



07th Asia-Pacific International Conference on Quality of Life

Wina Holiday Villa, Kuta, Bali, Indonesia, 30 Sep – 02 Oct 2023

Cultural Exploration of Shanxi Local Opera Costumes and Malaysian Chinese Opera Costumes

Xing Furong¹, Azian Tahir¹, Syed Alwi Syed Abu Bakar¹, Li Peimin²

** Corresponding Author*

¹ Collage of Creative Arts, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Perak Branch, Seri Iskandar Campus, Malaysia,

² Shanxi Department of Culture and Tourism, Shanxi Province, China,

2021946099@student.uitm.edu.my, azian572@uitm.edu.my, syeda214@uitm.edu.my, shewenchulpm@163.com

Tel: +601123057792

Abstract

This paper uses diversified qualitative research methods such as literature, case studies, and comparative research to focus on Shanxi local and Malaysian Chinese opera costumes. The article found that the development of Shanxi local opera and Malaysian Chinese opera costumes is the result of cultural identity and inheritance. The changes in opera costumes are a new visual form formed after transcendence, integration, and identification. This paper can also boost the exchange of costumes between Shanxi local and Malaysian Chinese opera and further enrich the current global cultural civilization.

Keywords: Opera costume; Shanxi local opera; Malaysian Chinese opera; Culture;aesthetic

eISSN: 2398-4287 © 2023. The Authors. Published for AMER & cE-Bs by e-International Publishing House, Ltd., UK. This is an open-access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>). Peer-review under the responsibility of AMER (Association of Malaysian Environment-Behaviour Researchers), and cE-Bs (Centre for Environment-Behaviour Studies), College of Built Environment, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21834/e-bpj.v8i26.5199>

1.0 Introduction

For decades, we have witnessed a process of globalization that can compress time and eliminate distance. The rate of flow of people, goods, and discourse is instantaneous, ultimately leading to a mix of culture and identity. The increasing importance of local and national cultural identity in this complex transnational network may be the way to overcome language and cultural barriers in globalization (Cao,2021). In this sense, the exploration of the artistic expression of traditional clothing is not only a deep understanding of local and national culture, a bridge between traditional culture and contemporary spiritual culture in a modern environment, but also a powerful weapon to further explore and innovate local and national culture in global activities. This paper systematically solves the topic using directed, descriptive, and interdisciplinary research methods. This article focuses on three main objectives:

Objective 1: To summarize the historical relationship between Shanxi local and Malaysian Chinese opera costumes.

Objective 2: To compare the analysis of Shanxi local opera costumes and Malaysian Chinese opera costumes;

Objective 3: To analyze the influencing factors of the aesthetic expression of Shanxi local and Malaysian Chinese opera costumes.

2.0 Literature Review

eISSN: 2398-4287 © 2023. The Authors. Published for AMER & cE-Bs by e-International Publishing House, Ltd., UK. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>). Peer-review under responsibility of AMER (Association of Malaysian Environment-Behaviour Researchers), and cE-Bs (Centre for Environment-Behaviour Studies), College of Built Environment, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21834/e-bpj.v8i26.5199>

Clothing arose from the primitive way of dressing himself. Therefore, theatrical costumes also originated from the role-play carried out by primitive people by dressing themselves up (Cao & Li,2021). The essence of opera is cosplay. The costumes are dressing, and the two are interrelated. Role playing is role transformation, that is, from one role image to another. The meaning of clothing is to dress up the wearer and promote change (Liu,2022).

Shanxi local opera originated in central Shanxi, so it is also called Zhonglu Bangzi or Shanxi Bangzi. In the development and evolution of Shanxi local opera, Zhonglu Bangzi originated from the mountain Shanxi bangzi, and gradually formed into a big opera (Chen,2021). Shanxi local opera costumes are Shanxi local opera performing arts, with the help of virtualization, freehand, stylization , other artistic expression means, not only express the inner characters but also play the role of visual communication. Shanxi local opera's costumes embody both the art of costume, the art of weaving, the art of embroidery, and the art of crafts (Yang,2017). The design uses artistic exaggeration, pictography, deformation, and other means in aesthetics, and its color and displayed character play a role in setting off and rendering the character. The Malaysian Chinese opera is a whole based on the structure of the Malaysian Chinese opera activity and its interrelated relationships. Malaysian Chinese opera has always played a role in the system of Southeast Asian Chinese opera and even the world's Chinese opera (Sharan, et al,2017).

