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Reformation of Transmission Practice for the Preservation of Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique (MCO 4)

Prof. Haze Ng

PolyU UoA38

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Title: Reformation of Transmission Practice for the Preservation of Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique

Descriptor

This research is a participatory practice-led investigation on the transmission practice of *Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique*, which is a national representative intangible cultural heritage (ICH) of Hong Kong and China, conducted between September 2023 and November 2025. It was funded by the Departmental General Research Fund (DGRF) of School of Fashion and Textiles of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University with HK\$ 149,852.

Based on the desk research and expert interviews conducted in MCO 1 and MCO 2, the transmission practices of *Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique* in the modes of three-years master-apprenticeship and practice-focused short course are considered inopportune under the life-style of modern society and the critically endangered situation of the ICH. This research was derived to 1) investigate the traditional master-apprentice transmission practice through interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), 2) investigate the current practice-focused short course through participatory research and IPA, 3) discuss and propose a modernised and pragmatic transmission framework for the ICH.

With reference to the cheongsam research programs curated by the Hong Kong Museum of History (HKMoH), Intangible Cultural Heritage Office (ICHO), tertiary Institutes, and specialist researchers in 2011, 2014, 2018, 2019, and 2021 and part of the research findings of MCO 1 and MCO 2, the team conducted an in-depth practice-led qualitative study through participating in real-life training under the guidance of registered ICH bearers of the Hong Kong Cheongsam Association (designated protection organisation of the ICH). The researchers generated first-hand learning experience of the current teaching and learning practice. Comprehensive observation and practice notes, interview records, photo recordings, video recordings, specimens, and research prototypes were generated.

The deficiencies and challenges of the traditional and current transmission practice were evaluated for the proposition of a modernised framework based on pragmaticality in transmission of the ICH in modern society.

Researcher Profile: **Prof. Haze Ng**



Assistant Professor Haze Ng is a research faculty at the School of Fashion and Textiles (SFT) since 2020, specializing in sociocultural study and theoretical-practical investigation in the scopes of fashion and textile related intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and diverse craftsmanship. His research investigates the traditional craftsmanship and its historical and current development and transmission. It also examines how craftsmanship and sociocultural value in fashion and textiles evolve with social practices and cultural ecology.

In his capacity of Executive Committee Member in Education at the Hong Kong Cheongsam Association (HKCA, the designated protection organization of *Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique*, which is a representative item in the ICH list of Hong Kong and China) since 2021, Ng has been bridging the collaboration between the academia, ICH preservation community, and the authorities and plays a leading role in the protection of *Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique* from research perspective. With an aim to provide a comprehensive support to the overall protection of the ICH, Ng's research strategy is developed with four dimensions, covering RD1) investigation of the traditional craftsmanship and historic development of the ICH, RD2) investigation and reformation of ICH transmission model, RD3) adoption of digital technologies in ICH preservation, and RD4) reinvention of cheongsam design practice for ICH revitalization.

Researcher Profile: Prof. Haze Ng

Ng has established a series of research projects in accordance with the multi-dimensional research strategy. Addressing the significantly different tailoring principles, aesthetics, sociocultural values, and paths of development between men’s and women’s cheongsams, the projects related to garment structure and craftsmanship have been developed separately for the two attires while those related to ICH transmission and preservation are designed to examine both attires simultaneously. The projects include: Two Intangible Cultural Heritage Funding Scheme (ICHFS) Projects: “Investigation of the Craftsmanship, Development, and Transmission of Hong Kong Women’s Cheongsam (MCO 1)” and “The Craftsmanship of Hong Kong Men’s Cheongsam – Archive, Analysis, Inheritance, and Implementation (MCO 2)”; Two General Research Fund (GRF) Projects: “Digitalized Intangible Cultural Heritage Preservation – Application of Computer-aided Pattern Generation and Digital Jacquard Weaving Technology in Reinventing Men’s Cheongsam Design and Development Practice (MCO 3)” and “Development of Digitalized Intangible Cultural Heritage Preservation Model with Multimodality for Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique – A Practice-led Approach”; and One SFT Departmental General Research Fund (SFT DGRF) Project: “Reformation of Master-Apprentice Transmission Model for the Preservation of Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique (MCO 4)”.

