

# A Study on Stylistic Development of Mak Yong Costume in Malaysia

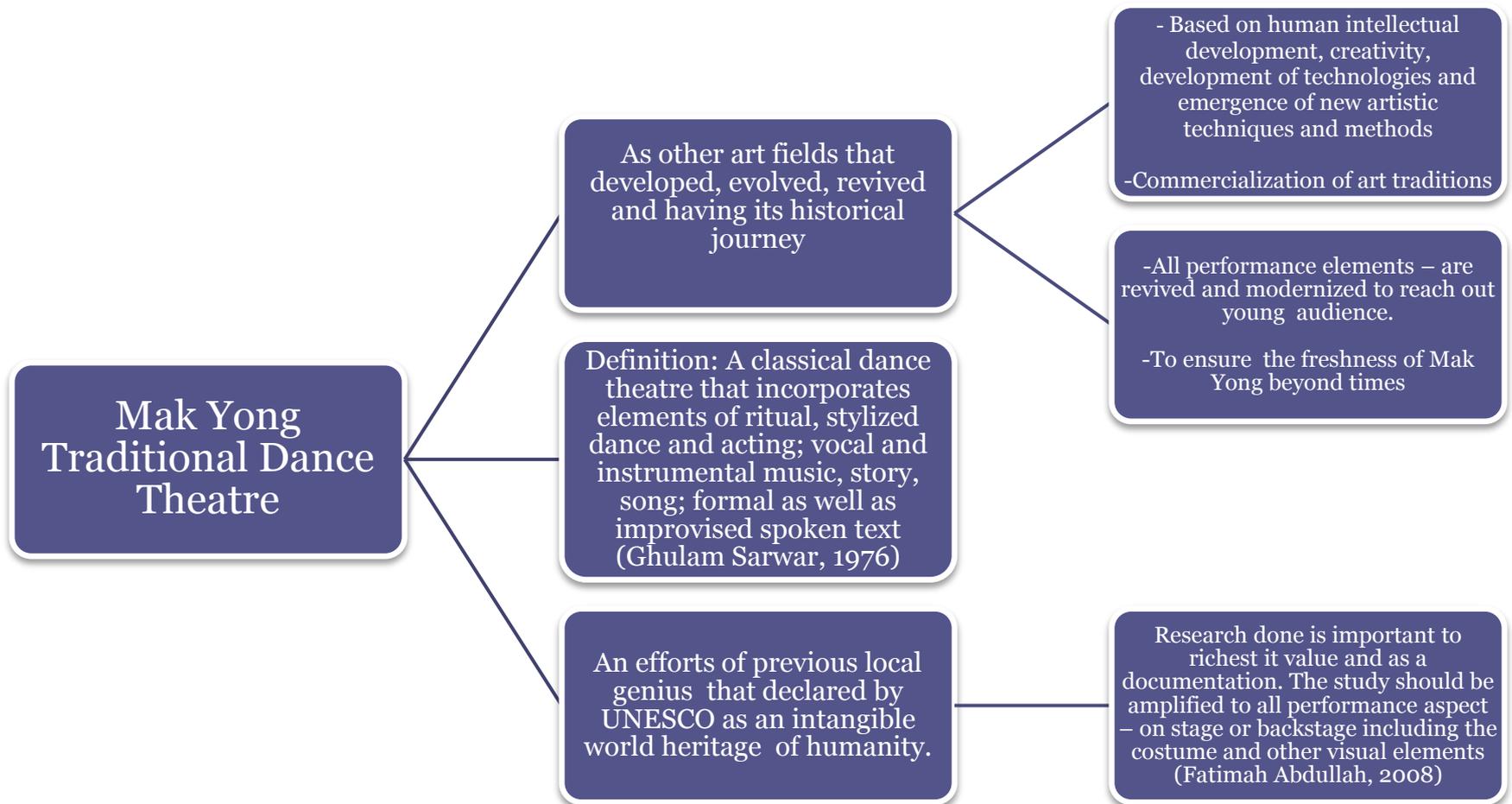
Prepared by

Suriyami Abas

AD 771 Art History and Cultural Management

2007239402

# Introduction



## Aim

The aim of this research is to study the development and stylistic change of Mak Yong costume in Malaysia.

