animal and flower patterns, making it appear plump and full of joy. With

appropriate exaggeration and variation, it is beautiful and smooth, full of charm. Until now, when people in Nanjing are getting married, they still need to buy festive patterns and stick them on the glass windows and mirrors of their new houses.

Yangzhou was one of the areas where paper cuttings were first popular. During the Sui and Tang dynasties, people used paper cuttings to decorate and beautify their life. In the Sui Dynasty, in the Shanglin Imperial Park in the west of Yangzhou City, every winter, Emperor Yang of Sui would send palace maids to imitate the folk paper cuttings, to cut colorful brocade into flowers and leaves to decorate branches, and into lotus, water-chestnut, and rhizoma nelumbinis to decorate the lake surface. In the Tang Dynasty, Yangzhou had a custom of cutting paper to welcome the spring. On the day of the beginning of spring, people would all cut paper flowers, or cut spring butterflies, spring coins, and spring headwear, "either hanging on the head of a beautiful woman, or under flowers" to enjoy watching. During this period, there were also paper figures, paper horses, paper money and other forms of paper cuttings in Yangzhou, which were used to worship ghosts and gods. The prosperity of paper making in the Tang and Song dynasties also promoted the development of paper cuttings art. Because Yangzhou has many strange flowers and different flowers since ancient times, flowers have become the main theme of paper cuttings in Yangzhou. Folk paper cuttings in Yangzhou are closely related to embroidery. Embroidery is also called embroidery of patterns. Previously, Yangzhou people called paper cuttings artists "pattern cutters", because during embroidery, paper cuttings were used as the ground pattern to firstly produce the ground pattern, cut it into paper shape, and then paste it on the fabric for embroidery. This method continued for a long time in Yangzhou and it is still used in folk embroidery today. During the Qing Dynasty, Yangzhou's economy developed and the city prospered. Embroidery was taken as a kind of fashion, which could be found in many residential areas, ranging from door curtains and curtain edges, to bedding and pillowcases, to sachets and handkerchiefs. As for weddings, birthdays, and festive occasions, more embroidery patterns were used. With a pair of scissors and a few pieces of plain paper, paper cuttings artists can cut lively and auspicious patterns with ingenuity. Under their scissors, various images of flowers, birds, butterflies, and fish are all superb and lifelike. Therefore, they are also known as "divine scissors". At the end of the Qing Dynasty and the beginning

of the Republic of China, paper cuttings artists from Jiangsu were all over the country, and Zhang Yongshou, a famous paper cuttings artist in Yangzhou, was the best. His paper cuttings had a wide range of subjects, and he was best at flowers, especially chrysanthemum paper cuttings. His chrysanthemum paper cuttings had delicate and exquisite shapes, each of which was charming and beautiful, with both form and spirit, and was slightly elegant in commonness, which was deeply loved by people.

Jintan is located in the southwest of Jiangsu. Folk paper cuttings there have a long history and have been passed down continuously since the Ming and Qing dynasties, being an art style for ordinary people to express their life. Jintan is known for its paper carvings art and is known as the "hometown of paper carvings". Jintan paper carvings were derived from school of paper cuttings. At first, Jintan paper cuttings were mainly through cut. The tools and materials were very simple. With just a pair of scissors and a piece of red paper, brilliant works in dexterous hands could be produced. Later, in the continuous creative contemplation of Jintan artists, they gradually replaced scissors with carving knives. Scissors could only cut up to three or four pieces at a time, while using a carving knife could cut ten or twenty pieces at once. Compared with paper cuttings, paper carvings not only have a large output, but also break through the limitations of paper cuttings, such as small size and single content form. Jintan paper carvings have a wide range of themes, diverse forms, exquisite craftsmanship, and a rich sense of interest.

Jintan folk paper cuttings have strong professional and amateur teams. Zhu Xiaokun is the representative of the older generation of folk artists in Jintan paper cuttings. His paper cuttings of Neolamarckia cadamba wedding cards are vivid. Especially, his works of paper carvings, not only have complex composition and grand scale, but also have rich decorative and ideological connotations, vividly reflecting the artistic characteristics of Jintan paper carvings. Another example is the famous paper cuttings artist Yin Zhuoning, whose paper cuttings techniques are not rigidly traditional, and he has created artistic techniques of cutting, carving, tearing, and overdyeing, spotting, filling, and dyeing. He pioneered the development of colored paper carvings, created hollowed out carving methods, and used new types of blow molding paper for paper carvings art creation. In addition, Sun

Rongcai has also been engaged in paper carvings for over 20 years. His paper carving works are known for their simple composition, smooth lines, and exaggerated shapes, making them famous for creating local rural life themed paper carving works. It was under their influence that the art of paper carvings in Jintan is widely popularized. There are paper cuttings groups in all villages and even art classes in primary and secondary schools have set up local teaching content of "paper carvings". This has laid a good foundation for the future development of Jintan paper carvings.

The style of paper cuttings in rural areas of northern Jiangsu is quite different from that in the above areas. Paper cuttings in northern Jiangsu are mainly pattern cuttings. Pattern cuttings and cloud depictions may be more about balancing one's own spirit with the inclination of real life, so the cutting process of the work is entirely according to one's own wishes. Pixian folk paper cuttings are a typical example of paper cuttings in rural areas of northern Jiangsu, which have been passed down from generation to generation. While inheriting the traditional 152 techniques in the past, they have also created many themes to express the new life. Pixian culture belongs to the cultural circle of the Yellow River, and paper cuttings there show the world in a big outline, reflecting the theme of rural life. For example, fried bread stick stall, cooking pig food, picking persimmons, and protecting seedlings are all scenes of rural life. Paper cuttings there have tight structures and smooth lines. Whether it's bold and straightforward, with simple lines, or dense and magnificent, it's neither showy nor ostentatious, and there's no sense of affectation. The paper cuttings craftsmen cut freely, giving people a fresh style, which is imbued with the pursuit of the working people for life.

5. CONCLUSION

In general, paper cuttings in the Yangtze River Basin have the overall exquisite style of southern paper cuttings, but its paper cuttings art in different regions and nationalities has its own unique features. For example, Sichuan paper cuttings not only have the rough and unconstrained nature of the Ba people, but also reveal the elegant and scholarly atmosphere. While Hunan paper cuttings inherit the custom of cutting, hollowing and carving in State of Chu during the Warring States Period and the legacy of "Human Day" decoration in the Southern and Northern Dynasties. Chiseling patterns are the most distinctive ones and have the unique slim,

delicate, exquisite and beautiful style of southern paper cuttings. In Hubei, once the hinterland of State of Chu, witchcraft paper cuttings are particularly rich. In the old days, witchcraft paper cuttings were used for festivals, ancestor worship, funeral, necromancy, and praying for offsprings. The brilliant development of paper cuttings art in the Yangtze River Basin represents the further inheritance of this traditional art in China and even the world. It has a long history and has been increasingly loved by the masses from ancient times to the present. Beauty is among the people and what belongs to the nation is what belongs to the world. It's crucial for people today to develop national characteristics to a first-class level and promote them to the world.

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