

The Inheritance and Transformation of Shaman Paper-Cut Art in the Modern Design

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ABSTRACT. *Shaman culture, as an original ecological culture with the earliest origin and longest continuity, is centered on the religious rites of Shaman beliefs, which is a comprehensive carrier of primitive culture with certain mysterious and important historical and cultural value. While Shaman paper-cutting displays the folk arts of the inheritance of Shaman Culture, and it is also an essential part of Chinese intangible cultural heritage. Therefore, it should be properly protected and inherited. At the same time, some elements of the shaman paper-cut can be integrated with modern design so that it can be existed as an artistic image by itself or presented with the modern design. With the tourism product design and animation product design as example in this paper, the practice in inheritance of shaman paper-cut art in china will be demonstrated.*

KEYWORDS: *Shaman paper-cut; Inheritance; Contemporary design*

1. Introduction

Shaman culture, a comprehensive carrier of primitive culture, covers the area of the religion, history, economy, philosophy, medicine, literature, art, sports and folklore and so on. It has certain mysterious and important historical and cultural value. In its long and rich culture of worship and sacrificial activities, Shaman people has formed many artistic form, such as Shaman music, dance, plastic arts and so on. It is not too much to say that these art forms are the perfect combination of religion, folklore and art, among which the paper-cut of Shaman is one of the greatest achievements of the inheritance and transformation of Shaman culture and graphics. In the Chinese folk arts, the art of paper-cutting is one of the art forms with strong aesthetic form. Now in China there are more than 40 paper-cut schools, each of which has formed different artistic styles because of its different regions and customs. Shaman paper-cut is mainly expressed the Shaman culture in the North China. The folk culture information contained in it has become a precious historical material for the study of the process and form of cultural integration between ethnic minorities and Han nationalities in northern China in history.

Nowadays, with the rapid development of China, the lives of the Chinese people are all about the modernization and internationalization. Yusheng Lin (1989) pointed out that “the transformation of symbols and value systems in tradition” would “become a seed that is conducive to change” and “maintain cultural identity”. It gives a basic orientation to the creative transformation of Chinese traditional culture. As the element of national culture and traditional art, Shaman paper-cut is deeply rooted in the heart and soul of the northern people, bearing the spirit and blood of the northern nationalities. With the era changing, Shaman paper-cut goes through the continuous self-development, inheritance, transformation. It is necessary for the Modern design to inherit some parts of traditional culture. Shaman plastic arts or paper-cut art is created in the traditional sacrificial activities of Shamanism and a wide range of people's beliefs in Shamanism culture with a strong two-dimensional and three-dimensional forms as well as symbolic decorative patterns, colour and other shapes. In the continuation of traditional art and culture, it gives much inspiration to artists, designers. If those artists and designers could base themselves on the contemporary time and space and then look back, sort out, differentiate and make good use of Shaman from an international perspective, they will have a constant stream of inspiration for design by deeply interpreting the meaning of culture and transforming its shape into contemporary artistic language.

2. The Inheritance and Characteristics of Shaman Paper-Cut

From the 1980s, the Chinese government supported shaman paper-cutting a lot. A number of outstanding national level and provincial level inheritors were selected to protect the art craft and encourage more creation and inheritance. Among them, the Yiwu Manchu paper-cut was listed as a national level intangible cultural heritage, Guan Yunde paper-cut, Manchu paper-cut was listed as Provincial level intangible cultural heritage in

Jilin Province respectively. The inheritance methods and characteristics of shaman paper-cutting from the following three perspectives: theme, practical aesthetic characteristics and art form, and further demonstrates the inheritance direction and design elements of shaman paper-cut art in northern China.

