

Decoding the Xiangxi Miao Paper-Cutting Art: Revealing the Narrative Philosophy of a Cultural Gem

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Abstract: The paper-cutting art of the Miao people in Xiangxi is a desirable expression of intangible cultural heritage, and its appearance has witnessed the life, wisdom, and philosophy culture of the Miao people. Its rich patterns and vibrant colors not only highlight the amazing creativity and unique aesthetic concept of the Miao people but are also a significant medium for narrating Miao folklore and transmitting cultural consciousness. Based on a narrate perspective and a comprehensive investigation of Miao folk culture, this paper discusses the intricate narrative elements encompassed in the Miao paper-cut art in western Hunan, entailed the artistic symbols, theme narration, and paper-cut techniques used in the art, and expresses their practical functions in conveying information, expressing emotions and telling stories. Through a comprehensive analysis of these narrative codes, this study finally reveals the philosophical thinking behind the Miao paper-cutting art in Xiangxi, emphasizing the religious beliefs and cultural values deeply rooted in Miao tradition and the role of intangible heritage preservation.

Keywords: Miao Paper Cutting Art; Intangible Cultural Heritage; Philosophical Culture; Folklore; Narrative Codes

1. INTRODUCTION

The Miao paper-cut art of Xiangxi originated in southwest China, also known as "Filing Flower" or "Filing Book", stands out as a unique form of expression reflecting Miao identity and values in the field of cultural artifacts as a traditional art form the paper-cutting art of the Miao people in western Hunan is not only a visual depiction but also a narrative medium. It portrays their beliefs, customs, and lifestyle while expressing complex artistry and fundamental narrative elements. The filing technique used is also a reflection of their abundant cultural heritage and history, transforming it into a valuable form of expressing and conserving their traditional culture (Min, 2024). In terms of art that combines visual

aesthetics with storytelling elements, Xiangxi paper-cut art provides a distinct perspective for the intersection of art and culture. By studying the intricate details and symbolism of Miao paper-cut art, we may enhance our comprehension of the historical narrative and philosophical spirit embedded in each paper-cut piece, adding to the diversity and richness of its global art landscape in a broader artistic and cultural context. In short, the art of Xiangxi Miao papercutting is not only a form of decorative craft but also a cornerstone of cultural heritage, which is a tangible link between the past, present, and future. It is of great significance to analyze the intricate patterns and compositions of the Miao people's paper-cut art in western Hunan to uncover the mysteries of ancient legends, traditional beliefs, and daily life narratives. In today's increasingly internationalized and uninformed world, Xiangxi paper-cut art faces numerous substantial obstacles., and some have even had even demonstrated a trend of withdrawing from the market. This essay investigates the narrative elements of Xiangxi paper-cutting, collates the narrative context, and deciphers the narrative code to acquire greater awareness of its artistic and philosophical implications, prompting Miao culture to find a lasting expression that unites generations of Miao people and preserves the traditions that have shaped their Miao identity.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Xiangxi Miao Nationality

Gang Li (Gang Li, 2024) states that the Xiangxi Miao people are a distinct subgroup of the Miao ethnic group residing in China. Their location is inside the hilly western area of Hunan Province, including Zhangjiajie City, Changde City, and Xiangxi Tujia Miao Autonomous Prefecture. The study primarily focuses on the Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture inside the province of Xiangxi. Figure 1 illustrates the geographical area under study, historically known as "the Land of Five Streams". This region is located in neighboring communities with interrelated ethnic minorities. The Miao people of Xiangxi possess a vibrant and profound intellectual culture. Previous studies have provided valuable insights into their social structures, religion, and artistic expressions, but as communities respond to the challenges of a changing world, such as population mobility and cultural integration, as highlighted (Labadi et al., 2021), continued research and conservation efforts are essential to ensure the ongoing prosperity and revitalization of this rich cultural heritage.

