



Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts

**A Comparative Study on the Visual Styles of Kelantan and Shaanxi
Shadow Puppets**

Cheng Xiaochun

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A Comparative Study on the Visual Styles of Kelantan and Shaanxi Shadow Puppets

Cheng Xiaochun

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DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. Except where due acknowledgements have been made, the work is that of the author alone. The thesis has not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature of any other degree.



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Signature

Name: Cheng Xiaochun

Matric No.: 19010077

Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

Date : May, 2025

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to compare the shadow puppets in Kelantan, Malaysia and Shaanxi, China by providing new insights into the preservation and development of this traditional art form through cross-cultural comparative analyses using qualitative and inductive methods along with elements and principles of design, Iconography, Cultural Anthropology, and Gestalt theory. The objectives of this research are to (1) analyse the visual style variations in shadow puppets from these two regions, (2) investigate how social and cultural influences the shadow puppets in these two regions and (3) explore ways of emphasizing cultural identity in a globalized context. The research unfolds in four phases. First, is the historical and cultural review which explores the craftsmanship, performance, carving techniques, stage settings, and storytelling styles. Followed by an examination of the visual elements and design principles in both regions, analysing changes in styles, investigating societal and cultural influences, and exploring approaches emphasizing cultural identity in the context of globalization. Contributions encompassed innovative research methods revealing influences on visual styles, with findings highlighting disparities in cultural contexts, carving techniques, visual styles, and cultural influences between Kelantan and Shaanxi. The study underscored cultural diversity preservation, advocating augmented and virtual reality use, and adapting traditional visual art to contemporary contexts. It offers key insights into visual styles, diversity preservation, and interdisciplinary research. Recommendations suggest exploring intangible cultural heritage conservation and expanding research methods to understand cultural differences in traditional art.

Keywords: Kelantan's shadow puppet, Shaanxi's shadow puppet, Shadow plays, Iconography, Visual style

Kajian Perbandingan Gaya Visual Boneka Bayangan Kelantan dan Shaanxi

ABSTRAK

Penyelidikan ini bertujuan untuk membandingkan wayang kulit di Kelantan, Malaysia dan Shaanxi, China melalui analisis perbandingan silang budaya dengan menggunakan kaedah kualitatif dan induktif berserta elemen dan prinsip rekaan, Ikonografi, Antropologi Budaya, dan teori Gestalt. Objektif penyelidikan ini adalah untuk (1) menganalisis variasi gaya visual dalam wayang kulit dari kedua-dua wilayah, (2) mengenalpasti bagaimana sosial dan budaya mempengaruhi rekaan wayang kulit di kedua-dua wilayah dan (3) meneroka cara untuk mengketengahkan identiti budaya dalam konteks globali. Penyelidikan dijalankan dalam empat fasa. Fasa pertama adalah melalui tinjauan sejarah dan budaya yang meneroka penghasilan seni kraf wayang kulit, persembahan, teknik, ukiran, penyediaan pentas, dan gaya penceritaan. Sumbangan penyelidikan ini merangkumi kaedah penyelidikan inovatif yang mendedahkan pengaruh pada gaya visual, dengan penemuan menyerlahkan perbezaan dalam konteks budaya, teknik ukiran, gaya visual dan pengaruh budaya antara Kelantan dan Shaanxi. Kajian itu menekankan pemeliharaan kepelbagaian budaya, menyokong penggunaan realiti tambahan dan maya, serta menyesuaikan seni visual tradisional kepada konteks kontemporari. Ia menawarkan pandangan utama ke dalam gaya visual, pemeliharaan kepelbagaian dan penyelidikan antara disiplin. Kajian ini mencadangkan penerokaan pemuliharaan warisan budaya tidak ketara dan meluaskan kaedah penyelidikan untuk memahami perbezaan budaya dalam seni tradisional.

Kata kunci: *Wayang kulit Kelantan, Wayang kulit Shaanxi, persembahan wayang kulit, ikonograf, gaya visual*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DECLARATION	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
<i>ABSTRAK</i>	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	xiii
LIST OF FIGURES	xiv
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Overview	1
1.2 Research Background	2
1.3 Problem Statement	5
1.4 Research Questions	6
1.5 Research Objectives	7
1.5.1 General Objective	7
1.5.2 Specific Objectives	7
1.6 Scope of the Study	8
1.7 Limitation of Study	10
1.8 Significance of Study	11

1.9	Structure of Thesis	12
CHAPTER 2	LITERATURE REVIEW	14
2.1	Overview of Shadow Play	14
2.2	Origin of Shadow Play	16
2.2.1	Turkish Shadow Play	17
2.2.2	Indian Shadow Play	19
2.2.3	Malaysian and Indonesian Shadow Play	20
2.2.4	Chinese Shadow Play	21
2.3	Cultural Tradition of Shadow Play	23
2.3.1	Cultural Tradition of Malaysian Shadow Play	24
2.3.2	Cultural Tradition of Chinese Shadow Play	26
2.4	Religious Context of Shadow Play	28
2.4.1	The Influence of Animism on Kelantan Shadow Play	28
2.4.2	The Influence of Hinduism on Kelantan Shadow Play	30
2.4.3	Religious context of Chinese shadow play	31
2.4.4	Comparison of Religious Context and Cultural Tradition	32
2.5	Shadow Play in Contemporary Society	34
2.6	Theoretical Framework	37
2.6.1	Cultural Anthropology	38
2.6.2	Iconography	39

2.6.3	Elements and Principles of Arts	40
2.6.4	Gestalt Theory	40
2.7	Chapter Summary	41
CHAPTER 3	METHODOLOGY	43
3.1	Overview	43
3.2	Qualitative Research in The Research	45
3.3	Research Plan	47
3.3.1	Phase One: Reviewing the History of Shadow Play in Malaysia and China	48
3.3.2	Phase Two: Sampling Technique and Data Sources	49
3.3.3	The Sampling Technique	50
3.3.4	Data Sources	51
3.3.5	Phase Three: Comparative Study	54
3.3.6	Phase Four: Application of Shadow Puppets Visual Styles	55
3.4	Research Approach	57
3.4.1	Library-based Study	57
3.4.2	Observation	58
3.4.3	Interview	60
3.4.4	Case Study	64
3.4.5	Comparative Study	65
3.5	Chapter Summary	67

CHAPTER 4	DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION	69
4.1	Overview	69
4.2	Craftsmanship of Kelantan and Shaanxi Shadow Puppets	70
4.2.1	Craftsmanship of Kelantan Shadow Puppets	70
4.2.2	Craftsmanship of Shaanxi Shadow Puppets	73
4.2.3	Comparative Analysis of Shadow Craftsmanship in the Two Regions	76
4.3	Shadow Play Performance of Kelantan and Shaanxi	78
4.3.1	Shadow Play Performance of Kelantan	78
4.3.2	Shadow Play Performance of Shaanxi	83
4.3.3	Comparative Analysis of the Shadow Play Performance in the Two Regions	85
4.4	Visual Elements in Kelantan and Shaanxi Shadow Puppets	86
4.4.1	The Screening Process	87
4.4.2	Extraction of Key Visual Elements	93
4.4.3	Classification of Visual Elements in Shadow Puppets	94
4.4.4	Line	95
4.4.5	Shape	99
4.4.6	Colour	103
4.4.7	Space	111

4.4.8	Comparative Analysis of Visual Elements in Shadow Puppets of Two Regions	114
4.5	Gestalt Theory & Principles of Design in Kelantan and Shaanxi Shadow Puppets	115
4.5.1	Categories of Principles of Design	116
4.5.2	Gestalt Theory Applied in the Principles of Design of Shadow Puppets in Two Regions	117
4.5.3	Similarity and Proximity	119
4.5.4	Continuity and Repetition	121
4.5.5	Law of Closure	123
4.5.6	Figure - Ground	126
4.5.7	Symmetry and Balance	129
4.5.8	Law of Common Fate	130
4.6	Visual Style of Kelantan and Shaanxi Shadow Puppets	131
4.6.1	Features of the Figure	133
4.6.2	Multi-angle Perspective	136
4.6.3	Characteristics of the Pattern	140
4.7	Cultural Anthropology and the Socio-Cultural Context of Kelantan and Shaanxi Shadow Play	142
4.7.1	Cultural Anthropology in the Visual Style Research	143

4.7.2	Influence of Folk Art Traditions on Shadow Puppets Visual Style in the Two Regions	143
4.7.3	Thai Nora Dance and Kelantan Shadow Puppets	144
4.7.4	Indian, Balinese and Kelantan Shadows Puppets	146
4.7.5	The Stone Carvings and Shaanxi Shadow Puppets	147
4.7.6	The Murals and Shaanxi Shadow Puppets	149
4.8	A Case Study - Adopting Iconography in the Study of Traditional Folk Art Form	150
4.8.1	Description– Pre-Iconography	152
4.8.2	Analysis - Iconography	153
4.8.3	Interpretation –Iconology	154
4.9	Endeavours to Revitalise Traditional Art Forms in the Modern Era	156
4.9.1	Adapting Traditional Storytelling Characters, and Themes	158
4.9.2	Integrating Shadow Puppet into Contemporary Art	159
4.9.3	Boosting Shadow Play Entertainment by Innovative Technology	161
4.10	Chapter Summary	163
	CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	165
5.1	Overview	165
5.2	Summary of Research	165
5.3	Research Finding	167

5.4	Achieving the Research Objectives	169
5.4.1	Determining Visual Style Variations in Shadow Puppets from Kelantan and Shaanxi	169
5.4.2	Investigating How Social and Cultural Influences Intricately Mold the Visual Style	169
5.4.3	Exploring Ways of Emphasizing Cultural Identity in a Globalized Context	169
5.5	Contributions to the Body of Knowledge	170
5.5.1	Innovative Research Approach to Traditional Visual Art Form	171
5.5.2	Preserving Diversity for the Future	172
5.6	Suggestions for Further Research	173
REFERENCES		175
APPENDICES		189

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1.1: Research Questions and Objectives	8
Table 2.1: Comparison of Religious Context and Cultural Tradition	34
Table 3.1: Outline of the Open-ended Questionnaire	62
Table 3.2: Classification of Open-ended Questions for Interview	64
Table 4.1: Comparison of Shadow Puppet Craftsmanship	78
Table 4.2: Comparison of Shadow Play Performance	86
Table 4.3: 15 Samples of Shaanxi Shadow Puppets	88
Table 4.4: 15 Samples of Kelantan Shadow Puppets	91
Table 4.5: Comparison of the visual characteristics of the lines of Kelantan and Shaanxi shadow puppets	98
Table 4.6: Definition of Shape, Motif & Pattern	100
Table 4.7: Shape found on Kelantan Shadow Puppets	101
Table 4.8: Shape found on Shaanxi Shadow Puppets	101
Table 4.9: Colour Analysis of Kelantan ShadowPuppets	105
Table 4.10: Colour Analysis of Shaanxi ShadowPuppets	106
Table 4.11: Analysis on the Proportion of Colours used.	109
Table 4.12: Gestalt Laws of Grouping & the Principles of Design	118

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 2.1: The Four Types of Shadow Play	17
Figure 2.2: Classification of Chinese shadow play	22
Figure 2.3: Digital 3D Puppet Animation	35
Figure 2.4: Wang Biao's Shadow Puppet Museum on Google Art and Culture	36
Figure 2.5: Theoretical framework of the Research	38
Figure 3.1: The Research Plan	48
Figure 3.2: Types of Data in the Research	51
Figure 4.1: The "Locust Teeth" Motif of Siti Dewi	71
Figure 4.2: The Assembly of Kelantan Shadow Puppet	73
Figure 4.3: Interview with Wang Biao	74
Figure 4.4: The Assembly of Shaanxi Shadow Puppet	76
Figure 4.5: A typical shadow play stage in Kelantan in the 1950s	79
Figure 4.6: Interview with Tok Dalang Eyo Hock Seng	81
Figure 4.7: Interview with Tok Dalang Jufry	82
Figure 4.8: The Data Analysis Process Flow	94
Figure 4.9: The Lines used in Kelantan shadow puppets.	96
Figure 4.10: The Lines used in Shaanxi shadow puppets.	97
Figure 4.11: Capture from Rama Shoots Through 40 Palm Trees	108
Figure 4.12: Capture from Heavenly Guards Blessing	108
Figure 4.13: The Head bolt of Caocao (left) and Guanyu (right) from Romance of Three Kingdoms	112
Figure 4.14: A Detailed Pictorial of Siti Dewi	113
Figure 4.15: A Detail Depiction of <i>Lakshmana</i>	113

Figure 4.16:	The Sarong of Siti Dewi	120
Figure 4.17:	The Design Elements of Sarong of Siti Dewi	120
Figure 4.18:	The Fascinating Colour of <i>Maharaja Wana</i>	121
Figure 4.19:	The Character named <i>Jinn</i> from the Epic Tale of <i>Ramayana</i>	122
Figure 4.20:	Examples of Frieze Patterns and The Block Patterns	123
Figure 4.21:	The Head of <i>Sun Wukong</i> (Monkey King)	124
Figure 4.22:	A Supernatural Being	125
Figure 4.23:	The Confined Pattern on the Monkey King's Costume	126
Figure 4.24:	"Birds and Fish" by Maurice Escher in 1960, the Dutch Tile Museum in Otero	127
Figure 4.25:	The Part of <i>Guanyu</i> 's Head	128
Figure 4.26:	The Scenery Board	129
Figure 4.27:	Kelantan Shadow Puppet Jentayu Showing Strong Principles of Symmetry and Balance	130
Figure 4.28 :	Shaanxi Shadow Puppet, <i>Lei Zhenshi</i> (deity)	131
Figure 4.29:	The Body Proportions of Shadow Puppet	134
Figure 4.30:	The Simplified Outline of Shadow Puppets showing their Articulated Parts	136
Figure 4.31:	Multi-angle Perspective Applied in the Construct of Shadow Puppets	138
Figure 4.32:	Comparison of the Kelantan Shadow Puppet with an Egyptian Tomb Painting	139
Figure 4.33:	The Comparison of <i>Nora</i> 's Costume and Kelantan's Shadow Puppet Styling	146
Figure 4.34:	Comparison of Visual Styles in Indian, Kelantan and Javanese Shadow Puppets	147
Figure 4.35:	A Stylistic Comparison between the Stone Carving and the Shadow Puppet of China	148
Figure 4.36:	Comparison of the strokes and colors of the murals and shadow scenes of the <i>Yongle</i> Palace	150

Figure 4.37: Seri Rama	152
Figure 4.38: <i>Siri Rama's</i> feet	156
Figure 4.39: Works of Fusion WK	159
Figure 4.40: Gallery of Fusion WK	159
Figure 4.41: Continuum-Generation by Generation Exhibition	160
Figure 4.42: Shadow Play Interactive Game Experience on Site	162
Figure 4.43: Interactive Wayang Kulit 360 °Experience Project	162

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This research explores the visual styles of shadow puppets in Kelantan, Malaysia, and Shaanxi, China, with a focus on exploring the nuanced artistic expressions shaped by distinct cultural backgrounds. The analysis unfolds within the dual framework of comparative research and specific thematic exploration, aiming to reveal the rich artistic tapestry encapsulated in the traditional art form of shadow puppets in these two regions.

The visual styles of shadow puppets, such as form, colour, pattern, and ornamentation, are highly rich. Serving as a folklore culture in miniature, shadow puppets provide a unique lens for comprehending the cultural influences and aesthetic preferences of both regions. This research employs a cross-cultural comparative research approach, integrating inductive and comparative analyses and drawing on theoretical perspectives from design, cultural anthropology, and iconography. The primary goal is to uncover the unique artistic characteristics across diverse cultural contexts via shadow puppets in Kelantan and Shaanxi. Special attention is devoted to exploring how these visual styles integrate with modern culture and cutting-edge technology, as well as how they contribute to the establishment of cultural identity through the recognition of national visual symbols in the era of globalization—an unexplored field in academia, especially in arts and culture.

The study commences with a comprehensive literature review to establish a holistic understanding of the traditions and developments in shadow play in the selected two regions. Subsequently, a detailed analysis of the visual elements, including making

techniques, performance styles, and visual aesthetics, were conducted. This exploration spans from specific visual elements to the application of design principles, aiming to delve into the similarities and differences in visual characteristics. Concurrently, through an iconographic case study, an investigation into cultural influences, religious aspects, and the impact of other art forms would unfold, shedding light on how these factors manifest in the visual expressions of shadow puppets.

Through a comprehensive examination of visual styles and cultural influences, this research aims to provide valuable comparative insights into the traditional arts of Kelantan and Shaanxi, offering both theoretical and practical revelations for cultural heritage preservation. The ultimate objective is to propose viable solutions for the purpose of safeguarding cultural diversity, enhancing cultural identity, and mitigating cultural erosion in the era of cultural globalization.

1.2 Research Background

The research background of this study is not only concerned with the challenges of traditional arts in the context of globalization, but also pays special attention to shadow puppet as a marginalized traditional visual art form.

In today's wave of globalization, traditional folk art is facing both new opportunities and unprecedented challenges in the face of its uniqueness and cultural values (Anufrieva et al., 2015). With the evolution of social structures and values, as well as the rise of modern technology and entertainment culture, the survival and development of traditional art forms have become increasingly complex. According to Lufkin (2016), in the last century, the conflict between modern culture and traditional folk art has become a prominent focus. The rapid globalization of modern entertainment has exacerbated the

conflict. Traditional arts uphold a long history, deep cultural connotations, and social identity, while modern entertainment focuses on novelty, excitement and rapid dissemination. The collision between the two creates a cultural tension that makes traditional art appear more marginal in the modern entertainment-dominated era.

The increase in global cultural interaction has led to the interpretation and influence of visual styles across cultures. Rodil et al., (2012) provided an example of a young Western designer who accepted the challenge to work with local designers and active collaborators from traditional villages, together with community members (elders and youth) to design a 3D graphics visualization of a small village in Southern Africa. This is a brilliant example of cultural interaction. This cultural exchange may also lead to the loss and integration of traditional visual elements, posing a potential threat to the identity of traditional art forms. Against this background, we need to have a deep understanding of the impact of globalization on traditional art forms, especially the challenges posed in terms of visual expression and cultural heritage.

Kozbelt (2016) and Eijck (2012) stated that changes in socio-cultural factors have a profound impact on the visual expression of traditional art, and changes in religion, social structures and values could all cause visual styles to evolve within traditional art forms. An in-depth understanding of how these socio-cultural factors affect the visual expression of traditional art is essential to ensure that traditional art maintains its fundamental identity as it evolves. This also makes it necessary for researchers to explore the ways in which these underlying cultural changes shape traditional art forms in their studies.

Traditional arts need to find new ways to maintain their appeal and attract the attention of younger generation. This study explores how we can breathe new life into

traditional art and make it better suited to the needs of modern society, through the integration of virtual reality and augmented reality technologies, as well as the combination of contemporary narrative techniques and installation art. In this broader research context, our focus on traditional art becomes clearer. This fusion of technology and tradition can not only stimulate artistic innovation but also meet the expectations of contemporary audiences for diversity and interactivity.

At the international level, according to the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (UNESCO, Nov 2, 2001), inheritance and development are regarded as the main tasks of the preservation of cultural diversity whereby the international community has begun to pay attention to the preservation of shadow theatre as a cultural heritage. UNESCO has listed shadow puppetry of five countries as the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, namely Indonesia and Cambodia in 2008, Turkey in 2009, Syrian Arab Republic in 2018, and China. Chinese shadow puppetry has been added on to the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of Humanity in 2011 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, n.d.), which reflects the international recognition of this traditional art. While in Malaysia, a scholar from the Universiti Kuala Lumpur Malaysian Institute of Information Technology (UniKL, n.d.) received a grant from UNESCO to digitally preserve Malaysian shadow play puppetry or the *Wayang kulit*, which was also listed as the National Intangible Heritage of Malaysia in 2007 (*Jabatan Warisan Negara*, Nov 6, 2023). The Tourism and Culture Minister at the time, Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz told reporters after the launch of the “Wayang Kulit Nusantara: Symbolism Behind the Screen” exhibition at the National Museum in 2016 that Malaysia's *Wayang kulit*, has its own distinct characteristics.