## Objectives

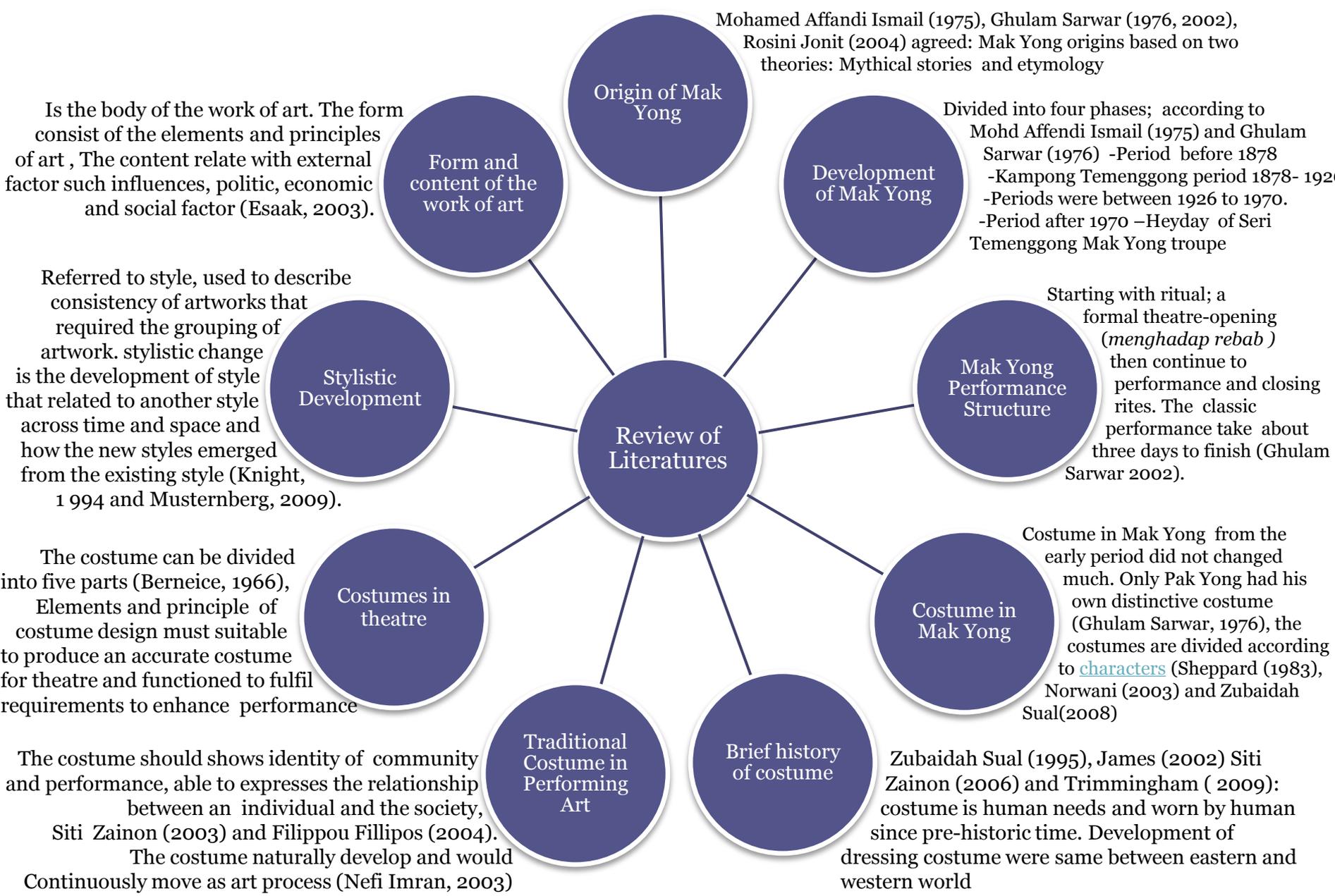
To trace the history and development of Mak Yong costume in Malaysia

To identify the form and content of Mak Yong costume

To come up with the classification of styles of Mak Yong costume in Malaysia from 1920's to 2000 onwards