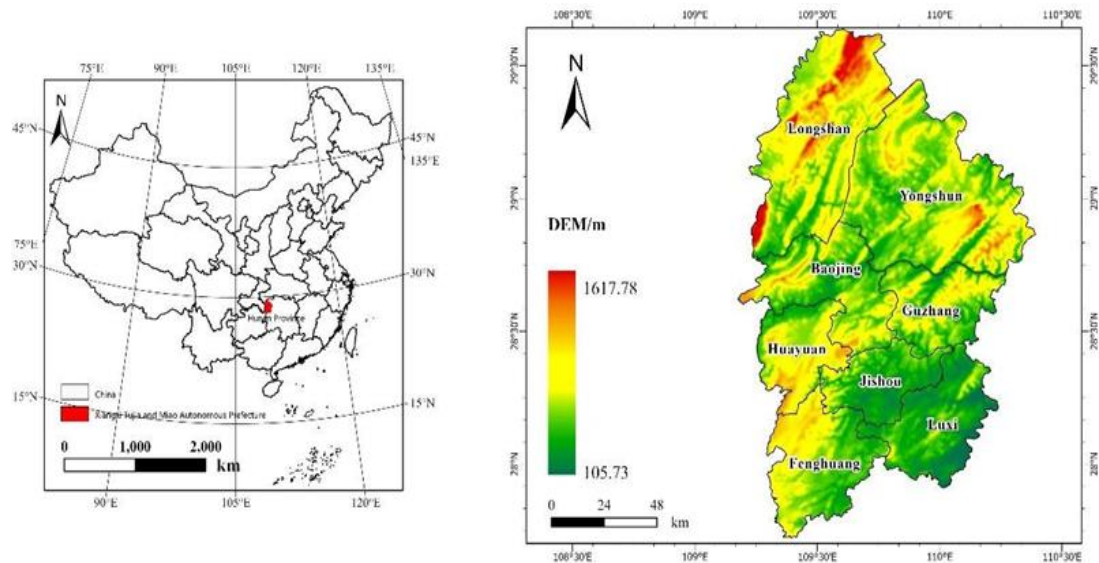


Figure 1: Xiangxi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture, China map

2.1.1 History and Social Structure

With an extensive history and a unique social structure, the Miao people who live in Xiangxi are an essential component of the Chinese nation (Guo & Canessa, 2023; Jiang et al., 2023). The study conducted by (Ding et al., 2024; Xiaodong, 2019) examined the origins of the Miao in western Hunan, tracing their ancestry back to ancient settlers, and the patriarchal clans are at the core of their social structure, with a strong emphasis on community and ancestor veneration. The social structure of the Miao in western Hunan is based on blood ties and is organized in clans, each of which has its own genealogy and ancestral shrine, and relatives are referred to as "brothers and sisters" by the Miao people. Within the family, the patriarchal structure is practiced, and the patriarch is in charge of running the affairs of the family (Zhu et al., 2023). In the social structure of the Miao in western Hunan, the male elders hold a comparatively elevated position, and they are responsible for overseeing the family affairs and safeguarding the interests of the family, while the women are responsible for the production and daily life in the family, and they also hold a certain level of social standing. As far as family relations are concerned, the division of labor is clear, the husband is outside the master, the wife is inside the master, if the family's foreign affairs have a husband, and the family chores are all taken by the wife. For example, in agricultural production, the husband is mostly responsible for physical work, such as cultivating pear fields and threshing rice, while the wife is responsible for feeding poultry, washing, and cooking. Therefore, most of the embroider makers of Miao nationality in Xiangxi are women, and very few are men.

2.1.2 Linguistics and Societal Customs

The Xiangxi Miao people, although lacking a distinct writing system, preserve their history and culture via oral traditions and symbol systems, and they possess their dialect, which is now categorized as a member of the Miao language family (Schein, 1986). The Miao culture of Xiangxi is characterized by its abundance and color, mainly reflected in its silver jewelry, clothes, music, dance, festival celebrations, and architecture. The dress of the Miao nationality in Xiangxi has bright colors and exquisite craftsmanship, especially the silver jewelry and embroidery of the Miao nationality, which have high artistic philosophy value and cultural significance. Miao music and dance are an important part of their culture. (Xia & Karin, 2021) analyzes typical examples of Miao songs, provides a survey of the history and current situation of multi-part singing from different perspectives, and puts forward suggestions for the inheritance and development of Miao choral songs (Tan & Charoennit, 2022). Discusses the key factors, driving factors, and strategies of Miao folk songs in the inheritance and innovation process of Xiangxi and analyzes how these factors affect the inheritance and innovation of Miao folk songs. There are many festivals of the Miao people. These festivals are not only a time to celebrate the harvest and pray for peace but also an important occasion to show the Miao culture and enhance community cohesion, which reflects the spiritual outlook and ideological values of the Miao people who love life and pursue a better life. Table 1 shows the basic characteristics of Xiangxi culture.

Table 1: Cultural Features of the Xiangxi Miao

No.	Category	Characteristics	Example
1	Silver Jewelry	Diverse styles, exquisite craftsmanship	Silver crowns, Hairpins, Necklaces
2	Attire	Vibrant colors, exquisite patterns	Embroidery, Batik
3	Music	Rustic charm, melodious tunes, soulful expressions	Songs of Stopping the Door, Songs of Crying Marriage, Songs of Storytelling
4	Dance	Exuberant, energetic, distinct ethnic Flair	Reed-pipe Dancing, Drum Dancing, bench Dancing
5	Festivals	Rich diversity, vibrant activities	Miao New Year, June 6 Festival, Dragon Boat Racing

2.1.3 Religious Convictions and Customs

The Miao nationality in Xiangxi is an important minority group. They have unique religious beliefs and rich customs. The study conducted by Yu