Malaysia has also embarked to list "*Wayang kulit*" (shadow play) as a national and world cultural heritage under UNESCO (Malay Mail, Dec20, 2016).

1.3 Problem Statement

Despite the many challenges and opportunities facing traditional folk arts in today's globalized context, particularly shadow play as an ancient and unique art form, the uniqueness of its visual style is crucial for the preservation of cultural identity and diversity. There are studies focusing on its historical development, and digital innovations, however, there is still lack of in-depth understanding of the visual style of shadow theatre. Thus, this study focuses on three key issues in this context:

The primary concern of this study is to analyse in depth the visual styles of shadow puppets from Kelantan, Malaysia and Shaanxi, China, and to adopt multiple perspectives to gain a comprehensive understanding of the differences and similarities in their visual styles, taking into account the making techniques and performance characteristics of shadow puppets from both regions. The research aims to accurately define the visual style characteristics, and to broaden the knowledge of shadow puppets.

Secondly, although shadow play as a traditional art form carries deep cultural connotations, the influence of social and cultural factors on its visual expression has yet to be adequately studied. In this realm, we are faced with the need to gain a deeper understanding of religion, culture, and social change, as well as the need to investigate how these factors intertwine with other traditional arts to trigger and drive the evolution of the visual style of shadow. By exploring these changes in socio-cultural contexts, we are able to gain a fuller and deeper understanding of the evolution of the visual language of shadow puppets in a particular context.

The ultimate challenge is that, although shadow play has gained international recognition, the traditional art form is on the verge of extinction in many regions in the face of the impact of modern entertainment and the cultural globalization. Cultural diversity is declining in many parts of the world. The main question is how shadow play, which represents a traditional art form, can be brought out of its endangered state, especially to attract the younger generation, to avoid this cultural heritage from fading. Therefore, there is an urgent need to find innovative ways to breathe new life into shadow play by integrating cutting-edge technology and contemporary narrative techniques, so that it can be revitalized in the contemporary society.

1.4 Research Questions

The research tries to answer the following questions:

- i. What are the visual style characteristics of shadow puppets in Kelantan, Malaysia, and Shaanxi, China? (Addressing the primary question of the comparative study)
- ii. How do social and cultural factors influence the visual style of these traditional art forms in terms of lines, shapes and colours? (Delving into the impact of socio-cultural influences)
- iii. How to uphold cultural diversity and prevent cultural erosion? (Exploring solutions that combine visual styles with modern technologies to preserve cultural diversity)

These questions aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the visual styles of shadow puppets in both regions, the socio-cultural factors shaping them, and innovative approaches to preserving traditional art in the context of globalization.

1.5 Research Objectives

The objectives of research are mostly determined by the goals of the study. A clearly defined research objective serves as the study's cornerstone. The problem statement identifies the key directions of the research questions, while the research objectives provide targeted responses to those questions.

1.5.1 General Objective

The general objective of this research is to analyse and reveal the uniqueness of the visual styles in the shadows puppets of the two regions. It aims to provide new insights into the preservation and development of this traditional art form through comparative analyses and in-depth discussions, as well as to develop feasible way for promoting cultural diversity and emphasising the practice of cultural identity among different ethnic groups in contemporary society. To achieve this aim, the specific objectives pursued in this study are to:

1.5.2 Specific Objectives

- i. To determine visual style variations in shadow puppets from Kelantan, Malaysia, and Shaanxi, China, employing a comparative study approach to unveil their unique artistic expressions.
- ii. To investigate how social and cultural influences are intricately capable of molding the visual style, shedding light on the dynamic interplay between artistic expression and the broader socio-cultural context.

- iii. To recommend strategies of how cultural identity can be promoted in a globalized context, integrating visual styles with modern technologies and narratives to uphold diversity and prevent cultural erosion.

Table 1.1: Research Questions and Objectives

High Topic	Narrow Topic	Specific Topic	Research Question	Research Objective
analyse visual style characteristics	similarity & difference	Element & principles of design	What are the visual style characteristics of shadow puppets in Kelantan, Malaysia, and Shaanxi, China?	To analyse visual style variations in shadow puppets from Kelantan, Malaysia, and Shaanxi, China.
investigate social-cultural influence in visual style	relationship with religion, social, other traditional art form	Nora dance in Thailand, Java, Indian shadow puppet, stone-carving, mural-painting in China	How do social and cultural factors influence the visual style of these traditional art forms in terms of lines, shapes and colours?	To investigate how social and cultural influences are intricately capable of molding the visual style.
preserve cultural diversity, enhance cultural identity, avoid culture erosion	connection visual style with latest technique and modern popular culture	VR, AR technology, installation art, modern popular story.	How can cultural identities be emphasized in the face of globalization?	To recommend strategies of how cultural identity can be promoted in a globalized context.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The geographical scope of the study first needs to be clarified. The Kelantan State, Malaysia and Shaanxi Province, China are the main regions of this study. It should be noted that this is due to the fact that Kelantan shadow is a type of fusion art form that was

influenced by Thai and Javanese styles in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Sweeney, 1974, p. 25). Therefore, this study focuses on the Kelantan style of shadow puppet, but also partially touches on the Southern Thai influence and the Javanese shadow puppets.

The Shaanxi shadow play is an art style and is the result of historical development and regional interaction. According to Wei (2007), the Chinese shadow play is not divided by the current administrative divisions, but by the characteristics of shadow figures, they are divided into Northern, Western and South-central shadow play. The Shaanxi shadow puppets in this study are the typical representative of the Western shadow play and have the most ancient origin. Shaanxi here does not refer to the administrative region of Shaanxi Province, but reflects a logical visual style division, specifically the area around *Weinan* in the South of Shaanxi Province and *Langzhong* in the North of Sichuan Province, as their shadow styles are very similar.

The issue of identifying a specific timeline also needs to be noted. Although this study traces the historical development of traditional shadow play in both regions, as a folk art form, shadow puppet lacks a clear record of when it was created. Whereas the earliest preserved shadow puppets in Chinese museums dated back to the late Qing Dynasty (1616-1912), for Kelantan, related artefacts mainly dated back to the early 20th century. This study tries to avoid selecting modern shadows puppet, as the use of modern tools may have an impact on their traditional appearance.

The scope of this research investigates the shadow puppets within Southwest China and Kelantan of Malaysia, based on the various cultural contexts. It should be noted that this is due to the art form of Kelantan shadow puppets, which was influenced by Thai and

Javanese styles from the late 19th century to the early 20th century (Sweeney, 1974, p.25). This research primarily concerns significant Kelantan visual styles.

An important consideration concerning the scope is that the visual style research is of paramount interest. Although the origin of storytelling, performances, traditional music, puppeteer's manipulative skills, and so forth are considered as an integral part of the shadow play research, the focus of this study, however, is primarily on the visual artistic expression of shadow puppet figures.

1.7 Limitation of Study

There is a long tradition of shadow puppet play in many Asian countries. However, due to time constraints, this study is limited to two specific regions only. The sampling may also be limited. The samples are chosen based on the purposes of the study, and due to the limitations of knowledge and awareness, the samples may not fully represent all the styles of these two regions.

In addition, cross-cultural research has pros and cons; much of the literature related to Malaysian shadow play is in Malay, and the study may be limited by translation and understanding due to language barriers and cultural differences. Furthermore, each researcher has his or her worldviews, and the observation inevitably carries the influence of cultural background, contributing to the limitations of visual culture research. However, this study is not an aesthetic or cultural judgment of the samples, therefore, the interference of cultural bias on the study should be avoided.

1.8 Significance of Study

From the visual arts academic context, shadow play has been internationally recognised as an intangible cultural heritage. By analysing the visual styles of shadow puppets in Kelantan and Shaanxi in an in-depth comparative study, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the visual expression of the traditional art form in these two regions. This provides scholars with a new perspective on the comparative study of visual arts, the cultural differences and similarities within similar art forms, and offers a new direction for academic research in this field.

The study also investigates factors such as cultural traditions, religious beliefs and historical evolution in Kelantan and Shaanxi Province by investigating the social and cultural factors that have shaped the visual style of shadow theatre. This provides in-depth insights into the cultural contexts behind the visual elements and promotes a deeper understanding of the interaction between traditional art and culture.

In the context of globalization, cultural diversity is essential for preserving of national cultural identities and is a source of inspiration for artistic creation. By emphasizing on cultural identity through the integration of traditional visual styles with modern technology and narrative techniques, this research provides an innovative practical path for the survival and development of traditional art in contemporary society.

The findings of this study aim to shed light on various aspects of research in the field of traditional visual culture. By adopting an innovative interdisciplinary research methodology that combines cultural anthropology and iconography, the study introduces a fresh framework for a systematic analysis of visual style. This approach transcends the limitations associated with traditional research methods, offering novel perspectives for

interpreting the significance of traditional cultural elements. The study's innovative methodology enhances our comprehension of the evolution of traditional visual arts and provides designers and artists with valuable insights into the visual characteristics of shadow puppets in the two regions.

1.9 Structure of Thesis

This thesis is structured into five chapters as follows:

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction, providing background information on the study, followed by the problem statement, research questions, research objectives, and the scope of the study. It also addresses research limitations and the significance of the study.

Chapter 2 initiates with a historical review of Malaysian and Chinese shadow play, delving into the religious background, summarising the current state of research, and highlighting current issues. Stating the theoretical framework and the theories employed in the study

Chapter 3 focuses on the methodology. It elaborated the research plan is detailed in four steps, with the second step explicating the sampling technique and data sources. The chapter concludes by presenting the research approach.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to data collection, analysis and discussion. It starts with a comparative examination of craftsmanship, performance, and visual style, followed by an investigation of other arts' cultural context and influence. Subsequently, iconography is applied to analyse the case study, aiming for a clearer understanding of the cultural context of shadow puppets' visual style. Finally, the chapter explores how shadow play has been

inherited and developed in the era of globalisation by discussing the fusion of contemporary art forms and visual styles.

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the thesis, outlining the contributions of the research and suggestion for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview of Shadow Play

Shadow play, an ancient and expressive art form celebrated for its distinctive visual effects and cultural significance, utilises hidden materials to craft expressive characters and compelling storylines. In this unique artistic expression, performers skilfully manipulate figures positioned between a light source and the audience, projecting their shadows onto a screen. These shadow play figures come to life as performers deftly control them, occasionally enhancing the theatrical experience with mimicked voices.

According to Chen (2003), the roots of shadow play can be traced back to Asia, with diverse manifestations across cultures. Notable variations include those from Kelantan, Malaysia, and Shaanxi, China. Shadow plays a pivotal role in cultural inheritance across Asia, reflecting local values and beliefs while providing audiences with artistic entertainment. Despite challenges in the digital age, shadow play maintains its unique cultural value in Asia and beyond, acting as a bridge between the past and present, and between inheritance and innovation.

In the current research on shadow play in Malaysia and China, scholars predominantly focus on several key aspects, including history, cultural and religious influences, artistic styles, and contemporary applications.

In the in-depth exploration of the history of shadow play, scholars strive to unravel its origins, development, and dissemination. Furthermore, scholars extensively investigate the profound influence of culture and religion on shadow play in both Malaysia and China.

This involves a detailed analysis of religious elements within the shadow play narratives and the role of them in conveying cultural values and moral principles.

The study of artistic forms, performance techniques, and making methods of shadow puppet is another focal point for researchers. Given that shadow play is a folk performing art deeply rooted in local cultures, its traditions exhibit diversity across different regions. Many researchers concentrate on the regional distinctions of their own countries, with specific studies delving into the local features, modes of inheritance, and performance styles. They delve into the visual artistic features, shadow crafting techniques, musical accompaniment, and other aspects to gain a comprehensive understanding of this traditional art form's richness.

As societal changes unfold, scholars also examine the impact of modernization and commercialization on shadow play. Some studies focus on how the tradition is being preserved and innovated in contemporary society, exploring the influence of commercial interests on traditional performing arts. Scholars are particularly interested in how modern technology can enhance the expressive capabilities of shadow play, including the use of digital media in traditional performances and the role of digital technology in promoting the dissemination and preservation of this art form.

Lastly, some research directs attention to government policies affecting shadow play performance. This includes an exploration of cultural policies, societal perceptions, and market demands to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the status and prospects of this traditional performing art in contemporary society.

Overall, current research presents multiple perspectives and levels of interest, and this chapter will detail these aspects of these studies.

2.2 Origin of Shadow Play

Shadow plays are prevalent in numerous countries worldwide, with a predominant presence in China, India, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia, as well as Turkey and Egypt (Figure 2.1). Serving as an ancient folk art, the tradition of shadow play performances is meticulously passed down through generations by dedicated folk artists. Within academic circles, diverse perspectives exist regarding the origin of shadow play.

China, Java, India and Turkey have a long tradition of shadow play performances. Therefore, some researchers have suggested that shadow puppets originated in India (Hans & Barbara, 2013) or China (Wei, 2008) (Laufer, 1923, p. 36), but due to the lack of clear and systematic written records, there is no conclusion in the academia.

Scholar Hans and Barbara (2013) referred in their monograph *Asian Punches: A Transcultural Affair* that the origins the shadow theatre have not yet been precisely traced and vary between China, Java and India because they all had a long tradition of shadow theatre.

According to Chen (2003, p. 26), the origin of the shadow play is still a matter of debate. Scholars generally agree that shadow play originated in Asia. While some propose that it originated in China (Wei, 2008) (Laufer, 1923, p. 36), others suggest India, Indonesia, or Central Asia (Hans & Barbara, 2013) (Rentse, 1947). Although shadow play has developed greatly in both China and Indonesia, there is a lack of reliable documentary and archaeological proof to support any of these claims. Myths, rumours, and debates abound over the shadow play's past.

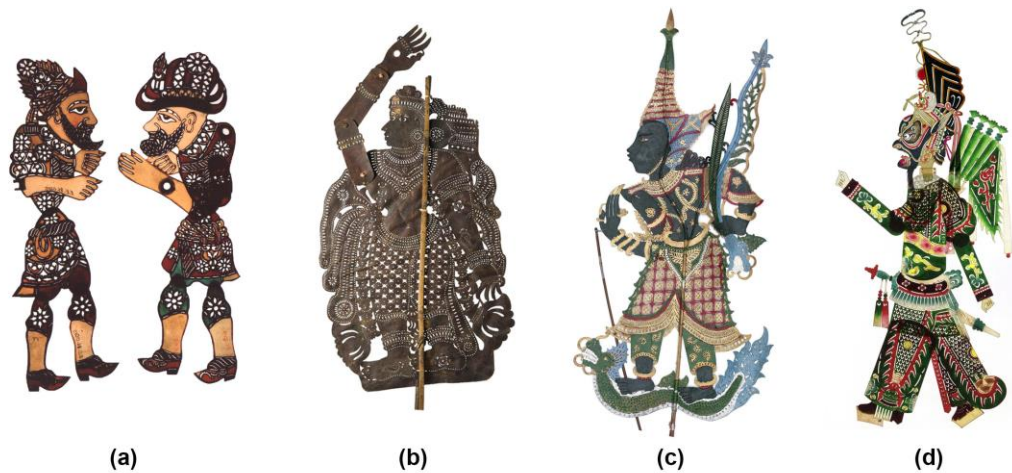


Figure 2.1: The Four Types of Shadow Play

Source: (a) *Karagöz* (Turkey shadow play), picture from UNESCO, Center for Folk Culture/ Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Turkey. (b) Rama, Kerala shadow play, India, Linden-Museum Stuttgart, SA 03128 L. (c) Seri Rama, Kelantan shadow play, Malaysia, Victoria and Albert Museum, S.995-2011. (d) Zhangfei, Shaanxi shadow play, China, Author's collection.

2.2.1 Turkish Shadow Play

The shadow screen is called “the cloth of dreams” in Arab world (Currell, 2015). Several scholars propose that shadow puppets have their origins in the nomadic tribes of the Central Asian grasslands (Baird, 1973). Within their tents, illuminated by campfires at night, the shadows of inhabitants would project onto the surrounding cloth or leather. This interplay of moving figures on translucent materials, visible from the exterior, is believed to have served as the inspiration for the development of shadow play performances.

According to Chen (2003), many Chinese scholars believe that there were shadow play theatres in the armies of the Mongols from the steppe tribes, and the army has shadow play troupes to boost morale Tseng (2010, pp. 35-37) and Gu (1983) stated that the Yuan dynasty, ruled by the Mongols, made shadow play spread in China. The Mongolian army marched westward, and shadow play spread to Persia, Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, and other places with the army. Gu (1983) suggested that shadow play was prevalent in mainland

China in the early Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), and starting from the beginning of the 15th century, Cheng Ho's seven voyages travelled to more than 30 countries and spread shadow play overseas, so that today there is shadow play in Japan, Java, Siam, Myanmar, and India, in addition to China. Chen (2003) indicated that in the mid-15th century, Chinese immigrants brought shadow play to Southeast Asia, and according to Chen (2003), a Jesuit priest is said to have introduced it to Western Europe. And Dulic (2006), who cited the Von Boehn (Shaw& Von Boehn, 1972) in his PhD dissertation that. In 1775 an Italian shadow showman called Amrogio (also known as Ambroise) opened the first shadow theatres in Western Europe and performed in France and England. Seraphin Dominique Francois staged the first shadow play show to packed houses in Versailles.

At the beginning of the 20th century, many German scholars began to pay attention to shadow theatres in Turkey and Arabia (Karagöz). Such as Berthold Laufer, Curt M. Prüfer, Paul E. Kahle, etc. Anthropologist Berthold Laufer indicated, in his book *Oriental dramas* indicated that, there is first record that appears shadow play in Turkish literature in the 17th century. In the first of 15th century, shadow play has become the popular entertainment in the Sultan's Saladin court. The Turkish conqueror, Selim, the first to bring shadow play from Cairo to Constantinople. And it is seems to have done from two routes, one from Egypt, the other from the interior of Asia via Samarkand and Persia (Laufer, 1932, p. 38).

The survey of Paul E. Kahle (1940) also demonstrated that Turkish shadow play styles are not limited to performing in Turkey, but also in Arab, North Africa, Palestine, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco and other Islamic countries. During the Islamic 'Ramadan', shadow plays with similar artistic styles will be performed in these countries.

Arabist and German diplomat Curt M. Prüfer (1911) indicated that Turkish shadow puppets passed from the East, but it was hard to verify whether they were introduced from China or India. According to Currell (2015), the travelling performers spread the culture of Istanbul to other parts of the Anatolia Peninsula through shadow play.

2.2.2 Indian Shadow Play

According to Orr (1974) and Currell (2015), Romanis played an important role in the spread of Indian shadow puppets. Because Romanis merged from Northwest India, after about the 10th century A.D., due to war and famine, the Romanis began to leave India and migrate outward. They are likely to carry shadow puppets when they migrate from Asia to Europe. Turkish shadow puppet expert Metin (1987) also pointed out that the characters in the shadow play performances of the Ottoman Empire have obvious Romanis elements, such as blacksmith and ironmonger, which are the main occupations of Romanis in the Ottoman Empire.

India has a long history of shadow play, and several parts of the country have their own distinctive styles (Orr, 1974; Currell, 2015), mainly performing the famous Hindu epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. The Indian shadow play has influenced the shadow play tradition of the whole Southeast Asia in many aspects, such as story, character figure, performance form and so on (Ringmar, 2019). Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia and Indonesia all combine the stories of these two epics with their local cultures to perform their own versions of these Hindu epics. Therefore, many scholars believe that the shadow play tradition in Southeast Asia derived from India (Orr, 1974; Osnes, 2014; Yousof, 2006).