Research Project Timeline of MOC 1, 2, and 3																				
2020 Q4	2021 Q1	2021 Q2	2021 Q3	2021 Q4	2022 Q1	2022 Q2	2022 Q3	2022 Q4	2023 Q1	2023 Q2	2023 Q3	2023 Q4	2024 Q1	2024 Q2	2024 Q3	2024 Q4	2025 Q1	2025 Q2	2025 Q3	2025 Q4
ICHFS 1 – Investigation of the Craftsmanship, Development, and Transmission of Hong Kong Women’s Cheongsam (MCO 1)																				
								ICHFS 2 – The Craftsmanship of Hong Kong Men’s Cheongsam – Archive, Analysis, Inheritance, and Implementation (MCO 2)												
								GRF 1 – Digitalized ICH Preservation – Application of Computer-aided Pattern Generation and Digital Jacquard Weaving Technology in Reinventing Men’s Cheongsam Design and Development Practice (MCO 3)												
								SFT DGRF – Reformation of Transmission Practice for the Preservation of Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique (MCO 4)												

Researcher Profile: **Prof. Haze Ng**

The related research outputs in the forms of multimedia database archives, refereed books, scholarly articles, digital portfolios, research prototypes and exhibitions have been disseminated to the public through diverse engagements, including 15 seminar presentations and thematic talks, over 30 local and international exhibitions, and various digital platforms and channels. The research deliverables and disseminations have been acquired and archived by the Intangible Cultural Heritage Office (ICHO), Hong Kong Museum of History (HKMoH), Hong Kong Public Libraries (HKPL), Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Records and Heritage Office (TWGHs RHO), and the Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong (THEi). Two cheongsam creations generated from Ng’s research projects have been acquired by the Worldskills Museum (WSM) as permanent collections in 2025 and one cheongsam collection is to be acquired by the Hong Kong Heritage Museum (HKHM) as a permanent collection in 2026.

Research Questions

Q1: How was *Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique* transmitted traditionally?

Q2: How is *Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique* being transmitted in modern society?

Q3: How to transmit *Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique* pragmatically in modern society?

The research sets out to:

- 1) Investigate the traditional master-apprentice transmission practice through interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA);
- 2) Investigate the current practice-focused short course through participatory research and IPA;
- 3) Discuss and propose a modernised and pragmatic transmission framework for *Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique*.

Research Outputs

The deliverables of the project include:

- 2 refereed journal articles,
- 2 refereed conference papers,
- 1 book chapter.

Research Field & Key References

The research was positioned in the overlapping scope of ICH study of *Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique* (a national representative ICH of China), transmission and protection of traditional craftsmanship, and practice-based pedagogy.

Among the pioneering investigations of Hong Kong cheongsam (Clark, 2000; Finnane, 2007; Garrett, 2007; Chan, 2010; HKMoH, 2011; Lee & Chung, 2012; Laumann, 2013; HKMoH, 2013) and the post ICH inscription studies of the ICH (Sun, 2014; Liu & Wei, 2017; ICHO, 2018; Ng, 2018; HKMoH 2019; Wu & Zhao, 2020; ICHO, 2021; Li, 2021; Liu & Zhu, 2021; Lau, Wong & Lo, 2023; Ng, et. al., 2025), the research of Hong Kong Museum of History in 2013, the study of Lau, Wong & Lo between 2019 and 2021 and men’s cheongsam-focused research of Dr Brenda Li between 2020 and 2021 investigated the stories of traditional master-apprenticeship transmission of the craft while the three pilot transmission schemes organised by the Intangible Cultural Heritage Office and local tertiary institutes between 2018 and 2021 demonstrated the current mode of transmission in the form of one-off practice-based short course. Additionally, the research project conducted by Prof. Ng between 2022 and 2025 (MCO 2) investigated the development of transmission through desk research, covering both transmission modes. These studies provided a foundation for this study to build on.

Research Field & Key References

The key references of the research are as below:

1. Hong Kong Museum of History (2013). A Century of Fashion: Hong Kong Cheongsam Story. Hong Kong: Leisure and Cultural Service Department.
2. Intangible Cultural Heritage Office (2018). Transmission Scheme for Hong Kong-style Cheongsam Sewing Technique 2018 – Faithful to the Craft. Hong Kong: Leisure and Cultural Service Department.
3. Intangible Cultural Heritage Office (2021). Transmission Scheme for Hong Kong-style Cheongsam Sewing Technique 2019 – Men’s Cheongsam Making Technique. Hong Kong: Leisure and Cultural Service Department.
4. Li, B. (2021). Men’s Cheongsam: History, Culture and Crafts. Cheongsam Making. Retrieved November 27, 2023, from https://cheongsam-making.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Mens_Cheongsam_Brenda-Li_TC.pdf.
5. Lau, C. P., Wong, K. K. & Lo, W. L. (2023). Intangible Cultural Heritage of Hong Kong Series: The Sewing Techniques of Hong Kong-style Cheongsam and Kwan Kwa Wedding Costume. Beijing: Chung Hwa Book Company Limited.
6. Ng, H. (2024). Oral History of the Distinguished Masters: A Century of Classic – Hong Kong Men’s Cheongsam. Hong Kong: The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.
7. Ng, H., Lee, E., Chan, A., & Chu, A. (2021) Hong Kong Cheongsam Database Archive. Hong Kong: Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong.
8. Ng, H., Lee, E. & Tsai, K. (2021). Succeeding the Grace – Hong Kong Cheongsam Exhibition. Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong.

