

Analysis of the Character Modelling Characteristics of Jiaodong Paper-Cutting Art in "Calabash Brothers" from the Perspective of Barthes's Semiotics

Zhang Yun^{1,2*}, Md Nagib Padil^{2*}, Md Khairul Nizam Ramlie², Si Jizhong²

¹ Hebei Academy of Fine Arts, Shijiazhuang City, China

² College of Creative Arts, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Perak Branch, Seri Iskandar Campus, Seri Iskandar, Perak, Malaysia

*Corresponding Author: 2022399151@student.uitm.edu.my , nagib746@uitm.edu.my

Received: 29 November 2025 | Accepted: 2 January 2026 | Published: 1 February 2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55057/ajress.2026.8.1.4>

Abstract: *This paper employs Barthes's semiotic theory as its theoretical framework, focusing on the application and characteristics of Jiaodong paper-cutting art in the character design of the classic animated series "Calabash Brothers". The article first outlines the artistic characteristics of Jiaodong paper-cutting, including its stylistic language and symbolic meanings. Employing qualitative research analysis, it examines the adaptation and innovation of Jiaodong paper-cutting elements in the character designs of "Calabash Brothers" from the semiotic perspectives of the signifier and signified. Research findings reveal that the character designs in the "Calabash Brothers" ingeniously integrate the flattened, exaggerated, and symbolic characteristics of Jiaodong paper-cutting. Through concise lines, vivid colours, and exaggerated forms, they create animated figures with distinct personalities and rich ethnic characteristics. Simultaneously, the film employs the metaphorical and symbolic qualities of paper-cutting elements to imbue characters with deeper cultural connotations, reflecting the aesthetic essence and spiritual values of traditional Chinese culture. This study aims to explore pathways for integrating traditional folk art with contemporary animation creation, offering fresh perspectives and insights for the inheritance and development of Chinese traditional culture.*

Keywords: Barthesian Semiotics; Jiaodong Paper-Cutting; The "Calabash Brothers"; Character Design; Traditional Culture

1. Background of Study

Amidst globalisation, the inheritance and innovation of traditional culture have become critical issues. As an integral component of Chinese traditional culture, paper-cutting art demonstrates renewed vitality in contemporary artistic creation. This paper selects the classic animation The "Calabash Brothers" as its subject, examining the application of Jiaodong paper-cutting art in its character design. Employing Barthes' semiology theory and qualitative analysis, the study delves into the integration of Jiaodong paper-cutting art with animation character design, alongside the application of Barthes' semiology within this context. This not only enhances our understanding of traditional culture's transformation within modern art but also offers fresh perspectives and insights for future animation creation.

2. Background Introduction

2.1 Jiaodong Paper-Cutting Art

Jiaodong paper-cutting (Figure 1) is a time-honoured folk art of the Shandong Peninsula, deeply rooted in local life. Originating in the Ming and Qing dynasties or even earlier, it is intrinsically linked to regional rituals such as festivals, weddings, and ancestral worship. Whether as window decorations during the New Year, celebratory motifs for weddings, or auspicious patterns for blessings, these paper cuttings embody the people's simple yet profound aspirations for good fortune and well-being, vividly reflecting the spiritual world of ordinary folk.



Figure 1: Jiaodong Paper Cutting – Window Decorations. (Source: Xiaohongshu app)

Jiaodong paper-cutting has developed its own distinctive style characterised by intricate and elaborate designs, primarily employing lines while integrating both linear and planar elements. Through continuous interaction with local folk and cultural traditions, it has cultivated a unique expressive form and aesthetic sensibility (Shao, 2014). The paper-cutting art of the Jiaodong region is a form of folk culture that has evolved from maritime traditions (Tian, 2019). In artistic style, Jiaodong paper-cutting possesses distinctive characteristics. Its compositions are full and robust, with bold lines and a pronounced sense of the knife and scissors. Works often combine intaglio and relief carving, with stark black-and-white contrasts creating compositions that are both grand and vivid. The subject matter is richly diverse, encompassing traditional auspicious motifs like fish, dragons, and pomegranates, alongside whimsical scenes depicting daily labours such as fishing and farming, and even folk tales like "The Eight Immortals Crossing the Sea" – brimming with life and imagination. This craft is primarily passed down through hands-on instruction between mothers and daughters, or neighbours. In times past, many ordinary peasant women used nothing but scissors and red paper to cut out colourful scenes of life. Today, Jiaodong paper-cutting has been listed as Intangible Cultural Heritage, ensuring its unique artistic value and cultural significance are better preserved and passed down. It continues to narrate the customs and folk wisdom of the Jiaodong region.

