

ABSTRACT

KSK Art Crew is a Cantonese opera troupe led by Kam Sin Kiew based in Kuala Lumpur. This study examined into the changing context of KSK Art Crew as Kam revitalized the Cantonese opera in effort of sustainability. Literature reveals studies by scholars looking into Chinese opera based in China and Western countries, but there is a lack of research that examines into Cantonese opera in Malaysia, brought in by the Chinese diaspora in a country where majority of population is Malay. Methods include fieldwork, participant observation, recording, analysis and interview. Results show that the change of transmission method, change of context in music accompaniment, movement, programmes and setting were inevitable in Kam's continuous effort to revive and revitalize Cantonese opera in Malaysia.

ABSTRAK

KSK Art Crew ialah kumpulan opera Kantonis yang diketuai oleh Kam Sin Kiew di Kuala Lumpur. Kajian ini focus pada perubahan konteks yang dilaksanakan oleh KSK Art Crew di mana Kam membuat beberapa pembaharuan terhadap opera Kantonese ini untuk tujuan menggiat semula seni persembahan ini. Tinjauan kajian literatur merangkumi tulisan penyelidik dari timur dan barat, tetapi, adanya jurang di dalam literatur di mana kajian tentang opera Kantonis di Malaysia adalah kurang. Metodologi yang digunakan di dalam kajian ini adalah kerja lapangan, pemerhatian, pemerhatian jenis penyertaan, rakaman, analisis, dan soal selidik. Keputusan menunjukkan perubahan pada acara pengajaran, konteks dalam muzik iringan, teknik pergerakan dan program diadakan dalam KSK Art Crew, sebagai suatu usaha untuk menggiat semula seni persembahan ini di Malaysia.

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CONTENT

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ABSTRAK.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	v
CONTENTS.....	vi
LIST OF TABLES.....	ix
LIST OF FIGURES.....	x

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background of Study.....	3
1.2.1 Music in Cantonese opera.....	4
1.2.2 Types of play.....	6
1.2.3 Development of Cantonese Opera in Hong Kong.....	8
1.2.4 The Cantonese opera in Malaysia.....	9
1.3 Problem of Statement.....	10
1.4 Justification of Research.....	10
1.5 Conceptual Framework.....	11
1.6 Research Objectives.....	11
1.7 Research Question.....	12
1.8 Limitation of Study.....	13
1.9 Chapters Outline.....	14

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction.....	15
2.2 Chinese opera literature.....	15
2.3 Peking opera and other operatic genre.....	16
2.4 Cantonese opera.....	18
2.5 Chinese opera Migration and Other Issues.....	19
2.6 Conclusion.....	21

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction.....	23
3.2 Secondary Data.....	23
3.3 Partial Study Selection.....	23
3.4 Fieldwork.....	24
3.5 Post fieldwork	27
3.6 Conclusion.....	27

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction.....	28
4.2 Organization of KSK Art Crew.....	28
4.3 KSK Art Crew and its Performances.....	33
4.4 Cantonese Opera Revitalized.....	36
4.5 Setting, costume and make-up.....	47
4.6 Performance Programme and Analysis.....	54
4.6.1 A Night of Cantonese opera at Actor's Studio.....	55

4.6.2 Johor Chingay Ritual Performance.....	58
4.6.3 Wu Ze Tian.....	64
4.6.4 Restaurant Performance.....	67
4.7 Discussion.....	68
4.8 Conclusion.....	71

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction.....	72
5.2 Summary of Findings.....	72
5.3 Suggestion for Future Research.....	75
5.4 Conclusion.....	75

REFERENCES.....	77
-----------------	----

APPENDIX.....	86
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LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1 Four super stars & Four great Male Vocals

Table 4.1 Gongche pu Notation Chart(see Ng 2006, p156)

Table 4.2 *Gongche Pu* and cipher notation and the translated *Solfege* system

Universiti Malaya

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure. 1.1 KSK Art Crew (Photo courtesy of KSK Art Crew)
- Figure. 4.1 Kam with her younger brother (Photo from Kam's Face book)
- Figure. 4.2 Management of KSK Art Crew
- Figure. 4.3 Performances for the deities (Source: TV8)
- Figure. 4.4 The temple of Johor in 1950 and present.
- Figure. 4.5 This is a map to show the way for the parade of deities.
- Figure. 4.6 Rehearsal at Kam's house (photo by author)
- Figure. 4.7 Gongche pu used in Cantonese opera (Photo from www.sbc.hpe.cn, 2012)
- Figure. 4.8 Madam Kam show a heavy ring file of a huge collection of audio CDs
(Photo by KSK member)
- Figure. 4.9 Kam (black) teaching the author siuku of Cantonese opera (photo by KSK member)
- Figure. 4.10 Make-up for Cantonese Opera (photo by author)
- Figure. 4.11 Researcher's participant-observation during make up session (photo by author)
- Figure. 4.12 Researcher's participant-observation during make up session(photo by author)
- Figure. 4.13 Cloth over face for a lift (photo by author)
- Figure. 4.14 Local television host Desmond Tey (8TV, 2013)
- Figure. 4.15 Kam coaching Desmond Tey (photo by author)
- Figure. 4.16 Costume rack (Photo by Author)
- Figure. 4.17 The author in the role Chao Heong (photo by Roon Poon)

Figure.4.18 Promotional Poster for A Night of Cantonese Opera (KSK Art Crew 2012)

Figure 4.19 Rehearsal for Legend of the Moon fairy (photo by author)

Figure 4.20 Post performance photo with audience (photo by author)

Figure 4.21 Karaoke version of Miu Yu for transmission of Cantonese opera (photo by author)

Figure 4.22 Excerpt from Miu Yu (transcribed by author)

Figure 4.23 Excerpt from Miu Yu (transcribed by author)

Figure 4.24 Introductory rhythm from Ba Xin Worsao (transcribed by author)

Figure 4.25 Introductory rhythm from Luk Gok Daifongxiong (transcribed by author)

Figure 4.26 Excerpt from Luk Gok Daifongxiong (transcribed by author)

Figure 4.27 Luk Gok Daifongxiong's outfit (photo by KSK member)

Figure 4.28 Promotional Poster of Wu Ze Tian (Poster courtesy of KSK Art Crew)

Figure 4.29 Wan Er (Right) and Shan Er (Left) (Photo courtesy of KSK Art Crew)

Figure 4.30 Kam as Empress Wu (Left) (Photo courtesy of KSK Art Crew)

Figure 4.31 Empress Wu ascend the throne (Photo courtesy of KSK Art Crew)

Figure 4.32 Diagram showing the changes in Cantonese opera led by KSK Art Crew

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The aim of this dissertation is to examine the revitalization of Cantonese opera based on a case study of a troupe led by Hong Kong artist Kam Sin Kiew, known as Kam Sin Kiew Art Crew (KSK) in Kuala Lumpur (see Fig. 1.1). The fact that Kam revitalizes Cantonese opera in Malaysia, where majority of the population is Malay and the contemporary Chinese communities no longer favour this archaic performing arts, inevitably invite a re-contextualization to many of its elements, such as programme, transmission method, movement, and setting.

Bithell and Hill (2014) explain that the revival process is a 'shifts between different historic, geographic, social, and cultural contexts, between the individual and collective, private and public, informal and formal, and between different mythical geographies' (p.15). Cantonese opera is not complete absent in Malaysia, however, its revival may refer to its absence as a popular genre on performing arts stage, and re-contextualization come into play in examining into how it continues to strive to perform at a small number of local Chinese ritual in an inevitable changing context and also challenging an entry into the contemporary theatre in Malaysia, a country where Chinese population remain minority. Thus in this study, its music, survival, and its changing context as a musical and creative process are investigated.

Exploring into transmission method and performance at KSK Art Crew reveals an important finding that led to its survival in Malaysia. Cantonese opera is traditional Chinese theatrical performing arts which involve music, acting, martial arts, acrobatic movements, sets and costumes based on legends or historical tales (McPherson and Welch, 2012).



Fig. 1.1 KSK Art Crew (Photo courtesy of KSK Art Crew)

Since modernity, the advancement of technology and the effect of globalization and popular culture, Cantonese opera's survival became a challenge in the majority Muslim Malaysia where Chinese remain minority. Staging Cantonese opera is no longer a popular genre, compared to lion dance or *getai* during Phor Tor (Hungry Ghost Festival), as Cantonese opera was once popular during Phor Tor ritual and other festivals.

Kam Sin Kiew and her troupe in Kuala Lumpur continue the tradition and in this research, the effort in revitalizing the art and its transmission to the modern younger generation was examined. In this chapter, a background to the study gives an overview of the historical information of Cantonese opera, leading to the research objectives, research questions, conceptual framework, significance of research, limitation, and a general structural outline of the dissertation.

1.2 Background to the Study

Although there is a lack of evidence how Chinese opera existed and exact date of origin, however, the Southern opera was believed to appear around the Southern Song Dynasty (around 1179 to 1276 AD). Cantonese opera, or *yuejü*, is a form of Southern Chinese opera where the word Cantonese refers to the city of Canton and *yue* in Chinese refers to the city of Guangdong (Yung, 1989), *ju* means opera. In China, *yuejü* originated from *nanxi* (*nam hei* in Cantonese), which is a form of Southern theatrical performance during the 12th century. The Cantonese opera has its roots from the Pearl River Delta located in the Southern region of Guangdong (Yung, 1989). Cantonese opera became popular during the mid-19th century (Grout and Williams, 2003) and Snow (2004) states that 1920s to 1936 was the peak of its popularity in China.

For the Malaysian community, this form of Chinese opera is more commonly known as *daxi*, where in the early days where it is common to hear some older generation saying that they used to ‘*qu kan daxi* [go and watch Cantonese opera]’ where it was performed on a temporary stage in villages.

Career as an opera artists were very much a male-dominated profession until the 20th century and later around the mid 1920s, female cross-dressers were popular (Stokes, 2009). Famous artists in Cantonese opera include what was commonly known as the *Four Super Stars* (四大天王) and *Four Great Male Vocal* (平喉四大天王) during the early 20th century are as follows:

Four Super Stars		Four Great Male Vocals	
Chinese Name	Hanzi	Chinese Name	Hanzi
(1) Sit Gok Seen	薛觉先	(1) Tsui Lau Seen	徐柳仙
(2) Ma Szi Tsang	马师曾	(2) Siu Ming Sing	小明星
(3) Kwai Ming Yeung	桂明杨	(3) Cheung Yuet Yee	张月儿
(4) Baak Yuk Tong	白玉堂	(4) Cheung Wai Fong	张惠芳

Table 1.1 Four super stars & Four great Male Vocals

Larger change occurred during the 20th century when Peking opera became popular. This involves borrowing of tunes from Peking opera and its instrument, and also obvious influence of Western opera styles as observed by Yung (1989). Su (2010) also claimed that Cantonese opera is a very adaptive genre and can easily fused Western, commercial or popular genre. However, Chinese traditional instruments are still the norm and remain in Cantonese opera.

1.2.1 Music in Cantonese Opera

Pai he or in Cantonese, *Pak wor*, means ‘beat’ and ‘accompaniment,’ as Su (2010) explains, is a common label to the musicians of Cantonese opera. And this ensemble is made of 10 to 12 musicians. In Cantonese opera, percussion is responsible for the overall rhythm and pace of the music, while the *erhu* leads the orchestra. According to Yee (1998, p.39), the instrumentation of a Cantonese opera consists of the following:

1. *Erxian* (two-stringed fiddle)
2. *Zhutiqin* (bamboo fiddle)

3. *Yueqin* (moon shaped plucked lute)
4. *Xiao* (vertical flute)
5. *Luo* (gong)
6. *Gu* (drum)

From 1940 onwards, instrumentation of the Cantonese opera presents a mixture of East and West approach as Yee (1998, p.39) listed:

1. *Gaohu* (two-stringed fiddle – higher range)
2. *Zhonghu* (two-stringed fiddle – middle range)
3. *Yangqin* (dulcimer)
4. *Pipa* (four-stringed plucked lute)
5. *Dizi* (bamboo flute)
6. *Suona* (double-reed instrument)
7. Violin (Western)
8. Saxophone (Western)
9. Steel guitar (Western)

The influence of the West in Cantonese opera is obvious. According to sites visited by Su (2010), other instruments such as xylophone and banjo were used too. In 1931, Baak Yuk Tong and Li Xue Fang singing *Huang Long Tong Yin* (黄龙痛饮) were accompanied by violin, saxophone, guitar along with some other Chinese traditional musical instruments. Yee (1998) also states audience is receptive towards the change in the instrumentation and it does not affect their views towards enjoying the *yuejü*.