Research Field & Key References

The supplementary references of the research are as below:

1. Clark, H. (2000). *The Cheongsam (Images of Asia)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2. Finnane, A. (2008). *Changing Clothes in China: Fashion, History, Nation*. New York: Columbia University Press.
3. Garrett V. (2007). *Chinese Dress: From the Qing Dynasty to the Present*. North Clarendon: Tuttle Publishing.
4. Hong Kong Art School. (2019). Jockey Club “ICH+” Intangible Cultural Heritage Education Project – Phase 1 – Pass it On. The Hong Kong Jockey Club “ICH+” Intangible Cultural Heritage Education Project. Retrieved November 27, 2023, from <https://ichplus.org.hk/en/programme/pass-it-on>.
5. Hong Kong Art School. (2019). Jockey Club “ICH+” Intangible Cultural Heritage Education Project – Phase 1 – Annual Showcases. The Hong Kong Jockey Club “ICH+” Intangible Cultural Heritage Education Project. Retrieved November 27, 2023, from <https://ichplus.org.hk/en/programme/annual-showcases>.
6. Hong Kong Design Institute (2023). Professional Course in Traditional QiPao Tailor-Making. Retrieved from Hong Kong Design Institute Website at https://www.hkdi.edu.hk/en/peec/peec_programme.php?peec_programme=professional-course-in-traditional-qipao-tailormaking&tab=all&page=1 on 27 December 2023.
7. Hong Kong Museum of History (2011). *The Evergreen Classic: Transformation of the Qipao*. Hong Kong: Leisure and Cultural Service Department.
8. Laumann, M. (Ed.) (2013). *Qipao: Memory, Modernity and Fashion*. New Taipei City: Fu Jen Catholic University and National Taiwan Museum.
9. Lee, C. L., & Chung, M. K. (2012). *In the Mood for Cheongsam*. Singapore: Editions Didier Millet Pte Ltd and National Museum of Singapore.
10. Liu, R. P., & Zhu, B. W. (2021). *Historical Draft of Chinese Qipao*. Beijing: China Science Publishing & Media.
11. Ng, S. (2018). *Clothes Make the Woman: Cheongsam and Chinese Identity in Hong Kong*. In Pyun, K., & Wong, A. Y. (Ed.) *Fashion, Identity, and Power in Modern Asia*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing AG.
12. School of Fashion and Textiles. (2023). SFT e-Newsletter Issue 2. School of Fashion and Textiles, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Retrieved November 27, 2023, from https://www.polyu.edu.hk/sft/-/media/department/sft/publication/e-newsletter/sft_newsletter-issue2_aw_final3-compressed_4.pdf.
13. Sun, X. (Ed.) (2014). *Enduring Fragrance: Exhibition of Cheongsam Culture*. Beijing: Unity Press.
14. United Pattern Design (2022). *Courses*. Retrieved from United Pattern Design Website at <https://www.updhk.com/courses> on 27 December 2023.
15. University of Hong Kong School of Professional and Continuing Education. (2023). *Cheongsam*. University of Hong Kong School of Professional and Continuing Education Website. Retrieved November 27, 2023, from <https://hkuspace.hku.hk/sharing/cheongsam/>.
16. University of Hong Kong School of Professional and Continuing Education. (2023). *Qi Pao Production Workshop*. University of Hong Kong School of Professional and Continuing Education Website. Retrieved November 27, 2023, from <https://hkuspace.hku.hk/prog/qi-pao-production-workshop/>.
17. YWCA Centre of Learning and Life Enhancement (2015). *Cheongsam*. Retrieved from YWCA Centre of Learning and Life Enhancement Website at https://clle.ywca.org.hk/Common/Reader/Channel/ShowPage.jsp?Cid=2068&Pid=101&Version=0&Charset=big5_hkscs&page=0&cat=2&cat=8&cat=7&cat=1&cat=65 on 27 December 2024.

