



## Shanxi Local Opera and Malaysian Chinese Opera Clothing Fabrics

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### Abstract

This paper, literature research, and comparative research were used to systematically study the costumes and fabrics. The paper finds that the clothing fabrics of Shanxi local opera have the magnificence of ancient Chinese costumes, and the process technology is mainly color embroidery, gold embroidery, and mixed embroidery. The fabrics of Malaysian Cantonese opera costumes are relatively more luxurious, with a very obvious Lingnan style. In the end, the article argues that historical and cultural changes have dominated the differentiation of fabrics. The research can further promote the theoretical and practical exploration of the intrinsic value of theatrical costumes.

Keywords: Theatrical costumes, Cultural differences, Fabrics

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### 1.0 Introduction

Due to the dispersion of historical materials, there is no place to know when Chinese opera was performed on the grass stage in Malaysia in a formal form. We can only roughly divide the period before 1910 as the transplantation of Chinese opera in Malaysia. The period from 1910 to 1920 was the decade in which Chinese opera took root and developed initially. Under the influence of the "Maritime Silk Road" since ancient times, Malaysian culture has been deeply influenced by foreign cultures, especially Chinese culture, which is reflected in many cultural fields such as language, food, clothing, etc (Qu & Liu, 2020 ). Malaysian Chinese opera is one of the most typical cases of Chinese opera being carried forward overseas. It constructs its complete history of opera and presents the characteristics of Malaysian localization that are different from the Chinese matrix. The local drama of Shanxi has formed a drama model with local style and traditional Chinese of the long process of cultural precipitation. Malaysian Chinese opera and Shanxi local opera are both different inheritances and developments of Chinese drama. This paper focuses on the comparison in the differences between Shanxi local opera and Malaysian Chinese opera costume fabrics, and systematically summarizes and summarizes the utility of fabrics in the expression of theatrical costumes.

### 2.0 Literature Review

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All material things written by the human body for body protection, covering, decoration, logos, etc., such as plant branches and leaves, animal fur, linen and silk, jade, etc., are regarded as clothing (Huang, 2013). Theatrical costumes have a specific connotation, which refers to costumes specially made according to the needs of theatrical costumes (Yan & Hu, 2020). The development of opera costumes has been synchronized with the development of opera, and costumes are a powerful means to portray characters and enhance the performance (Zhang, 2011). The feature is to beautify the actors' movements and express the subtle psychological activities of the characters (Liu, 2021). It is an indispensable tool for portraying a character's character. Opera costumes are subordinate to opera and serve opera (Feng, 2021).

The costumes are decorated with motifs such as python complements, plum blossoms, paddy fields, and cranes, but also with precious satin fabrics and exquisite Gu embroidery techniques (Yang, 2017). The folk opera troupe is still like this, and the costumes of the family class and the inner class are naturally more luxurious and exquisite. The material of the costumes is generally cloth, silk, and satin used by the folk Jianghu opera troupe, and only a few costumes use brocade or cloud satanic (Qu & Liu, 2020). In addition to cloth, silk, silk, and satin, the court used valuable silk fabrics such as rope silk; The whole set of artistic expressions of Malaysian Chinese opera and Shanxi local opera costumes is the main component of theatrical performance, which has a distinctive aesthetic taste (Hohaize, 2021). Malaysian Chinese opera and Shanxi local opera costumes incorporate a variety of artistic expressions such as embroidery, weaving, and traditional clothing. At present, the research on this topic focuses on the characteristics and functions of opera costumes, and colleagues focus on the fabric characteristics of drama costumes. However, the existing research has not systematically summarized the differences between different theatrical costume fabrics. Based on this, this paper starts with the costumes of Malaysian Chinese opera and Shanxi local opera and analyzes and summarizes the fabrics of the two dramas.

### 3.0 Methodology

This paper employs a qualitative approach, systematically analyzing literature and conducting descriptive research. Interdisciplinary research is the practice of 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. 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.