# Statement of Problem

- Previous researches on Mak Yong have focused mainly on performance structure, literature, music, dance, directing, management, acting and characters.
- Mak Yong has various types of arts and cultural elements like costumes that are interesting to be discovered. Previous studies by Sheppard (1983), Malm (1963) and Ghulam Sarwar (1976) contributed to the understanding of the genre and brief history of Mak Yong, although they have not discussed directly in detail about the costume in Mak Yong except for the description about costumes and the way they were applied and presented.
- Hence, through the detailed study on Mak Yong such as by Ghulam Sarwar, a number of refinements on Mak Yong had been made including the supportive elements of the genre such as costume, make up and staging.
- The refinement and reconstruction of Mak Yong finally contributed a historical development of Mak Yong along with the particular periods, given the fact that Mak Yong itself has declined considerably during the past century. It has undergone major transformations in style and performance structure as in its costumes and other supportive elements (National Arts and Cultural Division (JKKN), 2005).
- This research is hoped to study the development and stylistic change of Mak Yong costume in Malaysia in terms of form and content, and ultimately suggesting a classification of styles of Mak Yong costume from 1920's to 2000



# Methodology- Phases of research

Objective	Method
1. History and development of Mak Yong costume in Malaysia	<b>Theoretical review</b> to form a broad based knowledge of the subject.
1. Form and content of Mak Yong costume.	<b>Analysis of form and content</b> of costumes from 1920's to 2000 onwards using theory by Edmund Burke Feldman[1970]: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Description</li><li>• Analysis</li><li>• Interpretation</li><li>• Evaluation</li></ul>
1. Classification of style in Mak Yong costume in Malaysia	<b>Interview</b> with experts in costume design and Mak Yong to validate the form and content of Mak Yong costume.

# Analysis

-The costume analysis is divided into characters and periods

Description	Analysis	Interpretation	Evaluation
<p>The detail of costume such the clothes combination on the body part : the top body part and the bottom body part are described one by one including the detail of accessories.</p>	<p>The dress detail of the costume are analyzed in term of its silhouette, design line, the way the costume arranged to the body, the proportion and arrangement design elements and decorative elements, colour arrangement, the emphasis elements and focal point of the entire costume.</p>	<p>The general ideas of the costume are interpreted according to the purpose of the costume that designed to character</p>	<p>Evaluation are done in term of formalism aspect. The evaluation is based on the successfulness of the style changes and its development beyond decades from 1920s to 2000 onwards</p>
<p>All of description are refer to the visual analysis.</p>	<p>The fabric would be analyzed because it is the source of overall texture to the costume</p>	<p>The design line that arranged on costume, in term of costume design story could express the emotion of played character</p>	<p>It is also based on instrumentalism aspect in term of the ability of costume as a stage costume to support the played character and concern to the cultural significance of the costume</p>
		<p>The symbolism of colour that choose for costume are represents meaning in term of cultural context, colour in dressing and colour in stage costume.</p>	
		<p>Overall form of costume are discussed to relate with cultural point of view and other external factors</p>	

# Findings

- History and development of Mak Yong costume in Malaysia according to theoretical review have undergone three phases of transformation:
  - The simplest form at the beginning
  - The phase of adapting Patani's royal attire
  - The current style (during the period of Kampung Temenggong until the current observation in 1980's), that involving various refinements
- Form and content of Mak Yong costume in Malaysia
  - Form and development of Mak Yong costume in Malaysia - The evolution of form developed hand in hand with creativity and influenced by external factors on its costume cutting, decorative elements and accessories.
  - Content of Mak Yong costume and its development in general aspect – Every development of style in Mak Yong's costumes and form that designed were represent symbols and value that related to political, economical, social and cultural factors and meets the specifications of stage costume.
  - Content costume in Mak Yong as stage costume - almost entirely, the costumes are not succeeded to meet the characterisations of stage costume as emphasized
- Discussion of finding on stylistic changes and development of Mak Yong costume in Malaysia
  - Political and economic factor
  - Hierarchy of characters and social factor
  - Identity and cultural factor
  - The importance of costumes as stage costumes and the factor of costume practicality in performance
  - Evaluation according to the respondents' views on the costume of Mak Yong and the changes of style

# Mak Yong Costume: Classification of styles 1920's - 2000

Period	Style	Description
1920's to 1930's	Simple style (the beginning)	Used only cloth that simply wrapped around the bodice, inspired by the daily wears of Kelantan Malay society around the early of 20 <sup>th</sup> century. Only costume for Pak Yong that was decorated in unique style, completed with headdress and shirts.
1940's and 1950's	Simple costume style in traditional Malay attire	Royal character: complete royal attire with decorated headdress that some style maintain the characterizations in the period of Kampong Temenggong. Supportive character: the costume were adapted from the Mak Yong dancers' everyday wears.
1960's	Traditional Malay attire style	Maintain the form of previous style but began to involve the application of decorative elements to enhance the costumes. The <i>dayang</i> and <i>peran</i> 's costume are arranged in uniform.
1970's to early 1980's	Modern style that involve the current fashion influences	Traditional form of costume revived and influenced from the current fashion style that refer to the Western style, where the tight and body-exposing elements were mixed-up and has brought contemporary looked.  Costumes for Mak Yong the princess and Dayang transformed totally and back to use the sarong tied to the bosom style like in the era of Kampong Temenggong, only in modern form - bustier or corset.