2.2.3 Malaysian and Indonesian Shadow Play

Indonesian shadow theatre is called *Wayang kulit*. *Wayang* means shadow or puppet, and *kulit* means skin. According to the research of Orr (1974), there are two theories concerning its roots. One is that during the long process of Java's Indenisations (from the 3rd to the 12th century), it spread in Indonesia with the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* epic. Another view is that the shadow play in Java derived from the ancient indigenous tradition, this is often supported by the fact that part of the shadow-theatre repertoires is based on stories adapted before the arrival of Hinduism, and that all the technical terms of the genre are Javanese and not derived from Sanskrit or other Indian languages.

The name of shadow play in Malaysia is the same as Indonesia, which is also called *Wayang kulit*. At the beginning of the 19th century, shadow play has become an independent drama in Malaysia (Wright, 1981). According to Zahari (2013, pp. 4-6) and Matusky (1993, p. 8), In Malaysia, shadow play is categorized into three regional types. First, there's *Wayang kulit* Kelantan or Siam (Terengganu, Kelantan), featuring performances in a Kelantan's Malay dialect with influences from Thai Pattani. Next is *Wayang kulit* Gedek (Perlis, Kedah), performed in both Thai and Malay. Lastly, *Wayang kulit* Jawa or Purwa (Selangor and Johor) is presented in Javanese and Malay, particularly in areas with a strong Javanese tradition. This classification highlights the diverse linguistic and cultural influences shaping shadow puppetry across different regions in Malaysia.

The traditional shadow play in Malaysia originated from the state of Kelantan on the east coast (Ghani, 2011; Kia & Chan, 2009). Due to its proximity to Thailand and

Indonesia, the shadow play in Kelantan was influenced by Indonesia and neighbouring Thailand. The shadow play in this state began to develop with the Hinduism coming. The shadow character is showed the visual style of Thai shadow play and Indonesian shadow play. Therefore, shadow play is also known as "*Wayang kulit Siam*" in Kelantan. It is very similar to a form of shadow play called *Nang Talung*, which is popular in Thailand's southern city bordering Malaysia, where 80% of the population is Muslim Malays, *Nang* means hide, *Talung* is also called *Pattalung*, name of a city in southern Thailand where shadow play is very popular, and unlike other Southeast Asian shadow puppets, it uses transparent hides and is relatively small (Brandon, 1967). Brandon (1967) is inclined to believe that "in one way or another *Nang Talung* were inspired by Chinese shadow theatre" (p. 68).

Nowadays, in addition to *Wayang kulit* Kelantan, the other two shadow plays have gradually been forgotten by people (Zahari, 2013). The *Wayang kulit* Kelantan performer, *Wayang Pak Dain*, is considered to be the most authentic shadow play performer (Lim, 2011), *Wayang kulit* Kelantan is the most unique shadow play from in Malaysia. And due to the government's ban, the most famous living Kelantanese shadow performer is now only a Chinese *Tok Dalang* Eyo Hock Seng.

2.2.4 Chinese Shadow Play

Chinese shadow play used to be a popular folk drama art, which is closely related to religion, drama and folk customs. Wei Liqun, a famous Chinese shadow play researcher, suggested Chinese shadow play can be divided into northern shadow play, western shadow play, and central southern shadow play according to the visual characteristics' differences. Among them, Western shadow play has the longest history (Wei, 2008) (Figure 2.2).



Figure 2.2: Classification of Chinese shadow play

Source: Drawing by author

According to Chen (2003), despite sporadic mentions of Chinese shadow play in historical records since the Han Dynasty (202BC-220), it experienced significant development on a large scale during the Song Dynasty (960-1279). The flourishing of commercial activities and the gradual abolition of night-time curfews during the Song Dynasty contributed to the expansive growth of entertainment. Many poems from the Southern Song Dynasty reflect the rich nocturnal leisure activities, exemplified by the renowned poet Xin Qiji's "Jade Table - Lantern Festival", vividly describing the scenes of night-time festivities during the Lantern Festival (Egan, 2006). The performance of shadow play, requiring darkness, became feasible with the lifting of night-time restrictions, marking a pivotal moment in its historical evolution.

In the Song Dynasty, China took place two shadow play centres, *Hangzhou* city and *Kaifeng* city. Jiang (2015) discovered that the first shadow puppet production material is paper, represented by the paper shadow of *Hangzhou* in the Northern Song Dynasty, and animal hide have been used to make shadow puppets since *Kaifeng* in the Southern Song

Dynasty. Shadow puppets made of hide are easier to carry around and perform. This made shadow play popular throughout China.

Compared to other drama forms, shadow play is cost-effective and integrates various elements such as images, animation, music, narration, making it a versatile performance art. Primarily showcased during entertainment events, religious ceremonies, weddings, funerals, and special occasions, shadow play gained immense popularity until the early 20th century. However, with the advent of films in China during the 1930s, the prominence of shadow play performances dwindled. Presently, it has nearly vanished from mainstream entertainment and is predominantly preserved in museums and tourist venues.

2.3 Cultural Tradition of Shadow Play

Shadow play, a traditional form of performing art, with a long history in entire Asia. It is a magical world of "light" and "shadow" like a dream and full of rich imagination. As the previous sub-chapter discussed, shadow play traces its origins to ancient times and is deeply rooted in cultural traditions, with its roots firmly established in the Asian region. Its evolution across diverse cultures, from simple shadow shapes to intricate puppet carving techniques, reflects cultural shifts and developments over time. Shadow play has provided people worldwide with a unique and expressive form of entertainment in the past.

Beyond mere entertainment, shadow play serves as a profound means of cultural preservation and expression. Through its performances and dissemination, it conveys a deep understanding of one's culture (Osnes, 2014), history, and beliefs. Each region's shadow play incorporates unique traditional elements, encompassing everything from costumes and music to story themes and performance styles, carrying the distinct imprint of its culture.

Shadow play also plays a vital social function within societies. As part of traditional festivities, temple fairs, and other celebratory events, it becomes a connecting thread within community frameworks (Wei, 2008). Often conveying cultural values and moral principles through traditional stories and fables, shadow play serves as both entertaining and enlightening, providing successive generations with a pathway to understand and appreciate their cultural foundations.

2.3.1 Cultural Tradition of Malaysian Shadow Play

The development of agricultural civilisation has created the fertile soil for shadow puppets. Hall (1981) indicated that the Proto-Malays came to the Malay Peninsula from the southwest of Chinese Mainland along the coastline, bringing Neolithic culture. The Deutero-Malays came from 2500 BC to 1500 BC, bringing bronze culture and crop planting technology. Blust (2019) also indicated that during this period, people using the primitive Proto-Austronesian language family migrated from the southern coast of China to Taiwan, east to the Philippines, and south to Vietnam, Borneo, Java, Sumatra, and the Malay Peninsula. These people spread the paddy cultivation and the animism belief to all parts of Southeast Asia.

In comparison to maritime or hunting cultures, according to Higham (1989) rice cultivation culture places a stronger emphasis on social order and moral traditions. It celebrates harvests two to three times a year, incorporating a blend of theatre, dance, singing, and storytelling into a fitting celebration (Hamilton, 2004). This was the original form of shadow play performance. In contemporary Southeast Asian celebrations, performances praising the Rice Goddess, Dewi Sri, continue to be observed (Sunarti et al., 2022).

Storytelling is the vehicle of culture. The narrative foundation of Malaysian shadow play is rooted in the *Ramayana* (Sweeney, 1972), a Hindu epic that has gained global prominence, recounting a universal love story. Even within India, Singaravelu (1968) stated that there exist over 300 confirmed versions of the *Ramayana*, each with its own unique cultural and historical context. Over 250 years ago, in the pre-Islamic era, the *Ramayana* found its way to Kelantan alongside the flow of silk, spices, and other commodities through oral recitation (Sweeney, 1972). Shadow play has since become an integral cultural element of Kelantan and the East Coast, reflecting the rich tapestry of traditions in the region.

In the realm of performing arts in Southeast Asia, there are three discernible traditions: folk, court, popular, and Western (Britannica, n.d.). These traditions represent distinct and diverse approaches to artistic expression.

Folk Tradition: Traditional shadow play holds widespread popularity among the general populace, characterized by broad public participation and skilled performers. Performances serve both religious ceremonies and entertainment purposes. While most folk performing arts have ancient origins, their presentation is often influenced by courtly classical art, adapting to the aesthetic preferences of local communities. In turn, folk forms become sources of inspiration for court artists.

Southeast Asia's Royal Court Tradition: Shadow plays and other performance arts are highly valued as traditional art form. Court life has included dance troupes at least from the beginning of recorded history. It has historically been financed by the royal family and mostly presents epics and mythology. Whereas according to Ramlan & Quayum (2010) interviewed with renowned scholar of Malay theatre, Ghulam-Sarwar Yousof, “There has

never been any court tradition of theatre in the Malay sultanates”. However, according to Matusky (2023), *Wayang Jawa*, unlike the village folk form, was funded and nurtured by the royal families in the sultanates of Kelantan in the 19th and 20th centuries and performed only for the royal family before its demise in the mid- to late 20th century.

Popular and Western Traditions: Shadow play troupes primarily sustain themselves through audience ticket purchases. In the modern cultural landscape, the pursuit of commercial interests has driven innovations in shadow puppetry. Incorporating modern elements, popular songs, fashionable costumes, and contemporary narratives, puppeteers adapt for survival and development (Osnes, 1992).

Kelantan shadow play combines folk and popular tradition. it serves as a cultural embodiment of Malay village traditions, particularly thriving in the Tumpat of northwest Kelantan, thereby holding a pivotal place in Malaysian cultural heritage. The distinctive Kelantan Pattani dialect, known for its intricacy, is utilized in *Wayang kulit* performances, presenting a linguistic challenge for those unfamiliar with the region (Zahari, 2013, p. 103). Rooted in the Siam style of *Wayang kulit* and concentrated in Tumpat, the performances narrate stories from the *Ramayana*. The continued existence of *Wayang kulit* in Malaysia is sustained through unwavering support from rural communities. Practitioners grapple with the task of adapting to evolving societal needs, prompting some to innovate by incorporating modern elements, ensuring resonance with a wider audience.

2.3.2 Cultural Tradition of Chinese Shadow Play

While many scholars indicate that Chinese shadow play originated as early as the Han Dynasty (202BC-AD220) (Snibbe, 2003; Wei, 2008; Rollins, 2019), the earliest documented performances in Chinese history date back to the Song Dynasty (Chen, 2003).

With the flourishing of commerce during the Northern Song, evening entertainment became abundant, captivating both emperors and commoners alike. Rulers were keen on using theatrical stories for educational purposes. According to Song (2020), *Wang Hong*, a playwright in Qing Dynasty (1616-1912), noted, "The people do not know the written word but enjoy watching dramas." Due to limitations in ancient education, the transmission of ethical values and moral principles often relied on theatrical performances.

Traditional Chinese shadow play reached its peak in the Qing Dynasty (Wang, 2017), showing a profound cultural tradition. Its unique performance form has become a bright pearl in Chinese cultural heritage. Compared with traditional performing arts, shadow play is simpler and more flexible, with fewer troupe members, fewer restrictions on venues, and relatively lower costs, which has made it widely spread in different regions and become one of the most important cultural activities in both rural and urban areas.

The cyclical labour of the agricultural civilisation made farmers in dire need of a relaxing and enjoyable form of entertainment during their agricultural leisure time. As a result, shadow play became an important entertainment and celebration that brought joy and relaxation to the people during their agricultural leisure time (Humphrey, 1983). Particularly in agricultural communities, hundreds of theatre groups convey rich cultural connotations in their respective performances, becoming indispensable cultural symbols in community life.

During festival events in China, shadow play once played a vital role, serving as a form of entertainment and a means of communicating with gods and exorcising malevolent spirits (Balivet, 2020). On occasions such as festivals, temple fairs, weddings, birthdays, and harvest celebrations, people gathered to watch performances of "Joyful Shadows," not

only adding vibrancy to the celebrations but also incorporating deep cultural traditions. In religious ceremonies such as prayers, rain rituals, fertility rites, vows, and expressions of gratitude, watching "Wishful Shadows" became a way to convey faith, embedding cultural traditions into religious rituals.

Simultaneously, the visual elements of Chinese shadow puppetry seamlessly integrated with those of other traditional art forms, forming a distinctive cultural symbol. Influenced by traditional art forms such as paper-cutting, Han Dynasty portrait stones, and New Year paintings, shadow puppetry incorporated diverse elements into its artistic style, creating a colourful and meaningful expression.

2.4 Religious Context of Shadow Play

Religion often provides the inspiration and creative knowledge for works of art (Coleman, 1998). In shadow play, many stories and characters may originate from religious classics, myths or legends. By analysing the religious background, it is possible to understand how religious beliefs in a particular culture influence the formation and development of artistic traditions. This helps to reveal the role and place of shadow play in society. Religion plays a variety of roles in society, from moral education to the maintenance of social order. Shadow play is often more than just a form of entertainment and may serve a specific social function in religious ceremonies, celebrations, and other occasions.

2.4.1 The Influence of Animism on Kelantan Shadow Play

The region of Southeast Asia shares varied animistic belief systems. Animism includes the belief that objects, sacred places, animals and natural phenomena possess

unique spiritual essence (Arhem & Sprenger, 2015). These beliefs are still a crucial force in the religious life of Southeast Asians and provide important inspiration for various art forms in these regions.

Kelantan shadow play is deeply influenced by the animism of Southeast Asia (Wright, 1981). In this belief system, permeating daily life and profoundly impacting artistic and performance forms, particularly in traditional shadow puppetry.

The narrative foundation of shadow play is rooted in the Hindu epic *Ramayana*, intertwining mythology, legends, and religious elements. Animal characters in the story exhibit human traits, seamlessly incorporating animism. The narrative also portrays interactions between characters and deities, allowing audiences to sense the presence of the supernatural. This form serves not only as entertainment but also as a means of interacting with the spiritual realm.

The ritual of shadow play in the opening, regarding the shadow puppet characters as spirit of another world, people believe that shadow play performances can communicate with heaven and earth and avoid evil spirits or exorcise demons (Wong & Yousof, 2018), all religious characteristics are expressed during the performance. The shadow play itself can be regarded as the miniature of our universe. The white screen represents the world, Master puppeteer represents God, and the characters represent human beings and other creatures.

Kelantan shadow play often takes centre stage in celebrations, religious ceremonies, and festivals, imbuing these occasions with mystery and religious significance. Preceding traditional performances, rituals and homage to deities enhance the cultural and religious

aspects, making shadow performance a medium for preserving and propagating cultural beliefs.

2.4.2 The Influence of Hinduism on Kelantan Shadow Play

The examples of the influence of Indian culture on the Kelantan shadow play can be seen everywhere, such as the aforementioned *Ramayana*. The *Ramayana* was adopted by almost every country because to its ease of retelling, comprehension, adaptation, and modernization (Richman, 1991). The traditional Malaysia shadow play is mainly adapted from *Ramayana*. Which is called *Hikayat Maharajawana*. The repertoires usually depict the story of this Hindu epic. In order to localize the repertoires, some content has been modified. The main story now revolves around the antagonist *Maharajawana (Ravana)* instead of *Serama (Rama)*, the original protagonist has become a great morality story, it is also imbued with the religious in the process.

Indian culture has penetrated almost all of the country of Southeast Asia. Indian religion, according to Lockard (2009), whether Brahmanism or Buddhism, spread to Southeast Asia with the commercial trade of spices and minerals in the pre-Islamic period. At the same time, Indian dance also had a far-reaching impact on Southeast Asia theatre (Brandon, 1967, p. 25), including gesture, vocabulary, performance actions, drama structure, character modelling, clothing colour, etc. The two major Hindu epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, have become the inexhaustible source of traditional drama performance themes in Southeast Asian countries (Yousof, 2010). Therefore, shadow play in Southeast Asia is shown obviously Hinduism characteristics.

The tradition of shadow play confronts challenges from political, religious forces. In 1998, the Kelantan state assembly enacted the *Entertainment and Places of*

Entertainment Control Enactment, prohibiting "un-Islamic" local traditional performances, including *Mak Yong* (a traditional form of dance-drama), *Wayang Kulit* (shadow play), and *Main Puteri* (an indigenous Kelantanese healing ritual), among others. These restrictions were implemented due to perceived elements in these performances that are deemed inconsistent with Islamic principles.

2.4.3 Religious context of Chinese shadow play

As a performing art form combining visual and performing arts, the relationship between Chinese shadow play and religion is evident not only in the portrayal of myths and traditional stories but also in the religious ceremonies and perspectives on life, death, and divine beings during the performance process.

For instance, shadow play may depict hero stories from ancient literary works or narrate traditional fables about good and evil. Traditional Chinese beliefs, including Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and other indigenous faiths, highly influence the repertoire of Chinese shadow play, similar to traditional Chinese drama, often selecting myths and traditional stories with profound religious connotations as performance themes. These stories typically convey moral and ethical lessons, reflecting the religious and philosophical concepts of Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, and others in ancient Chinese culture, such as "*Journey to the West*," "*Romance of the Three Kingdoms*," "*Legend of the White Snake*," and Confucian tales of loyalty and filial piety.

Common character figures include deities, bodhisattvas, immortals, and spirits from Buddhism, as well as figures like the Jade Emperor, God of Wealth, and Thunder God from Taoism. In *Gansu* Province, "*Daoqing* Shadow Play" is directly linked to Taoist scriptures and Taoist music, with story content directly related to Taoist culture.

Jiang (2015) believes that shadow play serves as a means of conveying beliefs and participating in religious rituals, often playing a significant role in religious ceremonies and celebrations. During festivals, temple fairs, weddings, birthdays, and other events, people gather to watch shadow puppetry performances, this not only adds vibrancy to the celebrations but is also considered a way of communicating with deities and warding off evil. Shadow puppetry is viewed as an integral part of traditional culture, seamlessly integrated into religious rituals.

The performance purposes of Chinese shadow play are generally categorized into "Wishing Shadows" (*Yuanying*) and "Celebration Shadows"(*Xiying*) (Wei, 2008; Jiang, 2015). Celebration Shadows do not have specific dates or ceremonies, they are performed for joyous occasions. On the other hand, Wishing Shadows require selecting an auspicious day. A day before the performance begins, a tablet is set up to worship deities, inviting them to witness the show. The formal performance commences on the next day, and after the performance, a ritual to send off the deities is held.

Furthermore, shadow play reflects the people's beliefs about life, death, and divine beings. Some Chinese shadow play stories involve themes of reincarnation and the existence of spirits, reflecting ancient Chinese understanding of life and death, as well as their reverence for supernatural forces like gods and ancestors.

2.4.4 Comparison of Religious Context and Cultural Tradition

Both Chinese and Malaysian cultures are rooted in agricultural civilizations, where people in traditional villages developed lifestyles and customs to adapt to agricultural production needs. This system, reinforced through regular cultural activities, strengthens shared cultural beliefs, fostering cultural identity. Shadow play, with its minimal space,

fewer participants, and lower costs compared to other performances, became a widely popular form of entertainment before the emergence of modern entertainment and cultural globalisation. In both countries, shadow play performances often begin with religious ceremonies to enhance the sacredness of the show, creating an illusionary space where humans and gods coexist.

According to Heinzv & Murray (2018), the geographical separation by the Himalayas limited direct cultural influence from East Asia to Southeast Asia in pre-modern societies, with cultural influences in Southeast Asia primarily coming from India. Shadow play styles are also influenced by Hinduism, south Thai dance and shadow play, providing rich inspiration for traditional Kelantan shadow play. Elements like dance movements, costume design, music arrangement, and storytelling showcase unique charm. In contrast, Chinese shadow play developed across different dynasties, reaching its peak during the Qing Dynasty, characterized by simplicity and flexibility, widely spread in rural and urban areas.

