

Mediatization and Gender Narratives in Chinese Folk Paper-Cutting Art

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The Asian Conference on Media, Communication & Film 2022
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

This study employs the notion of "mediatization" as a theoretical framework to examine one of the folk art: paper-cutting, a national intangible cultural treasure in Zherong County, Fujian Province, China, to examine the mediatization and alteration of folk art through the lens of "gender narratives". This research will explore how the complexity and specificity of folk art's interaction with society and culture as a form of social interaction and meaning-making are reflected at the level of gender narratives, as well as the rules and mechanisms behind this. In further detail, this research will look at research questions like: The paths of communication in the media for paper-cutting in Zherong. How are gender narratives presented in paper-cutting works? The construction of female paper-cutting inheritors and artisans in the media. How male practitioners intervene in paper-cutting narratives? How has the development of digital media technology changed gender narratives? We find that at a time when the art of paper-cutting is dominated by female practitioners and narratives, the emergence of new technologies has driven restructuring of gender. The methodology of this study is mainly a narrative inquiry, supplemented by documentary sources. It can be extended from the case study of paper-cutting in Zherong, Fujian to the process of other type of folk art. The results of this research are related to the perspective of gendered narratives, providing a new kind of theoretical dialogue in the larger proposition of "how media logic affects folk art."

Keywords: Paper-Cutting, Folk Art, Gender Studies, Mediatization

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Introduction

Paper-cutting is a well-known folk art in China and the world. Paper-cutting is one of the most pervasive, regional, historically and culturally significant, and representative art forms of our nation's magnificent culture and art. Folk paper-cutting is ingrained in people's life and permeates the northern and southern regions of the country. In China, the artistic style and aesthetic characteristics of paper-cutting vary from region to region. In southern China, it is the slender, delicate, and gentle, while in northern China rugged, straightforward, and truthful. However, it all contains the beauty of the countryside and overflows with the aesthetic temperament and goodwill of the working people. Paper-cutting accompanies festivals and ceremonial rituals in folklore, or decorates the walls of doors and windows, or is used as the backing for embroidery, etc., in a variety of forms and widely. More importantly, paper cutting is one of the art forms that best reflects the dexterity of working women.

For working women, paper cutting is one of the most skilled types of art. In Zhe Rong County, Fujian Province, paper-cutting has been recognized as national intangible cultural heritage. In the contemporary inheritance and industrial development of paper-cutting in Zhe rong, all three generations of paper-cutting inheritors are women, as are all of the well-known creators, and the substance, purpose, perspective, and mood of the works are replete with feminine traits. In the perspective of mediatization, the art and industry of paper-cutting have been influenced by technology, media, and social changes; concurrently, masculine groups have arisen and grown among Zherong's paper-cutting practitioners. This study explores the influence of the evolution of gender interactions in the paper-cutting business on the content of paper-cutting, the paper-cutting industry, and inter-local and local organisational structures.

Additionally, large number of studies related to rural development, intangible cultural heritage protection and the revival of traditional culture have emerged in China at present. Take paper-cutting, one folk art in Zherong county, Fujian province, China, as a case, and we can identify the following problems in research in this related area: first of all, the majority of research on paper-cutting has focused on artistic ontology, texts, and industrial development; however, few studies have studied the impact of the evolution of media and technology on paper-cutting from a mediatization perspective. Urgent attention must be paid to the link between technology and media in the modern digital age.

Meanwhile, numerous studies on paper-cutting have remained superficial, such as the proportion of inheritors and practitioners and the narrative characteristics of the texts. Still insufficient research has been conducted on the entire process of paper-cutting, from creation to consumption and industrialization, especially from a gender perspective. Such research can uncover the status and importance of women in the field of paper-cutting art and their relationship with environmental changes in a more comprehensive manner.

Even where gender-based research has previously been available, there are more studies focusing on women's perspectives with a simple dichotomy, but there are few comparative studies focusing on the creation and participation methods of males or groups other than women, which is more in conjunction with the case of paper-cutting in Zherong and could provide a comparative perspective. This kind of research perspective also is committed to a pluralistic community, equality, and the relationship between diverse participants, with an openness to debate with those people, resulting in a society that is more just and equitable.