2.2 Jiaodong Paper-Cutting Art

The Chinese paper-cut animation "Calabash Brothers" was produced in 1986 by the Shanghai Animation Film Studio, marking a milestone in the history of Chinese paper-cut animation. Its

creative origins are deeply rooted in the glorious era of China's quest for nationalised animation.



Figure 2: Still from the Chinese paper-cut animation "Calabash Brothers"
Source: Bilibili website

Chinese paper-cut animation has undergone five significant phases: an exploratory period, a period of gradual maturation, a period of stagnation, a period of renewed development, and a period of international competition (Zhou, 2021). From the 1950s and 1960s onwards, Chinese animators led by Shanghai Animation Film Studio responded to the call to "explore a national style." They fused traditional folk art forms like shadow puppetry and window paper cuttings with cinematic techniques, pioneering a distinctive paper-cut animation genre imbued with Eastern aesthetic charm. The "Calabash Brothers" represents the pinnacle of this artistic lineage in the 1980s. Rather than merely employing flat paper-cut silhouettes, it ingeniously fused the perforated artistry of folk paper-cutting, the joint-movement principles of shadow puppetry, and cinematic language. Character designs were exaggeratedly simple with vivid, intense colours, radiating the decorative beauty of folk art; movement design found expressive charm within joint limitations, blending childlike charm with dynamic expressiveness.

Content-wise, the "Calabash Brothers" script draws upon Chinese folklore. Its core theme of "brothers united in purpose, fighting together" and its imagery—gourd, snake, scorpion—rich in traditional cultural symbolism, reflect profound national psychology and moral values. It recounts the tale of seven brothers born from gourds who sacrifice themselves to save their loved ones and vanquish demons. With its tightly woven plot and stark conflicts, it creates an unforgettable ensemble of righteous heroes.

The birth of "Calabash Brothers" coincided with the era when television media began to gain widespread popularity in China. It entered millions of households through television screens, its stirring theme song, vivid characters, and tales of rewarding virtue and punishing evil swiftly becoming collective memories for an entire generation. Not only does it represent the crowning achievement of Shanghai Animation Film Studio's "nationalisation" approach, but its exceptional artistic execution and powerful emotional resonance have cemented its status as one of the most influential and universally acclaimed classics in Chinese animation history. To this day, it continues to be revisited, interpreted, and honoured.

3. Literature Review

Roland Barthes, the renowned French semiotician and structuralist theorist, focused his semiotic theories on interpreting cultural, textual, and social phenomena (Barthes, 1972). Building upon Saussure's foundational work in semiotics, Barthes expanded the discipline to incorporate deeper socio-cultural analysis. His semiotics encompassed concepts such as signifier and signified, denotation and connotation, Mythologies, and concepts such as "readerly text" and "writerly text". For the purposes of this study, which explores the visual language and cultural connotations within Jiaodong paper-cutting art and contemporary Chinese paper-cutting animation, the author has selected two semiotic elements: the signifier and the signified (Table 1).

Table 1: Baudrillard Semiotics

	Code	Description	Example
Baudrillard Semiotics	Signifier Signifier	The signifier is the material form or sensory level of a sign, that is, the perceptible carrier of the sign, such as sound, image, or text. It constitutes the 'outer shell' of the sign.	The shape and colour of a red rose paper-cut pattern constitute the signifier.
	Signified Signified	The signified is the concept or meaning expressed by a symbol, representing its "content" layer. It is not material but rather the abstract meaning culturally and socially ascribed to the symbol.	The signified of the red rose paper-cut is the cultural symbolism of love, romance, and passion, or the imagery evoked by the concept of "the rose".

