

# Inheritance and Application of Patterns in Cantonese Opera Costumes—A Case Study of Cantonese Opera Costume Inchang Ping Princess

By

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## Abstract

This Article aimed to study Cantonese opera costumes, to sort out the development history of Cantonese opera, the process of costume patterns of Cantonese opera and summarize the pattern categories and characteristics of different development stages. intends to provide ideas for the creative transformation and innovative development of traditional theatrical cultural elements from multiple perspectives.

The research results were found as follows: Under the general trend of artificial intelligence and Internet plus, only by combining science and technology to innovate traditional culture can the market of traditional culture be truly opened and the public can be fully attracted. Inheritance and innovation of Cantonese opera should do the same. It is the necessary for scholars and artists to study the traditional cultural elements of Cantonese opera in detail, extract the cultural connotation, traditional elements and artistic value, and apply them to the development of contemporary art. The future direction of our colorful traditional culture is to extract its essence and make it adapt to the times.

**Keywords:** Cantonese Opera Costume; Creative Design; Inheritance Application

## 1.Introduction

It is urgent to study the costume patterns of Cantonese opera systematically and extract the cultural elements of traditional Chinese opera. The research on costumes of Cantonese Opera in this paper pays attention to its patterns. Moreover, it emphasizes on understanding the meanings of the patterns, and its structure and cultural significance.

A Case Study of Cantonese Opera Costume in "Chang Ping Princess" .I made an in-depth visit to the Guangdong Cantonese Opera Museum Research works and literature materials such as "Guangzhou Cantonese Opera Costumes" and "Cantonese Opera Art

Performance Encyclopedia". This article also adopts the interview method in the research to interview Cantonese opera costume designers, industry practitioners, and champions. Interview with Fang Xifu Factory and others. I have started my research and have made some progress at present.

This research hopes to get rid of the limitation of existing research, literature analysis, case method, historical analysis and other research methods, combined with drawing technology, focusing on research of Cantonese opera costume design, solve the main problems of two aspects: 1. How to apply the traditional culture elements of Cantonese opera costumes to the development of modern art? 2. What are the features of the production methods, materials and patterns of Cantonese opera costumes in different development stages?

## **2. Research Objectives**

2.1 To describe Inheritance and application of patterns in cantonese opera costumes: a case study of cantonese opera costume in Chang Ping Princess.

2.2 To understand Cantonese opera costumes, as a kind of traditional classic, also need to adjust themselves according to the requirements of The Times. On the premise of keeping national creation principle, the breakthrough of the traditional art conforms to the inheritance of the development of the art spirit. At the same time, it puts forward a new proposition to modern creative design of Cantonese opera costumes.

2.3 To develop application of the Cantonese opera dress patterns in the modern field of , sort out and explore the inheritance and innovation of traditional patterns in the field of modern design. To promote provide ideas for the creative transformation and innovative development of traditional theatrical cultural elements from multiple perspectives.

## **3. Literature Review**

Based on the existing research results, we find that the academic circle has carried out some studies on the theme of inheritance and application of traditional patterns in Cantonese opera costumes, and there is no lack of insightful theories.

First of all, Wang (2019) described that focused on relevant historical studies and made a detailed analysis of the development history of Cantonese opera from the perspective of the historical process. In the process, the changes of Cantonese opera costumes were involved.

Starting from different classification standards, Zhong (2017) divided the development history of Cantonese opera and its costumes into several stages, and analyzed the transition time, development content and development characteristics of each stage in detail. Secondly, Wang (2008) took the approach of case studies to elaborate the costumes of specific operas or the characteristics of specific categories of costumes, and then carry out further studies on the

categories, colors and patterns of costumes of Cantonese opera. However, there are still some aspects of existing research that need to be improved. First, few scholars have systematically classified and sorted the patterns in Cantonese opera costumes. The existing research focuses on the development history and costume characteristics of Cantonese opera and Cantonese opera, while there are few special studies on the evolution of patterns and patterns of Cantonese opera costumes. Second, existing research perspectives focus on the past and the present, but rarely focus on the future, so as to deeply discuss how to realize the inheritance and application of traditional patterns in Cantonese opera costumes.