This naturally includes a change in the character image. The product of the association between drama and costume is theatrical costume. This essence of theatrical costumes is in the origin and development of drama. The aesthetic expression of theatrical costumes is another key to express the art. Shanxi local opera costumes return to the characteristics of theatrical costume aesthetics. Malaysian Chinese opera costumes focus on the trend towards the overseas use of theatrical costumes. The comparative analysis of the two can better interpret the characteristics of the aesthetic expression of theatrical costumes).

3.0 Methodology

This paper employs a qualitative approach, systematically analyzing literature and conducting descriptive research. Interdisciplinary research is combining knowledge, methods, and ideas from multiple academic disciplines to solve complex problems and create new insights. In the literature search, the article focused on keywords such as "theatrical costume" "Shanxi local opera" "Malaysian Chinese opera", etc. Through the retrieval of related articles, relevant literature was obtained to provide literature support for this paper. At the same time, the author went to the Jin Theater in Shanxi Province and the Chinese Theater in Malaysia to conduct fieldwork and take a large number of photos of theatrical costumes. On this basis, this article provides a detailed analysis of the two theatrical costumes.

4.0 Findings

4.1 The historical origins of Shanxi local opera costumes and Malaysian Chinese opera costumes

The tradition advocating this idea aims to identify the sensory features that support a particular aesthetic effect and provide guidance on how certain elements can be created and combined in the stimulus to elicit specific effects in the perceiver. Historically, Malaysia is a country with a very complex population composition, with more than 300 ethnic groups living together (Lee&Guan,2012). Besides a small number of native Malaysian people, most of the "Malaysians" are essentially composed of foreign peoples, mainly including Malays from Indonesia, Indians from India, and Chinese from China (Lee & Guan,2012). Malaysian Chinese opera is one of the most typical cases of Chinese opera being promoted overseas. It not only constructs its complete history of opera but also presents the characteristics of Malaysian localization that are different from the Mainland Chinese.

Due to the random dispersal of historical materials, there is nowhere to know when Chinese opera started performed on the stage in Malaysia in a formal form. We can only roughly divide the period before 1910 as the transplantation of Malaysian Chinese opera. 1910-1920 was a decade of the initial development of Chinese opera (Liu, 2002). From 1786, when the British colonial government occupied Penang, to 1920, the British colonial government was only interested in economic plunder. They were more lenient in the policies promulgated by the colonies. Various races go their way and live in their circles. The spiritual world of the Chinese is Chinese. They present themselves as sojourners. In terms of lifestyle, traditional customs, moral customs, aesthetic taste, etc., they are relatively consistent with the homeland. China's long-standing traditional culture has also sown the seeds in this rubber forest soil. Chinese opera is a significant part of China's cultural heritage, reflecting the identity and consciousness of its people. The Chinese diaspora is becoming more aware and more firmly identified with many cultural norms that make Chinese people Chinese (Lee, 2012). Chinese opera has the corresponding opera cultural context. Penang's Pudu opera is the most famous in Malaysia's 13 states. This small island has an area of only 293 square kilometers. Due to a range of factors, since the 19th century, different dialect groups from China have immigrated and brought different local opera genres from China. That can be described as the Grand Garden of Chinese Opera, and such a landscape is inseparable from the needs of Zhongyuan Festival acting. The flourishing of the festival activities of the Zhongyuan Festival created a suitable climate for the development of Chinese opera as a group art. That has also nurtured many local theatre classes and helped them thrive.

Shanxi local opera originated in central Shanxi. During the Daoguang period of the Qing Dynasty, Shanxi's local opera spread to Taiyuan and other areas in the province. This period can be said to be the beginning of the formation of Shanxi local opera. Little is written about Shanxi's local opera from this period. Shanxi local opera also includes singing performances. Wealthy businessmen in the region would gather to watch various theater shows, some of which featured child performers. After that, the influence of Shanxi local opera in northern Shaanxi gradually expanded, forming its unique type of opera. However, Shanxi local opera has been hit hard by changes undergoing social upheaval. It was not until the establishment of the Chinese People's Republic that the development of

Shanxi's local opera began to get on track again. In the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the art of opera rekindled the artistic flame under the care of the government. Artists began to gather in various parts of Shanxi to form large and small class clubs, but the Cultural Revolution movement soon brought serious damage to the Shanxi local opera. Theatre classes were closed and studying Shanxi local opera art was banned, leading to criticism of outstanding artists. After the reform and opening up, China has a new look, every time Shanxi local opera art appears on the stage, the government vigorously promotes spiritual civilization culture, and Shanxi local opera art is still constantly improving and developing.