Source: Zhang Yun, 2025

Baudrillard categorises images in communication media and carriers—such as advertisements, photography, fashion, theatre, film, and television—into "linguistic message layers," "extensive image layers," and "implicit image layers," exploring the metaphorical influence of socio-cultural and ideological factors on image composition. (Zhang, 2013). Contemporary scholars employ Roland Barthes' semiotic theory to analyse diverse forms of popular culture, including advertising (Yapis Biak, 2024), posters (Rizki et al., 2024), animation (Wang, 2018), visual communication (Zhang J. 2013), and gaming (Ramadany et al., 2024). These investigations examine the symbols embedded within such cultural artefacts and how they convey meaning, ideology, and cultural expression. Consequently, this study may also employ elements of Roland Barthes' signifier and signified theory to summarise the role-shaping characteristics of Jiaodong paper-cutting art in Chinese paper-cut animation.

Roland Barthes' semiotic framework of "signifier, signified, denotation, and connotation" provides an operational tool for analysing how colour is encoded as cultural symbols within visual texts. Domestic scholars have introduced this framework into animation studies, focusing discussions on the visual rhetoric and national imagery within the classic domestic paper-cut animation series "Calabash Brothers". However, scholarly discourse specifically addressing the regional colour spectrum of Jiaodong paper-cutting remains notably scarce. Tai Zhao Jie (2021) employs Barthes's image rhetoric to note that the contrast between the Seven Coloured Children's attire and the snake spirit's cyan-purple in "Calabash Brothers" constitutes an implicit "good versus evil" connotation, yet fails to further interrogate the intertextual relationship between the colour spectrum and the pigment traditions of Jiaodong folk paper-cutting; Sun Ping and Huo Xiaoyan (2019) interpret colour metaphors through character symbolism and social psychology, similarly lacking depth in regional art historical context. At the level of animation craft history, Tang Zhi et al. (2020) documented the "preference for red" custom in northern Jiangsu paper-cutting through fieldwork. Their methodology provides a

paradigm for tracing the symbolic system of red, green, peach, and indigo in Jiaodong paper-cutting, yet the text does not address issues of animation translation.

4. Research Objectives

Overall, current research exhibits a ‘polarisation at both ends’: one strand focuses on interpreting animation symbols through Barthes' theory while neglecting the essence of folk art colour palettes; the other traces the colour folklore of paper-cutting yet pays scant attention to animation texts. A tripartite interdisciplinary study integrating Barthes' semiology, the colour spectrum folklore of Jiaodong paper-cutting, and the colour design of "Calabash Brothers" addresses this gap, offering a new contextualised interpretative model for ‘ethnicised animation visual language’.

Consequently, this research will analyse and summarise the character design characteristics of Jiaodong paper-cutting art within "Calabash Brothers" through the lens of Roland Barthes' semiology.

5. Research Methodology

This study employs qualitative research methods, grounded in Barthes' semiology, to conduct an in-depth analysis of the character design in "Calabash Brothers". Content analysis is utilised to explore the distinctive features of Jiaodong paper-cutting art in the character design of Chinese paper-cut animation, making the content analysis phase the primary component of this research process. The content analysis is primarily conducted through self-narrative writing. First, samples of Jiaodong paper-cutting art were collected through sampling. Subsequently, the paper-cutting animation segment selected the representative work "Calabash Brothers", created during the golden age of Chinese paper-cutting animation, as the primary research subject. Finally, combining the Jiaodong paper-cutting samples with specific content from the Chinese paper-cutting animation "Calabash Brothers", Roland Barthes' semiotic theory was applied to conduct a detailed content analysis of the character design.

Research Framework (Figure 2):