& Karin (Yu & Karin, 2022) investigates the methods used by the Miao ethnic groups in Xiangxi, China, to maintain and transmit their traditional knowledge, including culture, creative ideology, religious convictions, traditions, and approaches to engaging with the natural surroundings. According to He (He, 2020), animism and ancestor worship form the core of Miao's religious beliefs in Xiangxi. Miao people's religious convictions are complex and diverse, including ancestor worship, nature worship, totem worship, and ghost worship. Ancestor worship is the core of Miao's religious belief. They believe that the spirits of ancestors can safeguard future generations, so they regularly hold sacrificial activities. Miao people worship nature, especially trees, rivers mountains, and animals. They believe that these natural elements possess spirits and can influence people's fate. Totemism also has a place among the Hmong, and certain tribes may worship specific animals or natural objects as their totems (Bryson, 2022). Zhang (Zhang, 2022) delves into the elaborate rituals of the Miao people, often involving offerings to deities and communication with the spiritual world. Miao customs and religious ceremonies are closely linked. Sacrificial activities, marriage customs, and funeral customs are the embodiment of religious belief. Ancestor worship is an important part of Miao religious activities, including ancestor worship, heaven worship, earth worship and dragon worship, etc. Ancestor worship is the core of Miao religious belief, they believe that the souls of ancestors can bless future generations. Heaven worship is a sacrificial activity to pray for good weather, earth worship is to pray for grain harvest, and dragon worship is to pray for rain, which is usually accompanied by rich rituals and sacrifices. In these sacrificial activities, sorcerers played an important role, mainly responsible for performing sacrifices, divination, and exorcism (Katz, 2021). Riccio (Riccio, 2022) provides an in-depth understanding of the Miao people's cattle ceremony in Xiangxi, demonstrates its complexity and diversity in cultural inheritance and innovation, and puts forward his own views on how to protect and record this intangible cultural heritage. Marriage customs in western Hunan mainly include matchmaking, engagement, wedding reception, and wedding party, etc. Jing (Jing Li, 2021) explains the marriage customs ceremony of Miao nationality in western Hunan from the perspective of diachronic and synchronic, reflecting its cultural diversity and markedness. Zhang (Zhang, 2021) put forward that Miao's funeral customs have the function of aggregation, which not only integrates the three cultural elements of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism but also reflects the view of life and death in traditional Chinese culture. Miao's religious beliefs and customs have penetrated all aspects of

social life, affecting people's moral concepts, living habits, and social structure. With the process of modernization, Miao's religious beliefs and customs are facing the challenge of inheritance and development. New ideas and lifestyles brought about by modernization have challenged traditional religious beliefs, and some young Hmong may hold different views on traditional beliefs. How to balance tradition and modernity and how to protect and develop local culture is an urgent problem for us to solve.

2.2 Paper-Cut Narrative

Xiangxi Miao papercut is not only a decorative art but also an important means of cultural communication and historical record. Through paper cutting, Miao people can tell their history, legends, and daily life and express their feelings and values (Gao, 2022). As a traditional folk art form, paper-cut art has unique research value in narrative structure, element representation, and cultural inheritance. Paper-cutting art is of great significance to contemporary design and is a prominent aspect of Miao culture (Shu & Chen, 2024). According to the analysis conducted by Casais et al (Casais et al., 2018) these intricate designs are rich in symbolism, reflecting their mythology and social life. The study (Min, 2024) mainly focuses on the representation of modeling elements from the perspective of image narrative, expounds on the transformation of narrative symbols in paper cutting, and enhances the inheritance vitality of culture through the cross-border integration of art. Xia (Xia, 2021) analyzed some paper-cut works, showing that paper-cut is a scene created based on real life and has a distinct realism. Peng (Peng, 2022) focuses on the revival of the myth of the Miao people in Xiangxi, China, emphasizes the practice of reconstructing historical narratives, and shows the counter-narrative practice carried out by individuals and local institutions. In recent years, the research activity in the field of paper-cut narration has increased significantly, showing the extensive attention of the academic community to this traditional art form. Researchers mainly focus on the narrative of paper-cutting art, but there are obvious differences in the subdivision and methods in each field. Part of the research focuses on the narrative construction of paper-cut art, exploring how it expresses stories through images and symbols, as well as its role and function in folk culture. These studies often examine the narrative elements and expression techniques in paper cutting from a multidisciplinary perspective, such as aesthetics, semiotics, and anthropology. There are also scholars who focus on the narrative of paper-cut art in a particular geographical or cultural