The spiritual thoughts in Malaysian shadow play reflect Hinduism and animism, integrating religious themes deeply into performances. Chinese shadow play incorporates themes from Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and other indigenous beliefs, conveying moral and ethical teachings. In Kelantan state, this unique folk tradition of shadow play facing challenges from political and religious forces, prohibiting traditional performances as it is "non-Islamic".

Table 2.1: Comparison of Religious Context and Cultural Tradition

	Malaysia	China
Cultural Tradition	Agricultural civilization, South Thailand, Hindu epic	Agricultural civilization, chinesse traditional opera, Other traditonal art form,
Religious Context	Hinduism, Animism, Islam	Animism, Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism

2.5 Shadow Play in Contemporary Society

Numerous studies have focused on the origins, history, cultural heritage, performance forms, and music of shadow puppetry in Malaysia and China. Shifting our focus to efforts to preserve and inherit this art form in contemporary society reveals a myriad of explorations by scholars. However, there is a notable shortage of exploration into the unique visual styles of its national shadow play form.

Exploring the innovative application of shadow play in contemporary society with the help of the combination of the latest technology and shadow is one of the major research projects hotspots. The researchers studied how to apply digital 3D puppet animation (Figure 2.3) method to shadow play performance (Ghani, 2018), and use algorithms based on 3D real-world scanning modelling of human body to generate shadow characters in real time (Huang et al., 2015). Tang et al., (2023) studied how to apply new technologies to assist in the innovation of shadow puppet performance methods created a multi-dimensional interactive perception-based intelligent shadow play technology called Shadow Touch that enables natural user interaction with the shadow play figure. Liang et al. (2023) proposed a semantic-based scene generation method for digital shadow puppet performance scenes and searched the corresponding shadow puppet models in the model library to construct the virtual scenes of digital shadow play performance.



Figure 2.3: Digital 3D Puppet Animation

In spite of such efforts, under the impact of modern entertainment, shadow play performances could no longer attract the attention of the audience and inevitably went into extinction, which is the same problem faced by both countries' shadow play theatre. Shadow plays were the carrier of people's entertainment and religious needs in the past. With the change of contemporary living habits and the popularization of modern entertainment, especially the western popular culture spread to all over the world, fewer and fewer people watch shadow play, the traditional art form is declining, young people lack interest in learning about shadow play, and shadow puppeteer lack successors.

As a result of the Kelantan state's two-decade ban, both performers and the performance market have plummeted. Today number of *Dalang* dwindled to a very small, currently Now among the famous masters in Kelantan, only Eyo Hock Seng from *Pasir Parit* is still alive, but since he is in his late 70s and has poor eye vision, he has barely performed when interviewed by the author. And another interview with Wang Biao, a shadow play master in *Langzhong*, China, also revealed that although he owns a shadow

art museum in *Lanzhong* old town, there is no easy way for him to leave his disciples to stick to shadow play performances.

To ensure the continuation of the endangered art form of shadow play, various strategies have been employed, incorporating not only modern technology but also innovative approaches to revive traditional culture. In Malaysia, designers have infused elements of modern popular culture and science fiction into the performance style of shadow puppetry. Simultaneously, some fashion designers have ingeniously incorporated the flat elements of shadow puppetry into fashion design. The Google Arts & Culture project, Figure 2.4 (Google Arts & Culture, n.d.) actively promotes the precious cultural heritage of Chinese shadow play, and the representative of Chinese shadow puppetry featured in this program is none other than Master Wang Biao, the interviewee of this study.

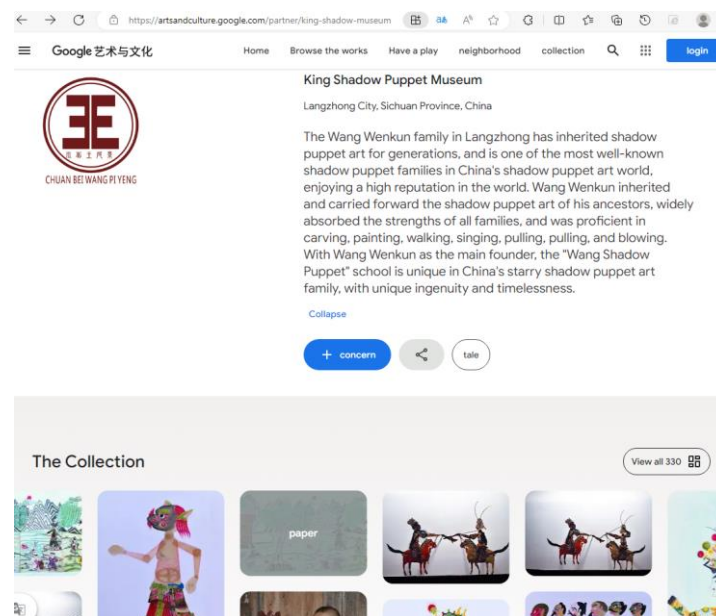


Figure 2.4: Wang Biao's Shadow Puppet Museum on Google Art and Culture

Source: Webpage snapshot

The value of preserving and inheriting shadow play has also attracted the attention of relevant government departments and non-governmental organizations. Four types have been inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). They are (Indonesia, 2008), (Cambodia, 2008), (Turkey, 2009), (China, 2011) and (Syrian Arab Republic, 2018). Since 2005, China has carried out the preservation of intangible cultural heritage and established a four level list preservation system. So far, 37 shadow plays from all over China have been listed in the list of National Intangible Cultural Heritage. which has played a very important role in the preservation and development of Chinese shadow play, and the Malaysian Ministry of Cultural Heritage also listed shadow play as National Cultural Heritage in 2007. Pusaka, a Malaysian non-profit organization (Pusaka, n.d.), is also committed to the preservation and development of the traditional Kelantan shadow play art.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

Based on the qualitative research, this study has identified the use of the following theoretical framework (Figure 2.5) to serve as the theoretical underpinnings of the study. Simultaneously, this theoretical framework aids in showcasing and explaining the knowledge acquired by the researcher on the research topic.

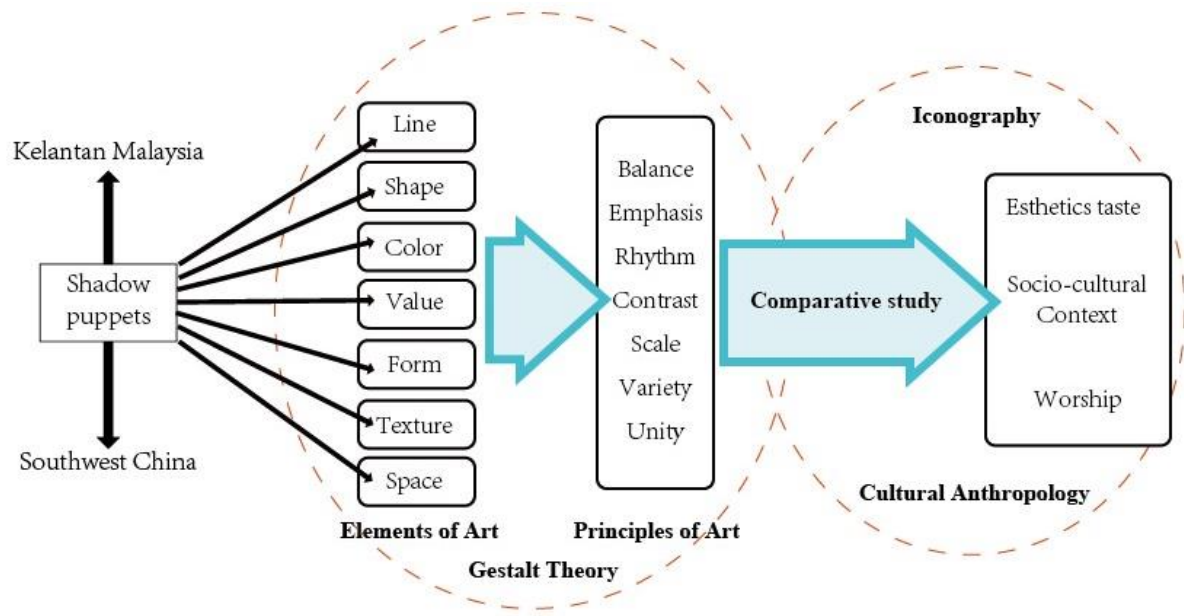


Figure 2.5: Theoretical framework of the Research

2.6.1 Cultural Anthropology

Cultural and artistic phenomena change in society overtime. Fieldwork in Cultural Anthropology allows researchers to immerse themselves in real-life scenarios, documenting drifting or decaying civilizations, and exploring the relationship between the subject of study, society and the times. Art Anthropology is a branch of Cultural Anthropology. In such an approach, anthropologist Layton (1991) has emphasised the importance of both the imagery and forms of art in such study and investigation:

To understand the artist's aims we must understand the symbolism he utilizes. The art object one observes is merely the tangible expression of a cultural, and therefore a mental, construct, expressed according to that culture's conventions of visual representation (pp. 27-28).

Therefore, in order to understand the relationship between art objects, symbols and convention, this study uses the Anthropology of art, and as a method to collect primary

data through fieldwork, web-based surveys and also formal and informal interviews, i.e., to understand the symbolism embedded in the visual representation in later analysis.

2.6.2 Iconography

Kopp-Schmidt (2004) stated that the purpose of iconography was to describe or reconstruct the meaning of images that had been gradually forgotten by people due to the changes of the times so that laymen in Art History or experts and scholars could understand the essence of these artworks.

According to Müller (2011), iconography is a theoretical framework for the in-depth description and interpretation of the content of artworks. It falls within the realm of Anthropology. The primary focus of the study is images. In addition to the direct description of images as objects, it is essential to understand the meaning of the images, their sources, the historical context in which they were created, and the societal conditions that influenced their production. This comprehensive analysis aims to provide a holistic understanding of artworks.

According to Panofsky (1983), a noted Art historian, who developed the theory describing three levels of meaning in an artwork: The first level of meaning was what Panofsky called as “Pre-iconography”, the second level was called “Iconography”, and the third level was called “Iconology”. Pre-iconography defines a generic description of the objects and actions represented in the picture. The Iconography level involves analysis to identify specific meaning from the perspective of practical knowledge, or to be based on “educated knowledge”. Iconology concerns interpretation, i.e. based on accurate Pre-iconographic description and correct Iconographical analysis of an artwork.

As an external form of expression, the visual style of shadow puppets cannot be solely derived from surface observations during performances. The intrinsic meaning relies on an understanding of cultural traditions. Therefore, this study explores the analysis of shadow puppet visual styles based on the principles of Iconography. In the process of the research, the theories of Anthropology of Art are applied, combining studies on ethnic cultures and social conditions through fieldwork and interviews to provide primary data. Through comparative analysis, utilizing Iconographic theory and comparative research methods, the visual styles of shadow puppetry in Malaysia and China are categorized into respective types. Subsequently, an Iconographic study of the patterns is conducted, exploring the relationships between societal backgrounds, living conditions, ethnic beliefs, and the visual representations.

2.6.3 Elements and Principles of Arts

Like any other art form, the design of patterns and motifs above the shadow figures have to follow specific rules, which are aimed at conveying the message in the most organised and practical way, it ensures that people can correctly identify the different characters roles, and at the same time, the patterns reflect the common aesthetic concepts of the people. The visual elements of shadow puppets, such as lines, shapes, colours, textures, and spaces, are presented according to specific rules, combined with the visual structure, balance, rhythm, and repetition. This helps to reveal the overall visual effects and viewing experience of the work, as well as the emotions, meanings and themes it conveys.

2.6.4 Gestalt Theory

In addition, the pattern extraction and analysis section of this study also uses the theory of Gestalt Psychology. Gestalt Psychology is the study of human visual phenomena.

In German, the word "gestalt" is most closely related to the English words "form," "pattern", and "shape" (Guberman, 2015). Using Gestalt Psychology theory could help researchers understand how the rules of pattern composition affect the viewer's mental perception. In other words, analysing how humans perceive what they see.

2.7 Chapter Summary

The chapter delved into the cultural traditions and religious contexts, artistic styles, and contemporary applications of shadow play in Malaysia and China. The chapter began by highlighting shadow play as a traditional form of performing art with roots deeply embedded in Asian cultural traditions. The author explored the rich historical tapestry of shadow play, emphasizing its evolution across diverse cultures and its profound impact on societal functions.

Within the Malaysian context, the chapter traced the cultural tradition of shadow play to Hinduism and animism, particularly rooted in the *Ramayana* epic. The influence of these cultural elements is further highlighted in the folk, court, and popular traditions of shadow play, each with its distinct characteristics and societal roles. The chapter also touched upon the challenges faced by Malaysian shadow play, including political and religious restrictions that emerged in the pre-Islamic era.

Moving on to Chinese shadow play, the author explored its historical origins and its peak during the Qing Dynasty. The chapter shed light on the religious context of Chinese shadow play, emphasizing its integration with beliefs from Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and indigenous faiths.

The religious context of shadow play is then analysed in a comparative perspective, drawing parallels between Malaysian and Chinese cultures. Both cultures deeply rooted in agricultural civilizations, showcased the intertwining of shadow play with regional beliefs, reflecting Hinduism and animism in Malaysia and various Chinese religious traditions.

As the dissertation delved into contemporary society, the chapter addressed the challenges faced by shadow play in modern times. The decline of interest among the younger generation, coupled with the impact of modern entertainment, poses a threat to the preservation of this traditional art form. The chapter discusses efforts to innovate and preserve shadow play through the application of modern technology, which are explored, along with the unique visual styles of national shadow play forms. The chapter also emphasized the importance of preserving shadow play as intangible cultural heritage. Efforts by government departments, non-governmental organizations, and cultural heritage initiatives in both Malaysia and China are highlighted, showcasing ongoing endeavours to safeguard and promote the invaluable cultural legacy of shadow play. Finally, this chapter explained the theoretical framework of the research and explains the relevant theories adopted.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

This chapter describes the research plan, research approaches and data collection procedures employed in this study. The adopted research methods and theories are elaborated upon, emphasising their relevance to this research, along with an exploration of how the research plan is designed to ensure the achievement of the research objectives. This chapter begins with the research plan, followed by an introduction to the four phases. This chapter also covers the discussion revolving around the selection of samples and the determination of sample size and ends with the research approaches.

Generally, a methodology is “a set of principles and ideas that inform about the design of a research study” (Mills & Birks, 2022, p. 4). Pickard (2013) states that there are only two basic methodologies to be used in research, either a quantitative or qualitative approach which both having their own strengths and weaknesses.

This study is a qualitative research utilizing an inductive approach, which is often used in visual art research (Sullivan, 2010). Qualitative research provides the much needed flexibility and could incorporate a myriad of techniques such as observations, descriptions, interpretations, and interviews. They are valuable for exploring and investigating current or potential situations and have the capacity to provide rich descriptions of complex phenomena (Sofaer, 1999). It is ideal to be used in research focusing on understanding and interpreting experiences, behaviours, and social contexts. They provide the much needed room to explore the complexity and depth of the research topic rather than aiming for

statistical generalisations. Thus, qualitative research methods are deemed suitable for achieving the objectives of this study. The collected data consisted of primary and secondary data, primary data gathered in this research includes interviews and visual documents, while secondary data involves the observation of visual data which are from museums and libraries.

In line with the title of this research, the research plan began with a review of the historical development of shadow play in Malaysia and China. The study identified research samples through interviews, fieldwork, and literature reviews involving shadow play performers from both regions. Subsequently, visual data was extracted from the research samples, and the analyses were conducted. The research employed a method of parallel comparative study to analyse the external similarities and differences as well as the internal cultural backgrounds of the two distinct visual styles of shadow puppets. Finally, the research examined the unique cultural identities by exploring the innovative application of traditional elements in contemporary art.

This study is grounded in existing theories such as comparative study, cultural anthropology, iconography, elements and principles of arts, and Gestalt theory.

Iconography, with its three steps of describing, analysing, and interpreting visual images, is applied in the case study. It involves describing the visual appearance, the graphic's symbolic meaning, and interpreting the cultural context, thus expanding the horizons of traditional art research. Elements and principles of arts facilitate the connection between design theories and patterns in traditional arts.

Gestalt theory aids researchers in understanding the psychological motivations behind pattern aesthetics. Cultural anthropology helps researchers understand the common

cultural memories of an ethnic group such as the ideas, values, emotions, and perceptions that have been transmitted from generation to generation through intangible cultural heritage for instance images, music, dance, literature, etc. (Stefano et al., 2006). They are used to give meaning to the experience, to produce the behaviour, and are reflected in that behaviour. According to Coote and Shelton (1992), the anthropology of art, a branch of cultural anthropology, is a discipline dedicated explicitly to studying art within its social and cultural context.

The content of this study also relates to the unique art forms presented in two different cultural contexts. Comparative art studies contribute to a profound understanding and appreciation of shadow puppets in China and Malaysia. By utilising shadow puppets as a case study, it becomes possible to comprehend how the socio-historical context influenced the establishment of these visual styles. The subsequent sections of this chapter provide a detailed exposition of the specific roles of these theories in the research.

3.2 Qualitative Research in The Research

Qualitative research aims to thoroughly understand phenomena and explore issues in depth. According to Bhandari (2023), it is commonly employed in fields such as sociology, anthropology, and psychology. The data collected in qualitative research is typically non-numeric (textual, visual) in nature. The research process is focused on uncovering themes, patterns, and meanings within the data. Qualitative research is particularly useful for exploring new topics and gaining in-depth insights into cultural phenomena.

Like most qualitative research, this study does not begin with hypotheses. Instead, the researcher starts with some preliminary observations in the field collected from a

literature review, as it allows for a more holistic exploration of meaning (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Compared to quantitative research, this study has the following advantages when using qualitative research:

In-depth Understanding: Qualitative research facilitates a thorough analysis and comprehensive description of the observed subjects, aiding researchers in comprehending the intricate factors and relationships involved. By employing an open-ended research design and data collection methods, researchers can delve deeply into the essence of the issue, uncovering new perspectives and concepts.

Fieldwork: Qualitative research is typically conducted in natural environments, respecting the authentic contexts and behaviours of the subjects under study. This approach provides more genuine and specific first hand data. Interviews with shadow play performers in both regions, it helps to reveal the true thoughts, motivations, and behaviours.

Flexibility: Qualitative research is characterised by its flexibility, making it suitable for complex and diverse subjects of study. Changes are often encountered when determining research samples and interview subjects. Researchers can adjust the research plan, data collection, and analysis methods as needed, such as interviews, observations, visual text analysis, to accommodate the characteristics of the subjects and the requirements of the research objectives.

Adaptability: Qualitative research methods can be applied across various disciplines and fields, ranging from social sciences to humanities, education to healthcare, and beyond. They can be utilised to study a wide array of complex phenomena, such as human behaviour, cultural phenomena, social relationships, showcasing extensive

applicability. In this study, an attempt is made to reveal the differences in visual styles in traditional folk art, making it suitable for applying qualitative research methods.

However, according to Opdenakker (2006), qualitative research also has limitations compared to quantitative research, such as a smaller sample size and limited generalizability of results. Due to the emphasis on an in-depth understanding of individual cases, researchers need to interpret the results cautiously and consider them as insights specific to particular contexts, rather than universally applicable results. The data in qualitative research is often subjective. Berger (2015) suggested that the researcher's subjective views and interpretations play an important role in analysing the data and interpreting the results. The researcher's background, experiences, and biases may influence the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. Therefore, in designing the study and analysing the results, the researcher needs to balance these strengths and limitations, choosing appropriate methods based on the specific research question.

