

The Rhetoric of the Longzhong Paper Cuttings^①

Zhang Shuping

Abstract: The paper cuttings of Longzhong represent one of the oldest folk-art genres in Chinese art history. The paper cuttings first appeared in the Northern and Southern Dynasties, originally used for decoration, worship and witchcraft. The cuttings used for worship are mainly engraved by knife and chisel, whereas the more decorative and witchcraft cuttings are mostly made with scissors. The Longzhong paper cuttings, which are characterised by their wildness, simplicity and clumsy style, convey distinct themes of totemism and reproductive worship and are intensely focused on human life. These themes are expressed through a variety of rhetorical devices such as simile, metaphor, synecdoche, metonymy, symbol, analogy, homophone and exaggeration.

Keywords: paper cuttings, worship, witchcraft, decoration, rhetoric, function

DOI: 10.13760/b.cnki.sam.2015.01.011

陇中剪纸的符号修辞研究

张淑萍

摘要: 陇中剪纸是中国最古老的民间艺术之一。最早的剪纸出现在南北朝，集装饰、巫术和祭祀功能于一体。祭祀剪纸主要用刀、凿制作，大部分装饰剪纸和巫术剪纸用剪刀剪成。陇中剪纸的

① The research for this paper was part of the Undergraduate Education Project of Lanzhou City University, entitled “The Identification of the College Students in Mass Media Society” (Grant No. 2013-JY-37).

特征是野，线条粗犷，风格朴拙；饱含着图腾崇拜、生殖崇拜等原始文化意味，并集中展现人类生活；惯用明喻、隐喻、提喻、转喻、象征、类比、谐音、夸张等修辞手法。

关键词：剪纸，祭祀，巫术，装饰，修辞，功能

The paper cuttings of Longzhong represent one of the oldest folk-art genres in Chinese art history. The practice is believed to date from around 541 AD, when worship and witchcraft paper cuttings were commonly used in funerals. Some of the paper cuttings have been well preserved in tombs in special areas such as Tulufan and Xinjiang as a result of the dry climate, which is beneficial to the preservation of paper. These examples are believed to be “the earliest paper cuttings in China” (Wang, 2006, pp. 29–30). The grave owners were courtiers of the Gaochang kingdom who, of Han nationality, had emigrated mainly from Gansu and Shanxi. At that time, the Gaochang kingdom was governed by “the king Qu and his descendents during 502 A.D. –640 A.D. [...] whose hometown was Yuzhong” (Jiang, 2008, p. 50). As Yuzhong was located in Longzhong, the etiquette of the Gaochang court undoubtedly inherited Longzhong customs. As the kingdom was ruled by a feudal autocratic government, the etiquette of the king needed to be upheld and glorified so that the etiquette and customs of the royal court were regarded as standard and were followed by the courtiers and common people. Furthermore, the patterns of the paper cuttings in the tombs are similar to those produced in contemporary Longzhong, which convey almost the same cultural connotations and functions. Because of the closed living environment and traditional living conditions in the Longzhong area, the ancient crafts have been preserved and continually handed down.

The Longzhong paper cuttings, which are characterised by their wildness, simplicity and clumsy style, can be divided into three types according to their different functions, i. e. worship, witchcraft and decoration. Worship paper cuttings are mainly engraved by knife and chisel, whereas the majority of the witchcraft and more decorative paper cuttings are made with scissors. The worship paper cuttings are used during funerals and festivals to honour deities. There are numerous types of funeral paper

cuttings, which include various kinds of streamers, such as the filial streamer, couplet streamer, incense streamer, flower streamer, lantern streamer and soul-directing streamer, and include motifs such as gold and silver buckets, money trees, treasure bowls and paper coins. However, there is only one type of festival paper cutting, namely, the honouring banner, which is decorated with the prevailing conventional patterns of worship paper cuttings, such as the *Yuntou*, swallow tail, flame, leaf and other signs similar to ○, ◇, ☼ and ※.