background. This kind of inquiry delves extensively the paper-cut works in the specific cultural background, uncovering their own narrative style and cultural connotation. These studies explore both the artistic qualities of paper-cut works and their influence on social culture, revealing the diverse and abundant nature of paper-cut art throughout in different regions. Paper cutting is a traditional decoration craft of the Miao people in western Hunan, and it is also a distinctive narrative medium. Through its rich visual narrative functions and numerous modeling aspects, it provides novel means of expression and opportunities for narrative. This artistic style not only showcases the cultural characteristics and folk traditions of the Miao people in western Hunan but also conveys to the audience vibrant narratives and deep cultural meanings via its symbolic motifs and comic-book arrangement. Although we have made some important advancements in this domain, the study of narrative research on Miao papercut in western Hunan remains a broad and complex field. Future studies can further combine modern technology and interdisciplinary methods to further explore the various narrative possibilities in this rich cultural heritage, explore its application and development in the modern context, and enrich the narrative expression and philosophical value of this traditional art form.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research method was adopted. This paper discusses how the paper-cutting art of the Miao nationality in western Hunan presents culture as a narrative picture scroll. Researchers personally experience and observe the production process, use occasions and integration of local paper-cut art in community life, and use literature collection and physical observation as direct narrative means to collect detailed information and personal narrative of paper-cut art in western Hunan (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Fernandez et al., 2023). By reviewing relevant academic literature, historical archives, and art reviews, this paper comprehensively understands the historical background and development narrative context of the Miao paper-cutting art in western Hunan and affirms its important positioning in the academic and cultural circles (Zhang et al., 2024). Through narrative techniques, this paper investigates relevant cases of paper-cutting and explores the common views of paper-cutting artists and Miao community members. In the narrative process, the author analyzes and understands the artwork itself, combs its narrative elements such as cultural language, color, composition, and skills, and discusses how the art

of paper cutting reflects the myth, history, and social life of the Miao people, and reveals the multi-level philosophical value and meaning of paper cutting art as a cultural treasure.

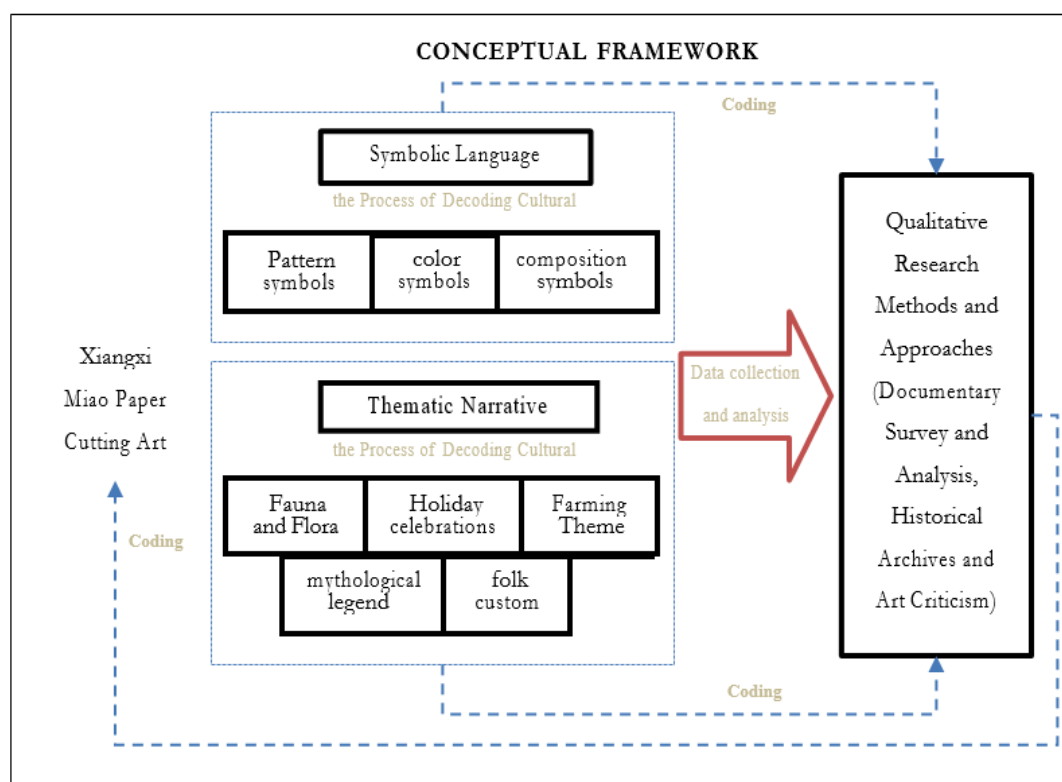


Figure 2: Research conceptual framework

Considering the significance and rigor of the investigation, the researcher constructed a conceptual framework, as seen in Figure 2. To maintain the accuracy and efficiency of data collecting, researchers use the process of triangulation verification to identify and prevent the occurrence of ambiguous and imprecise research data. They have also extensively monitored, observed, and analyzed the tale of paper-cut art in its original form over an extended period to establish their theoretical framework for study. Furthermore, they have chosen to gather evidence that aligns with the narrative progression of the theory.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Unveiling the Narrative Tapestry: Xiangxi paper-cut art is an exceptional visual spectacle that transcends mere aesthetics and philosophy, delving into the enchanting realm of storytelling. It captivates viewers with its rich cultural significance and complicated narratives. To unlock the narrative code, we need to go on an interesting journey of the distinct components,

methods, and functionalities that form the foundation of storytelling skills. This will enable us to create a tale that transcends temporal limits and enhances its engagement.

