

# Research on the Dissemination Paths of Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Context of Globalization: A Case Study of Xiaogan Carved Paper-cutting

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**Abstract:** Amid globalization, intangible cultural heritage (ICH) dissemination gains opportunities from multicultural convergence yet faces eroded local cultural identity and inadequate communication efficacy. Taking national-level ICH Xiaogan Carved Paper-cutting as a paradigm, this study explores its cultural essence and current dissemination status, identifying core inheritance challenges: inheritor gaps, homogenized communication, and deficient cross-cultural adaptability. Employing textual analysis and empirical inquiry, it examines globalization's dual impacts on ICH dissemination and formulates systematic optimization strategies—focused on new media utilization, educational infiltration, and international promotion—to provide actionable insights for the dynamic preservation and transmission of analogous ICH.

**Keywords:** Globalization, Intangible Cultural Heritage, Channel of Dissemination, Xiaogan Carved Paper-cutting, Cultural Inheritance

## 1. Introduction

As a national intangible cultural heritage, Xiaogan Carved Paper-cutting embodies the distinctive folk memory and artistic wisdom of the Jingchu region. Centered on the hollowing and piercing technique, it features a form of expression that combines narrative and decorative qualities, constructing a unique aesthetic system within Chinese folk art. To this day, it remains integrated into the daily life of local people in a living form.<sup>[1]</sup> Against the backdrop of the New Era, living inheritance has become the core paradigm for the protection of intangible cultural heritage. Such cultural heritage not only possesses cultural values including historical provenance and aesthetic appreciation, but also holds the potential to realize economic and social values through creative transformation.<sup>[2]</sup> Through a systematic study of the communication channels of Xiaogan Carved Paper-cutting, this paper aims to explore its contemporary significance in the modern cultural context and propose practical approaches for the innovative development of fine traditional Chinese culture.

As a pivotal category of Chinese folk art, paper-cut embodies the Chinese nation's millennia-old cultural accumulation and historical memory. It articulates traditional folk art's plastic and aesthetic concepts while embodying its inherent spirit<sup>[3]</sup>. Cultures thrive through exchanges and mutual learning. Research on Xiaogan Carved Paper-cutting's communication pathways facilitates integrity-based innovation, empowers local cultural and economic coordination, fosters consensus, and strengthens cultural confidence. Moreover, it advances intangible cultural

heritage's global outreach, bridging cross-cultural communication between China and the world.

## **2. Cultural Connotations and Current Dissemination Situation**

### **2.1 Cultural Connotations**

Xiaogan Carved Paper-cutting, a unique folk art of Xiaogan—a historical and cultural city steeped in filial piety culture<sup>[4]</sup>—carries “filial piety” heritage. It materializes local filial stories like Dong Yong Selling Himself to Bury His Father and Meng Zong Weeping for Bamboo Shoots, becoming a living symbol of Chinese filial piety culture. Filial ethics are conveyed through characters' expressions and scene details.

Aesthetics, a key criterion for culture and art, evaluates works and unlocks their cultural connotation logic, reflecting historical context and value orientation. For Xiaogan Carved Paper-cutting, its aesthetic form includes formal principles, artistic styles, and symbolic connotations<sup>[5]</sup>. Notably, the “intergrowth of virtual and real” paradigm inherits Jingchu culture's romantic visual tradition and integrates local ritual and filial ethics, serving as a spiritual bond for local cultural identity.

Local cultural heritage crystallizes regional people's long-term productive, living, and spiritual practices, intertwined with daily life and embodying regional characteristics. Xiaogan Carved Paper-cutting is embedded in local activities and rituals, with patterns encoding life information and cultural beliefs. For example, rural Xiaogan families paste red paper-cut gourds on doors to announce new births, pray for blessings, and ward off evil<sup>[1]</sup>.

### **2.2 Current Dissemination Situation**

Xiaogan Carved Paper-cutting has established a three-dimensional inheritance network of master leadership, school-community collaboration, and volunteer empowerment, transcending the traditional master-apprentice model. Guided by national ICH protection policies, Xiaogan Municipal Government has coordinated cultural institutions, multi-level ICH inheritors, folk artists, and enterprises to share inheritance duties<sup>[6]</sup>. This resource integration stabilizes the craftsmanship echelon, embeds paper-cutting in modern life, and expands its cultural influence, forming a protection-development virtuous circle.

ICH dissemination now requires global outreach to promote traditional Chinese culture, boost its international visibility, and deepen cross-cultural exchanges. Xiaogan has adopted a dual-track strategy: domestic inheritance training and social media/short-video promotion; international participation in cultural “Go Global” exhibitions. For example, at the 2023 World Sinologists Conference, it showcased Jingchu Culture globally. Currently, the art form attracts more folk inheritors, evolves through innovation, and enters a broader international arena.