3.3 Research Plan

The objective of the study is to determine visual style variations of shadow puppet figures in the two respective regions of Malaysia and China from a comparative research perspective, and to investigate the cultural and social contexts that give rise to such visual style variations, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the significance of visual symbolism. The study aims to contribute to the preservation of traditional cultural heritage in contemporary society, enhance cultural identity, reveal the diversity of traditional arts, foster respect and appreciation for other cultures, as well as drive innovation and development in the arts.

To achieve these research objectives, the study is structured into four phases, as shown in Figure 3.1:

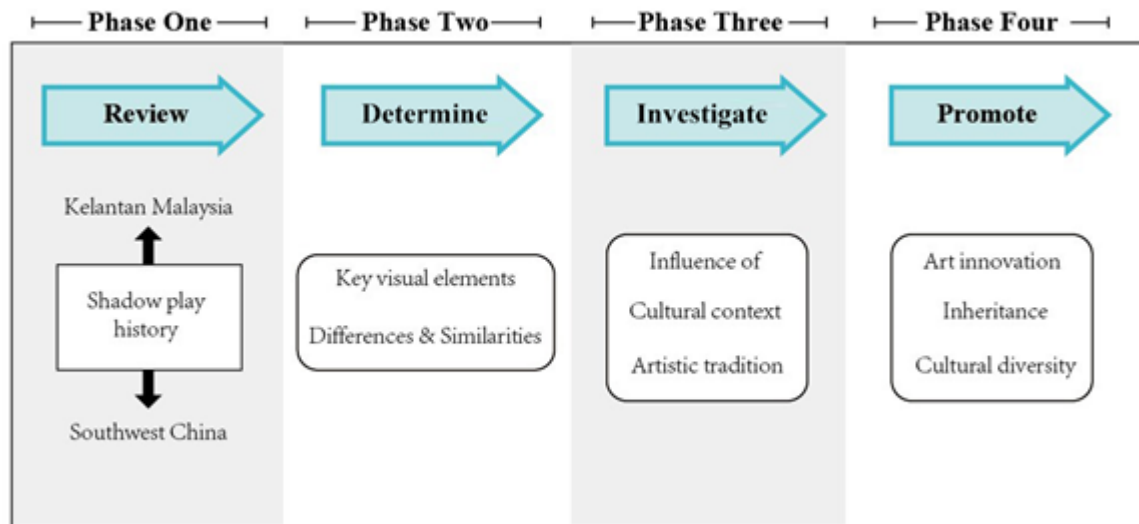


Figure 3.1: The Research Plan

The first phase involves reviewing the historical development of shadow play in Malaysia and China. The second phase focuses on extracting key visual elements from samples, and analysing the similarities and differences in visual elements between the two regions. In the third phase, a comparative research approach is applied to gain a profound understanding of the unique visual characteristics influenced by different cultural context and artistic traditions. The fourth phase concentrates on the role of artistic works in preserving and inheriting cultural identity. To interpret the deconstruction and reconstruction of shadow puppet visual styles in contemporary artworks, thereby promoting innovation and development in the art field.

3.3.1 Phase One: Reviewing the History of Shadow Play in Malaysia and China

One type of qualitative research is historical research. Historical research is regarded as both challenging and rewarding (Danto, 2008, p.8), it could provide a window through which one could observe how people in the past practiced their works, lives, and

arts. It furnishes evidence for the development and evolution of the art form of shadow play.

To begin gaining a profound understanding of the artistic characteristics and cultural backgrounds of shadow play performances in Malaysia and China, it was essential to begin with the context of historical development. This research section describes the historical background of shadow puppet performances in both regions, particularly the historical evolution of shadow puppet styles, and outlines some of the challenges faced.

The historical research of shadow play in both regions could also provide background information for data analysis. For example, it allows researchers to understand whether two different artistic styles of the same art form mutually influenced each other during the historical development process. In other words, did the expression of these two artistic styles draw artistic inspiration from each other?

This stage of the study is primarily a reflection of the literature review, which described the origins of shadow play, the cultural traditions, and the influence of different religious backgrounds in both regions.

3.3.2 Phase Two: Sampling Technique and Data Sources

The second phase is extracting key visual elements from samples. The data samples can be divided into two types of sources. The first type is acquired from shadow play masters (*Tok Dalang*) from both regions, who are the performers, creators, and inheritors of shadow play performance. The second type of sources comprised collecting information about shadow puppet samples and materials from museums and libraries. The materials are

an aspect of representations, vital to understanding the historical development of shadow puppet styles.

3.3.3 The Sampling Technique

Based on the research objectives and questions, purposive sampling was the primary method employed, which is a non-probability sampling method. Among the many sampling methods, purposive sampling is one of the widely used methods in which the researcher plays a central and very important role (Setia, 2016). According to Campbell et al.,(2020), “The reason for purposive sampling is the better matching of the sample to the aims and objectives of the research” (p.2). The samples were taken based on various criteria which include having specialist knowledge of the research issue, the ability and willingness of the samples to participate in the research (Campbell et al., 2020).

The shadow puppet samples chosen for this study need to be of significant importance; they need to be representative, which means they have significant roles in the show and are able to reflect the major visual styles of the shadow puppets. In this respect, the shadow play master’s and research experts were consulted, and advice was sought from them. It was vital to identify those who were knowledgeable about the art and could provide answers to the research questions.

In addition, given that folk art forms often exhibit a high degree of homogeneity within the same type of objects, it was essential to consider samples with differences along specific dimensions. This ensured a more diverse range of perspectives and viewpoints.

The chosen interviewees were two shadow play masters from China and Malaysia, both highly esteemed as custodians and inheritors of intangible cultural heritage. The interviews were conducted individually and on-site by using open-ended questions.

3.3.4 Data Sources

The collected data consisted of primary and secondary data (see Figure 3.2). Primary data was obtained from the fieldwork, including open-ended interviews and on-site photographs of shadow puppets. Open-ended interviews were the primary source of data collected as they allowed in-depth dialogue and communication with the interviewees to obtain their perspectives, experiences, and opinions about the art, i.e., to truly understand their views on the visual characteristics of shadow puppets, the process of creating shadow puppets, and the current state of shadow play performances.

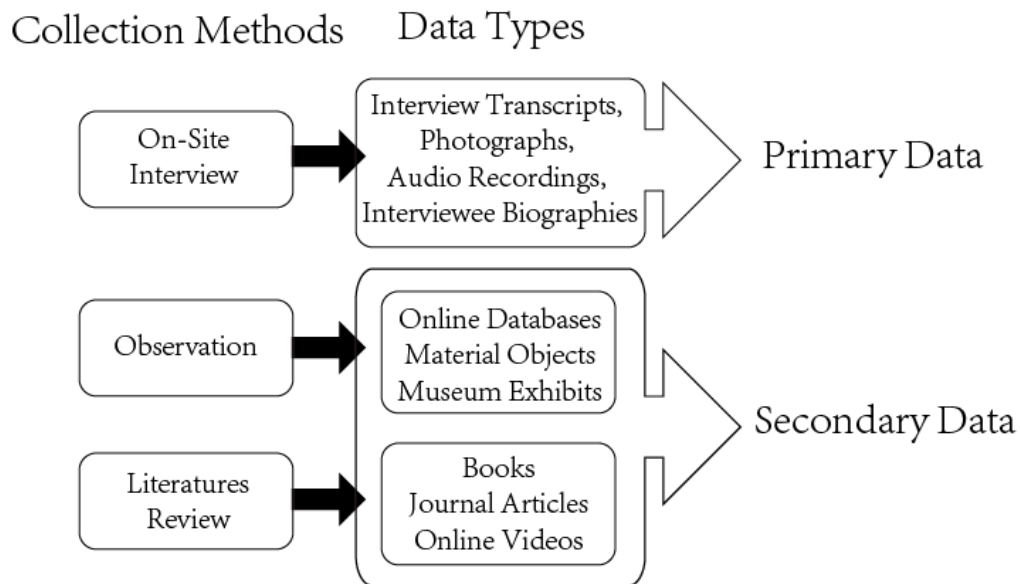


Figure 3.2: Types of Data in the Research

Since shadow play performance has become a dying art and there is a decreasing number of practitioners (Shi et al., 2014; Ghani & Ishak, 2011), it was a challenge to find influential and famous masters who were willing to be interviewed. Nevertheless, after

some efforts, shadow masters Wang Biao from Sichuan, China, Yang Yi from Shaanxi, China, Eyo Hock Seng from Kelantan, Malaysia, and Mohd Jufry Yusoff from Penang, Malaysia agreed to be interviewed. They are all very experienced and renowned for their art in shadow puppet making and shadow play performance.

In terms of secondary data sources, they were based on some references or online databases of museum institutions online databases, as well as library materials, and other resources. Among these institutions referenced included the British Museum, the Albert and Victoria Museum, and the Asian Civilizations Museum in Singapore. These three museums have a large collection of Southeast Asian shadow puppets, almost all of which belonged to Malaysia which originated from Kelantan. The British Museum holds 161 Kelantanese shadow puppets, and the Victoria and Albert Museum has a collection of 17 (note: there is an error in information regarding 3 items).

The collections of these three museums share distinctive features. The shadow puppets in the Asian Civilisations Museum, specifically the Kelantan shadow puppets, are generally considered to have rougher craftsmanship, with the majority being early works. This observation is supported by insights from an interview with the Kelantanese shadow play master, Eyo Hock Seng. As for the collections in the British Museum, their Kelantan shadow puppets' collections were acquired from a renowned Kelantanese shadow puppets master named Tok Awang Lah, who was also a former teacher of Eyo Hock Seng in his early years. This collection of shadow puppets exhibits a unified style, as they were acquired in a single purchase (Green, 2018), and they all recorded a definite production time. Their visual style is quite similar to the shadow puppets currently used by Eyo Hock

Seng in his performances. As for the Victoria and Albert Museum, their collection of Kelantan shadow puppets falls between the other two museums in terms of production time.

As for the reference sources on the China's shadow puppets, they included the Shaanxi Folk Art Database, the Shaanxi Fine Arts Museum, the Xi'an Shadow Puppet Art Museum, and the China Shadow Play Digital Museum. In particular, China Shadow Play Digital Museum, affiliated with the China Academy of Art, has a collection of nearly 50,000 shadow puppets from all over China, of which 2,612 are Shaanxi shadow puppets.

It is noted that the images and data from the UK, Singapore, and China museums are licensed for academic research. These shadow puppet figures are rich in content and reveal the common visual characteristics of their characters and roles.

As for the live physical samples that were investigated were based on selection samples from the Chinese *Shaanxi* region. Due to geographical proximity, *Hua* County, also the headwaters of Shaanxi shadow puppets, was chosen, and the other was *Langzhong* County in *Sichuan* Province. This is because they have similarities in their shadow styles. In addition to the samples that were acquired from the museum's database, there were also a total of 56 body parts, 69 male head parts, and 32 female head parts collected from these two regions during the fieldwork trips that were conducted. Except for some specific figures, i.e., in the majority of cases, the head and body can be freely matched.

On the other hand, there were 20 Kelantan shadow puppet figures collected from the fieldwork site and the museums' database. The sample were selected using non-probability sampling technique, which involved non-random selection based on professional criteria that excluded similarities but preserved the graphic characteristics of the different shadow puppets, i.e., a sampling method that is based on targeting specific

data. This is also considered a convenient and more feasible technique for the fieldwork study (Kohler et al., 2019). The sampling process was thus small but specific. In other words, the field work was conducted with a purposeful intend to gain detailed knowledge about specific visual features rather than making generalized or statistical inferences.

3.3.5 Phase Three: Comparative Study

Based on the results of the second phase, the third phase borrowed from Iconographic and Cultural Anthropology research theory to situate the results of the analyses in a cultural context. The analysis was contextualised with respect to the cultural backgrounds and history, aiming to gain a deeper understanding of the unique visual style influenced by different cultural contexts and artistic traditions. For instance, the use of specific color palettes, motifs, and compositional techniques in the visual style can be traced back to cultural influences between regions, religious practices or social values unique to each culture. In one case, the popularity of patterns using plants in art in Kelantan shadow puppets reflects the historical wealth of a region and its influence on Islamic religious art traditions. Similarly, the extensive use of patterns representing clouds and water was formed by Chinese philosophical principles and a cultural emphasis on simplicity and harmony with nature. By examining these connections through a comparative research approach, the study highlights how cultural heritage and historical developments have directly shaped the visual language and artistic expressions of the style.

Panofsky's Iconographic theory was employed in this phase. Firstly, it was crucial to understand the distinct cultural backgrounds, religions, and beliefs in both regions. A comparative analysis of the visual elements from different cultural groups was undertaken. The Iconographic theory emphasises the symbolism and cultural connotations of images,

providing a framework for analysing and interpreting the cultural significance of visual elements. It focuses on visual symbols and metaphors within artworks.

This research also involved comparing the similarities, differences, and variations between elements, examining the meanings and uses of similar elements in different cultures, as well as the cultural characteristics and uniqueness of different elements.

It was noted that the visual symbols shared by a community carry the emotions and memories of individuals and the collective (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995). Applying Anthropological theories and concepts, this research interpreted and discussed the results of the comparative study of visual elements. It provided a possibility to explore how cultural factors influenced the visual expression and meaning construction of artworks. The research could delve into the relationships between artworks from different cultural backgrounds, together with cultural, individual and group identity. Additionally, it explored how audiences interpret and perceive visual symbols in different cultural contexts.

It was crucial that a vigilant approach was taken to do the research work, i.e., to avoid bias in this process and emphasized understanding and respect for cultural differences. Cultural Anthropology provides a unique perspective and approach to the study of the visual arts. Meanwhile, it was also essential to be mindful of ethical issues and cultural sensitivity in cross-cultural research, ensuring respect and inclusivity throughout the research process.

3.3.6 Phase Four: Application of Shadow Puppets Visual Styles

Building upon the third phase, this phase focused on the deconstruction and reconstruction of the visual style of shadow puppets in contemporary art forms. It

emphasises the role of artworks in preserving and inheriting cultural identity, and promoting artistic innovation and development through applications of traditional visual symbols. It aimed to enhance respect and appreciation for other cultures while exploring artistic interactions and inspirations among different cultures. By taking such a stance, this approach and behaviour contributed to a deeper understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity.

To embody visual uniqueness in contemporary design, it was necessary to draw inspiration from traditional visual elements and place them in contemporary contexts and environments. Designers could utilize traditional visual elements and transform them into symbols that are relevant to modern society and culture through innovative design approaches. This process of repositioning and reconstruction could breathe new life and vitality into traditional art forms. It could help restore, resonate and establish a connection between individuals and their cultural roots, thereby strengthening cultural identity.

Using traditional visual elements in contemporary artworks could facilitate cross-cultural communication and dialogue. Contemporary design could also engage in interdisciplinary and cross-cultural fusion across artistic and cultural domains. Designers could integrate traditional visual elements from diverse cultural backgrounds to create designs with unique charm and cultural diversity. This cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural application can broaden perspectives, enrich the expression and meaning of design, and promote the development of cultural diversity.

The use of traditional visual elements in artistic activities could also play a positive role in art education and community engagement. Through educational programs and community art activities, traditional visual elements could be endowed with new meanings

and expressions, allowing more people to understand and participate in cultural arts, fostering community cohesion and cultural identity. Moreover, such art activities contributed to the preservation of the cultural heritage, establishing organic connections and interactions between traditional art and contemporary society. Artists could utilize traditional symbols, forms, and techniques to create art pieces with modern expressions. This form of inheritance helps maintain the vitality and innovation of traditional culture and promotes the continuity and development of traditional art.

3.4 Research Approach

In this research, qualitative inductive research approach was employed, including in-depth observation, interview and comparative study. The observation was mainly used to collect and analyse visual documents, interpret and discover the cultural kernel in detail.

Interviews were conducted through direct conversations with shadow play masters to obtain information about the current status of shadow performances and knowledge about the preservation of traditional arts. Comparative research methods can be used to systematically gain an in-depth understanding of the visual style differences and cultural factors found through cross-cultural and parallel comparisons.

3.4.1 Library-based Study

“Library-based work is integral to all research in the social sciences, whatever its methodological biases” (Bond et al., 1996, p. 373). It is a method of obtaining secondary data and is common in the arts and humanities as well as in social work research (Daland & Hidle, 2016, p. 79).

This type of research requires careful analysis and evaluation of existing literature and research methods on the topic being studied. In researching a particular aspect of a work of art, it was critical to scrutinize the existing literature to find out how it supports or refutes any the argument being proposed in this research. For the real-life dilemmas or challenges of the subject of the study, it was even more important to support and corroborate the research findings in the fieldwork by searching or referencing existing research in order to validate the research findings.

As this study involved a perishing art form, a lot of information had to be accessed with the help of books and literature, and issues related to the history and traditions of shadow play in the two regions, especially in the literature review section, library-based research is inevitable. In addition, for the Chinese shadow puppet, the making process nowadays is very different due to the intervention of machines compared with the traditional making process. The modern process requires less labour involvement and higher output efficiency. However, in Malaysia, the shadow puppets production is still very much traditional and done by hand.

The author's fieldwork found that traditional shadow theatre objects of artistic value are difficult to find outside of museums, therefore many of the samples in this study came from museum artefacts.

3.4.2 Observation

Observation was employed in this research observe the shadow play performance activities of the interviewees, but also to observe the shadow puppet figures in order to gather detailed information about the behaviour, situations, environments, visual

characteristics, and more. The observation used in this study included participant observation and systematic observation.

Participant observation is one of the most widely used approaches in qualitative research, especially in Cultural Anthropology (Verma, 2015, p. 414). It is an unstructured observation. In this study, the researcher went into the living and working environment of the shadow masters to observe the daily life situation of the research subjects as well as the process of shadow making and performance. In the observation scene, the researcher carefully observed and recorded the behaviour of the research subjects, paying close attention to the non-verbal expressions, body language, and environmental factors of the interviewees' performances, etc.

Observing the shadow puppets making process could help the researcher understand how traditional skills are passed down in contemporary times, and the observation of the shadow performance process could also help the researcher understand the behaviour and interactions of the research subjects in a specific environment and cultural context.

The systematic observation method was used to observe the visual elements in this study, such as composition, colour, material, line, and shape of the shadow puppet samples, to provide an intuitive and individualised understanding of the work through observation. The observation method provided a systematic analysis and interpretation when studying graphic visual elements. Systematic observation of the graphic visual elements of shadow puppets was mainly carried out by the researcher through reading the background materials, directly observing the visual features of the graphics, and then relying on subjective

feelings to understand, appreciate, and analyse them in order to interpret, determine, and excavate the essential content embedded in the information.

The steps taken in the systematic observation approach in this study are:

- i. Step 1: Determine the goal of graphic visual element analysis, focusing on the shape, colour, line, texture and other graphic elements.
- ii. Step2: Selecting appropriate samples of shadow puppet figures, while ensuring representativeness and diversity to fully reflect the graphic elements being studied.
- iii. Step 3: Develop appropriate analysis criteria to observe and measure the use of graphic visual elements. Consider the types of visual elements in shadow puppet figures and the frequency of their application, the lightness, darkness and saturation of the colours, the thickness of the lines, the scale and orientation of the shapes, and other visual characteristics.
- iv. Step 4: Analyse the collected data to compare the frequency, distribution, and characteristics of the use of each graphic visual element. Describe and interpret the results of the analysis.

3.4.3 Interview

To understand the process of shadow puppet making, the materials and the performance process, the researcher prepared an interview outline with open-ended questions (Table 3.1) in advance and all interviews were conducted after making appointments. During the interviews, open-ended questions and listening were used to encourage the interviewees to share their experiences, skills, and opinions. Thanks to

personal communication with the interviewees, rich and unique data were obtained, providing invaluable and helpful information for understanding the current status of the protection, inheritance, and innovation of shadow play performances and the types of government support.