The witchcraft paper cuttings mainly depict figures of men or women and are used for banishing disease, soul calling, warding evil, family protection, storm prevention, praying for rain, combating draught and exorcism. The various decorative paper cuttings are colourful in comparison with the other types, and can be used on any celebrative occasion, such as the Spring Festival, weddings, birthdays and other festive days when people decorate their windows, ceilings, pillars, kang, walls, cupboards, trunks and even themselves with coloured paper cuttings. The patterns of the decorative paper cuttings are also plentiful, including attractive animals, flourishing plants, bright flowers and well-known figures from mythologies, folk tales and dramas. In addition, traditional patterns such as totems and fabricated items including dragons and phoenixes continue to make up the main patterns. Each pattern embodies specific profound meanings in relation to totemism, reproductive worship and significant facets of human life. These meanings are expressed using rhetorical devices such as simile, metaphor, synecdoche, metonymy, symbol, analogy, homophone and exaggeration.

I. Metaphor

Classical rhetoric focuses on language and its usage, and is widely conceived as a device for “enforcing the persuasive or artistic effect” (Zhao, 2011, p. 186). Since antiquity, however, “attempts have been made to discover a semiotic system in the field of rhetorical figures” (Noth, 1990, p. 341). Despite the early attempts to revive the discipline, the field of rhetoric studies did not appear until the second half of the twentieth century (Chandler, 2007), mainly through the joint efforts of the “structuralists and

poststructuralists” and “cognitive semanticists such as George Lakoff and Mark Johnson”. Since then, semiotic rhetoric “has become the kernel of new rhetoric” (Zhou, 2010). Winfried Nothstated that “semiotic and other recent approaches to rhetoric either have shown a renewed interest in rhetorical pragmatics or have restricted themselves to the system of rhetorical figures” (1990, p. 339). According to Zhao, the aim of the semiotic approach is “to study the variants of the classic rhetoric in the non-linguistic sign system” (2010, p. 187). In fact, “the variants” and the “non-linguistic sign system” suggest that semiotic rhetoric has extended the vehicle of dissemination from language or words to pan-sign systems such as pictures, voices and objects.

Of all the rhetorical devices, metaphor, in a broader sense, is “the most luminous and therefore the most necessary and frequent” (cited in Eco, 1984, p. 87) and “all the other rhetorical devices are known as its variants” (Zhao, 2010, p. 188). Metaphor played such an important role in classic rhetoric studies that “Aristotle even referred to all of the rhetorical devices with metaphor” (cited in Li, 2007, p. 366). Eco stated that “metaphor is a genus of which all the other tropes are species” (1984, p. 87). According to Lakoff and Johnson, “metaphor means metaphorical concept” (1980, p. 6) and indicates “a cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system” (cited in Liu, 2006). In this regard, the essence of metaphor is “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 5). Accordingly, “the human conceptual system is metaphorically structured and defined” and is “not just a matter of language, that is, of mere words” (p. 6). Lakoff and Johnson’s notion of the conceptual metaphor has had a significant influence on semiotic rhetoric studies and has been adapted to a pan-sign semiotic system. After exploring the use of metaphor in pictures, objects, voice and media, such as films, performances, sports, competitions, advertising, music and e-games, Zhao even argued that “the semiotic metaphor is a ‘conceptual metaphor’ unexceptionally” (2011, p. 187). Hence, Zhao concluded that metaphor is a popular device for enforcing representability in all media using a cross-media mapping between conceptual domains that goes beyond the confinement of language.

Metaphor, in its narrower sense, is technologically necessary and

accessible in specific usage and can thereby be distinguished from other rhetorical devices such as simile, metonymy and synecdoche. Wang defined metaphor as a trope that “connects different conceptual domains by resorting to familiar, visible, specific and ordinary concepts to represent and understand the strange, invisible, abstract and extraordinary concept” (2007, p. 452). In folk culture, good fortune, ample salary, longevity, a happy life and great wealth are the basic human pursuits. However, this raises the question of how these invisible and abstract concepts are represented in paper cuttings, given that paper cutting is a pictorial art that involves direct perception through the senses and specific images. Female folk artisans endeavour to use the specific and common objects used in their daily lives to express abstract notions such as feelings, desires, attitudes and faith. Lakoff and Johnson regarded these tropes as expressing “ways of viewing events, activities, emotions, ideas, etc.” with such specific “entities and substances” as “ontological metaphors” (1980, p. 25). It is evident that the folk artisans use such ontological metaphors unconsciously. As a result, animals such as deer and monkeys, birds such as cranes, swallows, magpies and cocks and fruits such as the gourd, peach, persimmon and pomegranate are all used to signify abstract connotations. For example, the pattern of the paper cutting *A Fish Tasting Lotus* connotes sexual love. The image of the fish tasting the lotus signifies the intimate touch of two different species, which further functions as a signifier of sexual intercourse.