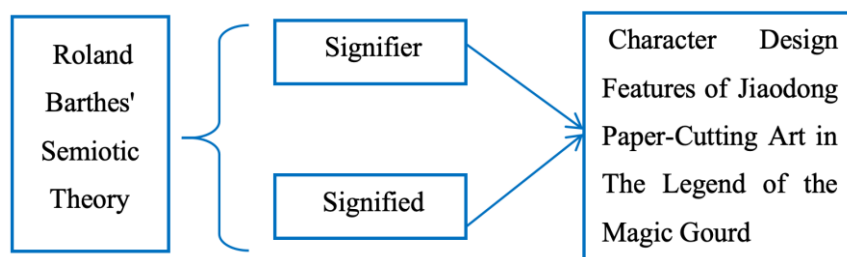


Figure 2: Research Framework
 Source: Zhang Yun, 2025

6. Research Methodology


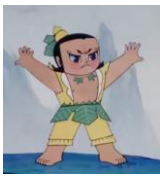


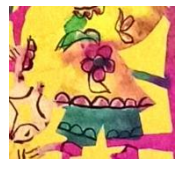

As one of China's traditional crafts, Jiaodong paper-cutting art holds significant reference value for understanding Chinese traditional culture through its unique artistic charm and cultural connotations. (Wang & Cong, 2019). Amidst the wave of traditional cultural revival, the stylistic characteristics of Jiaodong paper-cutting art have increasingly been incorporated into animation design. This is particularly evident in the classic animated series "Calabash

Brothers", where the character designs draw extensively upon the essence of Jiaodong paper-cutting art. The graphic composition of paper-cutting involves 'creating imagery through visual thinking and logical reasoning, reflecting the fundamental principles and methods of pattern organisation and pictorial composition' (Li, 2008). This paper explores the innovative application of Jiaodong paper-cutting art in animation character design through four dimensions: Jiaodong paper-cutting art itself, the Chinese paper-cutting animation "Calabash Brothers", Barthes' semiotic theory, and character design.

6.1 Characteristics of the Calabash Baby Characters

As illustrated in Table 2, Jiaodong paper-cutting art is evident in the design of the Calabash Baby Characters from "Calabash Brothers". Their imagery borrows the art form's characteristics of simplicity, exaggeration, and fluid lines. Design elements such as large eyes, round faces, stubby limbs, and rounded torsos not only visually represent childhood but also embody traditional Chinese aesthetic ideals of childlike innocence and vivacious charm. Through geometric stylisation and exaggerated proportions, these elements convey the Calabash Babies' youthful innocence and exuberance.

Table 2: The embodiment of Jiaodong paper-cutting art in the character design of Calabash Baby

Jiaodong Paper-Cut Works	Modelling Symbolic Elements	Elements Reflected in "Calabash Brothers"	Signifier	Signified	Character modelling
	Overall Appearance		Large head, small body, short and stout limbs, rounded torso	Lively and endearing, radiating health and good fortune, embodying the innocence and vitality of childhood	Smooth lines, geometric treatment, exaggerated proportions
	Facial Features		Round face, large eyes, small mouth	Innocent and kind-hearted, symbolising auspiciousness	Plump and rounded, with simplified facial features
	Costumes and Patterns		Flat treatment, simple line decorations, geometric patterns	Reflecting traditional folk art aesthetics, symbolising courage, justice, life, and hope	Symmetrical patterns, paper-cut motifs, flattened treatment

Source: Zhang Yun, 2025

The design of the Calabash Babies' Characters draws inspiration from the geometric treatment and exaggerated proportions characteristic of Jiaodong paper-cutting art. From the perspective of Barthes' semiotic theory concerning signifier and signified: Firstly, the design featuring large heads, small bodies, and short, stout limbs enhances the characters' visual impact while conveying the innocence and vitality of childhood. Secondly, the character's round face, large eyes, and small mouth employ the Jiaodong paper-cutting tradition's rounded forms and simplified facial features, symbolising innocence, kindness, and auspiciousness.

Thirdly, the colour scheme of the character's attire centres on red accented with green, while the geometric patterns draw inspiration from the symmetrical motifs and vibrant hues characteristic of Jiaodong paper-cutting. This design not only fosters a lively and endearing atmosphere but also symbolises courage, justice, and the essence of life and hope. Finally, the





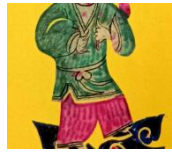

simple line decorations and geometric textures employ the cut-paper textures and flattened treatment techniques of Jiaodong paper-cutting art, symbolising the aesthetic appeal of traditional folk art.

Thus, the character design of the Gourd Children fully embodies the characteristics of Jiaodong paper-cutting art. Through the exaggeration and simplification of the Calabash Babies' Characters forms, it conveys rich cultural connotations. This artistic approach not only enhances the visual appeal of the characters but also allows audiences to appreciate the profound heritage of traditional Chinese culture.