Since shadow puppet performance is a dying art in both Malaysia and China, and such performances can only be found in tourist destinations and remote villages, and performances conducted today is more about attracting tourists, meaning, its originality including the meaning and values. Fortunately, for this research, the four individuals mentioned earlier were very receptive and welcoming.

The interview with shadow play master Mohd Jufry Yusoff was done in Penang. The interview was conducted in his studio, whereby he demonstrated the process of making Kelantan shadow puppets, played musical instruments and performed the shadow play, as well as provided his views about the current situation of shadow heritage and performance. The interview was very fruitful and informative.

Another interview was conducted in *Kampung Pasir Parit*, a rural area of Kelantan, at the home of Eyo Hock Seng, Kelantan's most famous shadow play master, who has a stage right next to his home for performing. During the interview, the master provided in-depth information about the characteristics of Kelantan's shadow puppets, the production process, and the current state of inheritance. Eyo Hock Seng performed shadow puppets on the spot, and also explained his shadow puppet collection.

Langzhong shadow master Wang Biao was interviewed at his museum. Thanks to government support, Wang Biao has a *Langzhong* Shadow Museum and a well-equipped performance venue. He talked about the current state of shadow preservation and then gave

a tour of his studio and museum, where he demonstrated his unique shadow-making techniques.

The last shadow master to be interviewed, Yang Yi, took place at his home in *Xi'an*, where he showed his inherited shadow puppets figures and talked about the plight of today's shadow performers. It was unfortunate that the shadow puppets have begun to deteriorate due to lack of performance opportunities and financial support.

Table 3.1: Outline of the Open-ended Questionnaire

Q1:	你是怎样开始你的皮影表演生涯的？
	How did you start your shadow play performance career?
Q2:	你的观众有哪些？
	Who are your audience?
Q3:	皮影表演的剧目是如何选择的？
	How to choose the repertoire of shadow play?
Q4:	皮影表演有什么固定仪式？
	What ritual does the shadow play have?
Q5:	皮影表演的剧目和民间信仰有什么关系？
	What is the relationship between the repertoire of shadow play and people beliefs?
Q6:	和其他皮影艺术相比，中国西南皮影人物形象上最大的特点是什么？
	Compared with other shadow puppet form you know, what is the most obvious feature of Kelantan (or “Shaanxi” depending on location of study) shadow puppet characters?
Q7:	皮影人物角色的人物比例有什么固定的规范？
	What is the regular standard for the proportion of shadow puppet characters?
Q8:	皮影的图形由哪些基本的图案元素组成？
	What is the basic pattern of shadow puppets?
Q9:	为什么要使用这些图案？
	Why use these patterns?

Table 3.1 continued

Q10:	中国西南的皮影艺术通常使用哪些颜色？
	What colours are usually used in Kelantan (or “Shaanxi” depending on location of study) shadow puppet?
Q11:	这些颜色是否有代表性的含义？
	What do these colours mean?
Q12:	你的表演（制作）和传统有什么联系？
	What is the connection between your performance and tradition?
Q13:	皮影表演怎样吸引现在的年轻观众？
	How does shadow play attract the younger generation?
Q14:	你是否会表演现代风格的皮影戏？
	Would you perform shadow puppets in a modern style?
Q15:	如何在我们这个时代保护和发展皮影戏
	How to preserve and develop shadow play in this era?
Q16:	请问你对马来西亚皮影有什么看法（展示马来西亚皮影表演视频）
	What do you think of Chinese shadow play? (Show Chinese shadow play video)

In the interviews, as noted in Table 3.3, the interviewees were asked about their professional backgrounds and personal experiences. This is to understand the influence of their personal upbringing and family backgrounds on their engagement in the shadow play industry. Following that, the questionnaires explored how they learnt and mastered these skills and whether they had learnt from specific masters and their learning experiences. The thirteenth to fifteenth questions were about their perceptions of the impact and challenges of the contemporary society towards the art, and where the marketplace for folk art inheritance lies. The final open-ended question asked the interviewees about their views on shadow play performance in other culture. In total, 16 questionnaires were designed as shown in the summary in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Classification of Open-ended Questions for Interview

No.	Section	No. of questions (Total 16)
1	Career	1
2	Performance	3
3	Visual Characteristics	5
4	Cultural Context	2
5	Comparative View	2
6	Challenge	3

3.4.4 Case Study

A case study involves in-depth and detailed analysis of one or more investigative cases to investigate specific issues or phenomena. In this study, an analytical approach based on Iconography was applied for the case study, and the steps involved were as follows:

Selection of research subject: Choose a shadow puppet as the research subject, ensuring that the selected sample has typical characteristics that represent the type.

Image description: Provide a detailed description of the selected item, including its elements, colours, lines and shapes. This can help to establish a preliminary understanding of the overall structure and composition of the image.

Elements of composition analysis: Analyse the compositional elements of the image from the perspective of the principles of design, including aspects of balance, contrast, and repetition and colour coordination. Explore how these elements influence viewers' perception and understanding of the image using Gestalt theory.

Background interpretation: Examine the cultural and historical background of the selected shadow puppet, understanding its production background and the influence of social customs on its style. This helps gain a more comprehensive understanding of the image's connotation and underlying meaning.

Comparative study: Compare the selected shadow puppet with the other shadow puppet to identify and discover similarities and differences and summarize the design patterns of graphic elements and cultural factors influencing the graphics creation.

3.4.5 Comparative Study

Comparative study in art and visual culture research involves the examination and analysis of similarities and differences between different aspects of art, such as images, prints, and visual compositions. It aims to understand how these aspects change over time, how they are influenced by cultural, sociological, and technological conditions and how they are structured by peripheral circumstances.

Esser (2017) proposed that applying the comparative research method to the field of visual arts could help to understand the connections and differences between artworks in different cultural contexts. Thus, providing a more in-depth, diversified, and comprehensive vision to understand cultures in their own way, discovering commonalities and respecting differences.

This method allowed the understanding of the differences in aesthetic concepts between different cultures through the Iconographic analysis of shadow puppets. Through comparative study, one can trace and understand the path of artistic development and explore the artistic interaction and borrowing between different cultures. This helps extend

the perception and broaden and deepen the spectrum of knowledge, views and understanding of cultural diversity, as well as increase respect and appreciation for other cultures. It unravels what is observed in an unconstrained manner such that it reveals the diversity, cross-boundary and cultural intermingling of art, and concurrently, promotes the innovation and development of art.

Comparative study is suitable for this research and could help to uncover the relationship between folk art and groups' cultural identities in different cultural contexts (Bronner, 1981). This is because artworks not only reflect the characteristics of culture but also carry the emotions, memories and identities of individuals and groups (Barnes, 1989). Through comparative studies, we can gain a deeper understanding of the connection between artworks and cultural identity, and the role of artworks in maintaining and passing on cultural identity.

The object of this study was the shadow puppets' visual style in Malaysia and China. Through the previous literature review, the researcher found that the development of shadow art between the two places is relatively independent of each other. In terms of visual styles, each presents its own significant artistic characteristics. While the Malaysian art of the Chinese folk-art have their own unique path of development, and the aesthetic awareness is also different, this circumstance provides the opportunity for the conducting of a cross-cultural and analogy study,

This research used two comparative research methods in this study, i.e., Analogy/parallel study, and cross-cultural study because, according to Ember (2009), cross-cultural study is often used to examine two or more countries or regions. When the regions originally do not influence each other, or have association and interaction, but if

certain commonalities and differences in their artistic styles are found, their respective characteristics could be discovered through comparison and their cultural differences could be uncovered. Whereas analogy study compares two things or systems, it is used to find their connection, explain unfamiliar things, and gain new knowledge. “Analogies are bridges between prior knowledge and new knowledge to make meaning of the new one” (Sezer et al., 2022, p. 217).

There are two others commonly used comparative research methods, which are influence study and art form study. Influence study is to find the relationship of mutual influence between two different objects of study, while art form study based on the study of the same theme or story, which is expressed or adapted in different art styles, such as in the case of theatre, film, painting, and literature, It is based on the same theme, but the richness of the artistic expression differs due to the uniqueness of each art style.

In this study, through the literature review in the previous chapter, it was learned that there was no evidence of interactive influences on the shadows of the two countries, and the expressed contents were completely different. Hence, it is not appropriate to carry out this research based on the latter two comparative approaches.

3.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the theories, methods, steps and data collection methods used in this research study, which used qualitative research methods to explore the visual style of the traditional folk art of shadow theatre and its puppets. In its endeavour, it used Cultural Anthropology, Art Design principles, Iconography and Gestalt Psychology theories as basis to analyse the visual characteristics of different shadow theatre puppet characters. As described, the study was divided into four phases: firstly, the historical

development of shadow play in Malaysia and China was reviewed, to better understand its evolution and to contextualise the research sample; next, data was collected through fieldwork, interviews, and observations of shadow puppet characters from museums and libraries; then, comparative research methodology was applied to analyse the similarities and differences of the visual elements between the two regions. Finally, the interpretation of the deconstruction and reconstruction of shadow visual style was applied for contemporary art work design.

CHAPTER 4

DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Overview

Visual style research is a multidisciplinary process that involves in-depth investigation and analysis of various visual elements, design principles, and artistic expressions within an artwork (Emmison et al., 2012). This type of research aims to understand and describe the unique visual characteristics and artistic styles of the artwork. It requires perspectives from various angles and requires a cross-field approach including adopting knowledge and theories from psychology, design studies, art history, and cultural studies (Earnshaw et al., 2015).

In this chapter, the visual elements of the shadow puppet were investigated and analysed using the theories, phases, and research methods mentioned in the previous chapter. The analysis aimed to explore the characteristics of the visual styles and their cultural context. The first part discussed the shadow puppet-making process in the two regions, followed by the shadow play performance, where the making process and performance has a tight relationship, directly influencing the shadow and formation of the visual characteristic.

The second part focused on the investigation of the visual elements and subsequently discussed how these visual elements were combined with design principles, drawing upon the Gestalt theory. This process, known as 'formal analysis,' formed the basis for the visual style analysis.

In the third part, based on the analyses conducted, the commonalities and differences in the visual style were summarized. The discussion then delved into the relationship between shadows and other forms of folk art, in the context of the influence of culture and tradition. A case study was used to explore the application of Iconography to the study of folk visual art.

Finally, the researcher explored the innovative development of the shadow puppet in the modern era and the efforts of both countries to preserve the visual cultural heritage so that the younger generation could better appreciate the rich cultural heritage.

4.2 Craftsmanship of Kelantan and Shaanxi Shadow Puppets

The traditional craftsmanship of the shadow puppet of Kelantan, Malaysia and Shaanxi, China have developed independently in their respective countries and have formed their own unique set of processes. The differences in this process have created the different characteristics of the surface texture and detailing of the final shadow images produced.

4.2.1 Craftsmanship of Kelantan Shadow Puppets

The first step is to treat the hide. Kelantan shadow puppets are typically crafted using cattle hide. It is essential to note that the chosen hide should not come from animals used in agricultural labour to avoid whip marks. Once the hide was obtained, the shadow puppet maker nails it onto a wooden frame and exposed it to intense sunlight for 3 to 5 days to ensure thorough drying. Subsequently, a thick knife (*pisau raut*) is used to scrape off the fur, followed by repeated brushing and rubbing with a hard, coarse brush on the hide surface to make it exceptionally soft and smooth. Finally, the hide is cleaned and subjected to further drying.

The second step is to chisel out the shadow puppet shape. Differentiating the shapes involves removing the outline shape's negative or positive. Firstly, the outline of shadow puppet is drawn on a white wax paper (*kertas wau*). After that, the outlined image is cut out from the wax paper with scissors and glued onto the previously processed hide using homemade rice glue. Subsequently, the shadow puppet maker uses a thin knife to roughly cut out the shape of the puppet based on the outlined of the paper. Then comes the intricate process, the hide is finely chiselled with a steady hand, using simple tools such as chisels and hammers of various sizes to punch holes and to carve and chisel out the detailed patterns of the shadow puppet. The most common motif included "locust teeth "as shown in Figure 4.1 (Yousof & Khor, 2017). A series of tiny, dotted lines are often used to depict the outlines and folds of garments, as well as to depict the hairstyles, facial outlines and necklines.



Figure 4.1: The "Locust Teeth" Motif of Siti Dewi

Source: Siti Dewi, Accession No.: XXXX-05379, Asian Civilisations Museum

The third step is colouring, the movable parts of the Kelantan shadow are the arms and the jaw, and these must be painted in the traditional colours before they are fixed to the body of the puppet. The colours are chosen according to the different characters. Several

shadow puppets with fixed colours, such as *Seri Rama* (green) and *Lakshmana* (red), where the defined colours come from the descriptions of the Indian epic *Ramayana*.

From talking to the masters Eyo and Jufry, in recent years, puppet makers have increasingly used ink markers to colour the puppets, making them translucent. When projected onto a screen (*kelir*), the characters appear as translucent colours that transmit light. While the traditional classic characters had a solid black silhouette, the use of coloured characters began in the 1970s as part of the innovation to compete with television entertainment.

The final step in the puppet-making process is to connect the puppet to the manipulating rod and the central pole, and then to attach the moveable parts with strings for precise manipulation during performances (see Figure 4.2).

The shadow puppet maker sharpens the ends of a thin bamboo, splitting it at one end and splitting it to the lower part of the thin bamboo, leaving the other end attached. The finished shadow is sandwiched in the middle of the split bamboo, and then the bamboo rod is tied to the puppet with a string to create a central pole that serves as a handle.

Moving parts such as arms, elbows and shoulders are ingeniously created by tying the body parts with strings, and for puppets with movable jaws, such as (*Maharisi Burung*, *Jejerit*, *Pak Dogol*, and *Wak Long*), a spring is sewn onto the puppet's face. A string is tied from the top of the spring to the jaws to hold them in place, and another string is attached to the bottom of the jaws that allows the mouth to be pulled apart. A ring at the end of the string allows the puppet performer to manipulate the mouth by moving the fingers holding the figure's central pole.



Figure 4.2: The Assembly of Kelantan Shadow Puppet

Source: Seri Rama, Accession No.:IS.177-1965, Victoria and Albert Museum

4.2.2 Craftsmanship of Shaanxi Shadow Puppets

The first step is to prepare the hide. According to Wang (Wang Biao, personal communication, Oct4, 2023) (Figure 4.3), the material used to process the shadow puppets is cattle hide. Only cattle about 2 years old are chosen for shadow making because of its softness and transparency. The puppet maker soaks the selected hide in a tank with clean water and adds some grass ash and lime to the water to make the raw hide soften, and the water should be changed every day. It is usually soaked for two to three days. Summers

and autumns are the best seasons to soak the hide because of the suitable temperature. After soaking, the maker uses a special knife to repeatedly scrape the hide to remove the fur. The hide is then placed on a wooden frame to air dry in the shade. It is forbidden to dry it in the sun or heat it over a fire to prevent cracking. The carver then polishes the hide with fine sandpaper, washes it with water, and leaves it to dry in the shade. This process is called "polishing".



Figure 4.3: Interview with Wang Biao

Source: Photograph taken by author at Wang's studio

The second step is to carve out the motif. The hide needs to be kept moist throughout the entire carving process, as moist softens hide and softening hide makes it easier to carve. The shadow puppet maker puts the pre-designed drawings of the head, body, and limbs under the transparent hide for carving. There are special sketches for making shadow puppets, known as "sample sketches", and these designs are passed down from generation to generation. The maker first uses a steel needle to carve the outer contours of the hide, carving with more than two dozen tools of different sizes. Shaanxi shadow puppet carving is distinguished by the fact that "the knife stays still and pushes the

hide". The maker places the leather on a custom-made wax pad, which is soft for easy carving flexibly rotated, then stabilises the knife with the right hand and pushes the hide with the left hand to move the hide in the direction of the drawn line. This method of carving is similar to the way a modern sewing machine works for sewing clothes. There are two ways to carving the face. The first is to hollow out the entire face of the shadow, preserving the contour lines of the image. The other way involves the maker retaining the shadow's entire face and hollowing out the image's contour lines, choosing a fixed carving technique for different characters. For smaller shapes, a chisel is used to hollow out the figure.

The third step is colouring. Shaanxi shadow puppets use pigments made of natural materials, mainly red, green, yellow, black and white. Experienced makers are good at mixing the colours in proper proportions and mastering the shades of colours. The shadow puppets they paint are even more colourful under light transmission.

After the colouring completed, the fourth step is dehydration and drying. This is because the hide shadow needs to be kept wet all the time during the previous process of carving and colouring. The purpose of dehydration and drying is to make the pigment penetrate into the hide so that the colour of the shadow would look brighter and does not fade easily. There is also the possibility of fixing the shape of the hide shadow so that it will not be warped. Traditionally, all parts of the hide shadow are placed between two wooden boards. It is slowly baked at a steady temperature of 50 °C. Temperatures which are too high or too low can be harmful to the hide.

The fifth step is assembly. Assembly is the last process in the puppet-making process. Shaanxi shadow puppets, like those in other regions of China, consist of 1 head, 1 chest, 1 hip, 2 legs, 2 upper arms, 2 lower arms, and 2 hands, for a total of 11 parts. The 11

parts are connected one by one to form a complete figure. Each part can be moved flexibly, except for the head. Finally, the shadow maker attaches three bamboo rods to each puppet. One stick is attached to the neck, and the other two sticks are attached to each hand (Figure 4.4). During the performance, the actor manipulates the shadow through the three rods.

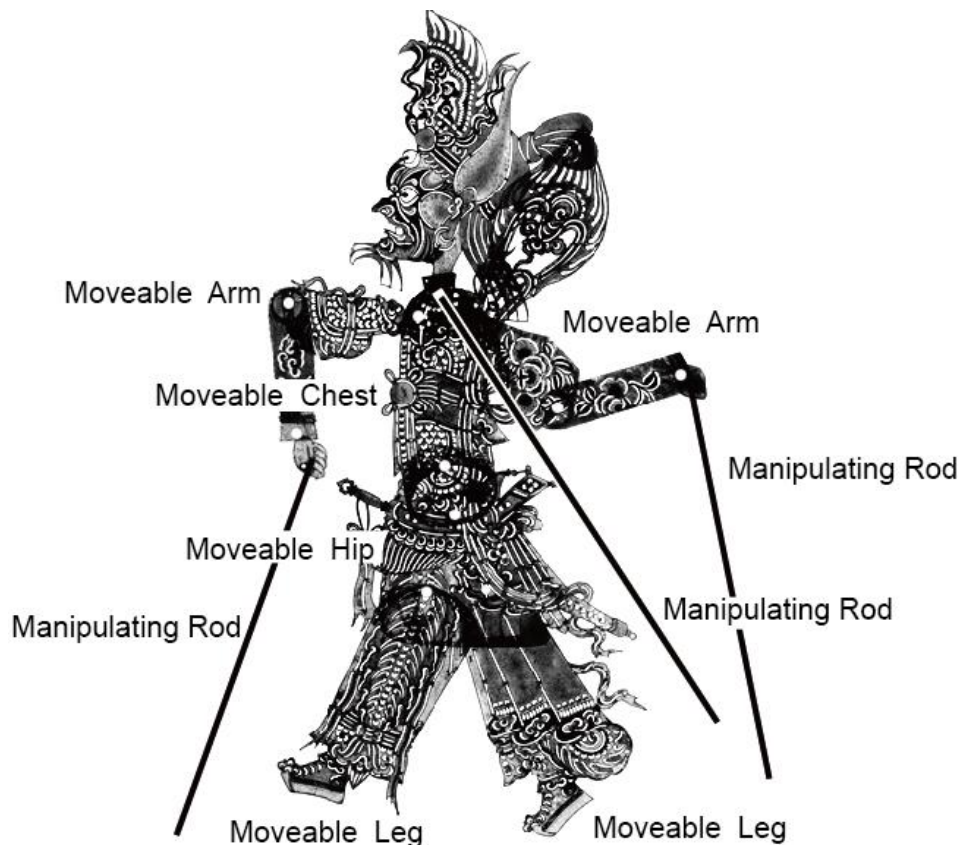


Figure 4.4: The Assembly of Shaanxi Shadow Puppet

Source: Deity of Heaven, Xi'an Shadow Puppet Art Museum

4.2.3 Comparative Analysis of Shadow Craftsmanship in the Two Regions

As shown from the making processes described above, both Kelantan and Shaanxi shadows puppet are made from cattle hide. During the production process, Kelantan hides shadows are kept dry all the time and need to be sun screened in bright sunlight for three to five days before production to ensure sufficient dryness. During this time, it would no longer come into contact with water.