Research Methods

The research was designed as an in-depth practice-led participatory study with multiple methods.

Literature Review and Desk Research

Literature review provided a knowledge foundation for the research to depart. The key and supplementary references were reviewed to establish the theoretical framework of the research and identify the key scopes and focus of the study.

In addition to the findings on the transmission modes of *Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique* identified from the key and supplementary references, desk research was conducted on other cheongsam tailoring courses offered in Hong Kong and relevant transmission programmes organised by ICH practitioners. The additional courses and programmes include:

1. Part-time Training Course: Certificate Course “Certificate of Cheongsam Design and Production Programme” offered by University of Hong Kong School of Professional and Continuing Education;
2. Part-time Training Course: Short Course “Qipao Production Workshop” offered by University of Hong Kong School of Professional and Continuing Education;
3. Part-time Training Course: Short Course “Professional Course in Traditional QiPao Tailor-Making” offered by Hong Kong Design Institute;
4. Training Course: Short Course “Cheongsam Qipao” offered by Young Women's Christian Association;
5. Training Course Series: Short Courses of Diverse Forms of Cheongsam offered by United Pattern Design;
6. One-off Training Course: “Pass It On @ Secondary 2018/19 – Cheongsam Sewing Technique” in Jockey Club “ICH+” Intangible Cultural Heritage Education Project – Phase 1 organised by Lingnan University and Hong Kong Art School;
7. One-off Training Courses: “Pass It On @ Tertiary – Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique – Advanced” in Jockey Club “Pass It On” Intangible Cultural Heritage Education Project – Phase 2 organised by Lingnan University and Hong Kong Art School;
8. One-off Training Courses: “From Inheritance to Innovation: Preserving Intangible Cultural Heritage of China” organised by School of Fashion and Textiles of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

Research Methods

Expert Interview

In addition to the findings from MCO 1 and MCO 2, expert interview with purposive sampling was used to provide meaningful insights into the traditional and current transmission practice of Hong Kong cheongsam. The interview focused on the difficulties of transmitting the craft to new generations of inheritors from trainer’s perspectives. Secondly, based on the practical considerations identified from the desk research, the interviews also provided extended evaluations on their teaching experiences in different short courses and transmission programmes.

List of interviewees

- Dr Brenda Li, Registered ICH Bearer, Advisor of HKCA, Specialist Researcher and Principal Investigator of Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique research and projects curated by ICHO, THEi, and HKMoH.
- Ms Eunice Lee, Executive Committee Member of HKCA, Specialist Researcher and Key Investigator of Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique research and projects curated by ICHO, THEi, HKDI, and HKHM.
- Master Chun Cheung Lam, Registered ICH Bearer, Veteran Master Tailor with over 60 years of cheongsam tailoring experience.
- Master Fung Yau Choi, Registered ICH Bearer, Veteran Master Tailor with over 60 years of cheongsam tailoring experience.
- Master Lau On Hing, Registered ICH Bearer, Veteran Master Tailor with over 60 years of cheongsam tailoring experience.
- Master Ting Chao-wen, Registered ICH Bearer, Veteran Master Tailor with over 60 years of cheongsam tailoring experience.
- Master Fu Nga Kwan, Executive Committee Member of HKCA, Registered ICH Bearer, Experienced Master Tailor with over 30 years of cheongsam tailoring experience.
- Master Chow So Mui, Registered ICH Bearer, Experienced Master Tailor with over 20 years of cheongsam tailoring experience.

Research Methods

In-depth Interview

In addition to the the deficiencies of transmission discussed in MCO 2 and the reflections of the trainees and program moderator in the pilot transmission programs organised by ICHO in 2019 and 2020, in-depth interview with purposive sampling was used to identified the key challenges in learning the craft faced by new generation of inheritors. The interview investigated the differences between trainings provided by traditional master tailoring and those of tailoring instructors. It also provided insights into reforming the teaching and learning practice and developing a more pragmatic transmission framework.