6.2 Characteristics of the Grandfather Character

As illustrated in Table 3, the Grandfather character draws upon the rustic, substantial qualities and bold lines characteristic of Jiaodong paper-cutting. Stylistic elements such as his long beard, wrinkles, and benevolent countenance not only visually represent an elder but also embody traditional Chinese cultural symbols of wisdom, compassion, and venerable authority. These stylistic elements, rendered through geometric treatment and exaggerated proportions, convey the grandfather's steadfastness and benevolence.

Table 3: The embodiment of Jiaodong paper-cutting art in the character design of Grandpa

Jiaodong Paper-Cut Works	Modelling Symbolic Elements	Elements Reflected in "The Gourd Brothers"	Signifier	Signified	Character modelling
	Overall Appearance		A benevolent countenance, medium build, slightly stooped	Symbolising the diligent, unassuming, wise, compassionate, and traditional elder,	Solid and substantial, with bold lines, harmonious proportions, and a sense of steadiness
	Facial features		Square jawline, thick eyebrows, full beard, wrinkles, benevolent countenance,	resolute yet benevolent, embodying traditional virtues	Square and full-faced, with distinct features
	Costume and Patterns		Clothing drapes with fluid lines, featuring sparse geometric patterns	Hardworking and unassuming, embodying the essence of traditional agrarian culture and the working people	Unadorned and unpretentious, traditional attire with simple lines and minimal embellishment

Source: Zhang Yun, 2025








From the perspective of the signifier-signified principle in Barthes' semiology, the grandfather's physique is designed as medium-built with a slight stoop, aligning with the harmonious proportions and sense of stability characteristic of Jiaodong paper-cutting art. This design enhances the character's visual impact, conveying the symbolic meaning of diligence, simplicity, and being the pillar of the family. Additionally, the grandfather's square face, thick eyebrows, and long beard employ the Jiaodong paper-cutting technique of square, full forms and distinct facial features, symbolising steadfastness, benevolence, and traditional virtues.

Furthermore, the grandfather's grey robe and simple sash draw upon the unadorned elegance and traditional attire motifs found in Jiaodong paper-cutting. This design cultivates an atmosphere of unassuming simplicity, representing diligence, down-to-earthness, and traditional agrarian culture. Finally, the fluid drapery lines and sparse geometric patterns on Grandfather's garments employ the Jiaodong paper-cutting tradition's minimalist lines and restrained ornamentation, embodying the authentic character of the working people.

6.3 Characteristics of the Snake Spirit Character

As evident from the tabulated content (Table 4), the serpent spirit's characterisation draws upon the distorted exaggeration and fluid lines characteristic of Jiaodong paper-cutting art. Analysed through Barthes' semiotic framework of signifier and signified, its elongated eyes, pointed chin, and slender form serve not merely as visual representation of an antagonist, but also embody traditional Chinese cultural connotations of cunning, treachery, and ruthless cruelty. These stylistic elements, rendered through geometric abstraction and exaggerated proportions, vividly convey the Snake Spirit's dual nature of alluring charm and inherent peril.

Table 4: The embodiment of Jiaodong paper-cutting art in the character design of Snake Spirit

Jiaodong Paper-Cut Works	Modelling Symbolic Elements	Elements Reflected in "Calabash Brothers"	Signifier	Signified	Character modelling
	Overall Appearance		Serpentine form, slender limbs	Cunning, treacherous, alluring and dangerous	Distorted and exaggerated, with fluid lines, slender and delicate, featuring exaggerated proportions
	Facial Features		Pointed chin, narrow eyes, high cheekbones	Insidious and treacherous, symbolising malevolent forces	A sharp, narrow face with sharply defined features
 	Costumes and Patterns		Black and gold colour scheme, serpentine scales	Mysterious and dangerous, embodying the complexity of antagonistic characters	Opulent and intricate, featuring stark colour contrasts, complex patterns, and curved ornamentation

Source: Zhang Yun, 2025

The serpentine form and elongated limbs of the snake spirit align with the slender proportions and exaggerated scale characteristic of Jiaodong paper-cutting art. This design not only heightens the character's visual impact but also conveys the dual symbolism of allure and peril. The snake spirit's facial features—a pointed chin, slender eyes, and high cheekbones—employ the Jiaodong paper-cutting tradition's depiction of sharp, angular faces and piercing features, symbolising cunning treachery and malevolent power.