4.1 Deciphering Sign Language: A Visual Dictionary of Resonant Cultures

Miao paper-cut art is a rich form of cultural expression, reflecting the beliefs, history, aesthetics, and values of the Miao people. Each paper-cut symbol is not only a decoration, but also a cultural symbol, representing the Miao people's religious beliefs, historical events, and life attitudes. The lines of these symbols are simple and powerful, and the composition is exquisite, which vividly depicts the unique beauty of creation and deep feelings for the nature of the Miao people. Interpreting the symbolic language in Miao papercutting is helpful for us to better understand and recognize the cultural connotation and social function of this artistic expression form. This not only protects and inherits the cultural history of Miao paper-cutting but also promotes the innovative development of Miao paper-cutting in contemporary society, highlighting the artistic charm, and cultural and philosophical significance of Miao paper-cutting.

4.1.1 Graphic symbols

Xiangxi paper-cut art usually includes patterns and symbols with their own symbolic meaning and connotation. Table 2 lists some of these. These patterns not only improve the artistic value of paper-cut works but also express the core of national spirit and cultural tradition. The rich patterns and symbols of Miao art papercut provide artists with a variety of subject matter choices to depict Miao history and mythology through paper-cut works. By digging deep into the profound meaning of these symbols, the art of paper cutting not only shows the cultural charm of the Miao people but also enhances the ornamental and artistic expression of the works, creating a broad space for the inheritance and development of paper cutting in western Hunan.

Table 2(a): Xiangxi Paper Cutting Art Pattern Symbols








No.	Category	Moral	Example	
1	Animal	Symbolizes power, strength, good fortune	Dog Head Hat Flower, Carp Leaping Dragon Gate, Double Lions Playing Balls	
2	Plant	Symbolizing life, prosperity, and abundance	Butterfly Lotus, Happiness Flower, Double Happiness Chrysanthemums	

Table 2(b): Xiangxi Paper Cutting Art Pattern Symbols

No.	Category	Moral	Example	
3	Character	Expressing the emotions of the characters	Carrying a Sedan Chair, Hmong Women Herding Cows	
4	Daily Life	Reflecting the way of life and production of the Miao people, expressing their diligence, bravery, wisdom, and positive qualities.	Picture of a Herd of Cattle, Tillage Pictures	
5	Mythological Legend	Expressing the Hmong people's desire for a better life	The Immortal Sitting on the Lotus, the Unicorn Delivering the Son, the Immortal Nun Scattering Flowers	
6	Religious Belief	Reflecting the spiritual world of the national people and their worship of nature	Butterfly Totem	
7	Others	Artifacts and Floating Figures	Pounding Sound of a Drum	

4.1.2 Symbolism of Colors

In the tradition of the Miao people of Xiangxi, paper cutting is mainly used for embroidery, and the preferred material is white paper because the white paper does not easily fade after washing, and the price is low, suitable for long-term manual operation and preservation. In Miao embroidery manuscripts, white papercuts can provide clearer patterns for embroidery craft. It allows complex and precise patterns to be presented quickly, which reflects the practicality of paper cutting in Miao handicrafts. When paper cutting is used as decoration or on occasions such as red and white weddings and religious ceremonies, people habitually choose red, yellow, green, black, white, and other colors. The use of these colors adds to the visual appeal of the paper cuts and conveys a specific symbolic meaning (Hatch-Surisook, 2023). Since the Miao people like to wear blue and blue clothes, these two colors are also widely used in paper-cutting art, reflecting the aesthetic preferences and cultural characteristics of the Miao people, making the paper-cutting works more regional and ethnic customs. Xiangxi

paper cutting uses bright colors to express a variety of aesthetics and emotions. Skilled paper-cutting artists skillfully use these colors to amplify the emotional impact of their creations, giving them more vitality and appeal. Each color in the paper cutting has a distinct symbolic significance, lending the piece a particular cultural resonance. Red is often used in marriage and festival ceremonies, symbolizing enthusiasm, happiness, prosperity, and good fortune. It represents the Miao people's aspirations and favorable outcomes for a more prosperous existence. Yellow represents authority, wealth, and distinction, it is frequently employed in paper-cutting art to portray individuals of great social standing or significance, so augmenting the overall sense of magnificence in the artwork. In the art of paper cutting, blue symbolizes the vastness and profundity of the sky. It is used to convey the grandeur and enigma of the divine, enhancing the sacred sense of the artworks. Green is employed in landscape papercuts to represent the vitality of spring and to celebrate the vitality of nature, it also symbolizes vigor and optimism. Black represents enigma, death, and solemnity, it is often utilized to elicit ideas of melancholy or mystery, thus enhancing the intricacy and potency of the piece. Papercuts use white to convey the simplicity of ladies, as well as the purity and innocence of animals and plants. It is employed to depict fresh, natural landscapes, and evoke pure feelings, enhancing the overall purity and beauty of the artworks (Jannit & Buaket, 2024). Xiangxi paper-cuts use these colors to not only produce a striking visual outcome but also effectively communicate the cultural values and emotional realm of the Miao people.