Period	Style	Description
Late 1980's	Enrichment of enhancement and traditional element in the style of modern cutting	<p>The characterization of traditional elements was enriched again by using kebaya. However, the influenced of modern cutting has been applied on the costumes such as modern kebaya and modern blouse with cap sleeves that were adapted from the kebaya.</p> <p>Costume for all characters enhanced with decorative elements. Dayang began to wear La, the necklace that was supposed to put on royal characters only. However, the differences between Dayang and princess could be seen through the different styles and structures of costumes of both characters.</p>
1990's	Decent style of traditional costume in modern cutting	<p>The same concepts from around late 1980s were maintained. The costume looked decent by the use of modern <i>kebaya</i> and <i>mini kurung</i> in loose fit cuttings.</p> <p>The decorative element were similar to the ones in the late 1980s, however all characters in Mak Yong including Peran and Dayang were enhanced, beautifully and elaborately accessorised.</p>
2000 onwards	Classical style in contemporary setting.	<p>Major change on almost every costume for the characters, the costumes for Pak Yong, Mak Yong and Dayang were elaborately enhanced, using luxurious fabric such as full songket, accessories and decorative elements, making all costumes look famed and luxurious.</p> <p>The structure of costumes for Mak Yong and Dayang are totally changed and cultivated with the similar styles without any differences, accessories such as gilded coronet, La or necklace put on Dayang are almost 100% similar to what the princess wear.</p>

# Conclusion

- Conclusion – The costumes that used in Mak Yong display the traditional element and content of Malay traditional costume that suit with the form of genre as Malay traditional dance theatre.
- However the condition is, Mak Yong's costume will always be the costumes for performing arts, which is dynamic, where the main function is as supportive elements to the performances.
- The costumes are not supposed to be the main attraction or the subject matter to be discussed. Nevertheless, the designs in Mak Yong costumes still have shown the changing of styles that are interesting to be focused.
- The changes that took place are not totally by development, but happened in various forms, changed directly, drastically or redundantly. The changes in the way of wearing, material used, colours and decorations showed the development of creativity through the ever changing of costumes' forms, including the applications of elements and principle of design on the costumes.
- The development of the forms of costumes and the application of fabrics on the costumes has also shown the development of materials used that is related to the advancement of the technology.
- The changes in the costumes' form have also brought changes to the content of the costumes that related to the performing arts and other aspects of human lives.
- These factors have made the costumes in Mak Yong important, actually, not just as supportive element in the performance but also important in the human civilization which related to the elements of politics, economy, sociology, culture and religion.

# Recommendation and Suggestion for Future Research

- **Recommendations:**

- As reference to costume designing for traditional performing arts to design Mak Yong costumes, or to design costumes for contemporary theatres, but showing the lives of Mak Yong society.
- Increase the awareness of the public and Mak Yong activists especially on the roles of costumes in the performance especially from the aspect of forms and contents of the costumes used.
- As guidelines to style the character with suitable costume or to improve the skills in costume design for Mak Yong and other traditional dance or performances. As documentation and informative source to study on history and beauty of the costume.
- Adding the historical value to Mak Yong in term of history of the visual element and costume.

- **Suggestions for future research:**

- Narrowed into the comparison research by choosing within two or three periods where a lot of transformation took place in the costumes of Mak Yong.
- The fractions to the costumes' contents from this study could be detailed thoroughly and narrowed by study on the meaning of costumes for each design details that could be found on the form of accessories or headgears from the aspects of craft and Malay art symbolisms.
- Focus on the history of Mak Yong's costumes could be detailed in term of the aspect of influences from the foreign cultures among the Malay Archipelago that formed the costumes of Mak Yong.
- An experimental research to construct a set of costume design for Mak Yong in the most precise in term of identity of Mak Yong's in order to preserve Malay culture and fits the elements of stage costume.
- Research that stresses more on the purpose of the study on performing arts, by comparing the costume in today's contemporary Mak Yong groups and rural Mak Yong group of Kelantan, the future researchers could conduct surveys from the audience's point of view and satisfactory.