Implication and Innovation

Application of mediatization theory to the subject of folk art - paper-cutting is one of the innovations. Since it has been an important academic concept in media studies over the past two decades, the theory of mediatization has been applied to numerous fields, including the mediatization of politics, religion and sports, which demonstrating the theory's academic vigour. This study applies the mediatization theory to the study of paper-cutting, which has been rarely covered in the previous literature. The research of mediatization is utilised to investigate gender studies as well.

The study of the mediatization of paper-cutting is to show the new interaction between paper-cutting and the media in the midst of changes in media technology, and the changes that this has brought to the development of paper-cutting, to society, and to human development, while focusing on the discovery of a gender perspective: with the development of media technology in recent years, the practitioners of paper-cutting have shifted from being predominantly male to predominantly female. Does a new gender group exist in addition to the original?

Another innovation is that this research highlights the role of groups outside women. This viewpoint contributes to the development of a pluralistic society, equality, and the relationships between many individuals and to consider what effects does the participation of gender groups other than women, such as young males, have on the industry's content, transmission, social organisation structure, and various social relations.

Last but not least, the offered conclusions and statistics have ramifications for Zherong's municipal administration. As a basis for decision-making, the cultural sector in Zherong County requires numerous forms of fieldwork data for the development and promotion of the paper-cutting business. The structural changes of practitioner groups in the digital era must be considered while formulating policies.

Research Questions

My research is dedicated to the combined perspectives of mediatization and gender studies, which bring implication and innovation to this field, like: it's an application of mediatization theory to the subject of folk art, paper-cutting, while the mediatization idea is also applied to gender studies. Meanwhile, the role of groups outside women to paper-cutting is highlighted, which contributes to the development of a pluralistic society, equality, and positive interactions among members.

What is important and relevant is the offered conclusions and statistics have ramifications for Zherong's local administration.

My research starts with research questions as follows:

- How has the process of mediatization of paper-cutting impacted the paper-cutting industry (creation, distribution, consumption, and industrial development)?
- What impact has the growth of paper-cutting media had on the status and function of women in this industry?
- In what ways do groups outside women participate in the paper-cutting industry?
- What effects does the current gender structure have on the transmitting of this intangible cultural legacy and the growth of local industries?

Methodology & Data Collection

- Content analysis
A compilation and analysis of media reporting about paper-cutting in Zherong in recent years.
- Narrative inquiry
Interviews with the most significant Zherong paper-cutting practitioners, from inheritors to the most influential representatives.
- Participant observation
Observation of the evolution of the paper-cutting heritage, the development of paper-cutting activities, and the behavior of the local participants.
- In-depth semi-structured interviews
In-depth, semi-structured interviews with other paper-cutting participants.

Conclusion

My findings are summarised in the following ways.

• Mediatization of paper-cutting

What effect does the paper-cutting media process have on the paper-cutting industry (creation, distribution, consumption, and industrial development)?

Mainstream reporting predominates; self-media influence develops; many media are utilized concurrently.

Artistic form

Under the influence of the media, paper-cutting artists have adopted a combination of traditional craftsmanship and contemporary art and culture. They have departed from conventional Yang-cutting and Yin-carving techniques and adopted techniques from oil painting, photographic engraving, photography, sketching, and white drawing, while keeping classic style techniques. Using materials such as coated paper, waxed paper, velvet paper, fabric, and leaves permits the cut-out pieces to be durable and colorfast. Additionally, there is a wealth of topic matter, an increase in application areas, and the production of increasingly inventive goods. Zherong paper-cutting products have been created from paper-cutting garments, paper-cutting lamps, paper-cutting ceramics, and more than 100 more variations after several years of development.

Regarding the medium of communication

Spatial medium has built, like the Zherong Folk Art Museum, and the Zherong Paper-cutting special industries museum to attract paper-cutting enterprises. Education is a medium as well, for example, training courses has been organised for citizens, focusing on organizing primary and secondary school art teachers, young and middle-aged women, and paper-cutting enthusiasts to study and carry out creative work in order to form the backbone of paper-cutting.