1.2.2 Types of play

There are three common categories for a contemporary Cantonese opera performance (Su, 2010). The categories are:

1. *Yue jü* (粤剧, full scale opera)

Yue jü means opera. The length of a full scale opera is usually more than 15 minutes. Examples are *Guifei Zuijiu* (贵妃醉酒) and *Muguiying Guashuai* (穆桂英挂帅).

2. *Ze zi xi* (折子戏, extracted scene or acts from a full opera)

Ze zi xi is a performance of an extracted scene or an act, from either one or a few full length *yue jü*. Popular examples are *Kaohong* (拷红) and *Jiaqi* (佳期) from *Xi Xiang Ji* (西厢记). Another example is *Taibai Zuijiu* (太白醉酒) from *Caihaoji* (彩毫记).

3. *Yuequ* (or *yutkuk* 粤曲, Cantonese operatic songs)

Yuequ is a shorter performance with selected songs from a full scale *yue jü*. Artists may bring forward their own rendition to the songs. Examples are *Li Zisung* (荔枝颂) and *Hong Zhulei* (红烛泪).

Cantonese opera is further divided into two: *wu* (武, martial arts) and *wen* (文, literate), similar to the division of *guzheng* repertoire. *Wu* plays are action-packed and intricately choreographed, often using weapons. The costumes for *Wu* plays are very complicated. *Wen* means intellectual, polite, cultured. *Wen* plays tend to be dramatic and the movements are soft and slow. This type of play focuses more on facial expression, tone of voice, and meaning behind the movements.

Cantonese opera has four types of roles:

1. *Sang* (*sheng* 生)
2. *Daan* (*dan* 旦)
3. *Zing* (*jing* 淨) and
4. *Cau* (*chou* 丑)

Sang is male roles in Cantonese opera. There are *xiao sheng*, *wu sheng*, *wen wu sheng*, *lao sheng*, *xu sheng*. *Daan* is female roles in Cantonese opera. There are *hua dan*, *wu wan*, *dao ma dan*, *gui men dan*, *lao dan*. *Zing* is often male characters such as heroes, generals, gods or demons. There are *en jing* and *wu jing*. *Cau* is known for clown figures in Cantonese opera. There are *chou sheng*, *chou dan*, *wen dan*, *cai dan* and *wu dan*.

The performer has four main conditions, such as:

1. *Chang* 唱: singing
2. *Nian* 念: dialogue
3. *Zuo* 作: body language and movement, and expression of feelings
4. *Da* 打: martial arts

As for colour signifier, Cantonese opera use different colors to representt different personalities:

1. Red: Loyal and brave
2. Black: virtuous
3. White: crafty and sinister
4. Blue: violent and rude
5. Yellow: capable and experienced

1.2.3 Development of Cantonese Opera in Hong Kong

In 1841, *yue ju* dissemination to Southeast Asia. After 1948, American recruits Chinese workers on Guangdong, then the *yue ju* performers followed the workers to San Francisco. In 1887 year, Li Zhongyu (1887) author of *Singapore Customs in Mind*, documented some groups perform Cantonese opera in Singapore.

However, during the Cultural Revolution, Cantonese opera among other traditional performing arts was banned in the People's Republic of China (Grout and Williams, 2003). Professional performers were humiliated with the fact that performing traditional arts such as opera or martial arts were then seen as a misconduct that brings no advancement to modernity and improvement to the nation. Many Chinese opera artists escaped to nearer Taiwan and some to Southern Asia and the United States of America. The consequences are loss of scripts, supports, and difficulty in sustaining this intangible traditional culture. Among other regional opera, Cantonese opera was regarded as the most popular one according to Grout and Williams (2003) due to the large number of migrations of the Southern Chinese as diasporic community.

Since the time of Cultural Revolution, Cantonese Opera used to be the main entertainment and continue to sustain in Hong Kong. However, the impact of modernity beginning from the 30s soon brought in influences from the West such as Western opera, popular music that led to Canto Pop; and it was then Cantonese opera faced a declined. Till today, efforts were seen in Hong Kong in the revival of this musical tradition. Many theatres in Hong Kong may invite Cantonese opera performances as a once in a while. In addition, full length *yue jü* duration of 3 hours may be a challenge to the non-aficionados.

1.2.4 The Cantonese opera in Malaysia

There are five phases of development of Cantonese opera in Malaysia: transplantation, improvement, epacme, undulating and decline stages. During the transplantation stage, the Chinese diaspora as emigrant work and live in Malaysia, amused themselves singing Cantonese opera. At this stage, professional artist is absent.

During the improvement stage, there was a rise in extensive use of the Cantonese dialect. Before they always employed the *guanhua* (官话). The latter was not easy to understand and they began using Cantonese (www.zh.anhuib.cn, N.D.).

Stage of epacme was during 1921- 1941, at the time of social stability, and the economy is in a rising stage, many professional group came to Malaysia for perform. And during the undulating stage around 1942- 1959, Japan started the Pacific war, they captured many Southeast Asian countries including Malaysia. Economic regeneration began in the 1950s which includes development in entertainment. During this time, ZhongLili (钟莉莉) was a famous artist who sang Cantonese opera in English.

It was till the decline stage around 1960-1979, mass media, popular culture via movie and TV show became closer to people's contemporary culture. And the professional Cantonese opera group tends to diminished. Since 1980, Cantonese opera is left with just few groups who insisted on effort to sustain the art (*Sichuan Xijü*, 2006).

In the following section, a problem statement is discussed followed by justification of research on KSK Art Crew. The research objectives and questions were stated and continued with the conceptual framework used in this research, together with limitation and chapters outline.

1.3 Problem Statement

Cantonese Opera is no longer popular since the commencement of popular culture and modernization, similar to other traditional and folk art. Originally, Cantonese Opera

consists of four parts, which are *Chang*, *Nian*, *Zuo*, *Da* as explained in Section 1.2.2. However, these are no longer present in many of today's performances. Most of the present day performances are employing either only *chang* or *nian*, leaving out *zuo* and *da* due to the latter required younger students to be trained from young and movement requires agility and acrobatic skills.

Technology and Westernization are factors where traditional instruments may no longer be a favourite among the youth when compared to electric guitar and keyboard, or other Western classical instruments. Audience may also not be in favour to watch a full performance of Cantonese opera. These are some issues happening in present day Cantonese opera and problems in transmission resulted in further decline of profession artist.

Many existing studies focused on the authenticity and preservation of Chinese Cantonese opera and the various forms of performances in China and abroad. However, few studies have paid attention to the transmission of Cantonese Opera in Malaysia context, especially, in an ethnographic way which can develop an insight into how Cantonese Opera continue in effort to sustain in Malaysia.

Thus, how KSK Art Crew revitalizes the Cantonese opera in this country where Chinese form the minority population is the main problem statement in this study.

1.4 Justification of Research

Most of the research of Cantonese Opera focuses on the performance and authenticity. However, very little research has been conducted to study how the Cantonese Opera transmits in Asian country. This research aims to find out how Kam who led KSK Art Crew drives on to continue her effort in revitalizing Cantonese opera. Results contributed to the re-contextualization of the Cantonese opera and its reception in Malaysia.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

This research is based on a qualitative theoretical framework. In the area of ethnomusicology, this study is employed Seeger's theory (section 1.7) where an ethnography of the Cantonese opera was carried out. Ethnography involves interaction between the researcher and the informants, participant observation, observation, interview; and where behaviors and perception were also recorded as data collection.

Besides, Blacking's theory of musical change became the backbone of this research. Blacking (1992) asserts that music is closely related to society. Both Seeger's and Blacking's theory, the former direct an ethnographic approach and the latter presents as a framework into looking at musical change. Both of them are found suitable as a combination for this research.

1.6 Research Objectives

This study is based on three main research objectives:

1. To explore the current Cantonese opera troupe led by Kam Sin Kiew
2. To study the transmission of Cantonese opera tradition in Kam Sin Kiew Art Crew
3. To analyze the selected live performance by KSK Art Crew and the Revitalization of Cantonese opera in Malaysia.

The above research objectives become the main aim in exploring KSK Art Crew and to deliver findings in how Kam revitalizes the Cantonese opera.

1.7 Research Questions

In meeting with the above research objectives, more than ten research questions were developed based on Seeger's (1992, p.104) ethnographic questions were employed in formulating a general query into Kam and her Cantonese opera music making process:

- The people who is involved and the principles that govern music making
- Reason of performance
- The outcome of the performance
- How is it being performed?
- The role of the performers in forming tradition and vice versa
- Other relating subject connected to the performance

These help in what Seeger called as *road maps* in guiding ethnography. Seeger's conspectus of fieldwork and ethnography is a wholeness of the event as a map instead of any investigator's detached perspective. As Seeger (*ibid.*) explains the word ethnography from the Greek word *ethnos* meaning folk or people, an ethnography of music differs from that of anthropology where music and music transcription is involved. Thus in this study, research questions below were formulated in answering the objectives 1. To explore the current Cantonese opera troupe led by Kam Sin Kiew; 2. To study the transmission of Cantonese opera tradition in Kam Sin Kiew Art Crew; and 3. To analyze the selected live performance by KSK Art Crew and the Revitalisation of Cantonese opera.

1. Who is Kam Sin Kiew and what is her background?
2. Why Kam Sin Kiew is an important person in the area of Cantonese opera in this part of the world – Malaysia?
3. When was the formation of KSK Art Crew?

4. How Kam Sin Kiew manage the KSK Art Crew?
5. What is the purpose of KSK Art Crew?
6. How does Kam teaches the Cantonese Opera?
7. Is the art taught authentically?
8. If not, what are the changes in the way Cantonese opera is transmitted in KSK Art Crew compared to its conventional form?
9. Why are these changes made?
10. How are the performers trained?
11. Who are the performers?
12. How were the live performances conducted?
13. Are the performances in their authentic form?
14. What are the programmes selected by Kam to perform in Malaysia?
15. Who are the musicians?
16. Is there any form of musical notation involved?
17. What type of music notation do they used?
18. Are there any changes to the music notation compared to its authentic version?
19. Are there any changes to the music accompaniment?
20. Are there any changes to the setting of the opera?

1.8 Limitation of Study

As a fulfillment for a degree Master of Performing Arts (Music) in mix-mode, this research focuses only on a case study on KSK Art Crew. Duration of the study was two years and the selected performances visited as a field were within these two years that include the *Chingay* festival in Johor Bahru in 2013, *A Night of Cantonese Opera* in Kuala Lumpur's theatre in 2012, *Empress Wu* in Kuala Lumpur in 2013, a restaurant

performance in Kuala Lumpur in 2014 and thirty rehearsals and class sessions at Kam's home.

1.9 Chapters Outline

This dissertation begins with chapter one stating the research objectives, research questions, conceptual framework, problem statement, significance of research and a background to Chinese opera. Chapter one reveals research trajectory and the need of this research.

The second chapter is a literature review of studies concerning Chinese opera and Cantonese opera. Literature concerning Chinese opera was reviewed and important studies on Cantonese opera were gathered and evaluated. This chapter focuses on identifying the gap in the literature.

The third is a methodological discussion chapter that explains the various approaches taken. The approaches taken in this research are carefully considered. Methodology involves fieldwork and ethnography of music. The author explained how each approach is an important step in delivering outcome that meets with the research objectives underlined in Section 1.6.

The fourth chapter discusses the researcher's finding, data collection and analysis. In this chapter, the author shows various fieldwork visited. Experiences of participation observation is one of the important entry into gaining insights into KSK Art Crew and their training, performances, and also the transmission in this contemporary society plus technological advancement.

The last chapter concludes the research with a summary of findings and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Fink (2014) explains that literature review is a quasi-reproducible approach in identifying and valuing work written by scholars and practitioners and further synthesizing the whole body of research publication. In this chapter, a literature review report was written in the author's work reviewing secondary data collected on the history and development of Cantonese opera. A section of Chinese opera literature opens the chapter looking at various different operas. The author also provides a critical evaluation of the differences between Cantonese opera to other Chinese operas based on these writings, while a study of Chinese traditional opera and its migration and transmission to other countries were examined.