While Shaanxi shadows puppets need to be kept wet during the two processes of carving and colouring, the drying treatment is not done until the end of the process of making them. This different treatment of the hides affects the surface texture of the shadow, and there are also differences in the contrast and saturation of the colours, with Kelantan shadows using flat, less transparent colours, while Shaanxi shadows are collared in a way that is learned from traditional Chinese mural paintings, using haloing to give a transition of intensity and identification of rich variations in the colours.

Moreover, the different degree of moisture of the hide brings about a considerable difference in the carving process. Firstly, as the texture of dry Kelantan shadow puppets is relatively complicated compared to Shaanxi, it is generally not possible to use the method of cutting with a knife, instead a hammer is used to punch the chisel which produces lines and motifs that are harder in outline, but richer in detail. The Shaanxi shadow carving technique is more flexible in the use of the carving knife, and is most distinctive in that the carving technique is not like conventional plane carving; shadow puppets carving has always used one hand to keep the carving knife still, and the other hand to push the hide to follow the pre-drawn lines and move it in order to carve out the exquisite patterns. The comparative study of shadow puppet patterns and motifs later also consider the impact of the change in making methods.

Finally, the Shaanxi shadow puppets have more movable parts of the figure and can make more elaborate and varied movements. However, Kelantan shadow puppets only have movable arms. Interestingly, some of Kelantan shadow puppets, such as clown characters have movable jaws, which can simulate the action of speech, and human mouths can express rich emotions. Therefore, the performance of Kelantan shadow play puts more emphasis on narrative. The Shaanxi shadow head, on the other hand, has no parts that can

move, so the story relies more on character movement to drive it. Table 4.1 provides a simple summary of the craftsmanship.

Table 4.1: Comparison of Shadow Puppet Craftsmanship

	Kelantan Shadow Puppets	Shaanxi Shadow Puppets
Step 1. Material Preparation	Cattle hide (or Goat hide), Polishing, drying	Cattle hide (or Donkey hide), Polishing, drying
Step 2. Chiselling/ Carving	Cutting, Chiselling (Dry hide)	Carving (Moist hide)
Step 3. Colouring	Non-transparent colour on dry hide (Traditional)	Semi-transparent colour on moist hide
Step 4. Drying	n/a	Drying
Step 5. Assembly	One movable arm connected with a manipulating rod, one central pole	Moveable limbs, three manipulating rods

4.3 Shadow Play Performance of Kelantan and Shaanxi

Shadow play is one of the oldest theatrical genres, which includes scripts and stories, music and soundtracks, performance venues and forms of performance, as well as images of shadow characters. Although shadow performances are becoming more difficult to see as it is a dying art form, it is known from the interviews with master shadow performers that as a performing art, shadow character images cannot exist independently on the stage, and this chapter discusses performance-related content.

4.3.1 Shadow Play Performance of Kelantan

Shadow theatre is performed on a stage (*panggung*), e.g. Figure 4.5. The stage building is usually improvised from ready-made timber or bamboo, with a platform serving as the stage. Wooden planks or walls of leaf thatch cover the two sides and backside, while a white screen covers the front part of the stage from head to toe, with a height of slightly

more than one meter from the floor to the stage. Two freshly cut banana tree trunks are nailed directly behind the bottom of the screen, to prevent the stage from being vandalized during the day when it is set up and left unguarded. The people were also told that any vandalism would result in being struck down by a mysterious disease.



Figure 4.5: A typical shadow play stage in Kelantan in the 1950s

Source: The Shadow play of Kelantan Report on a Period of Field Research (Sweeney, 1970).

A shadow theatre performance consists of four core element the storyteller master (*Tok Dalang*), characters (*Patung*), screen (*Kelir*) and music (*Muzik*) (Sweeney, 1970). The *Tok Dalang* performs behind a backlit cotton screen, and the musicians sit behind the performer during the performance. The other side of the screen faces the audience.

Before the performance begins, *Tok Dalang* takes out a large rattan binder containing more than 100 shadow figures, which he carefully takes out for use that evening and arranges according to the order of their appearance. The figures are placed flat near the banana trunk, with those representing the good characters on the right and those representing the devil placed on the left. The lights are placed behind the screen at eye

level. During the performance, when the time comes for that character to appear, the *Tok Dalang* picks them up and inserts the centre pole into the banana trunk, as the banana trunk penetrates easily, and the puppet character can be easily fixed to it. The beauty is that once removed, the holes close on their own and can be reused. Each banana trunk can be used for a maximum of four nights, and during performances on consecutive days, the trunks cannot be replaced as it is regarded as a custom.

The performance usually starts around 8.30pm. it is preceded by a ritual ceremony in which the backstage performers set out trays of yellow boiled glutinous rice, boiled eggs and other ritual items, and incense is lit. All the participants sit on the ground during the ceremony (*buka panggung*), *Tok Dalang* recites various prayer mantras to pray to the Gods for blessing and for the performance to go well.

At the beginning and the end of the performance, the *Tok Dalang* displays the *Pohon Beringin* (Tree of Life), a tree that represents the universe. The other two characters are *Bota* and *Raden*, the God of arrows. *Bota* holds a stick with arrows, while *Raden* holds a sword and also appears only at the beginning, they are the protectors of the Tree of Life. After that the performance begins, the *Tok Dalang* manipulates the puppet between the lamp and the screen while telling the story. Shadows are created on the screen. Unlike Javanese shadow play performances, a character would match more than one shadow figure, Kelantan shadow play has only one shadow figure for a character throughout the performance.

A group of about 10 musicians are seated behind *Tok Dalang*, they play a variety of Malay traditional musical instruments such as Malay flute (*gedombak*), drums (*geduk*, *tetawak*, *canang*) and finger cymbals (*kesi*). The musician plays as the *Tok Dalang* signals.

It used to be that a full epic *Ramayana* show would be performed for three hours each night and would continue for three months.

Stories in Kelantan shadow plays are almost always presented entirely in dialogue, interspersed with shouts of anger or derision, and musical accompaniment to emphasise the intense storylines. Performers were judged in the past by their talent for imitation and ability to remember every detail of the story, according to Master Eyo (H. S. Eyo, personal communication, Aug23, 2023).

According to Master Eyo Hock Seng (Figure 4.6), his latest full performance was done with the support of the Ministry of Culture in Kelantan. The performance was video recorded as part of the effort to preserve the cultural heritage. In this endeavour, he memorized a complete story and there was no one else but him.



Figure 4.6: Interview with Tok Dalang Eyo Hock Seng

Source: Photograph taken by author at Eyo's home

The proficient *Tok Dalang* is able to skilfully imitate variations in the vocal tones of various characters, including stern male voices and sweet female voices. Sometimes as many as three dozen. The main play is based on *Hikayat Maharaja Wana*, an adapted

version of the Hindu epic tale, derived from *Ramayana*, a part of the Hindu beliefs. Often, such epic tales are traditionally adapted to suit the local cultural context, so the result of these stories embodies multicultural confluence.

Master Jufry (M. J.Yusoff, personal communication, Aug 20, 2023) (Figure 4.7), pointed out that performers judge the precise distance between the lamp and the screen through years of their personal experience, creating more clearly defined shadows when the figure is closed to the screen, and that the slow-motion effect can be achieved by swinging the lamp back and forth while the figure is still. Although electric lamps are brighter and more consistent, the traditional light source is a ceramic bowl filled with coconut oil and containing a slow-burning cotton wick. Master Jufry believes that the traditional oil lamp's soft light able to create a more mysterious and suspenseful atmosphere.



Figure 4.7: Interview with Tok Dalang Jufry

Source: Photograph taken by author at Jufry's studio

According to Seng (2019, September 29), in 1969, it was recorded that 300 active puppeteers who were able to give elaborate performances that lasted for days. They usually

performed at ceremonies celebrating circumcision, marriage, or the fulfilment of vows. However, with the popularity of televised entertainment and, unfortunately, with the younger generation heading straight for better, more stable job opportunities, there are fewer than 10 practitioners left in the 21st century.

4.3.2 Shadow Play Performance of Shaanxi

Shadow play in China has a strong relationship with traditional opera, shadow play was earlier known as “storytelling through the curtain” in Shaanxi, which means that it has also retained traces of folk storytelling show. As a rural form of folk performance, Shaanxi shadow play used to be the major form of entertainment for people in their spare time on the farm, dispelling the drudgery of farming as well as praying for the blessing of the Gods and warding off calamities and illnesses. The performance of shadow play is simpler and more flexible than that of opera performed by real people on the stage, especially as it costs less. It also combines the features of folk storytelling show with simple and popular contents and strives to convey the contents to the audience in simple and attractive language. It has been refined and adapted to meet the requirements of the public.

In Shaanxi shadow play theatre, a troupe usually consists of up to five people called vocalist (*qiansheng*), puppeteer (*qianshou*), percussionist (*houcao*), trumpeter (*shangdang*), and violist (*xiadang*). Every shadow play troupe has a shadow puppet chest containing 200 to 300 body parts and head parts as well as stage scene sets. A shadow puppet consists of a head bolt and body that can be matched at random, with the exception of a few specific roles. A shadow figure can also perform several similar roles. Many shadow puppets are treasures passed down from generation to generation, and some even have a history of two to three hundred years. Shadow puppets are the "actors" of shadow play theatre, and it is

easily understood that the number of shadow puppets determines the number of repertoires performed,

Before a shadow play performance begins, an offering to the Gods, which is usually like an introductory speech. It is also known as the "Heavenly Guards Blessing" and is meant to invite the Heavenly Deities to come down to have fun with the people. These words of good luck are "spoken" through the mouths of the shadow puppets. These shadow puppets, sometimes the God of Wealth, sometimes the God of the Mountains, sometimes the God of Land, in short, people's lives are in the awe of the Gods. These Gods are usually portrayed as stepping on the clouds, i.e. the stage scene designs are a still image, and there is no part that can move, so it is called the "clouds stage set".

The formal performance begins after the offering to the Gods is finished. The primary performance of the vocalist is divided into two parts: the singing and the storytelling, the content is passed down orally, relying entirely on the artist's memory, there are also a few scripts that have been handed down. A shadow puppeteer is responsible for manipulating the shadows to make gestures according to the storyline, while three musicians play music.

The repertoire of Chinese shadow plays has a rich resource, most of which comes directly from classical operas, while the classical operas come from ancient Chinese novels. Some of them are derived from folk tales, some are adapted from local theatrical repertoire, and the values of the contents of these stories are all about eliminating evil and encouraging goodness, loyalty and filial piety, and other predominant ideas. For example, the adaptations from classic novels such as "Enchantment of the Gods", "Chronicles of the Eastern Zhou Dynasty", "Romance of the Three Kingdoms" and "Journey to the West" are

very popular among the people because the stories convey lessons, including about China's history and is educational.

Although Chinese shadow puppetry was inscribed on the World Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 2012, nowadays, with the diversification of entertainment, the real traditional form of shadow performance has become extinct, and there are only officially supported by conservation projects and commercial performances at attractions, i.e. more so for economic benefits.

4.3.3 Comparative Analysis of the Shadow Play Performance in the Two Regions

Likewise, as a performing art deeply rooted in folklore, the Kelantan shadow play troupe usually consists of about 10 people, while the Shaanxi shadow play troupe has a fixed number of 5 people. In the Shaanxi shadow play troupe, one person is in charge of singing and storytelling, another one is specialised in manipulating the shadow movements, and the other three are musicians, while the Kelantan shadow performers are in charge of manipulating the figure, singing, and storytelling at the same time, and the other members all play music.

As a result, Kelantan shadow puppet play has a broader variety of musical instruments, a larger number of musicians, more melodious music, and more varied tones and melodies. Meanwhile, the Shaanxi shadow plays due to the fact that there are people who are predominantly responsible for manipulating the shadow. It allows for more detailed and complex movements of the shadow figures and more frequent movement of the figures during the performance. Shaanxi shadow figures have 13 points of articulation that can be moved, whereas Kelantan shadows have only two. The different performance

effects are also matched by the design of the shadow puppets. Table 4.2 summarizes the differences in performances between the two regions.

Table 4.2: Comparison of Shadow Play Performance

	Kelantan Shadow Puppets	Shaanxi Shadow Puppets
Troupe	Around 10 people (1 Tok Dalang & Musicians)	Fixed 5 People (1 Vocalist / Storyteller, 1 Puppeteer & 3 Musicians)
Music	Lots of instruments, Varied melodies	Relatively simple
Shadow Play Character	Around 100 puppets	200-300 pieces (Separated heads and bodies, Stage scene set)
Repertoire	<i>Hikayat Maharaja Wana</i>	Lots of repertoires can be performed.

In addition, the Kelantan shadow play repertoire *Hikayat Maharaja Wana* comes from the Indian epic *Ramayana*, which has been adapted locally and usually, has relatively fixed story content. In contrast, the Shaanxi Shadow play repertoires come from a huge number of novels and stories of gods and devils from all periods of ancient China, performing a much richer repertoire than the Kelantan Shadow play. Therefore, the design of the shadow puppet is made by separating the head from the body, which is a cost-saving, yet simple and efficient method. This is a common method of shadow puppet making in other parts of China too and is a unique way of Chinese shadow splay design. According to Ledderose (2001), the modular combination has profoundly influenced all aspects of ancient Chinese creation.

4.4 Visual Elements in Kelantan and Shaanxi Shadow Puppets

The discussion of visual style in this study begins with screening process, and investigates lines, shapes, colours, and space, the most basic visual elements in art and

design, and further discusses the principles of visual form that are composed of these visual elements. This is then followed by an analysis of their artistic characteristics.

According to Foster (2021), design is a creative endeavour in problem-solving. Visual styles can be understood and subdivided into two aspects of elements and principles (Cook, 2018). The benefit of breaking down visual styles is that the researcher can easily identify and interpret them, facilitating an in-depth understanding and analysis of the similarities and differences in design and visual expression of the subject of study. In addition, understanding the different elements of traditional graphics can help to improve the capacity to develop a unique creativity and expression based on traditional visual elements in contemporary art designs.

4.4.1 The Screening Process

The sampling of the Shaanxi shadow figure samples was selected from four types: *Sheng*, *Dan*, *Jing*, and *Chou*. Chinese theater is characterized by four main character types: *Sheng* (male roles), *Dan* (female roles), *Jing* (painted face roles), and *Chou* (comic roles). *Sheng* represents noble and virtuous characters, *Dan* portrays different types of women, *Jing* plays heroic or villainous characters with distinctive makeup, and *Chou* provides comic relief. These character types are essential in Chinese drama.

Due to the principle that the head and body of the Chinese shadow puppet can be freely combined, the recognition process was separated. The figure's body recognition mainly relied on the head and 15 samples in total were selected for in depth study. These samples have obvious visual characteristics as shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: 15 Samples of Shaanxi Shadow Puppets

No.	Name	Description	Image
1	Sheng (Male role)	Head, the male positive figure with a square face and flat eyebrows	
2	Sheng (Warrior)	Positive male figure, brave warriors	
3	Dan (Female role)	Positive female figure, dignified and elegant woman	
4	Jing (Painted Face)	Head, positive or negative male figure, and distinctive personality features	

Table 4.3 continued

5	Chou (Clown)	Exaggerated and ludicrous	
6	Supernatural Beings	The Head of the beings, e.g. depictions of a dragon and a horse shown here	
7	Supernatural Beings	Head and body of the being	
8	Yunduozi (cloud likeness board)	Stage set (being shown by the figure)	

Regarding the selection of Kelantan shadow puppet figures, the researcher examined relevant scholars' literature on the classification of Kelantan shadow puppets. Up until today, the stories of traditional Kelantan shadow play performances are adapted from the Indian epic *Ramayana*, and unlike Chinese shadow figures the head and the body which are designed to be separated. Yousof and Khor (2017) suggested that the Kelantan shadow puppets should be classified into Gods, ogres and supernatural beings, humans, clowns, apes and hybrids. Kia (2014) in his doctoral dissertation “*Digital Puppetry of Wayang Kulit Kelantan: A Study of its Visual Aesthetics*” classified the Kelantan shadow figures into scenic puppets, royal figures, officer, gods, ogres, apes, clowns, hybrids and animals.

According to Zahari (2013), and an interview with shadow play master Eyo Hock Seng, there are two main types of shadow puppets in Kelantan, those from the Eastern region of Kota Bharu and those from the Tumpat region. The latter being, considered as purer representative of Kelantan's shadow puppets. It is noted that the samples from the British Museum selected for this research study are actually (verified to be) from Tumpat.

Hence, by applying and incorporating the categorization method as developed by previous scholars for categorizing the shadow puppets, i.e., through the process of elimination based on visual similarities,¹⁵ representative shadow puppets as shown in Table 4.4 were selected as unique samples for the research.

Table 4.4: 15 Samples of Kelantan Shadow Puppets

No.	Name	Description	Image
1	Siti Dewi	Noble, wife of Seri Rama	
2	Seri Rama	Noble, the main protagonists of the story	
3	Lakshmana	Noble, younger brother of Seri Rama	
4	Maharaja Wana / Rawana / Ravana,	King, an evil has 12 heads and challenging to kill	
5	Jentayu	A mythical bird who tried to prevent the kidnap of Prince Rama's wife,	

Table 4.4 continued

6	Hanuman Kera Putih (King of Monkey),	Seri Rama's son	
7	Hanuman Ikan (Monkey & Fish)	Hanuman's son by a wife in the sea	
8	Raksasa	Ogre	
9	Pohon Beringin	Tree of life	
10	Jinn	A malevolent demon	
11	Subali	Hanuman's uncle	

4.4.2 Extraction of Key Visual Elements

After identifying the samples, the succeeding step concerns the extraction of key visual elements found in the samples. The aim is to visually analyse and deeply understand the composition, form and visual styles as displayed by the shadow puppet figures. According to art design principles, visual elements can be divided into lines, shapes, space, colour, and so forth.

The arrangements of these design elements on the shadow puppets carry symbolic meanings reflecting cultural and artistic values. The visual elements are also constituents of patterns and motifs found on the figure of the shadow puppets, adhering to the formal aesthetics of balance, rhythm, proportion, and repetition. Therefore, Gestalt theory was appropriate in the analysis process, as it could elucidate and bring to light the reasons for the appearance of formal aesthetics.

Hence, the process which follows after completing the extractions of visual elements from the two different artistic styles of shadow puppets images respectively, was to identify the differences and common features of the two sets of samples. The analysis was performed in detail using in-depth observation and analysis methods, as shown in Figure 4.8.