Regarding costume design, the serpent spirit's black-and-gold colour scheme and serpentine motifs employ the Jiaodong paper-cutting tradition's use of opulent complexity and stark colour contrasts, symbolising mystery and peril. The serpent scales and curvilinear ornamentation

draw upon the art form's intricate patterns and sinuous decorations, embodying the dual connotations of allure and danger.

6.4 Characteristics of the Animal Characters

As evidenced by the table content (Table 5), the character designs of the Scorpion Demon, Toad Demon, and Snake Demon in "Calabash Brothers" draw upon multiple characteristics of Jiaodong paper-cutting art. From the perspective of signifier and signified in Barthes' semiotic theory, the Scorpion Demon's character image borrows the simplified, exaggerated, and fluid linework typical of Jiaodong paper-cutting. Its robust body and exaggerated limb proportions align with the geometric stylisation and exaggerated proportions characteristic of Jiaodong paper-cutting. Distinctive design elements such as its carapace, pincers, and tail not only visually represent the natural scorpion but also symbolise strength, danger, and ferocity. These stylised elements, rendered through geometric abstraction and exaggerated proportions, vividly convey the scorpion spirit's dual nature of formidable strength and inherent peril.

Table 5: The reflection of Jiaodong paper-cutting art in the animal character design of "Calabash Brothers"

Jiaodong Paper-Cut Works	Modelling Symbolic Elements	Elements Reflected in "Calabash Brothers"	Signifier	Signified	Character modelling
	Animal Form of the Scorpion Demon		Geometric patterns, distinctive carapace textures, robust body, exaggerated limb proportions,	Symbolising strength, danger, ferocity, and aggression	Robust lines, exaggerated proportions, clean and fluid lines, geometric treatment,
	Toad Demon Animal Form		The Toad Demon's form features clean lines and exaggerated proportions,	emphasising its grotesque and malevolent traits, symbolising the wickedness and destructive nature of antagonistic figures	The design exhibits symmetry with a geometrically structured body
	The animal form of the pig		Features clean lines, exaggerated form, and a geometric body structure	symbolising the greed and stupidity of antagonistic characters	Geometricised form, clean lines, exaggerated shape
	The animal form of the snake		Flowing lines, simplified form, elegant body curves,	emphasising its agility and cunning traits, symbolising the danger and deceit of antagonistic characters	Flowing lines, simplified form, body design brimming with curvaceous beauty,

Source: Zhang Yun, 2025

The toad spirit's design employs clean lines and exaggerated forms, echoing the concise lines and exaggerated shapes found in Jiaodong paper-cutting art, emphasising the character's ugliness and wickedness (Pu, 2018). Furthermore, the toad spirit's form draws upon symbolic patterns from paper-cutting art, conveying its malevolence and destructive nature as an antagonist. Specifically, the Toad Demon's form exhibits symmetry, a geometric body structure, and highly ornamental attire and accessories. These design elements render the character distinctly vivid while embodying a skilful fusion of traditional culture and contemporary animation design.

The Pig Demon's design employs clean lines and exaggerated forms, with a geometrically structured body. This echoes the concise lines and exaggerated shapes found in Jiaodong paper-cutting art, accentuating the Pig Demon's clumsiness and greed as an antagonist.

The serpent's character design employs fluid curves and simplified forms, accentuating its agility and cunning. Furthermore, the serpent's appearance draws upon symbolic decorative motifs from Jiaodong paper-cutting art, embodying the mystique and wisdom associated with serpents in traditional culture. Specifically, the serpent's body design showcases sinuous beauty, with ornamental scale textures. Geometric details on its head and eyes heighten visual impact, conveying the danger and cunning inherent to its villainous role.

By integrating with Jiaodong paper-cutting art, the animal characters in "Calabash Brothers" express distinctive personalities and characteristics. This renders the imagery of creatures like the Scorpion Demon, Toad Demon, Pig Demon, and Snake more vivid, while also demonstrating the ingenious fusion of traditional culture with modern animation design.