2.1 Shaman Paper-Cutting Carries the Ancient Shaman Theme

Shamanism is a primitive polytheism that worships more than 170 gods, including gods, earth gods, ancestors, family gods, animal gods, and plant gods. There are many animal gods worshipped by the Manchus, such as crows, donkeys, bears, deer, donkeys, tigers, hawks, etc. The most common ones are frogs and turtles. Therefore, the content of shaman paper-cutting is mostly related to religion. The legend of “Temple of the Sky Wars”, (Figure 1) which won the highest award for Chinese folk crafts, is based on the famous Manchu Genesis mythology. The works are more than 40 meters long in total. The paper in the form of paper-cutting presents the author's understanding of life, The pursuit, the profound interpretation of regional culture, the thinking and discussion of the inheritance of the new era Shaman culture.



Figure.1 Temple of the Sky Wars Source: Yunde Gan Collection.

2.2 Aesthetics in Practice Follow the Ancient Form of Expression

The inheritance of shaman's paper-cutting style art has maintained the ancient external shape and inner aesthetic meaning for thousands of years. Shaman's paper-cutting is growing up in northern China, though people from generation to generation pass on by hand, inheriting the technique of paper-cutting, and conveying the national sentiments of the northern people, simple, warm, kind, romantic and courageous. In the inheritance of shaman's paper-cut style, we have not seen a huge change in the formal language such as modeling, knife, and composition. The artists devoutly follow the traditional method of shaving paper-cutting in the north.

2.2.1 Symmetry

The fully symmetrical graphics are mirrored left and right with the central axis as the core, reflecting a balanced aesthetics. Symmetry is the most beautiful form that nature gives to human beings. It is the most recognizable aesthetic form of vision. The central axis of the human body is symmetrical, and the left and right symmetry of the leaves, both of them are the beauty of the objective world. In China, the beauty of symmetry is deeply rooted in people's aesthetic ideas. Architecture, porcelain, and stamps pattern all are the beauty of symmetry. Symmetry embodies the beauty of balance and stability. It gives people a quiet and peaceful aesthetic experience, reflecting Chinese unique mode of meditation, Yin and Yang (Tai Chi) balance and rational aesthetics. The symmetrical structure of shaman paper-cutting art is characterized by its traditional, simple and elegant decorative aesthetics in a stable, introverted and simple composition. (Figure 2)

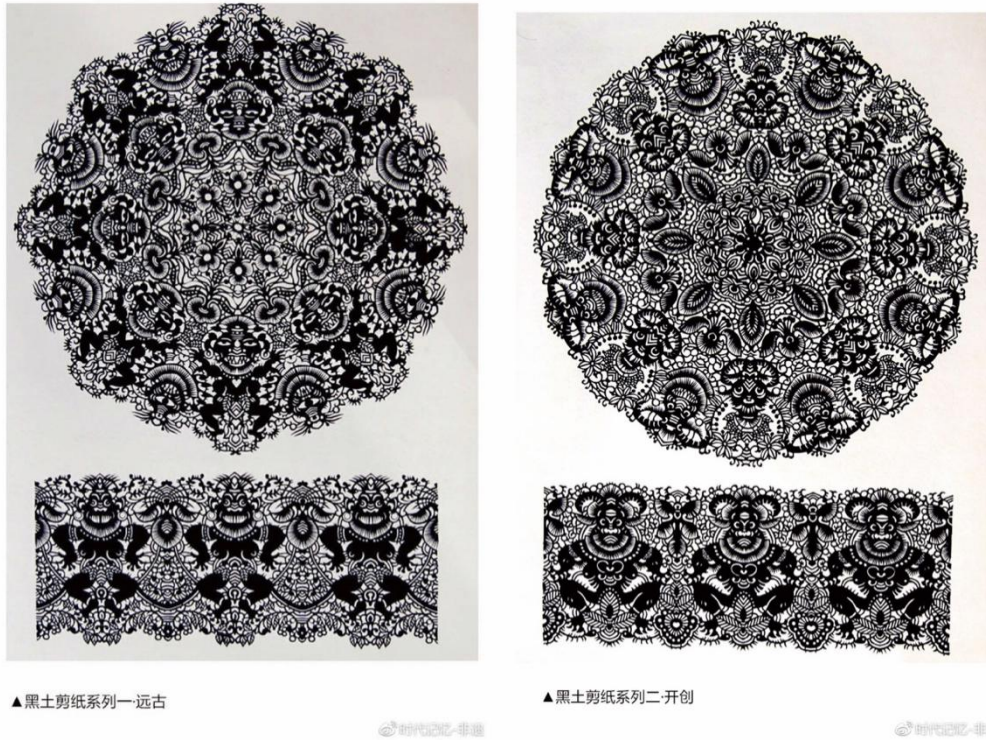


Figure.2 Black Soil Paper-Cut Series Ii Source: Yunde Gan Collection.