2.2 Chinese opera literature

Chinese opera is a popular area of research and was quite thoroughly studied. Based on the above mentioned scholars, the characters used in Chinese opera were well informed. This includes symbolic representation of colours, costume, character and role, props, gesture and so forth. Repetition of information is common and many written information in the form of book, journal article, or press articles can be found in introducing the Chinese opera and its elements to the public.

Lovrick and Siu (2011) was among the many who provide a very detailed description of the characters, stories and tradition on Chinese opera. Various types of Chinese opera were documented. In the same line with Lovrick and Siu were Hsu (1964), Yang (1969), Rao (2000) and Thorpe (2005). In Chinese opera studies, scholars Hsu (1964), Yang (1969), Rao (2000) and Thorpe (2005) studied into the historical development of Chinese opera. Hsu (1964) looked into musical elements of Chinese

opera. Yang (1969) looked into the political influence on Peking Opera and Thorpe (2010) looked into performance of Peking opera in the UK. Many scholars focus on Peking opera or *jingjü*. These scholars covered in complete details from a China perspective.

2.3 Peking opera and other operatic genre

Scholars who look into Chinese opera mostly focus on Peking opera and some examine into other operatic genre, and also how Peking opera was formed from other genre. Yang (1969), for example, written extensively on the origin of Peking opera. The author explains opera is a very nationalistic thing, Peking opera is clearly adopted by the Cantonese or the Fukienese troupes. And he mention the Peking opera history, for example: like in fact Peking opera is not a native product of Peking, it's root from several provinces. As Thorpe describes:

Jingju ('Beijing opera') is China's most iconic traditional theatre, marketed as a global signifier of Chinese theatre and national identity. Although troupes from mainland China regularly tour Europe, audiences in the UK have also had access to Jingju via two indigenous organizations: the UK Beijing Opera Society (now defunct) and the London Jing Kun Opera Association (now in its ninth year). (Thorpe, 2010, p. 33)

Another important contribution is perhaps Wichmann's dissertation and a very detailed account into Peking opera. More importantly, the author Wichmann (1983) gave a detailed examination into the vocalization of Peking opera singing. According to Wichmann, there are three important elements in vocalization:

1. *Yongqi* (breath usage and control)

2. *Fayin* (pronunciation)

3. *Shangkouzi* (distinct Peking opera enunciation)

In addition, mouth shape and throat position were also examined in detailed by Wichmann where four important requirement must be realized:

1. *Kai kou* (mouth in open position)

2. *Qi chi* (levelled teeth)

3. *He kou* (mouth in closed position)

4. *Cuochun* (lip in scoop position)

Besides, importance was given to the internal mouth function as pronunciation will fully be affected with correct use of:

1. *Hou* (larynx)

2. *She* (tongue)

3. *Chi* (palate)

4. *Ya* (denoting front teeth)

5. *Chun* (lips)

Wichmann's contribution is considered detailed and very useful to Chinese opera scholars. Technique and performance practice of Peking opera were clearly delineated. The author also examined into stage speech and the differences between singing and speech.

Other important writers are Halson (1983), Mackerras (1997), Goldstein (1999) and Xu (2003) who gave a detailed introduction and information to Peking opera. Writers such as Mackerras (1997) provide a detailed historical account of Peking opera and the genre in contemporary days. Goldstein (1999) on the other hand focused on Mei Lan Fang the well-known Peking opera singer.

On the other hand, Perris (1983) and Clark (2008) reveal how the Peking opera changed due to Cultural Revolution. As Huang (2008) explains, Cultural Revolution

that took place in the 60s see a new reform of musical idiom especially following Mao's wife Jiang Qing's concept that follows the politic propaganda. At this time, Peking opera went through changes. It was originally a simple opera on stories and folk tales, and became a political tool reforming as the revolutionary opera model.

Other scholars such as Mark (1990), Stock (2002), Wong (2009), Yu (2009), Zou (2010) wrote on other forms of opera such as the oldest form of traditional opera *Kunqu* and Shanghai's *Huju*. Scholars such as Johnson (1996), Huang (2008) and Lai (2009) deliver information on Cantonese opera or *Yueju*.

As Rao puts it:

Peking opera was especially distinguished by its literary and elegant scripts, its ornate melismatic passages, and its overall aesthetic refinement. Cantonese opera, a regional style using Cantonese dialect, flourished in the Pearl River Delta of Southern China where emigration was most common. (Rao, 2000, p.136)

2.4 Cantonese opera

Literature on Cantonese opera is less compared to Peking opera and general Chinese opera record. Still, there is enough information and contribution from scholars in providing general information about the genre. Similar to Wichmann, Su (2010) gave a detailed introduction to Cantonese opera. Its origin, different types of Cantonese opera, role and character including its music and act were detailed in Su's account.

Other scholars such as Johnson (1996), Huang (2008) and Lai (2009) also studied into the development of Cantonese opera.

The text of *bong wong*, or aria types, in Cantonese opera has to observe prescribed verse structures. In an actual performance, however, the singer very

often sings a greater number of syllables in a line than are prescribed. (Yung, 1983, p.439)

An important scholar contributing to Cantonese opera literature is Bell Yung. Yung's monograph (1989) pioneered a study into Cantonese opera. Yung delineated the historical account of Cantonese opera and also explained well about pre-existing tunes that should be known to singers, where scriptwriter would only mark title of tunes and the singers to realize the song based on the given text. Creativity and performance practice were recorded. Yung clearly categorized four music styles used in Cantonese opera:

- 1) Speech-type
- 2) Aria-type
- 3) Fixed tune
- 4) Narrative songs

His other journal articles such as Yung (1983a; 1983b; 1983c) describe the linguistic tones used in Cantonese opera, the method of *t'ien tz'u* [Tin Qi] and the method of padding syllables.

On the other hand, Huang (2008) especially look into the *bang wong*. The author is only fascination secondarily with the details of the story what of the greater significance that transpired on a linguistic, and physical related of the story.

2.5 Chinese opera Migration and Other Issues

Clark (2008) perhaps is one of the important entry in literature providing one of the reasons to the migration and changes of Chinese opera due to Cultural Revolution where chairman Mao delivers new propaganda and his wife Jiang Qin in remodeling the

revolutionary opera model. As Lovrick and Siu (2011) explain, the opera goers were familiar with the Chinese opera story similar to the Western opera audience. Ruru and Pitches (2012) reveal the intercultural differences by comparing Chinese to European opera model. However, in the Revolutionary opera series, these are new stories related to Mao's propaganda and Western music and instruments were used.

However, the authentic version of Chinese opera survives and some were transmitted or migrated to other countries as far as New York. While some were migrated and remain a diasporic cultural activity. Mazur (1988), Su (1994), Rao (2000) and Rao (2002) look especially into the development of Cantonese opera in New York. Wichmann (1994) examines into the translation of *xiqu* research. Moon (2005) gave a very detailed historical account into how Chinese migrated and continue their musical culture including Chinese opera in America. "Chinese opera, along with wedding music, lion dances, and funeral bands, was emblematic of the liveliness of the Chinese community in the U.S." (Rao, 2000, p.135).

Ip (2005), and other scholars such as Collins and Jordan (2009) briefly describes the scenes in Australia when relating Chinese opera as an ethnic performing arts genre migrated to the country and its presence and survival. Chinese opera in Hong Kong was briefly stated in Lee's paper (1991), while a few scholars look into this genre in Singapore such as Perris (1978), Newman (1988), Chong (2006), Lee (2007) and Lee (2000). A different phenomenon was seen in Singapore:

In Singapore today, *xiqu* is performed in two primary contexts: in indoor theatres as secular entertainment by amateur troupes and in outdoor spaces as part of Chinese religious and customary ritual celebration by professionals. The latter style, known as *jiexi* (literally, "street show"), is historically linked to professional *xiqu* troupes (Lee, 2007, p.398).

Besides, Perris (1978) and Newman (1988) looks into the rise and survivor of Cantonese opera in Singapore. Lee (2000) delivers an ethnographic report of Chinese opera and all professional troupes in Singapore, and how these troupes taking act in the form of street performance in Singapore.

While literature concerning Chinese opera in Malaysia took scholars Tan (1980), DeBenardi (1984), Tan (1984; 1989a; 1989b; 2000), Matusky and Tan (2004), DeBenardi (2006) their work in looking at its arrival and survival. Tan perhaps contributed most on this genre in Malaysia, as an ethnomusicologist in Malaysia, she discussed the survival of Chinese performing arts genre including the Chinese opera through the National Culture Policy. Also, including DeBenardi (1984; 2006), such as Tan and her works, feature Chinese opera and its important role during *Phor Tor* or Hungry Ghost Festival. Tan (1984) also recorded an account of Chinese opera in the form of Ko-Tai and in her later work connected to the Malay form of *Bangsawan* (see 1989a).

Other issues in Chinese opera focus especially on cross-dressing and gender. Scholars such as Chou (1997), Tan (2000), Li (2003) and He (2013) examines into these issues. Li (2003) investigates cross dressing, queer theory employed in Li's paper focus on woman warrior, male role and same female gender used in *Butterfly Lovers* besides transvetism and other context in terms of aesthetic. Tan (2000) focuses on the actress Yam Kim Fei and her ability singing in lower register in cross-gender role. Other scholars such as He (2013) looks at Li Yu Gang in the same issues, and He (2014) extends the issue to contemporary film.

2.6 Conclusion

Scholars work on Cantonese opera is considered sufficient and there is an in-depth writing into its historical background, development and its migration to the West. Still,

there is a lack of literature looking at its migration to Southeast Asian countries, a few literatures could be found relating to its location in Singapore. Some scholars especially Tan, look into the case of Malaysia and the local especially Penang regarding Chinese opera survival. However, there is a lack of development in the scholarship of Chinese opera in Malaysia since the eighties. The most recent writing of Chinese opera in Malaysia was in the form of a book introducing the genre in the last decade. Therefore, there is two gap in the literature: the development of Cantonese opera in Malaysia; and research examining specifically on efforts of a particular troupe, or person in the development or survivor of Cantonese opera in Malaysia. In this research, Kam from Hong Kong became the focus as a Cantonese opera professional artist who set up KSK Art Crew in Malaysia. Kam who positioned herself an important figure appearing frequently at local theatre under The Actor's Studio, featuring workshop and frequent performances in both theatre and ritual performances was found by the author an important entry into scholarship. Thus, this study examines how Kam sustain this particular art form in a multi-cultural Malaysian setting, what effort was put in, the transmission process of an old performing art genre in a modern capital, and the reception of Cantonese opera.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This study took on an ethnographical approach in examining the revival and recontextualization of Cantonese opera focusing on Kam Sin Kiew Art Crew (KSK) in Kuala Lumpur. The study is qualitative in nature. Qualitative research looks into group, in-depth interviews, content analysis, ethnography, evaluation and semiotics are among the many approaches that are used, but qualitative research in its most basic form involves the analysis of any unstructured data, including: open-ended interviews, literature reviews, audio recordings, pictures and web pages. In this study, a case study design was chosen as it involves studying KSK Art Crew as a whole during the given duration of research period.

3.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data collection is an important step in this research. A literature review was carried out in understanding the Cantonese opera, also as a pre-field before entering the main research field. Scholars writing in the subject area such as book, journal article, newspaper, brochures and so forth form the secondary data of this study.

3.3 Partial Study Selection

Yin (2014) reveals case study as a method that focuses on a particular subject in a holistic way. Goulding (2002) explains that ethnography can be carried out in a holistic or partial way. Similar to case study, this research adopts a partial study in nature examining not the entire social group involved in Cantonese opera but one particular troupe and its effort in revitalizing the genre by a non-Malaysian in Malaysia. In this study, KSK Art Crew was selected as the subject in query. Other Cantonese opera

troupes were not involved. Performances by Kam and KSK Art Crew during 2012 to 2013 were visited where data collection was performed.

3.4 Fieldwork

Reeves, Kuper, and Hodges (2008) explain that “ethnography is the study of social interactions, behaviors, and perceptions that occur within groups, teams, organizations, and communities.” Its roots can be traced back to anthropological studies of small, rural (and often remote) societies that were undertaken in the early 1900s, when researchers such as Bronislaw Malinowski and Alfred Radcliffe-Brown participated in these societies over long periods and documented their social arrangements and belief systems. This approach was later adopted by members of the Chicago School of Sociology (for example, Everett Hughes, Robert Park, Louis Wirth) and applied to a variety of urban settings in their studies of social life.

Ethnographic studies typically gather participant observations and interviews; through using these methods ethnographers can immerse themselves in settings and can generate rich understanding of the social action that occurs.