7. Conclusion

This study employs Barthes' semiotic framework to analyse the application of Jiaodong paper-cutting art in the character design of "Calabash Brothers". Findings reveal that the stylistic features, expressive techniques, and aesthetic principles of Jiaodong paper-cutting profoundly shaped the visual style of "Calabash Brothers". The animation's character design, scene construction, and colour palette all embody the essence of Jiaodong paper-cutting, while skilfully employing the concepts of signifier and signified from Barthes' semiotics.

This fusion of traditional art and modern animation not only creates a distinctive visual experience but also successfully conveys the profound connotations of Chinese traditional culture. The success of "Calabash Brothers" demonstrates that traditional cultural elements can serve as vital sources of inspiration for contemporary artistic creation. Through innovative transformation and integration, traditional art can be revitalised within new media and contexts.

This study offers fresh perspectives on understanding the transformation of traditional culture within modern art, while providing valuable insights for future animation creation. Subsequent research may further explore the application of other traditional art forms in contemporary animation, and how cross-cultural integration can foster Chinese animated works with greater international resonance.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to express sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed, both directly and indirectly, to the completion of this study.

The authors would like to thank the Hebei Institute of Fine Arts and Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) for providing the supports for this study.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this study.

References

- Barthes, R. (1972). *Mythologies* (A. Lavers, Trans.). Hill & Wang. (Original work published 1957)
- Li, W. Y., Wu, T. L., & Liu, S. (2012). *Fundamentals of patterns and decoration*. Oriental Publishing Centre.
- Pu, H. D. (2018). Research on the application of paper-cutting art in children's picture books. *Journal of Anhui University of Technology (Social Sciences Edition)*, 35(1), 15–18.
- Ramadany, R., Hasyim, M., & Sukma, S. (2024). Roland Barthes' semiotics analysis of characters from Liyue in the game Genshin Impact. *Journal of Maobi*, 2(1), 51–59. <https://doi.org/10.20961/maobi.v2i1.85101>
- Rizki, A. P. D. R. (2024). Semiotic analysis found in selected Christopher Nolan's movie posters. *Proceedings Series on Social Sciences & Humanities*, 18, 320–330. <https://doi.org/10.30595/pssh.v18i1.269>
- Shao, J. K. (2014). A study on the decorative characteristics of “Xihua paper-cutting” in the Jiaodong region (Master's thesis, Shandong University of Arts).
- Sun, P., & Huo, X. Y. (2019). Interpreting the symbolism of characters and social psychology in the animated series *The Calabash Brothers*. *Journal of China Radio, Film and Television*, (12), 72–74.
- Tai, Z. J. (2021). The aesthetics of imagery in contemporary Chinese animation from the perspective of pictorial rhetoric: Taking *The Legend of the Magic Gourd* as an example. *Art and Technology*, 34(15), 73–74.
- Tang, Z., Gao, Y., & Wang, K. (2020). Analysis of artistic characteristics and cultural implications in Huaian Cheqiao paper-cutting art. *Journal of Wuhan Textile University*, 33(6), 11–16.
- Tian, J. (2019). A study on Jiaodong paper-cutting styles based on regional culture. *Art Education*, (11), 247–248.
- Wang, M. (2018). A study of the cultural implications of Sun Wukong animation characters in China and Japan from a semiotic perspective (Master's thesis, Anhui University of Technology).
- Wang, W. P., & Cong, S. L. (2019). Research on the contemporary value of Jiaodong paper-cutting art. *China Ethnic Expo*, 10, 16–17.
- Yapis, B. (2024). Semiotic analysis in advertising: How messages are communicated to society. *Jurnal Komunikasi*, 2(3), 224–235.
- Zhang, J. (2013). On Roland Barthes' semiotics and visual communication theory. *Journal of Humanities*, (09), 70–74. <https://doi.org/10.15895/j.cnki.rwzz.2013.09.002>
- Zhou, L. H. (2021). A brief discussion on the development history and artistic characteristics of Chinese paper-cut animation across different periods. *Paper Industry Information*, (11), 96–97.