4. 1.3 Composition Notation

The compositional skill of Xiangxi Miao's paper-cut art plays an essential role in guiding the audience's gaze and augmenting the coherence of the narrative. Symmetrical compositions are frequently used to provide a perception of equilibrium and organization, producing visually stable and harmonic artwork. The symmetry in this art not only increases their beauty but also conveys the Miao people's desire for a peaceful life and aesthetic preference. The artwork offers movement and change by the asymmetrical layout, thereby providing a dynamic visual effect. This allows the audience to enhance their own imagination and thinking space, enhancing the attractiveness and attraction of the work. The technique of multi-layer composition is extensively adopted in the paper-cutting art of the Miao nationality in western Hunan. In this art form, the paper-cut artist enhances the depth and complexity of the narrative by overlapping and interacting

with the various parts. The multi-level arrangement not only enriches the level depth of the picture but also the pattern of each layer has its own unique meaning and story plot, thus amplifying the narrative and expressiveness of the paper-cutting art. Through the skillful use of these composition skills, Xiangxi Miao paper-cut art not only enhances its visual impact but also makes its works more vivid to tell the story of Miao people and cultural legends, showing the unique charm of Xiangxi paper-cut art. Table 3 shows the selection of content.

Table 3: Xiangxi Paper Cutting Art Composition Symbols

No.	Category	Forms of Composition	Application Topics	Example
1	Motifs	A full narrative image is formed by combining two or more patterns	Daily life, weddings, funerals, festivals, etc.	The Heron Parrot Treads on the Lotus, the Phoenix Treads on the Peony, the Birds and Flowers, and a Hundred Years of Happiness (lotus flower and white crane)
2	Coloration	Multiple colors complement each other to improve the creative effect.	Joy, mourning, etc.	Prosperity Brought by the Dragon and the Phoenix
3	Permutation and Combination	The many configurations of dots, lines, and surfaces contribute to a more cohesive and balanced composition in paper cutting.	Decorative, painting, and other visual arts	Symmetry, Balance, Rhythm, Rhyme

The Miao people use their symbolic language to communicate their feelings and philosophy, and it is significant for their ability to pass down their cultural heritage and sense of identity as a people. These symbols offer a profound comprehension of the daily life, customs, and religious beliefs of the Miao people, as well as an appreciation of their unique artistic charm and cultural spirit. The symbolic language used in Xiangxi paper-cut works not only provides visual artistic enjoyment but also vividly expresses the social values and spiritual world of the Miao people. This imbues the artworks with a strong cultural connotation and emotional expression. By disseminating and evaluating these symbolic languages, Xiangxi paper-cut art provides a window for us to comprehend the Miao culture. With their abundant symbolic meaning, the paper-cut symbols, not only enhance the variety of world cultures but also foster mutual comprehension and

interaction among different cultures, positively influencing the preservation and dissemination of the world's cultural legacy. As an exceptional artistic expression, the Xiangxi papercut showcases the wide range of Chinese minority cultures via its complex symbolic language. It not only boosts the profile and recognition of these cultures by international awareness but also plays a crucial role in promoting the sustainable development of cultural diversity.

4. 2 Thematic Narratives: Depicting Tales and Traditions

The paper cutting of Miao nationality in Xiangxi is not only a basic arrangement but also encompasses a profound theme narrative. The narrative of Xiangxi Miao paper-cut art encompasses a diverse range of themes, usually centered on the daily life of the Miao people, myths and legends, historical philosophy, and social values. Table 4 is a simple charting concept.

Table 4: Xiangxi Paper Cutting Art Theme Classification

No.	Theme Category	Description	Typical Elements	Symbolism
1	Flora and Fauna	Decorates living areas with complex patterns, reflecting reverence for nature	Animal Motifs (Dragons, Phoenixes, Dogs, Birds) Plants (Lotus, Bamboo, Peach)	Animal motifs symbolize power and good luck; Plants represent tenacity and a yearning for a better life
2	Festive Celebrations	Enhances the festive atmosphere and expresses appreciation for life and respect for nature	Peach Blossoms and Magpies	Depicting a lively festive atmosphere during the New Year (Year of the Seedlings)
3	Farming Theme	Symbolizes respect for the land and expectations for a good harvest	Field Labor and Crop Growth	Expressing gratitude for the land and optimism for the harvest
4	Myths and Legends	Conveys spiritual pursuits and Miao's cultural narratives	Stories of Heroes, Gods, and Ethnic Origins	Reflect religious beliefs, moral values, and a unique understanding of life and the universe
5	Folk Customs	Records daily life and cultural traditions	Weddings, Festivals, Traditional Dances	Offering insights into Miao's lifestyle and cultural heritage.