The process of mapping the source and target of metaphor is complex. First, the two items of any metaphor contain much more information than is needed. That is, both items have their own “semantic system” (cited in Jia & Cheng, 2002) or semantic “structure schemata” (Lakoff & Turner, 1989, p. 63). Second, visual metaphor involves “a function of transference, transferring *certain* qualities from one sign to another” (Chandler, 2007), which means that only the relevant qualities are amplified and projected into the interaction of metaphor. For instance, the semantic system of the gourd in Chinese culture covers many components, including being a plant, round and bottle-like, having a big belly, a flat bottom and rich seeds, opening up and being an instrument of Tiegua Li, a supernatural being. The semantic

connotations of the womb include belonging to the female, being a bodily organ, roundness, having a big belly, room for a baby and being a source of life. In this case, the relevant elements are roundness, a big belly, seeds and having a baby, which are amplified and projected in the metaphorical interaction with the significance of the gourd. This, of course, is the ideal pattern of metaphorical interaction in which relevant qualities are projected fully and directly and decoded, just as the visual designer or artisan would expect.

However, Kittay (cited in Zhao, 2007) notes that both the source and target have their own separate semantic fields and their interaction involves other factors such as knowledge, belief, character, relation and structure. This more comprehensive conception of metaphor suits the actual metaphorical interaction of the paper cuttings, in which meaning is never self-evident. That is, the patterns of the paper cuttings can never be fully decoded and thus always contain ambiguity. The mapping of the gourd onto the womb, for instance, is not confined to the relevant components, as it implicates the entire semantic field. Therefore, the metaphors are difficult to interpret, as they require the reader to be familiar with the culture and to interpret the meaning of the metaphors in light of the shared cultural knowledge and on the basis of the particular syntagmatic and paradigmatic context.

In addition, the particular nature of paper cuttings also leads to ambiguity. In language, both the source and target of a metaphor appear in the sentence structure, which are connected by *being*; for instance, *Life is a journey*. However, the source and linking words are absent in paper cuttings, with only the target being present. Paper cuttings are a product of an illiterate society and, having no captions or illustrations, represent “images given without words” (Barthes, 1977, p. 40). This raises the question of how to interpret the meaning of a paper cutting. It is clear that context plays an important role and that the syntagmatic components of paper cuttings can help narrow their paradigmatic scope and anchor their meaning.

To illustrate the interpretive process, an example of a Longzhong paper cutting of a gourd is shown in Fig. 1. The syntagmatic pattern of the picture

can be described as follows: a large gourd is depicted in the middle of the image with its mouth open and hips down, and some leaves springing out from the sides of the body. In the upper part of the gourd, the most prominent pattern is Guanqian surrounded by the seedlings of cereal crops. A headstand *Yuntou* occupies the main part of the lower section of the gourd, while a smaller one is shown in the upper bottom area. Six pairs of cereal crop seedlings are at the bottom of the lower section. The Guanqian is made up of four leaves and a diamond, which are believed to have been a symbol of genitalia in Chinese culture around 8000 years ago, when the worship of female generative organs is thought to have been popular. This primitive image has been inherited in folk custom and art. The producers of paper cuttings have long been illiterate rural women in backward places who have continuously passed the notions and craft of paper cutting on to the next generation without any great changes. Therefore, paper cutting serves as a means of preserving the traditional culture, and has accumulated a profound cultural heritage by propagating the patterns of ancient painted pottery.