Some scholars summarized the development of costume patterns in Cantonese opera from the perspective of costume decoration technology. For example, Yang, Zhou, and L (2013) divided the development of costume of Cantonese opera into four stages. Early costume of Cantonese opera mainly imitated the clothing style of Ming dynasty, and later it was gradually influenced by Peking Opera due to increased exchanges and association with Peking Opera. From the 1920s to the 1950s, the costumes were mainly brocade and embroidery, embellished with film and bronze supporting mirrors. From the 1950s to the early 1960s, the costume consisted of beads. Since the 1960s, the costumes are beautiful and mostly delicate embroidered.

In conclusion, this research hopes to get rid of the limitation of existing research, combined with drawing technology, focusing on research of Cantonese opera costume patterns, solve the main problems of two aspects.

## 4. Conceptual Framework

In the CNKI database, I searched for documents with words like Cantonese opera, Chinese opera costumes and Cantonese opera costumes, and sorted out related papers and reports. Combined with searched monographs, I classified the researches of Chinese traditional patterns of Cantonese opera systematically, and summed up the existing research direction and content:

**4.1 research on the development of Cantonese Opera.** Cantonese opera, also known as Guangfu opera, is the main type of drama in Guangdong. It is the first local opera to go abroad and enjoy the highest popularity. It is the most common and popular opera in Guangxi, Macao, Hong Kong. It not only inherits the traditional drama culture, but also has strong Lingnan cultural characteristics. Based on the history of Cantonese opera, Zhang, Hu, and Huang (2013a) believed that Cantonese opera and its performing costumes experienced four stages: formation and rise, decline and development, prosperity and revival.

**4.2 Research on the development of Cantonese opera costumes.** The costumes of Cantonese opera have rich features of the times and local characteristics, which comes from life and are higher than life. After a certain degree of artistic processing, it can clearly express the characters' characteristics and images, make the stage performance more vivid, and form a unique artistic style and aesthetic beauty (Ni, 2015). Based on the development history of Cantonese opera, the existing studies summarize the development process of Cantonese opera

costumes from different perspectives (Chen, 2014).

## 5. Research Methodology

### The Main Research Methods to be Used:

**5.1 Historical Analysis.** This subject use the historical analysis method to connect and compare the development history of Cantonese opera and the different stages of costume development of Cantonese opera, trace the source, find out the essence of development to discover .

**5.2 Observational Method.** Observation method refers to a method that researchers use their senses and auxiliary tools to directly observe the research object according to a certain research purpose, research outline or observation table, so as to obtain data. The object of this study is the pattern in costume of Cantonese opera. Therefore, the author will go to all kinds of museums, art galleries and theaters to observe the costumes of Cantonese opera, collect and arrange the patterns in the costumes of Cantonese opera with modern instruments and means, such as cameras and scanners, and redraw the patterns with modern drawing software.

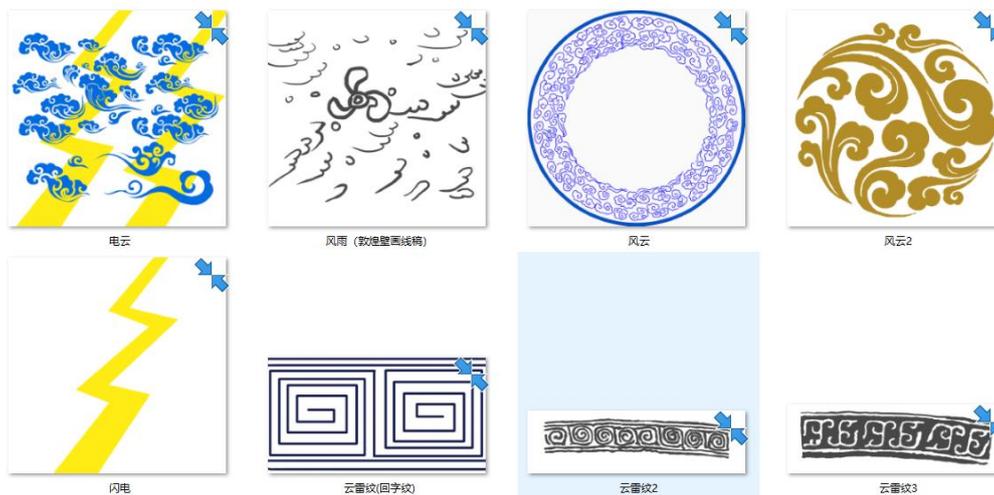
**5.3 Literature Research Method.** Literature research method mainly refers to the method of collecting, identifying and sorting out literatures, and forming scientific cognition of facts through the research of literatures. In addition to Chinese and foreign academic papers, newspaper articles, monographs and so on collected from electronic databases, I also collected some early and modern works on Cantonese opera costume research through various channels, such as "Guangzhou Cantonese Opera Costumes" and "Cantonese Opera Art Performance Encyclopedia" and so forth.