These thematic narratives serve a dual purpose, which not only improve our lives aesthetically but also educate future generations. The paper-cut pieces serve to transmit the history, culture, and philosophy of life of the Miao people, thus strengthening their national identity. The art of Miao papercutting has evolved into a streamlined and vibrant medium, facilitating a greater comprehension and appreciation of the cultural essence of the Miao people.

4. 3 Paper-Cutting Skills: Giving Narrative Life

The Miao nationality's paper-cutting art in Xiangxi is an ancient handcraft with a profound foundation in Miao culture. It showcases the exceptional creative prowess and rich cultural legacy of the Miao people. This art form effectively communicates the Miao people's worldview and point of view on their lives via sophisticated paper-cutting processes and symbolic patterns. Paper-cut artworks not only exhibit visual aesthetics and imbue vibrant energy but also include a profound cultural narratives, enabling the viewer to perceive the historical and legendary significance embedded within the artwork. During their examination of the folk art of paper-cutting, the researchers encountered several proficient paper-cutting artists who used a range of basic instruments, including files, carving knives, tiny hammers, scissors, awls, and wax trays. The Miao people's filing skills are very diverse, including operations like filing, cutting, engraving, tapering, and layering, especially when working on multiple layers of paper. the Miao people often use filing techniques to create paper-cut artworks, which are characterized by their thickness, fullness, and vividness (Lianhai, 2023). The reoccurring patterns in paper-cut artwork, including dragons, phoenixes, cows, dogs, and other animals, serve not only as decorative elements but also have symbolic, representing good luck and well-wishes. These symbols represent the Miao people's profound targets and aspirations for a wealthier and satisfying life. These paper-cut artworks are typically employed for large occasions, including weddings, funerals, festivals, and religious ceremonies, highlighting their crucial roles and esteemed positions in the social and cultural spheres. The paper-cutting art of the Miao nationality in Xiangxi has successfully integrated contemporary components, resulting in a rejuvenation and innovative transformation, in

response to the evolving trends of The Times. Contemporary paper-cut art maintains traditional craft and cultural relevance also incorporating current aesthetics and artistic styles. This integration attracts a wider range of young people and art lovers, while also promoting the sustainable development and preservation of this traditional art form. With the aging population and the younger generation exhibiting little enthusiasm for traditional skills, the Miao community in Xiangxi is confronted with a major dilemma of skill erosion. Despite the active involvement of local governments, communities, and cultural institutions are actively taking conservation and inheritance measures, such as regular paper-cutting exhibitions, art workshops, and various cultural festivals. These efforts have only partially succeeded in raising public awareness and interest in the art of paper-cutting, but they are insufficient for the comprehensive protection and preservation of this valuable cultural heritage. Preserving ancient talents necessitates not just legal safeguards but also a profound cultural identity and the ongoing practice of these abilities. This demands the collective attention and involvement of all segments of society. To foster the sustainable development of culture and maintain the diversity of national culture, we need to make more endeavors are required.

4.4 Narrative Safeguarding

Miao paper-cut art in western Hunan, like other traditional art forms, despite its significant cultural value, is also threatened by the challenges that face the contemporary world. The younger generation's declining interest in ancient rituals and abilities is typically a consequence of globalization, urbanization, and the rapid development of mass media. This poses a challenge to the preservation and inheritance of traditional culture. Given the circumstances, the preservation and dissemination of Xiangxi Miao paper-cut art have become very pressing. Globalization has a dual effect: it promotes the integration of cultures, but it also leads to the exclusion of traditional cultures and the extinction of valuable folk arts. To properly protect and inherit the Miao paper-cutting skills in Xiangxi, a more systematic approach is needed. Initially, it recorded and compiled traditional narratives in the medium of paper-cutting, passed on to future generations through educational and cultural activities, while using contemporary media such as books, documentaries, and online platforms to spread widely. At the same time, the active participation of the community is essential for the preservation of the narrative. Strengthen the collective identity of the community and promote the preservation of paper-cutting art in the community. At the same time, school education