The author conducted a systematic study on the fabrics of Shanxi local opera, focusing on the selection of raw materials and process technology, and conducted a systematic analysis to understand the characteristics and external performance of the fabrics. At the same time, the article also systematically analyzes the fabric characteristics of Malaysian Cantonese opera. Through the comparative analysis of different theatrical fabrics, this paper further excavates the intrinsic cultural characteristics after the representation of differences.

### 4.0 Findings

#### 4.1 Fabrics for Shanxi Local Opera

##### 4.1.1 Raw material selection

The "rigid" clothing in "rigidity and softness" is made of satin, and the original name of satin is plain satin. Shanxi local opera industry called it "hard satin", the best large satin is smooth and fine, thick and crisp, looking at a color, looking at a color, looking at a color, changing rich in different lights, bright color, not only can be very heavy, gorgeous and complicated embroidery work all carried out, but also can fully reflect the characteristics of python, leaning and other clothing. The large satin with a large number of pattern embroidery is more gorgeous and atmospheric, which is suitable for the emperor, concubine, and other high-status characters in the palace, making it the most luxurious wear in Shanxi local opera clothing (Yan & Hu, 2020). For example, the backrest comes from the ancient armor, which is the military general's uniform in Shanxi local opera, which is made of stiff satin and decorated with gold and silver embroidery, so that the whole backing suit presents a metallic luster.

In addition to the choice of materials themselves, there should be more expensive materials for decoration, such as gold and silver, pearls, birds and animal feathers, etc. The use of precious metal weaving and embroidery has existed in our country for a long time. After the rise of Shanxi local opera, people used this embroidery technique in Shanxi local opera clothing, because gold, silver, pearls, etc. will reflect the light under the illumination of the stage lights, dazzling, and its strong decorative effect can be well demonstrated.

##### 4.1.2 Process technology

First, the color embroidery is elegant, the righteousness is demure, and it is used for characters such as Boudoir Dan and Wen Xiaosheng, and the patterns of such character costumes are mainly flowers and butterfly swallows. Therefore, color embroidery is a symbol of demure gentleness and elegant temperament. Color embroidery is rich in commonly used stitches, there are needle grabbing, needle sleeve, needle rolling, seed beating, etc., among which the most used needle method is to grab the needle and set the needle. These two stitches are the main stitches for embroidering flowers in Shanxi local opera clothing, and they are also the main means of expression for Hua Dan and Xiaosheng clothing patterns. Grab the needle based on the line in batches, grab the needle stitches neatly, the embroidered leaf surface stretched, the level is clear, and rich in decoration. The set of needles is the intersection of the two rows of wooden combs when embroidering, and the socket is inlaid with each other, which is the main stitch method for embroidering all kinds of petals and bird abdomen. The finished embroidery of this stitching method has uniform stitches, natural integration of thread and color, soft and ingenious changes, and produces the aesthetic pleasure of "elegant and beautiful" clothing in Shanxi local opera. Second,

the gold embroidery is dazzling and has a strong sense of expansion, which is mostly used for pure travel, symbolizing the character's bold personality and strong temperament. In addition, to express the metallic texture of the armor, the clothing must be embroidered with gold, which is also a powerful foil to the heroic temperament of the characters (Ma, 2021). Golden embroidery refers to flat gold embroidery and flat silver embroidery, and gold embroidery is the main means of embroidering the dragon pattern, unicorn pattern, and seawater cliff pattern at the hem of Shanxi local opera clothing. The texture effect of the gold and silver threads themselves enriches the decorative beauty of the clothing, making the decorative patterns three-dimensional and layered. Third, mixed embroidery is mainly colored embroidery, and the outer contour of the pattern is outlined with gold thread embroidery process, also known as circle gold embroidery. Mixed embroidery is the most common embroidery process in Shanxi local opera clothing, from the emperor to the general and the common people. Where the character has a certain status, the patterns in the clothing will be mixed with embroidery. The color line is used in conjunction with the gold and silver line, and it also has a good harmonizing effect, so that the overall style contrast of the costume is strong and harmonious, and the brilliance is brilliant, magnificent, and the stage effect is brilliant.