In this research, ethnography of the musical practices at KSK Art Crew as the field was carried out. Observation was one of the approaches to gather data on performances, transmission method, and other approaches used by Kam to revitalize the Cantonese opera in Malaysia. However, observation has its limitation as to only provide an etic account from a perspective of an outsider (Barz and Cooley, 1996).

Therefore, participant observation was carried out in this research. This includes around 30 sessions of rehearsal and class sessions at Kam’s house, also participation in a few performances. These were attempts for the researcher to provide an emic account as from a perspective of an insider to experiencing how Cantonese opera was learnt, transmitted, and performed and what were the challenges during learning the art.

Interview was also an approach taken during fieldwork. Kam was the main informant and an open-ended interview was carried out. Besides, informal conversation during the lesson or rehearsal, backstage during performances becomes important data in this study too. Questions such as why Kam came to Malaysia, what kind of performance setting and why, and other art practices were asked. Chinese literacy is also very important in this research as most of the informants speak either Mandarin or Cantonese, therefore, forming interview question in Mandarin is obligatory. Below is a list of interview questions used in this research and translation in English:

Informant: Kam Sin Kiew (producer, artistic director and coach)

1. 请问金师傅是什么时候开始学习粤剧的?

When did you start learning Cantonese Opera?

2. 金师傅喜爱粤剧吗?

Do you love Cantonese Opera from your bottom of your heart?

3. 金师傅都去过哪些地方演出?

Where have you been for performances?

4. 金师傅为什么会选择在马来西亚定居?

Why you choose to settle down in Malaysia?

5. 在马来西亚是如何进行粤剧教学的? 在教学过程中有什么阻碍吗?

How do you teach Cantonese Opera in Malaysia? What kind of difficulties are you facing during the process of teaching?

6. 您的学生大都是乐龄人士吗?

Are most of your students at their age of learning Cantonese Opera?

7. 您觉得您的学生都能很好地表演粤剧吗?

Do you think that most of your students can perform Cantonese Opera in a proper way?

8.什么时候开始想要组建自己的粤剧班? 为什么会想要组建自己的团队?

When did you plan to establish your own Art Crew? Why did you want to?

9.在表演的过程中遇到过什么困难吗?

What kind of difficulties have you met during your performance life?

10.记忆最深刻的是在哪里表演?

Which performance impressed you the most?

11.对现在粤剧在马来西亚的现状有什么看法吗?

How do you find the current situation of Cantonese Opera in Malaysia?

Informant: Roon Pon (set designer and music director)

1.为什么学习粤剧? 什么时候学习并参与表演的?

Why do you learn Cantonese Opera? When did you start learning it and performing?

2.什么时候和金师傅学习和合作演出的?

When did you start following Madam Kam and performing with her?

3.和师傅一起表演会有压力吗?

Do you feel pressure when you performed with Madam Kam?

4.通常都会在哪里表演?

Where have you been performed before?

5.觉得每次演出会有不同的挑战吗?

Do you find challenges for each performance?

6.现在K S k 这种传播粤剧的方式你觉得可以长久吗?

Do you think the current way of teaching Cantonese Opera at KSK will last long?

Informant: Yap Qiu Pin (Administrative staff)

1. 为什么学习粤剧?

Why did you learn Cantonese Opera?

2. 觉得和金师傅学习和之前唱的有什么不同吗?

Do you find some changes compared with before when you did not learn from Madam Kam?

3. 现在参加 K S K 演出感觉有挑战吗? 有什么是比较困难的吗?

Do you find it challenged when you performed with KSK? In which aspects?

4. 对 K S K 的发展有什么更好的建议吗?

Do you have any suggestions on KSK's development?

Different sets of questions were asked according to the informant's role in KSK Art Crew. A mobile phone recorder model iPhone 4 was used in documenting pictures and video.

3.5 Post fieldwork

Post fieldwork was carried out after data collection during the field. The data were analyzed at this stage and data were disseminated in the form of a dissertation. Field notes, log book, and recording of interviews were transcribed and reviewed.

3.6 Conclusion

The above approaches reveal how this research was conducted in meeting with the objectives. Ethnography in fieldwork where participant observation was found the most effective way in understanding and examining KSK Art Crew and its effort in revitalizing and sustaining Cantonese opera in Malaysia.

CHAPTER 4 DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reports on a fieldwork of 21 months was carried out on 1st October 2012 to June 2014 in Kuala Lumpur and Johor Bahru. The first section of this chapter describes how Kam Sin Kiew set up the KSK Art Crew as to answer the first research objective. This proceeds with analysis of data gathered from fieldwork in meeting with research objective three. A performance where the author performed participant observation at Johor Bahru and Kuala Lumpur reveals how Kam transmit and sustain the Cantonese opera in a foreign country where a majority of population belongs to the Malay indigenous group. In the last section, Kam's effort and transmission method in a majority Muslim populated Malaysia is discussed.

4.2 Organization of KSK Art Crew

Kam Sin Kiew was born in 1948 in a traditional Cantonese Opera family. In an interview Kam (2012) explains that her father was the owner of a Cantonese Opera troupe in Guangzhou, China. But during the China Cultural Revolution time, her father fled to Hong Kong for he was considered as Capitalist, who is against Communist. Thus, the troupe was also dismissed because of that. Kam and her brothers and sisters started to learn Cantonese Opera since early childhood. At the age of 9, she went abroad performing with her father's troupe. She has been to Australia, Canada, Swiss, Singapore and so on for performing the Cantonese Opera. Because of her excellent performing skill and outstanding voice, little Kam won a lot of fans abroad.

In 1983, Kam came to Malaysia settle down in this country since. She met her ex-husband in this country and therefore, continues her career since then. Cantonese opera was not her career, it was fashion designing. However, it did not go well and she

decided to continue with Cantonese opera as she's born from a family who are trained professional artists. Kam's experience in Cantonese opera performances took her to Hong Kong, United State, Canada, Britain, Taiwan, Indonesia and Singapore. When she came to Malaysia, she has a group of fans both in Malaysia and Singapore and a lot of Cantonese Opera lovers came a long way to study from her.

In Malaysia, she began with joining Chinese associations. Later she was invited to teach Cantonese opera by the Cantonese association. Since the time, she began to realize that she was bound with Cantonese Opera for the rest of her life. Performing and teaching have become two important parts in life. At the very beginning, Kam only wanted enough money to support her family and especially her daughter. But as time pass, she gradually found that it not only a way of making a living, but more a career to help spread Cantonese Opera and even Chinese culture to more and more people around her.

The organization of KSK art crew involves seven important figures and their short biography as follows:

Kam Sin Kiew (The Cantonese Opera Artist, Director)

Madam Kam is a Hong Kong Cantonese Opera Artist. She has settled in Malaysia since 1983. She has been involved in Cantonese Opera since she was small. In 1968, she has started her career as a full-time Cantonese Opera artist and carried out her perform in Hong Kong, United State, Canada, Britain, Taiwan, Indonesia and Singapore.

Currently, she's the consultant of Jade Leaf Association and still base in Malaysia. She is also the producer and Artistic director of KSK Art Crew, based on the initial of her name – Kam Sin Kiew.



Fig. 4.1 Kam with her younger brother (Photo from Kam's Face book)

Lee Mei Wan (resident performer)

Madam Lee was a principal of a convent school. After her retirement, she starts to involve herself in Cantonese Opera and learn under Madam Kam for three years. She is active in this circle and she was one of the performing artists at The Actors Studio, Lot 10 and Penang PAC, Straits Quay.

Lee Yuen Lin (resident performer)

Madam Lee was an accountant before turning herself a full-time housewife. She starts to learn Cantonese Opera in the year 2009. She is also the Treasury of KSK crew. With her interest and passion in Cantonese Opera, her positive attitude made her involved almost every performance and workshop since 2010.

Ronald Poon Kong Kam (musical director)

Mr. Poon himself is an accountant, also an accountant for KSK crew. He fall in love with Cantonese Opera since his childhood and joined an amateur association of Cantonese Opera for a few years. He joined Madam Kam's crew since 19XX and performs with her around the country since then until now. He is still active and interested to perform in every performance Madam Kam conducted.

Sam Yip (resident performer)

Mr Yip is a top fans of Cantonese Opera. He has been practicing and performing Opera Singing since 2008. At 2009 he joins Madam Kam and take role as a lead actor in most of the performances. His latest performance was at KLPAC in 2013, act as emperor at Tang Dynasty.

Yap Qiu Peng (resident performer and administrative staff)

Miss Yap is also a Cantonese Opera lover since childhood. She is a human resources manager and also a properties agent. She join Madam Kam at 2010 and has been participating for several performances. Although her career makes her busy and stress, she still never give up on Cantonese Opera and her attitude won Madam Kam's recognition.

See Wan (resident performer)

Miss See Wan is Madam Kam's daughter. She works as a redactor. She was joking that she has already learning Cantonese Opera while she is in her mother's womb. She starts to learn Cantonese Opera at 19 and she is very helpful at making-up and wearing costume for others artists.

Jimmy Cheah (resident performer)

His interest on Cantonese Opera is mostly effect by his grandmother. At year 2012 he join KSK crew by introducing of Madam Lee Yuen Lin and act as an officer while performing Wu Ze Tian, at KLPAC. He exclaimed that learning Cantonese Opera is a mission to carry on the Chinese Culture and wish that he will influence more teenagers to know more about Chinese Culture.

A layout of the management team is as follows:

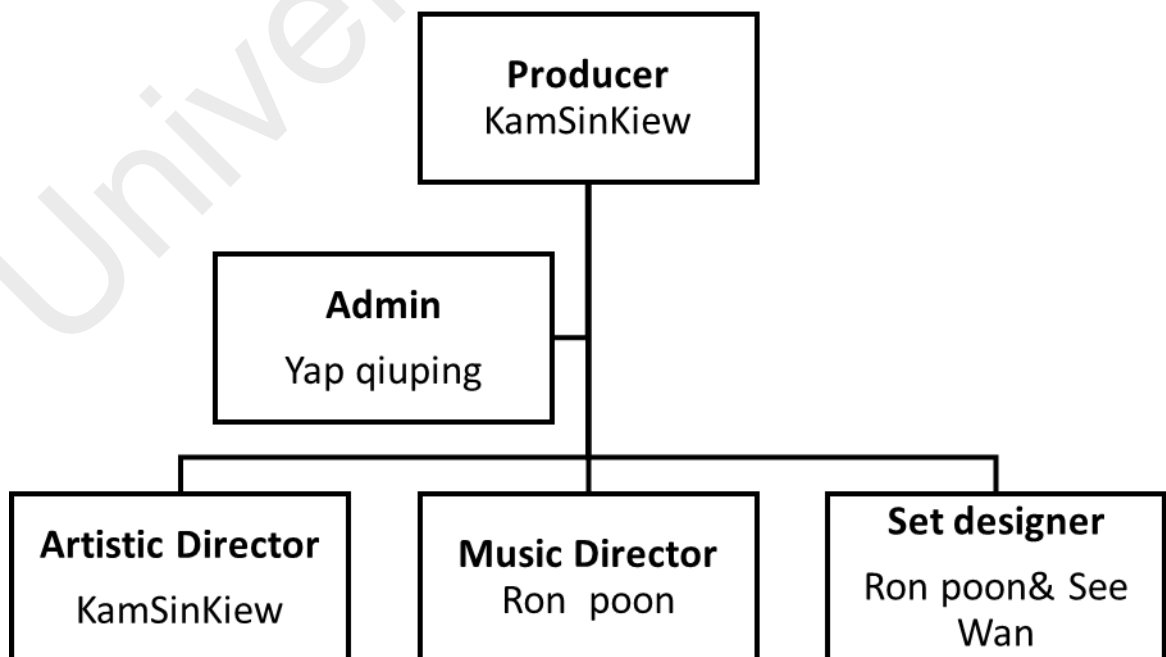


Fig. 4.2 Management of KSK Art Crew

4.3 KSK Art Crew and its Performances

This section discusses the KSK Art Crew in terms of transmission method and performance based on fieldwork carried out at *Chingay* festival in Johor Bahru on 27th Feb – 1st Mar 2013, *A Night of Cantonese Opera* a stage performance in Kuala Lumpur's theatre in 2012, *Empress Wu* at KLPac in 20 July 2013, function performances at Golden Seafood Restaurant Kuala Lumpur in 7 June 2014, and thirty rehearsals and class sessions at Kam's home. Data collected during these field trips were analyzed and discussed.