2.2.2 Scattering Perspective

“scattering perspective” refers to the artists’ performance of an artistic image in order to make it very realistic and real, showing its different sides on a plane. Meanwhile making these differences a form of expression that does not obstruct the sides. Integrity thinking is a unique mode of thinking in the early stage of human beings in the North of China and even in the world. It tries to reproduce objects completely and thoroughly. Shaman's plastic art vividly reproduces the characteristics of the integrity thinking mode of the original first-person scatter perspective.(Figure 3.)

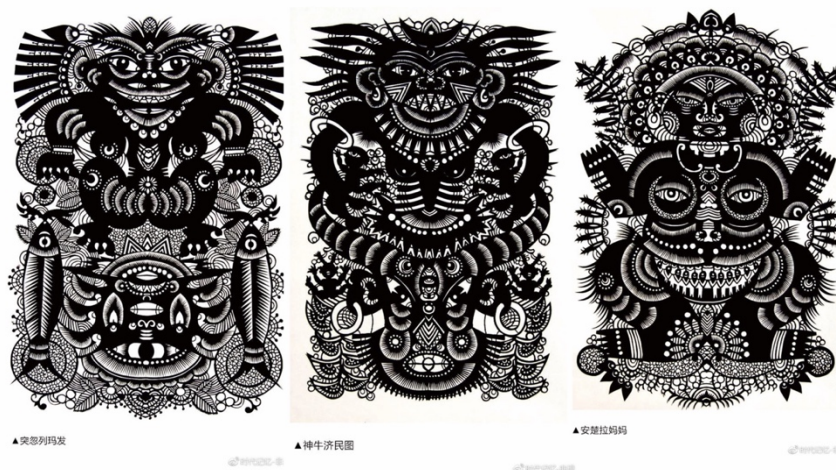


Figure.3 Idol Source: Yunde Gan Collection.

In the art of shaman painting, the shaman painter paints not the things that are directly seen, but the images that are felt inside through the self-thinking. This is different from the “focus perspective” method. In the

creation of the shaman-cut paper-cutting art, the two-dimensional space of the modelling is strengthened, and the three-dimensional space observation mode is removed, tiling people, animals and the environment in the space. The connection between lines and blocks is a special attribute of the art of paper-cutting. It emphasizes the main image and negative space of the picture, removes the depth and space level, forms the structure, and presents a decorative aesthetic with a simple and rich overall sense.

2.2.3 Rough Form

The art form of shaman paper-cutting does not express pure private psychology, but appeals to a public consciousness whose content is greater than form, so it is expressed in the form of rough lines, straightforwardness, and in one go. For example, animals and characters have no details such as hair, black and white contrast; mostly diamond or triangle decoration, some without decoration; characters, animal eyes are mostly oval, and there is no eyeball.

2.3 The Continuation of Folk Use and the Transmission of Symbolic Meaning

The birth of shaman paper-cutting art comes from a strong purpose. And some are for the needs of shamanic activities. For example, in the Hezhe family, the shaman, responsible for seeing and waking is called Ahamafa. In the ritual of treating patients, Ahamafa made a wish to the gods according to the severity of the disease, and cut off the image of the wish, such as horses, cows, sheep, pigs, chickens, etc., using fish skin or birch. Put it on the bedside pole. Some are in order to satisfy the psychological appeals of praying, surviving, exorcising, and Najib. They do not necessarily have real practical value but are “conceived to be practical.” Hegel thinks that symbolism is the primary stage of artistic enlightenment. The “symbol” is the beginning of art, both in terms of its concept and in the second place in history. Therefore, shaman should only be regarded as the origin of art.