Chinese opera is a form of opera nurtured under the domination of oriental ways of thinking. Malaysian Chinese opera is composed of various Chinese operas, mainly including plays from Guangdong and Fujian provinces. In addition, Peking Opera, Taiwan's Nanguan Opera, and Opera have also appeared in Malaysia, but their circulation time is relatively short (Sharan, et al,2017). Shanxi local opera originated in central Shanxi and is a unique theatrical art form in Shanxi Province. By sorting out their origins and development contexts, we can find that the development of both types of opera has experienced the influence of culture and art and the influence of social unrest. Eventually, they developed under the impetus of the general public and local opera organizations. The formation of different opera costume cultures provided a strong foundation.

Proposition 1: The development of Shanxi local opera and Malaysian Chinese opera shows folklore and politics.

4.2 A comparative study of Shanxi local opera costumes and Malaysian Chinese opera costumes

Shanxi local opera is a branch of traditional Chinese theater. Malaysian Chinese opera is a form of special assistance formed after the traditional Chinese opera entered Malaysia. Both originated from the indigenous culture of China. The costume is an outward expression of theatrical art. Shanxi local opera and Malaysian Chinese opera costumes show a dialectical contradiction. Chinese culture derives the essence. But their manifestations incorporate their characteristics.

Symbolism is the combination of time and space, and the unity of the whole and the individual. Opera modes are their categories in different times and spaces, forming their performance forms. The symbolism of this garment is expressed in style, color, pattern, and so on. Both costumes convey the characteristics of clothing in different elements for the public, and the essence of this communication is the same. That essence is portrayed in the play's stage space and historical context. It is embodied both in the overall system of theatrical costumes and in each specific suit system of theatrical costumes (Fan, 2009). But their performance is quite different. For example, Shanxi local opera costumes design various character images through intercultural contact, using symbolism, deformation, and other techniques, forming stage aesthetics and aspects related to the background of the characters, such as identity, personality, status, age, etc., For example, the python robe (Figure 1) in Shanxi local opera costumes originated from the python skirt in the Ming Dynasty and was processed and beautified based on the python skirt. Python robe retains the basic shape of the python skirt, inherits the characteristics of traditional Chinese clothing in pursuit of artistic beauty, and gives it more distinctive aesthetic characteristics.

Malaysian Cantonese opera, for example, has characteristics common to Chinese Cantonese opera and Malaysian culture. Malaysian Cantonese opera python robe absorbs the characteristics of local Chinese Cantonese opera, and the overall clothing style is more generous (Figure 2). As a medium of communication, religious ceremonies are expressed through acts such as prayer, chanting, offerings, singing, and dancing.

These acts are performed to reward the gods, entertain them, and gain accommodation and shelter with them. Another prominent phenomenon is that opera performances and religious ceremonies often show a situation of mutual echo and mutual penetration. In Malaysia, the performance of opera often stretches from the stage to the altar, showing the characteristics of a play in a festival and a sacrifice in a play (Sharan, et al,2017). Chinese religious ritual operas have a vital feature. Malaysia opera is often used to showcase religious ceremonies. The ceremonies are presented in the form of an opera on stage. In this way, opera performances and religious ceremonies become two sides of the same thing that cannot be separated. Malaysian Chinese opera clothing incorporates more religious elements due to cultural significance.



Fig 1: Shanxi local opera costume
(Source: Author shoots)



Fig 2: Malaysian Cantonese opera pyjama
(Source: Author shoots)

Based on this, this paper can draw the following conclusions:

Proposition 2: The expression of Shanxi local opera and Malaysian Chinese opera costumes has the unity of internal essence and the difference of external expression.

5.0 Discussion

Aesthetics extends to clothing aesthetics. That includes design aesthetics and wearing aesthetics. The principle of aesthetics is best reflected in clothing, making it a popular medium for its promotion. For clothing with different colors, styling styles, and cultural connotations, the principle of aesthetics can help people analyze from the perspective of psychology, sociology, and history so that they can feel the charm of clothing with different aesthetic values while producing different impressions. Digging into the characteristics of aesthetic expressions, we can find that the essence of this aesthetic difference is cultural identity.

Zhang (2007) argued: "The so-called cultural identity refers to the affirmation of a common culture between people or between individuals and groups. It includes using the same cultural symbols, following common cultural ideas, and adhering to common patterns of thinking and behavior." Having a common culture is often the basis of national and social identity. Cultural identity between people is mainly manifested in the recognition of the same cultural background, cultural atmosphere, and cultural behavior, and also in the recognition and acceptance of each other's culture. In fact, this cultural identity is gradually evolving in folklore and politics. For the Chinese in Malaysia, their cultural identity is manifested as the identification of the same national culture, that is, the identification of Chinese culture beyond national boundaries. The second is the identification with the same faith and culture, such as Buddhism and Christianity, which is a mutual identification regardless of race, gender, nationality, etc. The second is the identification with different cultural circles in the world, that is, the identification of civilizations, such as Islamic civilization.