The *Chingay* festival I visited was held at an old Chinese temple 27th Feb – 1st Mar 2013. (See Fig. 4.3). Every year in the first lunar month of 20-23rd, the temple organizes its annual *Chingay* ritual known as the Parade of Deities. Picard and Wood (1997) describe *Chingay* as a large scale celebration where Chinese cultural activities can be seen such as lion dance, pugilistic performance, Chinese opera and so forth. Although some scholars discussed the unscientific ritual, such as Benardi (2004), the Malaysian and Singapore communities still worship the deities and carried on this ritual till present.

My field experience showed crowds gathered and upon informal conversation, gathered that they came from Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Singapore, Sabah and from other neighbouring regions since around 150 years.



Figure 4.3 Performances for the deities (Source: TV8)



Figure 4.4 The temple of Johor in 1950 and present.



Figure 4.5 This is a map to show the way for the parade of deities.

Data from virtual fieldwork such as television programme of *Chingay* show a large scale performance of dances with a crowd gathered in a circle watching with full attention (see Fig. 4.3). Sustained by the Chinese community in Malaysia and Singapore, more people are seen participating in this parade. When I was participating in the ritual, I see some foreigners attended the event and they appeared interested.

The parade took place along streets shown in Figure 4.3. The Chinese community participants explained to me that there are five deities, below are a list of the five and the Chinese sub-ethnic group that the deities belong to:

- *Yuan Tian Shang Di* 元天上帝 --- Teochew
- *Hong Xian Da Di* 洪仙大帝 --- Hokkien

- *Gan Tian Da Di* 感天大帝 --- Hakka
- *Hua Guang Da Di* 华光大帝--- Cantonese
- *Zhao Da Yuan Shuai* 赵大元帅--- Hainan

The devotees to *Chingay* ritual offered prayer and invited the deities to the dooly and the procession took place during the parade.

Another performance captured in this study was a 2013 performance *A Night of Cantonese Opera* on 2012, October 13-14 at The Actor Studio in Kuala Lumpur. This took the form as a *ze zi xi*. A whole performance participated and observed was *Empress Wu* at KLPac Kuala Lumpur on 20th July 2013. A dinner show at Kuala Lumpur Golden Seafood Restaurant on 7th June 2014 reveals a new innovative setting to stage Cantonese opera. Other than this, a series of thirty rehearsals and training session at Kam's house was participated by the author.

4.4 Cantonese Opera Revitalized

Initially, this research begins gathering data from an etic perspective upon granting access to KSK Art Crew and their performances. However, I was fortunate when Kam invited me to be trained under her and perform with them for three months. From then onwards, I was able to gather data from a partial emic perspective. I describe this as partial because Cantonese opera requires years of training and I am certain that I did not become what ethnomusicologists and ethnographers labelled as a cultural insider after a fieldwork duration of one and a half year.

Kam's lesson was charged at RM40 per lesson for duration between one to two hours. Participating in her performance was not a paid job but instead, performers need to pay in a total of RM500 per performance. This is due to Kam's sponsored her own costume, make-up, and that most of the performers were not professional artists, but

students of Kam. Therefore, the payment is similar to costume rental, make-up fee and further training.

At the Johor Bahru *chingay* performance as it was taken part as part of the street parade and the Cantonese Opera was performed beside the temple, the production team and performers do not have a formal venue for rehearsal and practice were carried out at Kam's house. Rehearsal took three months once the programme was decided by Kam. The performers consists of part-time artists joining Kam Sin Kiew Art Crew as they have their full-time job during the day, therefore, everyone can only participate at the practice in the evening beginning at 8pm, and during weekend.

I attended the training session twice a week. Kam was generous in allowing me to do audio recording during the whole training process and rehearsals. Transmission method based on Kam's instruction began with imitation. No notation or script were used, unlike what was recorded in literature where a *gongche pu* is used in the transmission of its music in its authentic form. She performed and instructed me to imitate her steps, and then body and facial expression. A general first impression from what I gathered from her class, learning the move of Cantonese opera involves three levels:

1. Basic exercise to warm up
2. Steps following the music
3. Body and hand gestures in relation to the music

Kam also incorporated technology in the form of mobile devise such as her mobile phone to carry out a video recording of her students' movement when there is an obstacle in achieving certain movement. She did this to me showing me my mistakes and other students too. This reflexive way of teaching helped students to immediately

grasp their mistake. This was helpful in an instance understanding of what went wrong instead of just relying on verbal instruction and comments.

E-learning is something new that is not authentic to the transmission of Cantonese opera. The integration of a three-way learning was involved in Kam's teaching:

1. Teacher's instruction to student
2. Student's performance (recording takes place)
3. Teacher and students' reflexive account from viewing the recording together with teacher's commentary

Details such as the eye contact, facial expression, gestures and so forth were particularly challenging especially to an outsider like me. By carrying out a participant observation in this Cantonese opera troupe, I found more appreciation towards the art where each challenging smaller details such as these mentioned reflect how the performer trained for perfection. Another challenging task was the speed of steps. Fluctuation between fast and slow pacing following the music was achieved only with rigorous training and practice.

Some of the important movement and terminology was attained during participation observation such as the following:

1. *Sai Wan Sau* (小雲手)
2. *Dai Wan Sau* (大雲手)
3. *Lan Fa Sau* (兰花手)
4. *Yün Toi* (圓台)

5. *Hei Bou* (起步)
6. *Go Wai* (過位)
7. *Siu Tiu* (小跳)
8. *Dui Muk* (對目)
8. *Ci Gai Mei* (雉雞尾)

Hand movement or *Sau Dong Zok* (手動作) is important in its direct as to synchronize with the musical rhythm of the *kuk*. The hands and fingers need accuracy and correspond to the music. Female hand gesture is elegant and feminine, and the *Lan Fa Sau* (兰花手) position is common. Another hand gesture is *Wan Sau* (雲手) or cloud hand.

This has a long history in Chinese tradition where the technique occurs also in other forms of art such as *tai chi*. The circular movement form the basis of the hand gesture and it is an important command as other gesture rely on this fundamental basics. Kam taught and instruct as to carry out either big or small ‘cloud hands’ pronounced as *Dai Wan Sau* (大雲手) or *Sai Wan Sau* (小雲手).

Hei Bou (起步) or commencement of foot work is also an important technique. Sometimes, Kam would just instruct to ‘go’ as in *hei bou*. More precisely, *Chut Bou* is very important as it has not only a commencement of steps but in a gliding position and its basis came from Chinese martial arts. *Go Wai* was carried out when two performers cross over each other to the end of the opposite stage. Other techniques such has *Go Wai* (過位) or bypassing, *Yün Toi* (圓台) or rounding the table or stage, *Chut Bou* (出步) or commencing of steps and *Siu Tiu* (小跳) or small jumps were other common steps.



Figure 4.6 Rehearsal at Kam's house (photo by author)

Yün Toi was perhaps the most difficult. Female performer needs to fulfill this criteria and I found it very difficult to achieve. This was attained by making very small steps when walking that has an outcome as if an actress is gliding through distance. These smaller steps were commenced with a lift that made the body visually perceived as a light object that somehow seemingly floating across the stage. The body must be seemingly not moving affected by the feet. In the opposite, male actor does not make the same move, but with bigger steps.

Dui Muk (對目) or staring in the eyes was carried out when performers look at each other in the eyes, they may be in steps circling and after a few steps returning to their position. Eyes gesture like many other Chinese opera is very important. The eyes were painted with make up in the way the Chinese commonly refer to as Phoenix eyes or *fung ngan*.

These techniques were not easy to learn. Kam was patient throughout the training. However, there are some other techniques that were not taught due to the lack of professional full-time Cantonese opera actor in the troupe. Technique such as *Shui Zao* or water sleeves was perhaps the most challenging of all and was absent during my field visit. The sleeve used during my field visit and performances participated and observed were shorter. Other technique such as *Fei Tui* (飛腿) or flying kick that should be carried out by actor in the warrior role was absent too. *Ci Gai Mei* (雉雞尾) or pheasant feathers, was used but its full act was not seen in KSK troupe. This involves the warrior role again and is used to enhance expression. Another technique that is absent is *Yun Shui Fatt* (旋水髮) or Hair-fling that is used by the female swinging her ponytail when she was expressing sadness.

Learning the Cantonese opera techniques was not easy as I am still very much an outsider. Giving an etic perspective, the art form must be learned while at young age as

a profession. Even a fieldwork with participant observation within a year or more such as in my case would not have granted me an emic perspective.

Another challenge for Kam in transmitting Cantonese opera in Malaysia is Cantonese language. Kam was very strict on singers' pronunciation. This issue may be inevitable as Malaysia's pluralistic society speaks in multilanguages, not only that pronunciation may be at stake, an important phenomenon that I observed during my fieldwork and my stay in this country for five years, syncretism in language happened in a common way resulting in fusional language, where the same goes to syncretism in music as what Matusky and Tan (2004). While chatting with some local Malaysian Chinese, some syncretic form of words was made clear to me in understanding Kam's comments. For example, some Malaysian may pronounce *sama*, meaning 'all' in Cantonese where in the actual language is *chueenbou*. The word *sama* came from the Malay word *semua*. Therefore, the Cantonese in Malaysia may not be authentic.

Although I am a Chinese ethnographer considering researching on the same ethnic community, Cantonese is not my native dialect. Unlike the local, I did not have prior Cantonese literacy. Perhaps this may be an advantage as pure Cantonese language would be my first experience instead of a syncretic form. However, this puts me in a position of an outsider engaged with the art form. Providing an etic perspective in this research remains the fact. All through my learning process, Kam explained the sentence word by word to me, and strictly instruct to observe the shape of her mouth when and she pronounced a word in Cantonese.

In terms of music and its transmission, a survey into literature informs that a traditional musical notation method used in China *Gongche pu* (工尺谱) (see Wang 2007) was the basis of Cantonese opera music notation. This is the biggest challenge in the transmission of Cantonese opera in a contemporary society not only in Malaysia but the rest of the world. The *Gongche pu* was commonly used in Chinese folk art forms,

traditional opera and instrumental music in ancient times of China. Notation was named after Chinese writing such as 合、四、一、上、尺、工、凡、六、五、乙 and so forth.

When the notes are sung in different opera traditions, they do not sound as the words would be pronounced in the respective regional dialects. Instead, they are pronounced in an approximation of Modern Standard Chinese pronunciation and pitch recognition. The following is an example of *Gongche pu* from Cantonese opera.

Pronunciation of Cantonese Gongche characters									
Gongche character	合	士	乙	上	尺	工	反	六	五
Cantonese Gongche pronunciation	[hǒ:]	[sɪ:]	[jɪ:]	[sā:ŋ]	[tshé:]	[kón]	[fá:n]	[lí:u]	[wú:]

Table 4.1 *Gongche pu* Notation Chart(see Ng 2006, p156)

According to various sources such as Wu (1998) and Jones (1996), *Gongche pu* began its usage from the Tang Dynasty. It became popular in the Song Dynasty. *Gongche pu* is believed to have begun as a tablature of certain musical instrument, it is possibly using a fixed "do" system.

Later *Gongche pu* became a popular pitch notation, using a movable "do" system. The notation is not accurate in modern sense. It provides a musical skeleton, allowing an artist to improvise. The details are usually passed on by oral tradition. However, once a tradition is lost, it is very difficult to reconstruct how the music was supposed to sound. Variations among different traditions increased the difficulty in learning the notation. An example of *gongche pu* is in figure 4.8)



Figure. 4.7 Gongche pu used in Cantonese opera (Photo from www.sbc.hpe.cn, 2012)

In Chinese opera sometimes "士" *shì* is used instead of "四" *sì*. Sometimes "一" *yī* is not used, or its role is exchanged with "乙" *yǐ*. And "凡" *fan* is replaced by "反" *fan* in Cantonese tradition. With the various information gathered, a layout of *Gongche pu* and cipher notation and the translated solfege system were summarized as follow:

Gongche scale for Cantonese opera																			
Gongche	俗	仕	儼	仕	伋	伋	佻	合	士	乙	上	尺	工	反	六	五	亿	生	牙
Jianpu	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2
Solfege	sol	la	ti	do	re	mi	fa	sol	la	ti	do	re	mi	fa	sol	la	ti	do	re

Table 4.2 *Gongche pu* and cipher notation and the translated Solfege system (adapted from Su 1995, p.11).