Fig. 1 The Gourd Lu (2000, p. 75)

Yuntou signifies the male genital organ through its formal similarity. Here, the combination of male and female generative organs connotes sexual intercourse and the propagation of offspring. The body of the gourd is the place where life begins and the baby grows, in other words, the womb. Therefore, the generative organs have a reproductive meaning that directly

refers to the nature of the womb. The leaves and seedlings of cereal crops attest to the quality of the gourd as a plant, and the grass and leaves sprouting from the gourd hint that it is the source of life. In addition, in the mythic legends of early China, the gourd was considered the place where human beings came into existence. Moreover, Fuxi and Nüwa, the earliest ancestors of the Chinese people according to the legends, were said to be born in Qin'an of Longzhong and to have survived a storm by hiding in a huge gourd while all of the other people drowned. The brother and sister subsequently married and gave birth to the human race. As a result, the gourd is worshiped in Chinese culture and people look upon it as the source of life. In Fig. 1, the mouth of the gourd is open, which indicates access to heaven. Accordingly, the open mouth symbolises heaven, while the hip where grass grows refers to the earth. As a whole, the paper cutting symbolises heaven, earth and man coexisting in harmony, with heaven at the top, man in the middle and the earth at the bottom. The gourd, in this sense, serves as the perfect metaphor for the universe.

Fig. 2 shows a window decoration. The pattern is made up of four fruits: the gourd at the bottom, the pomegranate on the right, the persimmon at the top and the peach on the left, each of which is accompanied by a vine or leaves. "Persimmon" is pronounced *shi* in Chinese, which is a homophone of 事 (*shi*), which means all is going well. Well-known for its rich seeds, the pomegranate is a symbol of offspring and children flourishing. In ancient Chinese mythology, the Queen Mother of the Western Heaven liked peaches, which kept her forever young. The queen had a big peach garden and feasted her guests with fresh peaches at her birthday party every year. Accordingly, the peach symbolises longevity in Chinese folk culture. However, rather than evoking profound anthropological connotations, the syntagmatic elements of the gourd refer to the popular folk culture connotations of wealth and longevity. The vitality and length of the vine clearly endow the gourd with a powerful life force. Hence, the gourd also represents life and longevity. Furthermore, the representation of the vine suggests the model of *Panchang*, which indicates lasting wealth and life, as does the Chinese Knot.



Fig. 2 Everything Goes Well (Lu, 2000, p. 125)

II. Simile

Metaphor is classically defined as “the abbreviation of simile” (Eco, 1984, p. 90), therefore simile can be regarded as an extension of metaphor. From a cognitive perspective, metaphor is believed to have originated in the intuitive thinking of primitive people who could not yet clearly distinguish the source and target. For primitive peoples, metaphor served to reveal the similarities between things in an obscure way, so *being* was used as the linking word between two items. Simile emerged as the product of rational human thought when the source and target were weighed independently in an attempt to identify their precise and essential differences, although their similar qualities were also emphasised. (Zhao, 2007) For instance, in the simile *Her face is like an apple*, the presupposition of the simile is that her face is not an actual apple, but resembles the shape of an apple.

According to Chandler (2007), “simile can be seen as a form of metaphor in which the figurative status of the comparison is made explicit through the use of the word ‘as’ or ‘like’”. However, how can a simile be represented if there is no connecting word, as in a pictorial sign? Perhaps it is the requirement of explicitness that complicates simile, for extra explanations are required to make the expression easy to understand. Zhao (2011) confirmed that “the trope in ads is inevitably simile, since the picture and name of the product must be displayed” (2011, p. 191), together with the seductive

image that ads try to create. This reinforces the clarification of the expression and the anchor of the meaning. In this sense, to adapt the idea of visual metaphor as “transferring *certain* qualities from one sign to another” (Chandler, 2007) to particular visual signs, extra hints are needed to make the *certain* qualities prominent to ensure the decoding is successful. To a large extent, the extra hints are linguistic messages or the object itself, and the visual signs in this case are possibly limited to ads. Therefore, Chandler’s (2007) idea of “visual metaphor” can be treated as a visual simile.

Zhao argued that “simile is more frequently adopted than metaphor in semiotic rhetoric though the boundary between them is obscure in comparison with the distinct and definite difference between linguistic simile and metaphor” (2011, p. 192). Zhao also described the character of simile as “associating the target with the absent source compulsorily”, thereby forcing “readers to interpret it in a unique way” (p. 191) through the shared knowledge of culture and customs. Simile is frequently used in the Longzhong paper cuttings and the compulsory principle of semiotic simile is completely adaptable to their style of expression.