In terms of media communication, live streaming and short films can be utilised to strengthen the brand's impression and develop a stronger relationship with consumers. Through the

internet platform, the history of paper-cutting is imparted, blending the charming folk culture of paper-cutting with the practical, creative, and amusing nature of the products, progressively making them creative and entertaining. Research and development has the cultural connotation of paper-cutting, intangible cultural heritage and invention, which are defining traits of the era, and is in close proximity to consumers' actual demands. Concurrently, it can also facilitate some transactions, thereby achieving the unification of quality and efficiency. Use whole media thinking, relying for creative promotion on short video flow platforms such as Bilibili, Watermelon Video, Little Red Book, and wechat. Promotional marketing strategies has been developed in Zherong, such as paper-cutting workshops. Create a variety of short movies targeting the current demographic and trending issues to assist marketers in achieving comprehensive placements.

In present China, live-streaming with products is a great way for marketing. The live broadcast actively interacts with consumers, and the demonstration of product features (also known as experiential consumption) raises consumers' minds more centrally to explode on the brand, expanding its influence, attracting more users through word-of-mouth communication among users, increasing user stickiness, becoming fans and friends, and cultivating a deep customer base. To expand sales channels, establish online stores on Taobao, Jingdong and other e-commerce platforms.

Industrial development

Development and cultivation of Zherong paper-cutting culture creative presents, tourism souvenirs, and other industries. When the paper-cutting plus children's fun and other special industries, really catch the user's pain point through successful marketing in the news media and a wide range of social media, it may affect a greater number of people, which will aid in the spread of the image of the boot Lingwei village township. The implementation of these functions can be achieved through the subsequent projects.

In collaboration with county schools and youth palaces, regular monthly parent-child study activities are organised to deepen understanding of paper-cutting and enhance the significance of cultural studies through visits to the paper-cutting village, understanding of paper-cutting culture, and experience of paper-cutting in Zherong. Concurrently, the development of a netroots hitting point in Zherong with the specific characteristics of paper-cutting will serve as a stunning and distinctive village landmark for visitors to take photographs and punch cards. In the cultural tourism industry, develop rural B&Bs with paper-cutting characteristics, utilising the cultural and creative products developed by the project and local paper-cutting works to adorn the B&Bs and enhance their cultural atmosphere, thereby creating B&Bs that are popular with tourists and highlight the paper-cutting charm of Zherong.

• Gender research about paper-cutting

How does the growth of paper-cutting media affect the position and function of women in the industry?

Statistically, more female subjects are covered in the media. As with Yuan Xiuying, the focus has been sharpened in terms of quality.

"Folk paper-cutting artist Yuan Xiuying of Zherong, 'Paper-cutting artist Yuan Xiuying, 93:

beauty encased in a frame', 'Symposium on the artistic life of paper-cutting master Yuan Xiuying held in Zherong County.'

The agenda for women was set

In what ways do groups besides women intervene in the paper-cutting industry?

Linda is one example. Lin, a youngster who is deaf and mute, has learned paper-cutting and bamboo carving with the assistance of Inspiration Residence, utilizing her ability for sketching. In 2018, he was named "National Most Beautiful Secondary School Student" and became the inheritor of the "Zherong Paper Cutting" World Heritage for the next generation. He has been working as a volunteer at Inspiration House, a training facility constructed by the Party Branch of the Anju Project Community using the "Nearby Red Station" to provide training services for the crippled and unemployed.

Since its beginning, it has assisted 12 disabled individuals in acquiring a skill and 8 unemployed individuals in finding employment. It has also inspired a large number of residents to join the community's volunteer service team in order to assist the disabled and promote neighborhood relations, making it the most attractive sight in the Anju community.

How does the current gender structure affect the transmission of this intangible cultural legacy and the growth of local industries?

The gender structure: male participation must still be bolstered

The installation paper-cutting beckoning by Lv Shengzhong consists of thousands of paper cutouts like red dolls, covering the walls, floor, ceiling, and surrounding surroundings for four weeks.

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