Kam's teaching reveals changes from its tradition. *Gongche pu* was no longer used in KSK Art Crew. Kam owns a heavy ring file of a huge collection of audio CDs (see Fig. 4.8).



*Figure 4.8 Madam Kam show a heavy ring file of a huge collection of audio CDs
(Photo by KSK member)*

Kam reveals to me the CD collection she used for teaching. Karaoke version of Cantonese opera is quite popular to some social groups. This is no longer new where the once classical staged performance and its repertoire from China was now available in karaoke version, and could be perform by aficionados at home and other venue with karaoke system (see Drew, 2001; Pinch & Bijsterveld, 2011; Lum, 2012).

Kam taught her students, including me using the karaoke version. Therefore, one major difference compared to its original transmission method was the need of memorization towards melody. Though, professional Cantonese opera singers usually could memorize all the *kuk* (ditties) and this may not be too distance from its origin; except for the fact that there is no more written notation and lyrics in KSK Art Crew.

Performers learn and practice via karaoke. Not only the lyrics on the karaoke were highlighted accordingly to its entry, a practitioner also at the same time view the

original casts recorded which adds on the benefit of watching their expression as a reference (see Fig. 4.8).



Figure 4.9 Kam (black) teaching the author *siuku* of Cantonese opera (photo by KSK member)

One challenge is that the absence of notation made singing by ear an ability that trainees at KSK Art Crew must attained. Each phrase of the ditties must be memorized in order to be able to sing along this karaoke version.

This is considered a major change of its transmission method. In addition, it is a strategy in revitalizing the Cantonese opera. Karaoke is a tool here in increasing interest and convenience in learning Cantonese opera. Not only that, regardless of whether the person is a beginner or trained performer, the every-ready pre-recorded music accompaniment is a positive add-on, compared to practicing the script and its songs without accompaniment.

4.5 Setting, Costume and Make-up

Kam designed all the props for her performances. These include Chinese stone bench, table and embroidered cloth and so forth. On the banner the decorated embroidered satin labelling of *Jinqianci* (金倩翹) marked the name of Kam. Audience who regularly attend Cantonese opera recognize that this is Kam's performance upon looking at the label revealing her Chinese name. Kam also recycled by repeating use of the same backdrop from past performances.

Stage lighting has its characteristics in Chinese opera. Fujian opera is common to have white, while Cantonese opera also use the white color for stage lighting in Hong Kong. At a performance *A Night of Cantonese Opera* on 13-14 October 2012 at The Actor Studio, Lot 10 Shopping Mall in Kuala Lumpur, Kam selected orange color for the stage lighting throughout the performances and changes were made by altering the intensity of the light. Kam (2013) in an interview explained that orange reflects better appearance for the make-up.

Make-up is considered a serious phase as a preparation for Cantonese opera and requires a long time. I arrived 10am for the Johor Bahru *Chingay* performance even the programme began at 8pm, as all artists under KSK Art Crew were told.

Besides music and movement, make-up was taught as part of the transmission of Cantonese opera. The Chingay performance Kam selected red and white colour. Kam explained that product from the States is more advisable as some from China may not be healthy for the artists' skin with prolong usage.

During my participant observation my face was done by Kam as she began with white color on the whole face, and then red for highlighting the contours of the face (see Fig. 4.10).



Figure 4.10 Make-up for Cantonese Opera (photo by author)



Figure 4.11 Researcher's participant-observation during make up session (photo by author)



Figure 4.12 Researcher's participant-observation during make up session(photo by author)

Talcum powder as a finishing was advised by Kam as this allows oil absorption. The next step was pulling the face upwards using a cloth strip which I experienced pain and was tiring as a newcomer to this art. However, during the conversation Kam explained that this helps the performer to look *jingshan* or spirited.



Figure 4.13 Cloth over face for a lift (photo by author)



Figure 4.14 Local television host Desmond Tey (8TV, 2013)

During my fieldtrip, after putting on make-up, we were interviewed by local TV station 8TV and host Desmond Tey came to do a session with Kam and her opera (see Fig. 4.14). Kam was generous and taught Tey how to make-up and dressed up (see Fig. 4.15). She also taught him some simple movement. The visit by Tey from 8TV perhaps excited the performers and I could see effort from local TV station to promote the dying Chinese cultural performing art.



Figure 4.15 Kam coaching Desmond Tey (photo by author)

Costume is very precious at KSK Art Crew as they are costly. Before wearing the costume, performers wear a white lining made form 100% cotton. This is due to the unwashable fabric that will be easily torn and therefore, the costumes were seldom

washed and an inner garment is needed to protect sweat from staining and dirtying the costume.

Different roles have different costumes. Generosity on colours depicts a wealthy character. The costume has water sleeves (水袖) and is worn by wealthier roles. Only the domestic worker and poor people do not have water sleeves. The Wu (武) also do not use water sleeves.



Figure 4.16 Costume rack (Photo by Author)

Costume used in Cantonese opera is often not washed, and hanged to dry. Later it was kept in box.



Figure 4.17 The author in the role *Chao Heong* (photo by Roon Poon)

4.6 Performance Programme and Analysis

The performances observed during fieldwork at KSK Art Crew were mainly *ze zi xi* (*jit ji hei* 折子戏), as categorized by Su (2010). Only Empress Wu was a full scale *yue jü* (粵劇) however, it was still a combination of pre-existing tunes and what Yung (1983) defines as *T'ien T'zu*, which this chapter will explain.

4.6.1 *A Night of Cantonese Opera* at The Actor's Studio

I was at my early entry to the field at *A Night of Cantonese Opera* performed at The Actor's Studio at Lot 10.

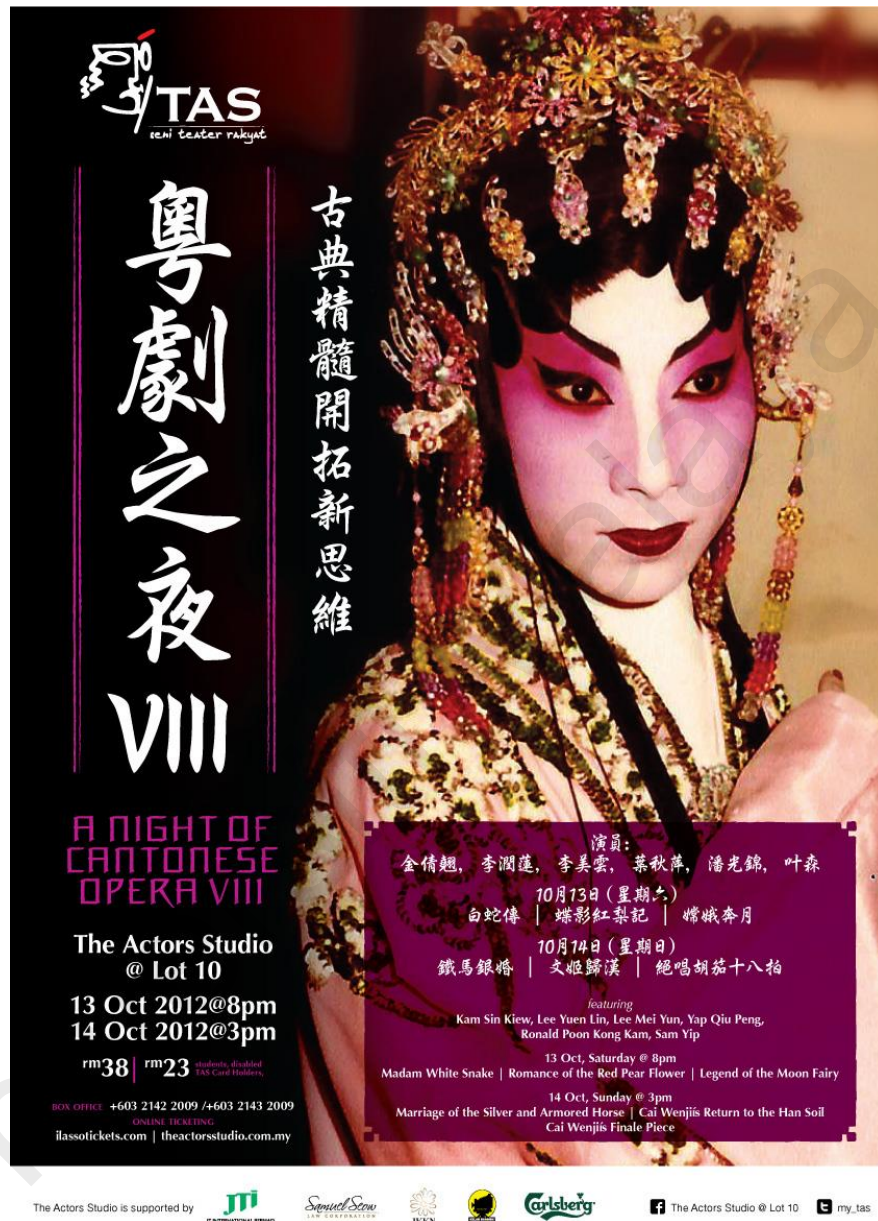


Figure 4.18 Promotional Poster for A Night of Cantonese Opera (KSK Art Crew 2012)

Actor Studio is a Kuala Lumpur shopping mall, the production ran for two days in October 2012 with a programme of *ze zi xi* showcasing excerpts from:

1. *Madam White Snake* 白蛇传
2. *Romance of the Red Pear Flower* 谍影红梨记
3. *Legend of the Moon Fairy* 嫦娥奔月

I was only allowed back-stage to help during the performance and as an observer for my research. The hall has a capacity of 220 seats. The casts include 6 people including Kam playing the lead role. Simple stage props such as stone bench, props door, stone bridge and fake tree made from polystyrene was used. The backdrop was a cyclorama and different background was set according to the scene.



Figure 4.19 Rehearsal for Legend of the Moon fairy (photo by author)



Figure 4.20 Post performance photo with audience (photo by author)

Music accompaniment was based on pre-recorded music. From a listening analysis perspective, the instruments involved were *erhu*, *pipa*, *bang* (wooden stick) and *luo*. The character of the music was lively for *Romance of the Red Pear Flower*. *Legend of the Moon Fairy*'s music is heavy. All the accompany music were played with prerecorded music in the form of an audio CD.

As for reception, only around forty to fifty audience turned up. Most of the audiences were at their middle age to the elderly. Majority of the audience were Chinese and only a few foreigners and Indian audience were seen. I took an opportunity to chat with some audience and gathered that they came because they would like to watch Cantonese opera, which was not commonly performed elsewhere, and that the ticket was not expensive as tickets were sold at RM23 or RM32, two price categories. Most of the audience I chatted revealed that they did not understand it, but were amazed with the costume and other Chinese cultural elements. Therefore, for these members of audience, watching Cantonese opera was merely a cultural exchange activity, without full appreciation of its stories, aesthetic, music, singing and so forth. The context of meaning and interpretation of performance was altered.

4.6.2 Johor Chingay Ritual Performance

Another site visited during this research was the Johor Chingay ritual in 2013, February 23. The performance was a combination of *yue jü* showcasing a *ze zi xi* of *Miu Yu* (廟遇) from *Tong Pak Fu dim Chao Heong* (唐伯虎点秋香之庙遇), *Ba Xin Worsao* (八仙贺寿), *Luk Gok Daifongxiong* (六国大封相). From my training with KSK Art Crew, I was fortunate to be appointed to lead the role of Chao Heong in the first, and as a ‘general’ in the third performance *Luk Gok Daifongxiong*. In *Ba Xin Worsao* I was an observer without participation.

Leading the role *Chao Heong* (see Fig. 4.17) allows me to witness and experience Kam’s teaching. As mentioned in Section 4.4, the excerpt of *Miu Yu* was taught by Kam to me without *Gongche pu*. My initial thought was a cipher notation may be used. However, no notation was used, unlike local Chinese orchestra or other Chinese folk music employing cipher notation, Kam used video karaoke instead. Kam did not teach *gongche pu* reading as this score was no longer commonly used in contemporary society.

Therefore, Cantonese opera, which originally based on *gongche pu* was transmitted at KSK Art Crew using oral transmission using technological support through online and recorded karaoke medium. Without a *pu* (score), learning of the *diao* (ditties) was not easy and based solely on memory. Observing others learning this way gave a first impression that it should be easy and enjoyable. However, in my participant observation, this took me and others two months to complete memorizing the excerpt *Miu Yu* and is challenging without a musical notation for reference.