## **3. Problems in the Inheritance of ICH**

### **3.1 Information Fragmentation**

The rapid development of Internet technology has driven explosive information growth, marked by prominent fragmentation. For Xiaogan Carved Paper-cutting, relevant digital resources—including written introductions, images, and short videos—are widely scattered across websites and social platforms without systematic integration or comprehensive presentation. Users thus face significant time costs in screening and synthesizing information, hindering access to core knowledge such as its historical origin, artistic characteristics, and cultural connotations. This fragmentation not only increases the difficulty of obtaining valid information but also impedes the systematic dissemination and in-depth inheritance of the ICH, leaving public understanding superficial and preventing the formation of comprehensive, accurate cognition.

### **3.2 Imbalance in Cross-Cultural Dissemination**

1. Cultural Symbol Distortion in Pattern Translation: The "Lotus Pod with Seeds" motif, a common element in Xiaogan Carved Paper-cutting, embodies Jingchu region's folk aspirations for “blessings of multiple children” and reflects local traditional fertility culture. A literal translation as "Lotus Seed Pod with Seeds" merely conveys the plant's visual form, completely omitting the core connotation of family prosperity through numerous descendants. This reduces the motif to an ordinary botanical pattern in international audiences' perception, obscuring its underlying folk

significance.

2. Semantic Deviation in Professional Terminology Translation: *Yinke (Intaglio Cutting)*, a core technique of Xiaogan Carved Paper-cutting, involves carving away the paper surrounding pattern lines to create hollowed, smooth lines and a translucent effect. Mistranslation as “Negative Carving” bears no relation to *Yinke*’s essential characteristics and risks misleading interpretations. International audiences thus misunderstand this traditional craft, failing to recognize its unique artistic value due to the terminological inaccuracy.

3. Cultural Connotation Loss in Color Meaning Translation: Vermilion serves as the dominant color in Xiaogan Carved Paper-cutting. In Jingchu culture, it symbolizes evil warding, blessing invocation, and auspicious joy, acting as a signature hue for occasions like the Spring Festival and weddings. Reducing it to a simple “Red” translation conveys basic color information but erases the regional cultural symbolism inherent in vermilion. International audiences cannot grasp the color’s specific cultural implications, hindering emotional resonance and weakening the paper-cutting’s cultural appeal.

### **3.3 Imbalance in Commercialization and Cultural Authenticity**

As the market economy advances, commercialization increasingly impacts Xiaogan Carved Paper-cutting. Driven by profit maximization, some entities simplify production, lower quality, and mass-produce low-cost goods—trapping handmade paper-cutting in a “bad money drives out good” dilemma. Lack of innovative design, branding, and diverse marketing channels also confines products to tourist souvenirs, failing to form a healthy industrial cycle.

This trend sparks a dual crisis: shoddy products undermine the ICH’s artistic value and credibility, while excessive commercialization prioritizes form over content—reducing paper-cutting to a commercial symbol and eroding its cultural, educational, and social values. Unchecked, it will accelerate craftsmanship loss, weaken inheritance foundations, and pose a systemic threat to its sustainable development.

### **4. Case Analyses of Dissemination Paths**

Rooted in filial piety culture, Xiaogan Carved Paper-cutting — a national Chinese ICH — has innovated cultural and creative products through cross-border integration and scenario extension. National-level inheritor Chi Fuxin and his daughter, municipal-level inheritor Chi Quan, co-developed a best-selling flagship: paper-cut wedding certificates. This work synthesizes the Dong Yong-Seventh Fairy legend, auspicious motifs (e.g., dragons and phoenixes for conjugal harmony), and modern wedding rituals into a scroll-style signature artifact, preserving “everlasting marital bliss” romance while embodying decorative and collectible values as a popular Qixi Festival product among young couples.

To expand themes, the inheritor team launched two core series: one centered on Xiaogan’s “Three Filial Piety Stories” and another featuring the “Four Gentlemen” integrated with integrity culture. These works bridge traditional craftsmanship with contemporary values, with dissemination achieving daily-life popularization via online e-commerce sales and offline ICH market exhibitions.

In education, Hubei Polytechnic Institute built a three-dimensional inheritance model— “curriculum foundation, pathway empowerment, platform support”— integrating the paper-cutting into its vocational education system. Courses include Carved Paper-cutting Techniques and Appreciation of Classic Xiaogan ICH Works, with inheritors like Guan Lifang as visiting professors. Over three years, 800+ professionals have been cultivated, and teacher-student works won national awards. A “Master Workshop” offers 150 annual master-led hours, incubating eight entrepreneurial projects— notably the student-designed “Zodiac Paper-cut Blind Box,” with over 1,000 online sales, realizing dual impetus for craftsmanship inheritance and industrial incubation.

### **5. Conclusion**

Against the globalization backdrop, Xiaogan Carved Paper-cutting’s dissemination demands a diversified framework of “online-offline integration and domestic-international coordination,” grounded in cultural authenticity. Online, new media platforms integrate fragmented communication with systematic content development. Offline,

experiential communication is enhanced through contextualized practices in education, cultural tourism, and business. For international dissemination, a cultural translation mechanism reduces cross-cultural misinterpretation. This three-dimensional model not only boosts the ICH's contemporary influence but also facilitates its transformation from a "local heritage" to a "humanity-shared cultural resource", providing a practical paradigm for safeguarding cultural diversity in the global era.

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