The colour of paper cuttings is regulated in Longzhong culture; red paper cuttings signify festivities; yellow paper cuttings can only be used in sacred situations and only deities have the right to match them; whereas white paper cuttings signify ghosts, dead ancestors and relatives who occupy a much lower social position than a deity. The improper use of a yellow paper cutting would result in severe punishment from the deities, who must destroy the souls of dead relatives. The use of yellow paper itself would reduce or exhaust the user’s family fortune, because fate is to be obeyed and never violated in Chinese tradition, even if the deities are benevolent enough to forgive the transgression. Blackness and blueness signify mourning and missing the dead. Therefore, paper clothing, quilts and other articles of daily use are always made of black and blue paper, which is burned on the first day of October in the lunar calendar to help the dead fight against the cold of winter.

Shadow puppets are a more mature product of the paper cutting tradition. The puppets express simile mostly because their purpose is to achieve an immediate effect by inviting the audience to interpret the characters

correctly in a limited span of time. The facial structure of the intellectual is different from that of the warrior, and audiences can instantly identify their roles and interpret what will happen next, which is necessary for the cultivation of a dramatic atmosphere. For instance, the intellectual's eyes are sculpted like a lying fish with two soft eyebrows and a straight nose, whereas a warrior's eyes must be round, with vertical eyebrows and a hawk nose.

III. Metonymy

According to Eco, “metonymy is spoken as substitutions of two terms for each other according to a relation of contiguity (where contiguity is a rather fuzzy concept insofar as it covers the relation of cause/effect, container/content, instrument for operation, place of origin for original object, emblem for object emblematised, and so on)” (1984, p. 90). The source and target of metaphor bear no apparent relation whereas metonymy “involves using one signified to stand for another signified which is directly related to it or closely associated with it in some way” (Chandler, 2007). Metonymy is widely used in Longzhong paper cuttings, and the different substitution categories require explanation.

A lantern in a Longzhong paper cutting always refers to light. In this case, the relationship between the source and the target is one of adjacency or a more specific sense of container/content, thus the rhetorical device used in this case is metonymy. In the traditional pattern of the Eight Immortals (characters in ancient Chinese mythology), only the instruments of the immortals are represented as cuttings, such as the gourd, fan, lotus, flute, flower basket, jade plate, drum and sword. Sometimes two or three instruments are represented while the others are omitted, although the function of representing the Eight Immortals remains the same. As the instruments are closely associated with their hosts, the depiction of the immortals with their instruments can be regarded as a form of metonymy. Apart from metonymy, synecdoche is also used in cases where the pattern only depicts partial instruments to signify all of the instruments of the Eight Immortals. It is evident that two or more rhetorical devices can be used in a pattern simultaneously.

The paper cutting in Fig. 3 has two syntagmatic layers. The first is composed of a flowerpot decorated with a plum, some leaves and buds stretching out from the two sides, and two blossoming lotuses with clusters of leaves in the middle. This is the outline of the paper cutting at first glance. With sufficient attention, the second syntagm can be discerned, which consists of three parts. The bottom depicts “The Flower of Deer Head” (Jin, 1994, p. 206), a name assigned by Mr. Jin Zhilin, a Chinese folklorist who conducted an ethnological study of Chinese paper cuttings. The pattern is titled “The Flower of Deer Head” because it refers to the heritage of totemic deer worship. There are two lotus blossoms protruding from the head of the deer, and two images of men growing out of the lotuses, whose heads are dressed with flames.



Fig. 3 The Lotus (Cut by Dong Bilian)

The pattern of the paper cutting indicates that numerous rhetorical devices are used to express a profound cultural connotation. The first device is *exaggeration*, which is manifest in the bold form of the leaves and deer, the distorted position of the flower and leaves, and the link between the

flower and leaves and the images of men. In this way, the worship of the totem, plant and sun are coherently combined. The second rhetorical device is *metonymy*, whereby the sun with flames symbolises the importance of the sun for the development of life. The third device is *metaphor*, whereby the flowerpot is used to signify the totem deer. Simultaneously, the flowerpot also refers to the womb that generates life. The lotus is always a *symbol* of the female because of the similarity in form between female genitalia and the lotus petal. Hence, *analogy* is also used. The last device is *simile*, whereby redness is used to evoke a happy festival atmosphere. In this way, the paper cutting functions as a window or lantern decoration for *Shehuo* during the Spring Festival.