Figure 4.21 Karaoke version of *Miu Yu* for transmission of Cantonese opera (photo by author)

Earlier in this chapter I explained the transmission of Kam using karaoke. However, from my participant observation, I learnt that this is very challenging and the tonality of the piece to perform cannot be confirmed. This is because although we were

trained following the key sung in the karaoke, however, if there are live musicians involved, they would play any key regardless of what the singers practiced.

This situation occurred in the Johor performance when live music accompaniment was involved. However, in other performances using pre-recorded music accompaniment, this was not the case. The music used for the performance was the same as the one for practice and training.

Miu Yu total length is around fifteen minutes. The music was in a character of stately crotchet beat and at moderate tempo that later speed up to its climax. The pitch range is high and vocal timbre required is narrow. As a trained vocalist in Western *bel canto*, I am a soprano singing for the first time in Cantonese opera. Some adjustment was needed for me. Articulation requires a narrower shaping of the mouth to achieve brilliancy and accurate pronunciation of Cantonese language, which was the aim of Cantonese opera nuance.

The performance of these three excerpts was accompanied by live musicians. This included an *erhu*, a violin, *luo* (gong) and *bang* (clave) as an ensemble. Kam invited these musicians from Ipoh and Penang as it is not easy to be able to find musicians who still know these *yuequ*. They played without a score, by memory, and on their music stand were only lyrics of the excerpts. They were playing mostly in heterophonic texture and naturally, without much discussion, they

In my practice, following what I was trained in the approach of ethnography of music, I tried to transcribe the music from karaoke into Western notation as a reference. The *diao* of *Miu Yu* (庙遇) from *Tong Pak Fu dim Chao Heong* (唐伯虎点秋香之庙遇) begins in 18 bars (see Figure 4.22). The climax reached a higher pitch at middle of the song. (See Fig 4.23).

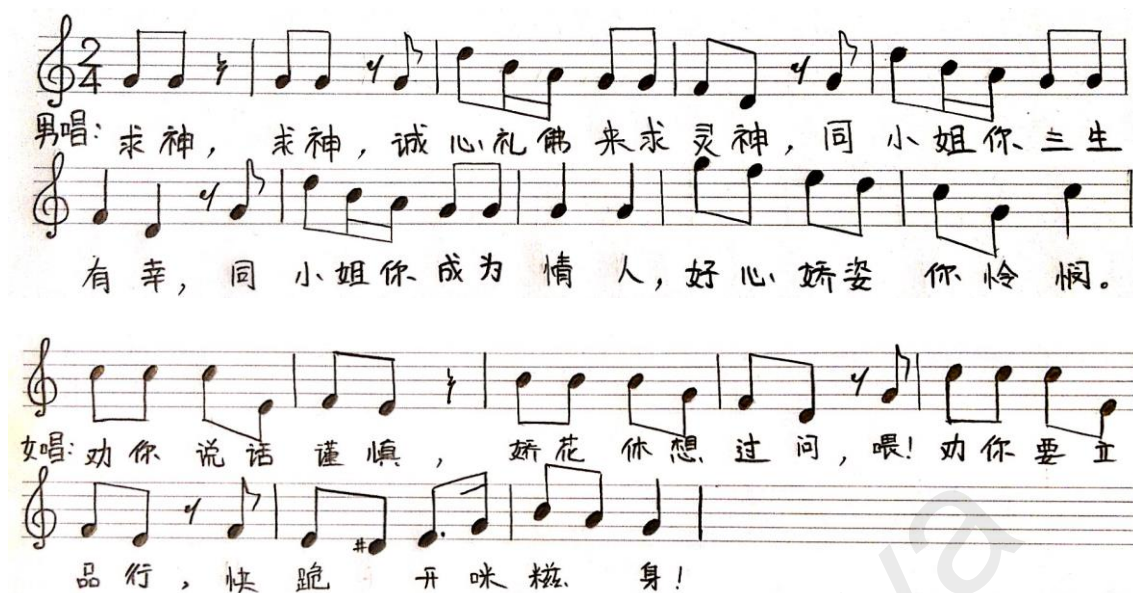


Figure 4.22 Excerpt from *Miu Yu* (transcribed by author)

The music went as high as notated in Figure 4.20 and it was considered a challenging passage for beginners.



Figure 4.23 Excerpt from *Miu Yu* (transcribed by author)

The text and its relationship to music was not too complicated as it is syllabic. During my participant observation in learning *Miu Yu*, I did not continue with note taking and transcription, but managed using karaoke as a source of learning. In *Ba Xin Worsao* (八仙贺寿), the music was just the the rhythm of playing the *Luo* and *Gu*. In this performance, the *Ba Xin Worsao* was performed for *Hua Guang Dadi*. When *Hua Guang Da Di* went out for travelling, there would be crowded. Since that, the *Ba Xin Worsao* play and its music accompany shall be simplified. We just wore the costume of *Ba Xin Worsao* to greet *Hua Guang Da Di*'s birthday.

In the *Ba Xin Worsao* music section, there are only *Luo* and *Gu* to be played as the accompany music. The two percussions was played softly and slowly in stately rhythm for the entrance of the artists, creating mystic and suspense.

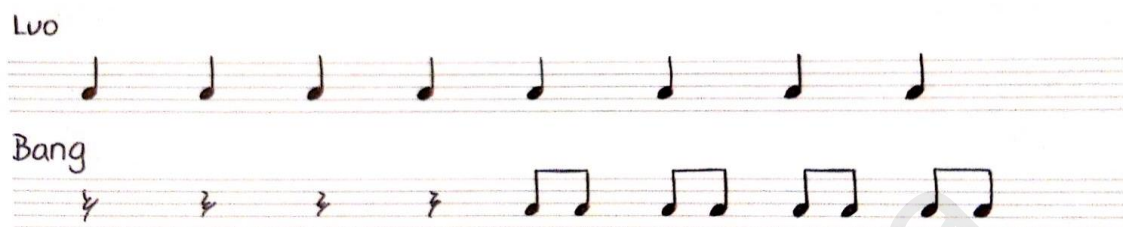


Figure 4.24 Introductory rhythmic pattern from *Ba Xin Worsao* (transcribed by author)

Luk Gok Daifongxiong (六国大封相) was performed in 10 minutes. The music consists of the combination of *luo* and *bang* accompaniment. *Luk Gok Daifongxiong* is a more challenging piece. In this show, the music accompanists will play different rhythm according to the relatively roles, which is a spontaneous job for the live music accompanists.

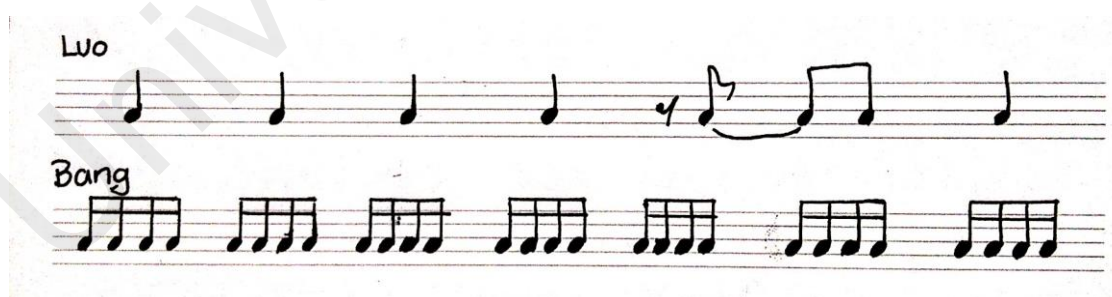


Figure 4.25 Introductory rhythm from *Luk Gok Daifongxiong* (transcribed by author)



Figure 4.26 Excerpt from *Luk Gok Daifongxiong* (transcribed by author)



Figure 4.27 *Luk Gok Daifongxiong*'s outfit (photo by KSK member)

There were not many audience paying attention to the performance by KSK Art Crew. As Kam explained, this performance was for the deities. The Chingay parade carried the deity on the wooden carriage passed by the stage where KSK Art Crew performed Cantonese opera. Some participants stopped by and watch our performances, but most of them were elderly people, and a majority of the participants just passed by and paid full attention to the parade.

4.6.3 Wu Ze Tian

The third entry of my field was a major and larger scale performance of *Wu Ze Tian* (*Empress Wu*) at Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre, Sentul, in July 20, 2013.



Figure 4.28 Promotional Poster of *Wu Ze Tian* (Poster courtesy of KSK Art Crew)

Here, I was fortunate to be given a role as a *gongnü* or palace maid as a mean of participant observation that enabled me to access a step closer to the production. This production resembles a full scale *yue jü*, it was a new entry in Cantonese opera by Kam,

however, the music was not new and it was a combination of preexisting tunes taken from existing Cantonese opera such as *Bai Longguan* (白龙关), *Di Nvhua* (帝女花) and *Hong Zhulei* (红烛泪). In a way, it was what Yung (1983) labelled as using the *T'ien T'zu* method, employing *siu kuk* from other Cantonese opera and inserting texts by Kam. Narratives was based on a historical story of the one and only female emperor in China – Empress Wu Zetian during Tang dynasty.

Empress Wu is a piece of Cantonese Opera created, directed and played by Kam Sin Kiew herself. The purpose of doing the show was to raise the fund for KSK art crew. Empress Wu is the first Charity Show conducted by KSK ARTCREW, and also the first Cantonese Opera show on the story of Empress Wu in Malaysia.

Kam Sin Kiew stated that, preparation and *t'ien t'zu* process took a longer time for this production. Pre-recorded music was used, without musician accompaniment. And the reason for choosing Empress Wu as the topic of the show is because among so many characters that Kam Sin Kiew has been played, Empress Wu is one of her favorite characters. Besides, participant by a commercial TV personal – the TV program host of *Ba Du Kong Jian*, Desmond Tey, was crossed-dress in his role for *Empress Wu*. Although he was quite busy, he still managed to pick up the role within one month.

In total, there were seventeen artists in the show. Among them, there were some Cantonese Opera aficionados who were not the members of KSK Art Crew. I was given the role Shan Er. Kam and Lee Mei Wan played the role of Empress Wu; Desmond Tey and Yap Qiupin played the role of Empress Wang and consort Xiao; Sam Yap played the role of Emperor Tang Gao Zong; Jimmy Cheah played the role of General; Roon Poon played the role of Zhang Sun Wu ji and Mei Wan played the role of Shang Guan Wan Er.



Figure 4.29 Wan Er (Right) and Shan Er (Left) (Photo courtesy of KSK Art Crew)



Figure 4.30 Kam as Empress Wu (Left) (Photo courtesy of KSK Art Crew)



Figure 4.31 Empress Wu ascend the throne (Photo courtesy of KSK Art Crew)

The story took Empress Wu from a young Wu Mei Niang rose to be an Empress of Gao Zhong Emperor, and finally as the first female Emperor in Tang Dynasty. This was considered a large scale performance as Pentas 1 at KLPAC has a capacity of five hundred. The first opening show was almost full house and probably owing to Desmond Tey and publicity in TV8 channel and KSK Art Crew's own effort.

Audience were mainly Chinese, middle and older age. Young people can be seen are reporters, or accompanying parents. Applaud was quite strong and it was notable that effort was put in to sustain this art genre.

4.6.4 Restaurant Performance

An innovative change of performance context was witnessed in one of the sites carried out which is a restaurant performance set-up. Kam explained that it is getting harder and harder to advertise the Cantonese Opera, therefore, producing a show at a restaurant setting was carried out by Kam as a new development of the art form.

Due to the lack of finance, Kam set up a production on 7th June, 2014 at a local restaurant. The new concept see audience buying ticket for the show which is also a

meal ticket, similar to the local Chinese ten-course dinner set. The ticket was priced at RM120 inclusive of a ten-course meal and Cantonese opera performance. An ordinary ten-course dinner at local Kuala Lumpur restaurant ranged from the cheapest of around RM60 – RM 100; while concert tickets priced around RM30 to RM 300 depending on various types of productions, therefore, a RM120 show-dinner ticket was decided.

Kam successfully managed ten tables booking, which indicates a sales of hundred tickets. The stage was quite simple and the make-up room was just a display room. Various *bong wong* or *siu kuk* were selected by Kam and other artists for performance. Kam gave instructions and suggestions on their selections of *bong wong* or *siu kuk*. Musicians were not hired, and pre-recorded music was used by a CD player.