3. Shaman Paper-Cut and Modern Design Inheritance Innovation

3.1 Tourism Product Design

With the transformation of society, the development of economy and culture, the strict shamanistic religious form fades people's lives, and the shamanic art is transformed into a local folk art form with regional cultural characteristics that is rich in national folk characteristics. The relationship between the people has also changed. The shamanic art no longer has the clan's closure and mystery, but is public as a cultural tourism product; it no longer has the sacrifice of God's will, but inherits the folklore. It transfers the hopes for the auspicious meaning and the good wishes of the people and is no longer the shaman's personal production method, but the open, performance-style production of the people's participation and cultural heritage, and it is an integration of design, production and sales, and has a wide spread of national and even the world. Whether it is used in the overall construction of the scenic spot or in the overall design of the tourist souvenirs, the shaman paper-cut elements can be used reasonably. First, it should be studied the connotation of shaman paper-cut works and explore the depth and breadth of the story. Second, it can be used innovative paper-cutting language in composition. Third, the use of modern decoration techniques, materials and forms of colour matching should be applied for the shaman paper-cut.

3.2 Animation Product Design

Anime culture products refer to the art of “creative” as the core and animation and comics. The animation industry has great potential for development and become a new industry in the world. The creative transformation of shamanic art is a major cultural element that cannot be ignored in the development of animation products in northern China. It is the presentation of regional culture and its powerful promotion. Regional culture is the manifestation of a nation's growth history. It is a comprehensive representation of ethnic habits and beliefs. It is an important foundation for the nation to stand on the world in an independent image. It is the most powerful and irreplaceable national force.

Tencent, one of China's largest Internet integrated service providers, launched and incubated a new game, Nishan Shaman which was animated by six graduates, is now officially on the App Store. Nishan Shaman is adapted from the classic legend of the ethnic minorities in northern China, *Nishan Shaman Biography*. It tells a story about a female shaman named Nishan, who goes to the underworld through her own power to overcome all kinds of difficulties and obstacles and help innocent children to retrieve their souls. In the game, we can

experience this bizarre game from the perspective of Nishan. It uses the traditional Chinese paper-cut style as the game screen. The picture of Nishan Shaman is more detailed in the details of Chinese traditional paper-cut culture.

As a rhythm game with the theme of traditional culture, in addition to the paper-cut style, the soundtrack of Nishan Shaman also refers to the drums and melody in the shamanic rituals and makes a modern interpretation, full of the rough of the primitive society, along with a strong sense of rhythm. It seems that the player is taking risks in Nishan him/herself. In addition, in order to better reflect the original flavour of the original “Nishan Shaman Biography”, the plot CG uses Manchu as a narration.

4. Conclusion

The study on the modern inheritance and transformation of Shaman Plastic Arts is complicated and diverse. With its settings faced with problems of many aspects, it concerns the value and significance of Shaman culture's historical evolution, Shaman Plastic Arts' elements' analysis, the transformation and sustainability of Shaman Plastic Arts', the Shaman Plastic Arts' economic contribution in the region. All these problems are able to be extended multi-dimensionally to various areas, including Shaman history, Shaman culturology, Shaman folklore, Shaman Modelling, Shaman Design, Shaman Aesthetics and Shaman Cultural Industry Economics. The artistic forms we are now faced with are diverse, with the crazy technology leading to the world's fast operation, the far-away gods bringing away human beings' admiration towards nature, the weak ideology makes people lose their restful home, the artists, designers and related intellectuals, in such times, should more clearly review, dig and know about themselves, to repair the far-reaching spiritual culture, and to rebuild the culture kingdom. If artists and designers step foots on the modern time and space, looking back in an international angle of view, arranging, analysing, identifying and creatively applying the Shaman Plastic Arts to practice, profoundly interpreting the meaning of culture, and transforming the modelling to the modern art language, there will be continuous inspirations for design.

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