programs will be promoted in relevant areas to ensure that the younger generation can understand and appreciate this art form, stimulate their interest, and cultivate future paper-cutting artists and inheritors. The last, but not the only means to establish a policy to protect the art of paper cutting is the government and cultural institutions. These policies should clearly describe the key role that these institutions play in protecting the art of paper cutting. By strengthening international cooperation, we can draw valuable experience from successful cultural protection work around the world and enhance the international influence of Xiangxi Miao paper-cutting art through cross-cultural exchange and promotion. These comprehensive measures, more attention, and resources will give strong support for the Miao paper-cutting art in Xiangxi, this will ensure its new vitality in contemporary society and continue to preserve and enhance global cultural diversity. The preservation of the Miao paper-cutting art in Xiangxi involves more than just keeping a collection of pieces. It also entails the preservation of national cultural identities and worldviews passed down from generation to generation. The Xiangxi Miao paper cut is not just a visual art form but also serves as a narrative vessel for preserving wealth national memory and cultural history. Preserving this art form entails safeguarding the ancient narratives, beliefs, and ways of life of the Hmong people, and ensuring that these cultural components persist and evolve within contemporary society. Conservation endeavors must extend beyond the mere preservation of physical cultural relics and prioritize the perpetuation of cultural significance to guarantee the transmission and promotion of national cultural identity and worldview among the younger cohort.

4.5 Research Limitations

There are several limitations in the narrative investigation of the Miao paper-cut art in western Hunan. Language barriers and cultural differences may make it difficult for researchers to gain a profound understanding of the underlying significance of paper-cut art (Chai et al., 2022). There is a lack of comprehensive literature on Miao paper-cut art, and the dwindling number of traditional paper-cut artists throughout the modernization process has further hampered access to firsthand information and the transmission of expertise. These are all challenges that researchers may encounter during their research. Recognizing the limitations of the study of Xiangxi Miao paper-cut art does not indicate weakness but acknowledges the intricate and abundant nature of this traditional national culture. This will enable us to address these limitations via forthcoming

research, leading to a deeper comprehension of the expression, historical importance, and changing function of this art form in present-day Miao culture. To overcome these constraints, researchers have implemented a multifaceted strategy. While establishing a solid cooperative partnership with the Miao community, the research findings undergo rigorous verification across several dimensions, and the data is digitally archived and made available online using advanced technology, therefore augmenting the comprehensiveness and scope of the research. Raise the public's consciousness of the value of paper-cutting art, proactively engage in activities, seek financial assistance from the government and civil organizations, and advocate for the endorsement of relevant policies and legislation. The preservation and research of the Miao paper-cut art in Xiangxi need the cooperation of cross-culture, cross-discipline, and cross-department. It requires sustained creativity and ongoing dedication. By implementing these extensive procedures, we may more effectively reveal narratives, enhance worldwide cultural diversity, and provide future generations with more resources to safeguard creative and cultural legacy.

5. CONCLUSION

The paper-cutting art of the Miao people in Xiangxi not only exceeded the aesthetic qualities of art but has also emerged as a multifaceted and diverse narrative medium. By deciphering its narrative code, including patterns, colors, composition, and other elements, we gain an in-depth comprehension of the crucial function of safeguarding and inheriting the cultural legacy of the Miao people. Through conducting an in-depth comprehensive analysis of their thematic narratives and paper-cutting techniques, we not only witness the artistic achievements of the Miao people, but also develop a more profound comprehension of their religious beliefs, cultural values, and historical traditions. This paper detailed investigation and research, literature review, and art narrative analysis, the paper reveals the rich connotation and unique charm of Miao paper-cut art, it highlights the significant role of paper-cut art in Miao social life, as well as its crucial contribution to the preservation of Miao culture, the fostering of community cohesion, and the strengthening of national identity. These studies enable us to appreciate the aesthetic charm of paper-cut art and gain insight into its profound philosophical and cultural thoughts, highlighting the intangible cultural heritage of contemporary society. This study documents the history and current situation of Miao

paper-cut art, while also offering the theoretical basis and practical instructions for safeguarding this intangible cultural heritage. The current study points out the obstacles that Miao paper-cut art is confronting, including the advancing age of inheritors, the erosion of traditional knowledge, and the cultural loss caused by the modernization process. Several conservation tackles and strategies are offered in this work to address these issues, these measures include enhancing community education, increasing public awareness, utilizing advanced technology to disseminate and innovate art, and formulating appropriate policies to bolster paper-cutting art and its practitioners. Preserving and promoting the art of Hmong papercutting serves as both a means of cultural preservation and a monument to the unwavering perseverance and creativity of the Hmong people who continue to shape their cultural identity. This work is not only an academic study, but it also has a huge cultural and societal responsibility. This study aims to uncover the narrative philosophy behind this cultural gem and examine its legacy and evolution in contemporary society via the in-depth exploration of the Miao paper-cut art in western Hunan. It is intended that via this endeavor, more people will be inspired to participate in the protection of Miao paper-cutting art, ensuring that this traditional art form is effectively Conservation and dissemination, and continues to shine for future generations. In future research, it is important to focus on the preservation and evolution of these ancient art forms in contemporary society, we should investigate ways to integrate traditional art with current science and technology to contribute to the growth of the cultural industry in western Hunan.

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