Members of the audience consist of friends and fans. Some younger audience could be seen accompanying their grandparents or parents. The restaurant performance setting proved success as the turn-up was good and it was a profitable production.

4.7 Discussion

Based on the theory derived from Blacking (1995), the ethnomusicologist explains that changes through innovation or acculturation in performance should not be surprising, instead, a common situation expected because the nature of all organism. This research provides both synchronic and diachronic perspective, referring to Kam as a partial ethnography of Cantonese opera by making reference to its origin.

Based on Blacking's statement, similar to a certain extent, KSK Art Crew brought many changes to the performance and transmission of Cantonese opera (see Fig. 4.32). Two main changes based on Blacking's theory were context changes, technological development and social use.

Firstly, the context of Cantonese opera performed and trained by Kam has moved away from its origin. An absence of *gongche pu* was clear in Kam's

transmission. The approach of oral transmission was used. In addition to technological development, karaoke system is used in the transmission of Cantonese opera at KSK Art Crew. Therefore, text appeared on tv screen and audible music accompaniment or singing part could be attained however, without notation as a reference.

Another context change is the restaurant performance. Kam incorporate her performance with a dinner show. Tickets sold for the performance include a ten-course dinner. In this way, audience may be more encouraged to watch Cantonese opera, while enjoying dinner, especially to those who were prime with the notion that Cantonese opera is old and boring.

In terms of its relation to society, Cantonese opera is no longer a popular entertainment or performing art genre in Malaysia. Though, it still has its function at ritual such as the Chingay ritual. However, not many audiences would stop and watch. Performance at theatre usually may need extra effort in drawing in audience. Still, performance at a Western concept theatre is new in Malaysia, that move away from its origin. This in a way revitalizes the Cantonese opera with amplified sound system, that is not authentic in its original setting.

Another change is the decreased interest and lesser number of professional performers due to the lack of popularity. This is a major downfall that further decrease the popularity of Cantonese opera because less people will be performing. My fieldwork gave an impression that it is not easy for Kam to look for performers. My participation in the class of not more than a year made me a selection by Kam too to perform although I am not a professional artist.

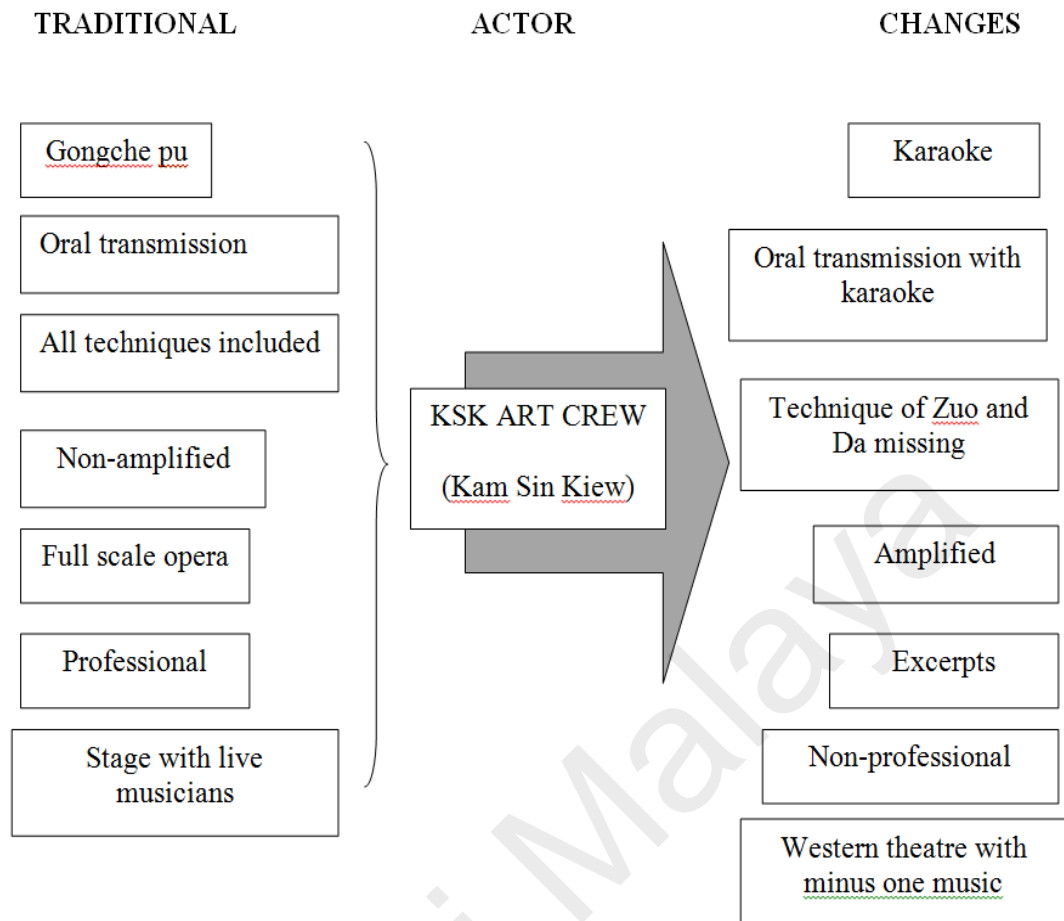


Figure 4.32 Diagram showing the changes in Cantonese opera led by KSK Art Crew

On a positive perspective, I see this as how Kam revitalizes the Cantonese opera in Kuala Lumpur. The chances of being selected to perform actually encourages students to participate in her class knowing that there is a chance to perform. As a way to revitalize this art form, Kam sacrifices some difficult technique in Cantonese opera and made it friendlier. Therefore, clearly, the *zuo* and *da* elements required for the warrior role were almost absent in current performance. Only simple ones were taught. This is due to acrobatic and virtuosic movement and technique required serious training from childhood.

Another technological advancement that helps to revitalize the Cantonese opera is pre-recorded music for accompaniment. Live musicians were rarely involved. Not

only of high difficulty to locate professional musicians who still able to remember the ditties used in Cantonese opera, it is also costly. As witnessed during the fieldwork, these musicians do not rely on a score and lyrics given. They play the ditties used in Cantonese opera were performing based on their memory and this becomes another challenge in transmitting music to the next generation.

4.8 Conclusion

Based on this study, KSK Art Crew led by Kam is seen as a social actor in revitalizing the Cantonese opera genre. Many changes took place in this opera troupe in a Malaysian context and these form a re-contextualization of the art form.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

The study discussed the issue on how Madam Kam and her KSK have developed and then, revitalizes the Cantonese Opera in Malaysia. Madam Kam devoted herself in the transmission of the art form and continues sustaining this cultural performance in a foreign country, dominating with a majority of non-Chinese ethnic population – Malaysia. This chapter concludes this study by summarizing the findings and suggestions for further work.

5.2 Summary of Findings

This research took on duration of two years for completion. Literature review was an appropriate first step in research that helped the author in gathering secondary data of written academic work related to the genre – *yuejü*. It also helped to identify the gap in literature regarding Cantonese opera.

Methodology was found appropriate after a review of the approaches selected such as fieldwork, interview, observation, participant observation and analysis. The author carried out participant observation during field visit. However, this may not accurately gave an emic perspective as the art form, if learnt professionally, required serious professional training since childhood as ideal. However, still, via participant observation, this enabled the author to gain access to the field in a more thorough way. Opportunities to interview or to have personal communication via participant observation increased. The author became a student of the main informant – Kam Sin Kiew. Besides, back stage access, performances, training, and following the troupe, became the norm and access granted once participant observation was employed.

Along the study of this troupe, the author was influenced by Madam Kam and her KSK's delight endeavor and gradually get more insight into the challenges and difficulties that Madam Kam and her KSK have been facing. Especially under the circumstances when modern media developed in a rapid speed, it is more difficult for the traditional Cantonese Opera to spread its culture via teaching and performing. Even though, Madam Kam still insists in trying various ways to expose the art, such as charity show, TV program, restaurants show etc. which offers the younger generation who are learning the art precious chances to practice.

Cantonese opera is perceived as an archaic art in the contemporary society and one major challenge is that there is a lack of professional artists. Practitioner, actor or actresses at KSK Art Crew are not professionals. They did not train from young, some are as new as the author. Kam made some changes to its original form in meeting with these participants as her actors.

Karaoke as a transmission method is new and this form what was in trend with current contemporary educational system as E-learning. Using karaoke as a teaching tool allow Kam's student to first experience the recorded sound, diction, melody and expression, and then the vocal part was muted when the student practiced the role of either the male or female parts. Therefore the absence of *gongche pu* followed as a change in the midst of revitalizing this art form to motivate participants as it becomes more easier to learn, and at the same time, karaoke has its popularity and attraction as an entertainment tool.

Besides, most artists in KSK are senior citizens. Because of that, some of the key components in the tradition Cantonese Opera, such as *Gong Jia*, *Chang*, *Nian*, *Zuo* and *Da*, cannot be taught systematically because the lack of early training. Therefore, the original form of Cantonese opera with virtuosic acrobatic skills is absent and a more

simpler form was performed. This moved Cantonese opera away from its original character.

The use of karaoke also comes along the flow when professional Cantonese opera musicians were dying out. Explained in Chapter 4, there were less and less musicians who could play Cantonese opera professionally. Not only because that these musicians played by memory, there are also less musicians interested to perform for this art form, not to mention the low salary paid. And it is obvious that Cantonese opera music is not the main component in music education curriculum when the Western art music dominated most institutional setting.

Therefore, in KSK Art Crew and its productions except for the Johor Chingay Festival, minus one was used and the pre-recorded music was amplified along with head-held microphone for actors and actresses. The amplified vocal timbre and pre-recorded music made its acoustic different from its origin. However, it enables the troupe to travel easily without the large scale production of bringing along a group of musicians. In addition, especially when the troupe is facing hardship with survival, paying musicians seemed to be a luxury.

As a summary, the objectives of this research were met. The first objective which is to explore the current Cantonese opera troupe led by Kam Sin Kiew was carried out through fieldwork, interview, and data collected and analyzed via the productions and effort of sustaining the art form. The second objective, to study the transmission of Cantonese opera tradition in Kam Sin Kiew Art Crew, was also met by carrying out through field visit, participant observation and interview and data were collected as the research findings in Chapter 4. Final discussion in Chapter 4 answers the third objectives, to analyze the selected live performance by KSK Art Crew and the revitalization of Cantonese opera.

As a summary, this research looked into the musical processes of KSK Art Crew and how Kam continue to revitalize this traditional art form from China in a country Malaysia, where Chinese remains as minority. The hardship faced by KSK Art Crew, development and survival of *yue jü* may present as a challenge in sustaining this art form, similar to how it was documented in other countries including Hong Kong. However, by documenting Kam's activities and her various transmission methods may contribute to the current literature of *yue jü*, showing another angle of what has been done and carry on in this art form in a Southeast Asian country – Malaysia.

5.3 Suggestion for Further Research

In this study, the author focused on Madam Kam herself and her Cantonese Opera art crew. This research looked into a particular troupe at a particular juncture of time. Therefore, a longitudinal study that examine into the history of Cantonese opera in Malaysia may fill the gap to this research and other studies such as by Tan and Benardi, however, access to information may be a challenge.

As for the music, the use of *gongche pu* was difficult in this study because Kam never applied this notation system into her performance or teaching during the time of the research took place. Thus, further research can be carried out to look into this, and if any other alternative practiced in Malaysia or other part of the world, as in Kam's approach, karaoke is used.

5.4 Conclusion

In this research, Kam's effort in revitalizing this Chinese performing art genre was notable. However, due to the nature of technological advancement and popular culture, challenges in gathering more practitioners become difficult. It is also observed that all participants in KSK Art Crew were Chinese, a mix ethnic participation was absent

although Malaysia has a majority of Malay population, followed by Chinese and Indian. the modern way of learning, some of the components could not be taught in the traditional way. Only by change, simplify the procedures of study can that be taught by more and more Cantonese Opera lovers.

In this study, four different productions highlights performance took place in different location, setting and approaches. This research had the author witnessed the hardship in sustaining the art form.

Still, as Yung described:

A striking characteristic is what I called “living” – it is a “living” opera in that sense that, despite a long tradition, it is ready to change and adapt itself to the current tastes of the audience. (1989, p.ix)

Therefore, a change probably was inevitable. Kam and KSK Art Crew and effort in revitalizing Cantonese opera in Malaysia includes inevitable change to many of its elements, in accommodating to our modern society with technological advancement; contributing to another example of what Blacking theorized in musical change.

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