IV. Synecdoche

Eco describes synecdoche as a “substitution of two terms for each other according to a relation of greater or lesser extension (part for the whole, whole for the part, species for the genus, singular for plural, or vice versa)” (1984, p. 90). In the Longzhong paper cuttings, however, the application of synecdoche is restricted to a part for the whole, a species for the genus, the singular for the plural, and not vice versa. Jakobson (cited in Chandler, 2007) notes that the principle of contiguity is the basis upon which both metonymy and synecdoche function. In fact, the source and target of metonymy are more contiguous, while the two items of synecdoche are more homogeneous than contiguous. Synecdoche in the Longzhong paper cuttings includes the following substitutions:

Substitution of a part for the whole is more popular than other substitutions in the Longzhong paper cuttings. In a broader sense, all of the paper cuttings belong to this category, as only one part or one side of an object can be represented. Moreover, there are at least three layers of signification in the Longzhong paper cuttings. The signifier of the first layer is the direct image of the object appearing in the pattern, which signifies its denotative signifier. The signifier and its signified form a second signifier, which produces connotations, thus producing the second layer of signification. The second signifier and its signified jointly express the

mythological connotations, and hence produce the third layer of signification (Barthes, 1999). The final signified or myth is essentially ideological. However, one paper cutting is only partly ideological, even though its purpose is to represent and advocate feudalistic ideologies such as the loyalty and filial piety of Confucianism, the *yin-yang* technique and the five rules of Taoism or the Karma of Buddhism.

The signifier of the first layer of signification in Fig. 4, *Wang Xiang Melting Ice with his Belly*, is the paradoxical image of a man lying on his chest with three fish swimming toward him, splitting ice at the bottom, and two butterflies and a flower at the top. The first layer of signification conveys the denotative meaning: Wang wants to melt ice during a cold winter to catch some fish. The first signifier and its signified constitute the second signifier, which connotes Wang's filial piety. Because this is regarded as positive behaviour, butterflies fly to celebrate and flowers blossom as a reward. To understand the connotations of this image, the viewer must be familiar with the Chinese legend. Wang was an obedient son and he attempted to satisfy his mother's appetite for fish on a cold winter day. The ice on the river was too thick to break, so he had no choice but to lie down on his chest to melt the ice with his own body heat. His filial behaviour impressed a god who was passing by and the god broke the ice with magic, so Wang finally caught the fish. The second signifier and its signified form the third signifier, which in turn creates the final signified, the myth that tyranny is reasonable and natural, and that we should obey its authority with a devoted attitude and heart.



Fig. 4 Wang Xiang Melting Ice with His Belly (Lu, 2000, p. 9)

In a narrower sense, synecdoche is also commonly used in the Longzhong paper cuttings. For example, images of generative organs are used to connote whether a person is male or female (synecdoche), intercourse and the reproduction of the population (metonymy). Various representations of the female genital organ appear in most paper cuttings. The other two substitutions (of species for the genus and the singular for the plural) are also frequently adopted. For instance, a tree represents all plants, and a peach indicates all peaches.

V. Homophone

The Macmillan English Dictionary defines a homophone as “a word that sounds the same as another word but has its own spelling, meaning and origin and is pronounced the same as another word but differs in meaning”. Homophones are based on psychological misunderstanding and association, because they project double layers of meaning. In the Longzhong paper cuttings, the use of homophone is preferred by the local people and has become a popular means of expression. For instance, bat is 蝙蝠 in Chinese, which is pronounced as *bian-fu*. 蝠 (*fu*) is the homophone of 福 (*fu*), which means good fortune. Therefore, the bat pattern is commonly used in folk paper cuttings to convey good wishes and it also frequently appears in worshiping streamers. In Fig. 5, four bats are flying together toward a central location where a lotus is blossoming. The lotus not only signifies female genitalia as afore mentioned, but also has profound connotations in Buddhism. The lotus is called the “Flower of Buddhism” owing to its capacity to grow in mud, but not become contaminated with it. Thus, this homophone encourages the living to place hope in the idea that they will go to the Western Paradise after death where they can enjoy a life full of *fu*.