Fig 1: Colorful embroidery pictures  
(Source: Author shoots)



Fig 2: Gold embroidery pictures  
(Source: Author shoots)



Fig 3: Mixed embroidery pictures  
(Source: Author shoots)

#### 4.2 Fabrics for Malaysian Cantonese Opera

Cantonese embroidery costumes made using traditional Cantonese embroidery techniques are the mainstream of Cantonese opera costumes. Velvet embroidery and gold and silver thread embroidery are the two main stitches in Cantonese embroidery. According to the "Complete Works of Chinese Embroidery Clothing": "After the middle of the Qing Dynasty, Cantonese embroidery was divided into four types: velvet embroidery, thread embroidery, gold velvet mixed embroidery, and gold embroidery, among which the gold embroidery with padded cushion was the most famous. "Nail gold embroidery is the more characteristic color silk thread or gold and silver thread with another silk thread nailed to the surface of the fabric embroidery method, after several technical treatments, such as pad, embroidery, paste, etc., to produce a unique relief effect different from other embroidery(Chen, 2023). There is a record in the Han Army's deputy capital Guoermin's bamboo branch poem "Washing the Vulgar Zhai Poetry and Grass": "The gongs and drums are noisy and noisy, the golden beads shine brightly, and the flags are cut to the end of the flowers and lanterns, all of which are all exquisite." "This is the earliest document documenting the process of sequential embroidery. In the 20s of the 20th century, bead embroidery gradually replaced gold and silver thread embroidery and was widely used in traditional Cantonese opera costumes, bead embroidery was mainly divided into two forms: one was piled up into a specific pattern and used locally on the surface of the costume, and the other was to directly use beads on the entire costume. From the perspective of art design, the production process of Malaysian Cantonese opera costumes is a traditional folk handicraft art that is both practical and appreciative. The handicraft technique is the soul of the art of Cantonese embroidery costumes, and the production of Cantonese opera costumes continues to flourish through the exquisite craftsmanship of Cantonese embroidery(Hu, 2020).

In this paper, the gold embroidery process and the bead embroidery process, which are different from other theatrical costume production techniques in traditional Cantonese opera costumes, are the main research objects. There are two forms of gold embroidery in traditional Cantonese opera costumes: one is to use red silk threads to fix gold and silver threads on the cloth by "binding" and "tying" to embroider patterns. This kind of "binding" and "tying" method emphasizes the neatness of the stitches and needle tips. The distance between each gold and silver thread is the same, and the luster is bright, silky, and delicate. The other is gold and silver thread, which is used to outline the outer contour of the pattern or to depict details. Visually, the pattern conveys a strong sense of hierarchy and three-dimensionality, which is layered and vivid. Feel the nail gold embroidery process from the sense of touch, the texture is clear, and the concave and convex feeling is obvious. The beads used in the bead embroidery belong to the material with a reflective effect, and the hexagonal beads of different colors are regularly stacked into different patterns, which is highly decorative, creating a multi-level possibility for the design of traditional Cantonese opera costumes. Under the illumination of natural light, it presents a dynamic visual effect. As a hard-textured material, the use of bead embroidery makes traditional Cantonese opera costumes look tougher and straighter, with a stronger sense of texture, and can also enrich the stage effect of Cantonese opera and attract the attention of viewers. Compared with gold embroidery, bead embroidery is more rough to the touch and has obvious tactile stimulation. As shown in Table 4, traditional Cantonese opera costumes and crafts are in kind.