List of interviewees

Ms Katrina Tsai, Project Associate in Transmission and Training Programmes for the Items in the “Representative List of the ICH of Hong Kong – Technique of Making Hong Kong Cheongsam” co-organised by HKCA and ICHO;

Ms Frana Yeung, Trainee in Transmission and Training Programmes for the Items in the “Representative List of the ICH of Hong Kong – Technique of Making Hong Kong Cheongsam” co-organised by HKCA and ICHO;

Ms Quinn Cheng, Trainee in Transmission and Training Programmes for the Items in the “Representative List of the ICH of Hong Kong – Technique of Making Hong Kong Cheongsam” co-organised by HKCA and ICHO;

Mr Andrew Lau, Trainee in Transmission and Training Programmes for the Items in the “Representative List of the ICH of Hong Kong – Technique of Making Hong Kong Cheongsam” co-organised by HKCA and ICHO;

Participatory Research

Positioned as a practice-led research, the research team had taken trainings under the guidance of registered ICH bearers of HKCA, including Dr Brenda Li, Master Chun Cheung Lam, Master Lau On Hing, Master Fu Nga Kwan, and Master Chow So Mui, and gained first-hand learning experience of the current teaching and learning practices.

Comprehensive observation and practice notes, interview records, photo recordings, video recordings, specimens, and research prototypes were developed for evaluation. Together with the analyses of the desk research and interviews, the deficiencies and challenges of the transmission practices were identified and discussed through interpretative phenomenological analysis.

Research Outcomes, Findings & Further Research

Research Outcomes and Findings

- This research investigated the transmission practices of *Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique* and summarised the corresponding advantages and disadvantages in modern society. The key transmission modes include 1) master-apprenticeship and quasi-master-apprenticeship; 2) private course offered by master tailor and practitioner; 3) certificate course offered by tertiary institutes; 4) interest-based short course offered by local community and organisation; 5) transmission programme organised by Hong Kong government.
- The research also identified the underlying challenges faced by designers and new generation of ICH successors. Key challenges include 1) profound difficulties of the craftsmanship; 2) extensive coverage of dress forms; 3) prolonged training and practicing required; 4) specific setting required and space limitation; 5) ineffective communication between trainer and trainee; 6) mismatched training expectation between trainer and trainee; 7) lack of teaching and reference materials; 8) financial burden.
- Addressing the current challenges, the research formulated a pragmatic transmission framework which calls for collaborative efforts among industry, academia, authority, and ICH protection community.

Further Research

- Due to the limitations of project duration and resources, this project only covered the primary to medium level of tailoring technique of lined and unlined men's, lined and unlined 3-dimensional women's cheongsam. Further study is suggested to be established in succession to this research to address other dress forms and more advanced level of tailoring technique covered by the ICH, including women's discreet under-flap cheongsam, makwa (traditional Chinese riding jacket), and other dress forms. Other derived structural variations, including diverse types of padded, semi-padded, fur-lined, which require significantly different tailoring skills, should also be covered for a complete establishment of the transmission framework.

Research Dissemination

The research has generated two refereed journal articles, two refereed conference papers, and one book chapter as listed below:

Journal Article

Zhang, Q., Cheng, Q., Lau, A., & Ng, H.* (2025). An Examination of the Preservation of Hong Kong Men's Cheongsam-making Technique. *Journal of Silk*, 62(12), pp, 79-84, ISSN: 2097-4604. DOI:10.3969/j.issn.1001-7003.2025.12.010.

Zhang, Q., & Ng, H. (2025). Historical Evolution and Localized Preservation of the Hong Kong Cheongsam. *Intercultural Communication*, 2025, pp, 152-158, ISSN 2744-2551.

Conference Paper

Zhang, Q., & Ng, H. (2025). A Digitized Sustainable Preservation Framework for Traditional Garment-Making Techniques: A Case Study of Hong Kong Cheongsam. FACTUM 25 Fashion Communication Conference, Organised by Department of Media Studies and Fashion Studies, Stockholm University. Filmhuset, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden. Date: 25 – 27 Jun 2025. Proceedings of the FACTUM 25 Conference, pp, 397-402. ISBN: 978-3-031-99481-4. DOI:10.1007/978-3-031-99481-4_32.

Zhang, Q., & Ng, H. (2026). Reconfiguring Designer Engagement with Intangible Cultural Heritage through a Knowledge-Based Collaborative System. IFFTI Annual Conference 2026, Organised by RMIT University Vietnam, Vietnam. Date: 13 – 17 Apr 2026. (the conference paper is accepted to be published in the proceedings.)

Book Chapter

Zhang, Q., & Ng, H. (2025). A Digitized Sustainable Preservation Framework for Traditional Garment-Making Techniques: A Case Study of Hong Kong Cheongsam. In P. V. Wachenfeldt, L. Cantoni, N. Sabatini, T. Sádaba (Eds.), *Fashion Communication in the Digital Age*. Springer Cham. ISBN: 978-3-031-99480-7. DOI:10.1007/978-3-031-99481-4_32.