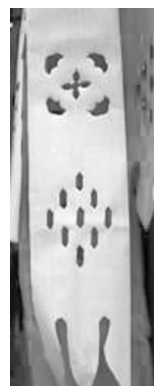


Fig. 5 Photograph of a Funeral Banner

The paper cutting in Fig. 6 depicts a deer, a crane and a tree, and is named *Lu-he-chun* (六合春) in Chinese. *Lu* (六) means six, is the

homophone of 鹿 (deer) and denotes the six directions of heaven, earth, east, south, west and north, which together indicate the whole world. *He* (合), the homophone of 鹤 (crane), refers to harmony, and the leaves sprouting from the tree symbolise the coming of spring. Accordingly, the overall composition of the paper cutting suggests that when spring comes, heaven, earth and men are all immersed in a flourishing situation. Furthermore, the pattern also hints at the desire to live in a harmonious world where everything goes smoothly. By representing the abstract notion of 六合春 with more specific objects 鹿鹤树, it is evident that the paper cutting presents the typical pattern of projecting abstract concepts onto specific objects through the use of homophone.



Fig. 6 Lu-he-chun (Lu, 2000, p. 143)

In summary, the producers of the Longzhong paper cuttings use a variety of rhetorical devices to convey desires and ideas that have been nurtured in a particular social environment, are sensed instinctively by the female folk-artisans and were constructed during the long history of women's changing social positions and the stabilisation of family-centred identity. Furthermore, the paper cuttings reveal that the minds of the producers were influenced by the prevailing ideologies such as the loyalty and filial piety of Confucianism, the *yin-yang* technique, the five rules of Taoism and the Karma of Buddhism. All of these elements comprise the content that the Longzhong

paper cuttings attempt to represent. By studying the rhetorical devices used in the paper cuttings, the true meaning of the patterns can be traced back to the psychological development of the local mentality in Chinese history.

References:

- Barthes, R. (1977). *Image, music, text*. New York, NY: Hill and Wang.
- Barthes, R. (1999). *Mythologies*. Shanghai, CHN: Shanghai People Press.
- Chandler, D. (2007). Semiotics for beginners. Retrieved from <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/semiotic.html>.
- Eco, U. (1984). *Semiotics and the philosophy of language*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Jia, Z., & Chen, J. (2003). On the unification of the interaction theory of metaphor and the interactionist approach to cognition. *Journal of Sichuan International Studies University*, 2, 70–73.
- Jiang, Y. (2008). On the paper cuttings discovered in the tombs in Tulufan. In *Studies on the Chinese folk paper cuttings*. Beijing, CHN: China Light Industry Press.
- Jin, Z. (1994). *The trees of life*. Beijing, CHN: Social Science Press of China.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff, G., & Turner, M. (1989). *More than cool reason: A field guide to poetic metaphor*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Li, Y. (2007). *An introduction to theoretical semiotics*. Beijing, CHN: China Renming University Press.
- Liu, J. (2006). On the cognitive functions of conceptual metaphor in everyday discourse and reasoning. *Journal of Anshan Normal University*, 2, 84–87.
- Lu, Z. (2000). *Longzhong paper cuttings*. Haerbin, CHN: Heilongjiang Art Press.
- Noth, W. (1990). *Handbook of semiotics*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Wang, B. (2006). *The history of Chinese folk paper cutting arts*. Hangzhou, CHN: China Academy of Art.
- Wang, Y. (2007). *Cognitive linguistics*. Shanghai, CHN: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Zhao, W. (2007). *Metaphor culturology*. Xi'an, CHN: Northwest University Press.
- Zhao, Y. (2011). *Semiotics principles and problems*. Nanjing, CHN: Nanjing University Press.
- Zhou, X., Zhao, K., & Zhao, Y. (2010). Linguistics poetics and the revival of rhetoric (Symposium). *Academic monthly*, 9, 109–115.

□ 符号与传媒 (10)

Author:

Zhang Shuping, lecturer of School of Foreign Languages, Lanzhou City University. Her research field mainly focuses on cultural semiotics.

作者简介:

张淑萍, 兰州城市学院外国语学院讲师, 研究方向为文化符号学。

Email: maom8118@163.com