Fig 4: Detail of gold embroidery  
(Source: Author shoots)

## 5.0 Discussion

The patterns of Malaysian Cantonese opera costumes are mainly made by Cantonese embroidery techniques. Cantonese embroidery belongs to local embroidery. As one of the four famous embroidery, "Cantonese embroidery", according to the "Complete Works of Chinese Woven and Embroidered Clothing", "Cantonese embroidery is divided into four types: velvet embroidery, thread embroidery, gold velvet mixed embroidery, and gold embroidery(Li, 2021). Among these, the most famous is the gold-stamped embroidery with padded cushions. His art mainly shows the characteristics of full composition, vivid patterns, strong decoration, strong color, strong contrast, complex decoration but not chaotic, and uniform stitches. This embroidery method is in harmony with the warm and bright cultural and artistic characteristics of the Lingnan region on the Cantonese opera stage. It is unique in the types and styles of costumes in many local operas, which is manifested in the use of gold-nailed cushion relief embroidery techniques, the use of gold, silver velvet thread, beads, film, and other embroidery materials, and the costumes embroidered with techniques such as disc locks and pad nails

have four major characteristics(Peng, 2019). First, the needle row is uniform and the embroidery surface is smooth. Second, the needle header is tight and the needle step is appropriate. Third, the color scheme is coordinated and soft. Fourth, the ornamentation of the high part of the costume is layered. The background color of the materials used in Malaysian Cantonese embroidery is in harmony with the patterns embroidered on the costumes, and the costume patterns must match the identities of the characters in the play(Ma & Qi, 2023). The gold thread process and cushion embroidery techniques make the embroidery brilliant, rich, and rigorous. This has influenced the development of Cantonese opera costume art in Malaysia. The prosperity of Cantonese opera theatre in Malaysia and the prosperity of the costume manufacturing industry are mutually reinforcing.

The quality of raw materials directly affects the quality and beauty of clothing, and the materials selected by Shanxi local opera have a rich and luxurious character. The troupe will choose to use precious fabrics such as cloud brocade and silk as materials to make them gorgeous. There are many different materials to choose from, one of the most important of which is that the materials selected for Shanxi local opera costumes must be conducive to the performance. Common materials include satin, silk, brocade, etc., such as the water sleeves that shake freely during the performance, and the smooth and light crepe satin should be chosen(Peng, 2019). The python robe should be made of thick satin, shaking and powerful, and the performance should be vivid, that is, "rigidity and softness are conducive to dancing". Secondly, there is also a procedural rule, which is to highlight the status and identity of the character.

## 6.0 Conclusion

This paper systematically discusses the differences between Shanxi local opera and Malaysian Chinese opera clothing fabrics. The evolution of different theatrical costumes is discussed from the perspective of history and culture. On the one hand, the research of this paper can help to understand the characteristics of clothing fabrics between Shanxi local opera and Malaysian Chinese opera, and further explore the internal characteristics behind the differences between fabrics. In addition, the research of this article can further extend the research on clothing fabrics, integrate fabrics into life, and explore the changes in social living habits from fabrics.

Shanxi local opera and Malaysian Chinese opera clothing fabrics are a unique form formed under the rendering of specific historical culture and living habits. Given this, this paper suggests that the development of theatrical fabrics needs to integrate the background of the times and the living habits of the public. As far as the aesthetics of costume decoration is concerned, the costume pattern of Malaysian Cantonese opera has become a symbol of people's living habits in a specific period, and it is also a special symbol of Guangdong art and culture in Malaysia, which is a precious cultural and artistic heritage. Based on this, theatrical fabrics need to be further integrated with the aesthetics and characteristics of current society in the future. Combine the characteristics of traditional costumes with current craftsmanship to create costumes with a more graphic and three-dimensional sense.

Although the paper systematically compares the differences between different theatrical costumes, it still has certain limitations. This paper only relies on photographic materials to conduct a comparative study of the two theatrical costumes, which lacks further data acquisition and needs to be extended in future research. At the same time, this paper takes Malaysian Cantonese opera as an example to show the characteristics of Malaysian Chinese drama costumes, and the selection of samples needs to be further expanded. In the future, researchers can also use methods such as interviews to collect data to deepen the comprehensiveness of the system analysis. At the same time, for the analysis of fabrics, this paper mainly focuses on raw materials and processes, and further discusses the classification and dyeing of fabrics in the future.

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## Paper Contribution to Related Field of Study

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

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