**Picture 1** Female Python Robe in Opera Costume in Guangzhou Cantonese Opera Art Museum

**5.4 Case Study.** A Case Study of Cantonese Opera Costume in "Chang Ping Princess" study the costume patterns of Cantonese opera displayed in stage performances, and analyze the categories, characteristics and reasons for changes of costume patterns of Cantonese opera under the contemporary environmental conditions.

**5.5 Interview Method.** This article also adopts the interview method in the research to interview Cantonese opera costume designers, industry practitioners, and champions, Analyze the current situation of the application of costume pattern elements in Cantonese opera in the field of modern art. Sort out the elements in costume patterns of Cantonese opera that can be used for modern art creation and the development of modern art industry. Discuss the inheritance and application of Cantonese opera costume patterns in the field of modern art in the future.



**Picture 2** some of the pattern elements were teased out -- cloud and thunder (Zhang, Hu, & Huang, 2013b)

## 6. Analysis

**6.1 Studies on the costume characteristics of Cantonese opera.** On the basis of absorbing the costume characteristics of the Tang and Song dynasties, the costume styles of the Ming and Qing dynasties are taken as the basis, and the costume influences of Peking Opera, Kun opera and other opera forms are integrated into the costume of the characters of Cantonese opera, gradually forming its own unique artistic expression form with distinct opera characteristics. Previous studies have summarized the costume characteristics of Cantonese opera from the following aspects:

**6.1.1 Stylization.** The styles of costumes of Cantonese opera are universal. Similar characters at different ages can wear the same costume, but colors and patterns cannot be mistakenly dressed. The colors, patterns and accessories of costumes of Cantonese opera are symbolic, with the feature of institutionalization of traditional Chinese costumes, showing the identity and disposition of the characters.

**6.1.2 Dancing.** Dancing means that the costumes should play a certain role in the drama when the actors performance. When it comes to a good drama, costume is not only the expression of the aesthetic beauty, but also the display and transmission of the story by the characters. It reveals the artistic image of the characters, conveys the emotions, personality

characteristics and psychological activities of the characters to the audience, and builds a bridge of emotional communication between the actors and the audience.

**6.1.3 freehand brushwork.** Freehand brushwork is a kind of expression technique with simple form and abundant meaning. It does not simply reproduce the details of historical clothes, but also conveys the emotion and personality of the characters by means of clothes. Cantonese opera is a highly symbolic of leisure. A table, two chairs, and a whip are all symbolic. Empty stage can be imagined as a palace, a house, and a battlefield.

**6.1.4 Studies on the patterns in costumes of Cantonese opera.** The costume art of drama in China is the crystallization of the collective wisdom of all generations of drama artists and costume craftsmen. The patterns and patterns on the costumes of Cantonese opera are also varied, which is the epitome of Chinese pattern art. Scholars have sorted out and studied the patterns on the costumes of Cantonese opera from different perspectives.

Pan Fulin divided the decorative patterns of Cantonese opera costumes into five categories.