This cultural identity has given the outward expression of Chinese theatrical costumes a local cultural touch. To explore cultural identity, we must start with cultural understanding. Just like the Malaysian Chinese, they consciously adhere to the unique cultural norms of the Chinese. Traditional Chinese culture includes both tangible material culture and intangible spiritual culture, especially in terms of lifestyle, customs, religious beliefs, values, psychological characteristics, and aesthetic taste. These ancestors migrated to Malaya, not only bringing with them customs and languages rich in regional characteristics, but also bringing music, painting, opera, novels, poetry, etc. to the hot land under their feet, carrying forward them as the symbols and cultural identity of their ethnic groups, and establishing an "artistic China". Among them, Chinese opera is a very representative cultural event, because it integrates Chinese literature, music, dance, painting, architecture, and other cultural and artistic factors to the greatest extent, so it can shape the overall image of Chinese traditional culture explicitly and implicitly. Shanxi local opera, under the rendering of identity and identity, is the expression of clothing while absorbing Chinese traditional culture, but also integrated Shanxi local cultural elements, such as paper cutting, printing and dyeing, wallpaper, and so on. The identity of the essence of the two theatrical costumes and the difference in external expression are formed by different cultural identities. Ultimately, it influenced the external aesthetic characteristics of the clothing of different districts. This article can lead to the following conclusions:

Proposition 3: Shanxi local and Malaysian Chinese opera costumes show the identity and difference of internal aesthetics under the influence of cultural identity.

6.0 Conclusion

And cultural identity is the root of this expression of aesthetic difference. This paper finds three conclusions. Firstly, the development of Shanxi local and Malaysian Chinese opera shows folklore and politics. The external expression of Shanxi local opera and Malaysian Chinese opera clothing has the unity of internal essence and the difference of external expression. Finally, Shanxi local opera and Malaysian Chinese opera clothing show internal aesthetic similarities and differences under the influence of cultural identity.

Given its limitations, this study only explores the reasons for the difference in aesthetic expression between Shanxi local opera and Malaysian Chinese opera. The performance of the two theatrical costumes in terms of fabric, color, appearance, pattern, etc. still needs to be further studied in the future.

Through the comparison of the two dramas, in the study of traditional costume aesthetics, researchers need to pay attention to the intrinsic nature of different costumes and the historical changes of changes and extract the characteristics of costume aesthetics, to further promote the development of the aesthetic expression of costume art.

Acknowledgement

Authors acknowledge the Jabatan Kesenian dan Kebudayaan Negara for funding under the Program Penyelidikan Seni Budaya (100-TNCPI/PRI 16/6/2 (038/2021))

Paper Contribution to Related Field of Study

On the one hand, this paper will further promote the research on the aesthetic expression of Shanxi local opera and Malaysian Chinese opera costumes. At the same time, this paper explains the essence of different aesthetic expressions of opera, which will further promote the development of traditional art culture.

References

- Cao Min, Li Zhenying. (2021). BJD Clothing Innovative Design from the perspective of China-Malaysia Cultural Exchange Light Textile Industry and Technology, 50 (05): 12-15.
- Chen Huanyi. (2021) Persatuan Seni Budaya Putra Cross-cultural integration and innovation from "Niang Jia Ge Ba ya". Journal of Minjiang University, 42 (01): 113-120.
- Liu Xiaoqing. (2002). Dynamics of theatrical costumes. Opera Arts (3), 3.
- Lee, & Guan, H. (2012). Malaysian Chinese: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. Wang Xinyue. (2020) Research on the symbolic costume pattern of shanxi local opera. Art and Design (Theory), 2 (03): 88-90.
- Sharan, Nazzatul, Izwana, Mohammad, Legino, & Rafeah, et al. (2017). Malaysia's chinese opera characters visualized into creative visual artwork. Advanced Science Letters, 23(11), 10862-10864.
- Yang Zhiyong. (2017) Analysis of the stylized characteristics of stage art of Traditional shanxi local opera. Art Education, (Z5): 142-143.
- Zhao Zhuqing. (2018) A preliminary study on the costume characteristics of the characters in Shanxi shanxi local opera. Industrial Design, (07): 111-112.
- ZHANG Yunpeng. (2007). Cultural Rights: The Dimension of Self-Identity and Otherness. Social Science Literature Press.