One is the ancient pattern and armor-shape decoration. The Haiqing of Cantonese opera has a large area, which gives free space for decoration design. For example, some are decorated with oracle bone inscriptions, some are decorated with the most ancient tile patterns, some are decorated with colorful wool embroidery line landscape paintings, such as tiger head shape, fish scale shape and other ancient group, which are colorful.

The second is the pattern of *Anthocephalus chinensis*. The mantles worn by the heroes and heroines are usually decorated with patterns of *Anthocephalus chinensis*, such as "Fu Shou auspice", "Yun Fu auspice".

Third is plum, orchid, bamboo and chrysanthemum. Restricted by the costume system of the feudal society, there will not be dragons and phoenixes in the folk clothes, and the common people usually decorated their clothes with flowers and plants. The commonly used patterns of *Anthocephalus chinensis* include lotus, crane, pine, peony and butterfly.

Fourth, birds and animals. In Cantonese opera costumes, some vaudevilles embroidered with cranes and peonies; Sea field, large sleeves, diagonal front and robes and robes are embroidered with tiger or unicorn; The pattern of "Buzi" embroidered on the chest of the official dress is that of birds and animals, used to distinguish between the categories and levels of official positions.

Fifth is dragon and phoenix and dragon python. Dragon and phoenix patterns are common in Cantonese opera costumes. Dragon boa, is the imperial clothing of emperors and generals.

The dragon pattern is usually set off by flowing clouds and water patterns, combined with sun, mountain and Eight Treasures patterns. The belly and flag of female Kao suit have

embroidery decoration of phoenix pattern and peony pattern; the cloak of female role in Chinese opera, is embroidered with phoenix and flower (Shan, 2012).

**6.2 Take Cantonese Opera "Chang Ping Princess" as an example to analyze Cantonese opera costumes.** The representative Cantonese opera "Chang Ping Princess" choreographed by Wang-NGai and Lovrick (2014) allows the audience to feel the art of Cantonese opera that "travels through a hundred years and feels the classics". Whether it is a sense of form or film, Emperor Flower is full of exquisiteness and exquisiteness. The colors, styles, embroidery, accessories and many other elements of the costumes of the play are properly combined, with obvious contrast, bright and harmonious, and the beauty of artistic conception and subtle beauty of Lingnan charm is permeated everywhere (Li, 2018).



**Picture 3** Common Dragon Patterns and Common Phoenix Patterns (Lovrick & Siu, 2011)

The costume design of the large-scale Cantonese opera "Chang Ping Princess" fully respects the history and traditional culture of Cantonese opera, but also deeply understands the development requirements of modern civilization. Artistic features such as "danceability" and "decorativeness" of clothing. Costume design mostly inherits traditional costume style and refers to the design of Ming dynasty. Basically those costumes have a big sleeve shirt with Yue embroidery cloud shoulder, and the lower body with a double-layer pleated skirt, and waistband with cards. The emperor's costume is decorated with embroidered dragon, and the empress's costume is embroidered with phoenix. Chang Ping princess's dress in the play with the details of the Ming and Qing dynasty figures, which can reveal the palace emperor's elegant temperament and graceful and beautiful image (Wang-NGai & Lovrick, 2014). The costumes of Emperor Flower draw on the connotation of traditional opera costumes and carry out a reasonable artistic deconstruction of the aesthetic consciousness of costumes. For example, in the fifth scene, the two people met. In the pattern design, the most representative Chinese peony pattern was used as the basic element, and it was applied to the different decorative parts of the

clothing of the two, such as the chest, sleeves, lapel, and collar of the clothes. The flowers in the patterns are clustered and looming. At the same time, the peony pattern shows the characters in the play's beautiful longing for happiness and love, which is a metaphor for love and joy. In the subsequent performances, the costumes of the two protagonists are all paid attention to. The sense of integrity and echoing, through the costumes, strengthened the great love between the two of them, which is close to each other and the bond of life and death (Ng, Lam, & Choi, 2010).



**Picture 5** The costumes of "Chang Ping Princess"

The accurate positioning and successful design of the dress style of "Chang Ping Princess" is the designer's in-depth analysis and deconstruction of traditional culture with modern aesthetic eyes. It is on the basis of inheriting the tradition, giving new vitality to the dress pattern and making traditional elements The connotation of decoration is sublimated in modern design.

The costume design of the characters in "Chang Ping Princess" is realistic in the costume structure and freehand in the pattern. Freehand patterns such as plum, orchid, bamboo and chrysanthemum can be seen in long flat skirts, collars, parquets, cloaks and other costumes. The use of freehand patterns in costumes has two objectives. One is to highlight the image of the protagonist, and the other is to add beauty and image space to the opera. The freehand style of clothing has the characteristics of point-to-face, orderly lightness, and combination of virtual and reality. Stage costumes and scenes play an important auxiliary role in rendering the atmosphere (Tan, 2000).

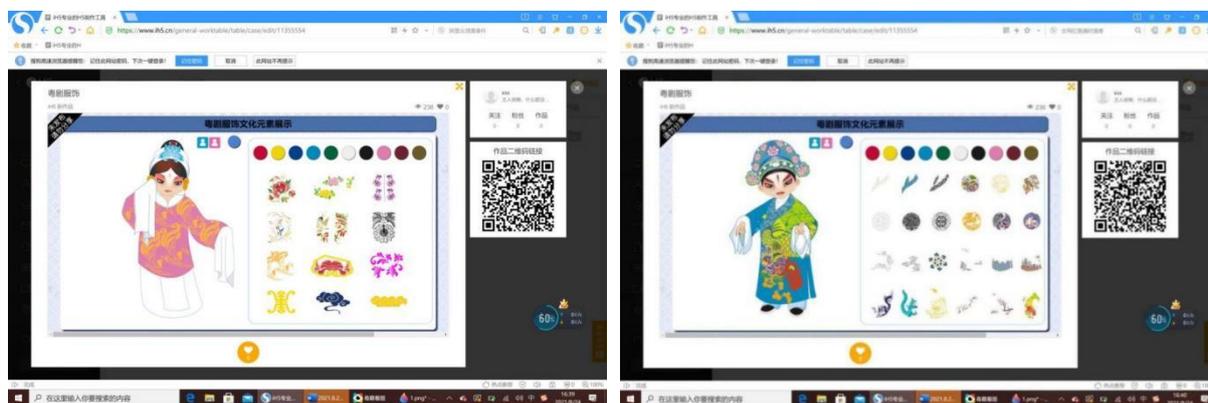
## **7.Results**

Objective 1. The results showed that about the inheritance and innovation of traditional patterns in modern design. JPG and PNG source material will be stored by using Photoshop, Illustrator software to redraw the pattern elements. We can design an interactive animation program between Cantonese opera costumes and pattern patterns, which provides technical and design convenience for the promotion and application of beautiful pattern elements in Cantonese opera costumes.

Objective 2. The results showed that after collecting and sorting out the collected costume patterns of Cantonese opera, the elements of traditional costume patterns of Cantonese opera are extracted into seven types of costume patterns, including dragon and phoenix, dragon python, official clothing padding, flower plants, group flower patterns, wide embroidery, auspicious patterns, decorative patterns and so on.

## 8. Discussions and Suggestion

As for research limitations and future research directions, the state and government have constantly proposed to promote the excellent traditional Chinese culture (Lovrick & Siu, 2011). However, due to the influence of environmental ecology, aesthetic taste, expression form and other factors, traditional operas, including Cantonese opera, are more and more difficult to attract a wide range of public appreciation in modern society, and the road of innovative development is difficult (Bonds, 2019).



**Picture 6** Show the effect of the program on the interactive operation interface of costume and pattern elements of Cantonese opera characters

As a carrier of cultural inheritance, clothing, on the one hand, should pay attention to the selectivity in cultural inheritance, and make proper choices according to the objective requirements of social development. On the other hand, in the diagnosis and interpretation of culture, the costumes of Cantonese opera are constantly changing and choosing between difficulties. Abandoning those obsolete cultural elements are not suitable for modern social life, and it is necessary to add new spiritual content in accordance with the requirements of the new era in the opera costumes.

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