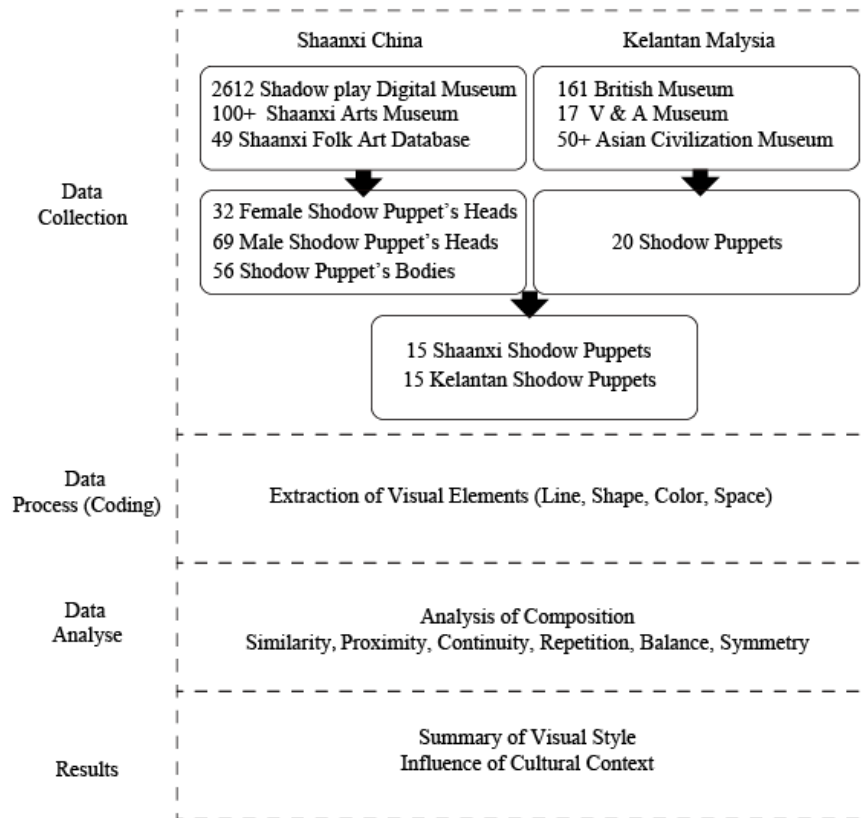


Figure 4.8: The Data Analysis Process Flow

4.4.3 Classification of Visual Elements in Shadow Puppets

Visual elements are the types of "components" used in creating artwork. Design as a visual language is used to preserve and transmit cultural heritage. Different cultures have specific and unique visual elements. The visual elements in the design of shadow puppets are divided into, lines, shapes, colours and space.

Lines can be represented in a variety of ways such as straight lines, curved lines, zigzag lines, etc. Analysing the position, direction, length and form of the lines allows for the understanding of the relationship between the different components of the work, as well as the layout and balance of the whole composition.

Shape is also one of the basic units of composition, which is divided into geometric and natural shapes in graphic design. By analysing the arrangement, size, and proportion of

different shapes, it can help the researcher to understand the compositional layout of the pattern, as well as the inter space relationship between the various elements.

Colour is abstract, but it evokes intense cultural memories. It is one of the artwork's most recognizable and emotionally expressive visual elements. Analysing colours can statistically determine the habits of different cultures regarding the use of colours, and preferences of different regions and cultural backgrounds. For example, traditional art in Asia prefers red and gold, whereas the Nordic region prefers white and blue. Besides that, specific colours have different and unique symbolic meanings.

The analysis of space in graphics includes positive and negative space, proximity, and separation. The visual characteristics of shadow puppets and paper cuttings are very similar in this respect, and both of these traditional art forms make use of the visual principles of positive and negative space to add interest and expressiveness to the artwork.

The following are detailed descriptions of how these visual elements are embodied in the shadow puppets of the two regions respectively.

4.4.4 Line

As one of the most fundamental visual elements, line plays an important role in the visual expression of an artwork. Distinguishing the edges of different objects in visual art and representing the turn of the surface of the same object all need to be realized through lines. All of the lines used for analysis were extracted from 15 samples of Kelantan shadow puppets and 15 samples of Shaanxi shadow puppet, the researcher carefully observed and compared the subtle differences of the lines in the samples and excluded the same elements in the extraction. The 18 lines in the Kelantan shadow (Figure 4.9) and the 18 lines in the Shaanxi shadow (Figure 4.10) are shown in the following two figures.



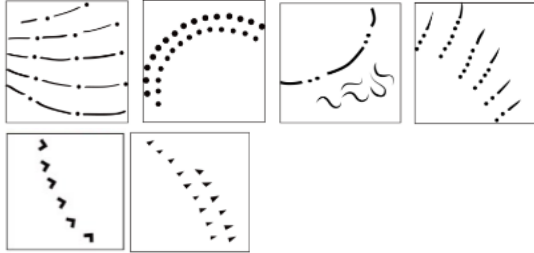
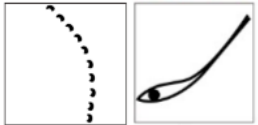
Figure 4.9: The Lines used in Kelantan shadow puppets.



Figure 4.10: The Lines used in Shaanxi shadow puppets.

In relation to the analysis of the making process in the Chapter 4.2.3, it was discovered that the visual characteristics of the two groups of lines showed significant differences. These differences are summarized based on three simple observatory points in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Comparison of the visual characteristics of the lines of Kelantan and Shaanxi shadow puppets

	Kelantan	Shaanxi
i		
ii		
iii		

- i. Kelantan shadow puppets rarely use long lines, and even short lines are mainly straight, with the thickness of the strokes remaining the same. Meanwhile, the Shaanxi shadows tended to use long, smooth curves, with a very clear variation of strokes, usually thin at the ends and thick in the middle.
- ii. To define the boundaries of a shape, such as the outline of a garment, Kelantan Shadow puppets used a regular arrangement of dots with different shapes to form a line, the most common dot is a kind of crescent dots called “locust teeth”, which was one of the most distinctive features of Kelantan Shadow puppets in comparison to Chinese Shadow puppets. It was also very common to use alternating combinations of dots and short lines to form lines. In contrast, Shaanxi shadow puppets rarely use a series of dots to form a line, and not a single instance of using an alternating combination of dots and lines has been found. Instead, crescent dots and longer continuous lines are used.

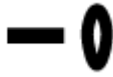
- iii. A combination of drawing lines and engraving techniques were found only for the Shanxi shadow puppets. Shaanxi shadow puppets not only used carving techniques, but also borrowed the techniques of traditional Chinese murals and classic Chinese ink paintings when colouring, using Chinese brushes to draw lines or draw continuous dots, and colouring in with variations of light and dark strokes to make the picture more expressive, whereas Kelantan shadow puppets used the flat colouring method, the technique of drawing dots for decoration was found only in sample of *Rawana* to emphasise the intricacy of the decoration.

4.4.5 Shape

The shapes and symbols in Kelantan and Shaanxi shadow puppets were highly diverse. According to du Plessis (2022), the shapes in patterns could be classified into natural (organic) shapes and geometric shapes, and both types were applied in shadow puppets in these two regions. The patterns discussed in this paper were also categorized into geometric shapes and natural shapes. In other words, this involved abstract shapes and representational shapes. Because of the large number of samples that needed to be observed and compared in order to collect information about shapes, the sampling in this section was expanded compared to the previous line section, striving to observe as much valuable information as possible to obtain a more comprehensive understanding.

The extraction of shapes started from the basic principle of shape, often a series of repeated individual patterns in the design. Basic shapes could be divided into simple and regular shapes, and basic shapes were constituents of the motif and the pattern. Table 4.6 illustrates the definitions of motif and pattern.

Table 4.6: Definition of Shape, Motif & Pattern

		Definition	Kelantan	Shaanxi
Basic Shape	Simple Shape	Shape can be regular or irregular. Regular shapes include circle, triangle, square, oval, and et cetera.	 Regular	 Irregular
	Regular Shape			
Motif		The motif can be created from basic shape, it is an element of a pattern		
Pattern		Patterns can be formed from the repetition of basic shapes or motifs		

Motifs can be used to generate many variations in the practical application of shadow puppet pattern design. In the research, typical representative motifs were extracted from the comparison of a large number of samples. For example, as shown in Table 4.7 and 4.8, they included both geometrical and natural forms. The first (K1) and second (K2) rows in Table 4.7 and the first (S1) row in Table 4.8 are the basic shapes or basic constituents from which a motif is formed. Motifs could be created from a regular repeat of basic shapes such as K3 in Table 4.7, and S2 in Table 4.8, or from a complex irregular shape, which is then named independent motif such as K4 in Table 4.7, S3 and S4 in Table 4.8.

Table 4.7: Shape found on Kelantan Shadow Puppets

K1	            a b c d e f g h i j k l
K2	    a b c d
K3	        a b c d e f g h
K4	        a b c d e f g h

Table 4.8: Shape found on Shaanxi Shadow Puppets

S1	          a b c d e f g h i j
S2	        a b c d e f g h
S3	       a b c d e f g
S4	      a b c d e f

From Tables 4.7 and 4.8, it was found that no matter whether it was the Kelantan Shadow puppets or Shaanxi Shadow puppets, the round dots (e.g. K1a, S1a) and the crescent dot (e.g. K1b, S1c, S1d, S1e, S1f, S1g) were used more frequently as basic shapes in both regions more than the others shapes, and they were simple and abstract.

On the other hand, the shapes in the form of Ficus leaves (i.e. S1b, S3b) and Ginkgo leaves (i.e. S3f) were only found in Shaanxi shadow puppets. The shapes in the second row (K2) in Table 4.7 were all geometric abstract shapes made up of straight and folded lines. These simply composed figures were found only in Kelantan shadow puppets.

Because the basic shapes needed to be used repeatedly in the making process, the makers turned them into moulds, and a simple chiselling technique could be applied to create the shape of the mould onto the shadow puppet. Such production characteristics were observed during a shadow making process in Kelantan, and when scrutinized, it was noted that the produced results, e.g. in terms of the outlines of these shapes on the shadow puppets, were consistent and exact.

For slightly more complex shapes, they were composed from combinations of simple shapes, such as the samples marked K1c, K1d, K1g, K1h, K3h, and S1h, S1i, S1j, S2a, S2b, S2d, S2c, S3g. The use of such combinations of shapes was very common in Chinese shadow puppet designs. This design and construction approach improved work efficiency and facilitates the keeping of a harmonized visual style.

Not only in folk art, but in other aspects of traditional Chinese design such as architecture, painting, and even Chinese characters, were often designed and constructed through modular thinking and means (Ledderose, 2001).

K3, K4, S2, S3 and S4 are rows with independent motifs. K3 and S2row are radial in symmetry based on, such as four-fold symmetry or five-fold symmetry, formed from the motifs being repeatedly used in the construction and extending in two-dimensional directions to form imagery patterns.

The results of these simple modular repetitions could be very effective. The shapes of K4 and S4 row were relatively realistic reproductions inspired by nature. Careful inspection showed that Kelantan shadow puppets tended to be land-based, expressing natural vegetative vines, whereas the Shaanxi shadow puppets tended to depict the generalization of clouds motifs, as shown by S4c, S4d, and S4e of Table 4.8. The vine motifs in S4a and S4f also showed distinct features of cloud motif, which were composed of smooth, flowing lines. There were no cloud-related images noted from the motifs and patterns of the Kelantan shadow puppets.

4.4.6 Colour

It is known that colour is one of the crucial factors affecting the visual impact of artworks. However, colour is more abstract than graphics. The use of different colours reveals the aesthetic taste of different ethnic groups and reflects cultural and symbolic meanings.

To examine the types of colours used and to measure the frequency and area of use of different colours on the shadow puppets, five colour representative shadow puppets from each of the two regions were selected to facilitate the research analysis.

Online application called "Image Color Summarizer" was used to help analyse the colour composition.

This online software is open source and can also be downloaded from the Microsoft App Store. Its most important feature is that it can analyse the size of the area of colours in an image, and the percentage of different colours in an image will be shown (in the "Pixel" column). This analytical ability is essential to reveal important information about the colour preferences of different regions of the shadow puppets.

With reference to Table 4.9, the software has the ability to cluster the colours. The "Cluster" and "Image Cluster Partition" columns show the composition of the major colours in the image, and it should be realized that minor, small areas with low percentage of colours have been excluded to facilitate the analysis. The "RGB colour model is used to reflect the colour composition, it is an additive colour model, In addition, another colour model known as CMYK, which is an approach using subtractive colour model was also employed for colour analysis.

The colour of shadow play was quite specific, and it could be described in both subtractive and additive mode. The hide itself was yellow and the colour of the hide blends with the painted colour under the influence of light transmission. The colour effects of the skin shadow could be either subtractive or additive. This was because of the performance requirement, i.e., it was necessary to reflect the correct colour through the light, i.e., in such case, the display effect mode was additive in nature. On the other hand, when there was no light transmission effect, subtractive colour effect would play a prominent role due to the absence of light.

Table 4.9: Colour Analysis of Kelantan ShadowPuppets

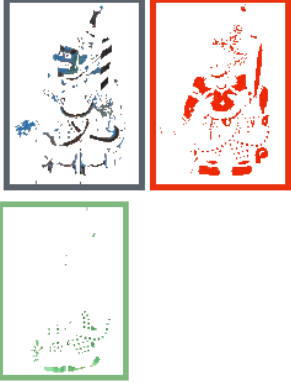
No.	Image	Image Cluster Partitions	Cluster	RGB	Pixel
1				114 126 77 187 146 81 161 75 64 108 101 101	8.53% 7.96% 7.48% 4.77%
2				124 148 116 234 105 81	22.02% 15.85%
3				90 98 109 234 50 17 127 185 128	11.24% 11.24% 2.69%
4				244 51 59 109 187 191 21 14 13 116 130 116	13.77% 9.78% 9.58% 6.41%

Table 4.9 continued

5				236 35 26	13.61%
				50 116 67	7.98%
				161 222 155	6.11%
				69 76 70	5.20%

Table 4.10: Colour Analysis of Shaanxi ShadowPuppets

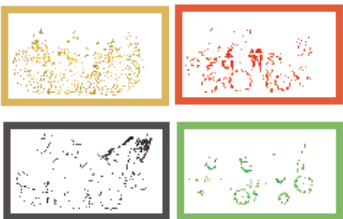
No.	Image	Image Cluster Partitions	Cluster	RGB	Pixel
1				185 144 65	3.99%
				175 54 57	3.40%
				54 57 52	2.34%
				83 126 47	2.32%
2				196 174 99	4.13%
				48 48 46	3.56%
				205 51 44	2.40%
				72 126 55	2.17%
3				215 182 93	10.93%
				227 91 54	15.85%
				80 77 76	5.76%
				128 184 102	4.05%

Table 4.10 continued

4		  	208 77 61 103 97 75 123 149 60	18.52% 16.08% 13.31%
5		 	50 42 42 119 19 16	8.86% 5.05%

Through the above colour analysis process, it could be observed that the colours of the Kelantan shadow puppets were highly saturated and more vibrant in general, as reflected by the analytical results in Table 4.9, while the colours used in the Shaanxi shadow puppets were less saturated, as shown in Table 4.10.

However, In night performances, the Kelantan shadows transmitted less light than the Shaanxi shadow puppets because of the differences in hide thickness and pigments used., (Figure 4.11), thus Shaanxi's semi-transparent shadows tend to show richer colors in actual performances, as shown in Figure 4.12.



Figure 4.11: Capture from Rama Shoots Through 40 Palm Trees

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DbA53E3M0Zw>

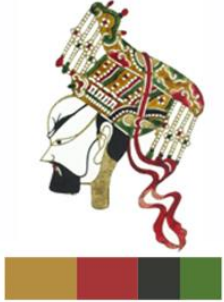


Figure 4.12: Capture from Heavenly Guards Blessing

Source: <https://www.bilibili.com/bangumi/play/ep431097>

An analysis was also made from the proportion of colours used. The results are shown in Table 4.11, where the width of the colour bars indicated the proportion of colours used. Examination of the Table 4.11 reveals that red is used in all ten samples from both regions, while green appears in nine samples, except Guan Yu's head, the fifth sample of Shaanxi shadow puppets. Because red and green as a pair of complementary colours appearing together creates a very strong visual effect.

Table 4.11: Analysis on the Proportion of Colours used.

No.	Kelantan Shadow Puppet	Shaanxi Shadow Puppet
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

It was noted that white did not appear in the colour analysis because in shadow play, white represents the colour of the light, and all light-transmitting parts can be considered as white areas. It was also obvious that the use of yellow was rare in both regions. This may be because the cattle hide appeared yellow under the light transmittance, causing the effect of using yellow to be invisible.

In terms of uniqueness, blue was common in Kelantan shadow puppets, and this did not appear in Shaanxi, because Kelantan shadow puppets used the colouring technique of flat painting, which allowed for thicker and more opaque colours. In contrast, Shaanxi shadow puppets were made from thin hides and used a thin colouring technique. the colour would subtly change under the light during actual performances, creating a dynamic visual effect. If blue were applied in Shaanxi puppets, it would mix with the natural colour of the hide, resulting in an unintended green hue instead of the desired blue. Shadow puppet craftsmen in Shaanxi, therefore, understood these material and technical limitations and avoided using blue to prevent such colour distortions, ensuring the visual integrity of their puppets during performances.

The choice of colours varied in meaning depending on the cultural context of the particular colour; it was also influenced by religion and tradition. In Chinese opera face painting, black represents integrity and rudeness, white represents sinister, and red represents loyalty (Siu & Lovrick, 2013). According to Osnes (2014, p.63), there is a fixed colour match for the main characters in Malaysian shadow puppets, green skin for *Rama*, red for *Laksamana*, yellow for *Sita*, black for *Pak Dogol*, red for *Wak Long* and white for *Hanuman*. This is the colour rule for the characters in Kelantan.

4.4.7 Space

Space is the area that an object occupies as well as the area surrounding it. Space in design terms could be defined as positive and negative space. The shape is usually the dominant body of the positive space, and the negative space is its background. Positive space is just as equally important as negative space. Some neighbouring elements could then be separated or combined by negative space.

Some interesting observations were found when the shadow puppets visual style was placed into and their design analysed based on the space theory. Because shadow is different from other two-dimensional art forms, its image was expressed through shading. In other words, the design of shadow puppet must consider the interconnection and influence between positive and negative space. The representations and meanings could vary and be switched. The principle was that positive space was displayed by shadow, while negative space was the opposite, with the shadow part being its background. The two forms of spatial representation could actually be different, they created different visual styles or representations of a shadow puppet. With the use of examples, this particular concept is illustrated next.



Figure 4.13: The Head bolt of Caocao (left) and Guanyu (right) from Romance of Three Kingdoms

Source : Shaanxi Fine Arts Museum

Regarding Figure 4.13, the two characters are famous characters found in the traditional Chinese novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. *Guanyu*, a well-known figure as a righteous and loyal general, and *Caocao*, a rival of *Guanyu*, is depicted as a sinister man in the novel.

In traditional Chinese opera, the make-up and colouring of the character's face were very specific. With the face mostly painted white, the audience was used to and would immediately recognise it as a sinister villain. Likewise, this connotation extended to the other traditional creative arts, so *Caocao*'s face in the shadow play had to be white, the outline of his face was carved using a positive space technique so that the face could penetrate the light. Whereas the outline of *Guanyu*'s face was carved using the negative space technique so that it could be easily coloured, as *Guanyu*'s face must be red, i.e. in line with the red face often seen in the Chinese opera masks which was also represented justice and loyalty. Also, *Guanyu*'s eyes were carved using positive space technique. These two different carving techniques were used in the same object.



Figure 4.14: A Detailed Pictorial of Siti Dewi

Source: Siti Dewi, Accession No.: XXXX-05379, Asian Civilisations Museum

Siti Dewi is a crucial female character in Kelantan's shadow puppet narrative, and for such a noble character, it requires very exquisite and intricate decorations to express it. The fan held in *Siti Dewi*'s hand in the Figure 4.14 applied a positive space technique, apart from that, all the decorations on the body were craved using the negative space technique, a transformation that enriched the visual style of the shadow, i.e., due to the thicker hide used by the Kelantan shadow puppets.



Figure 4.15: A Detail Depiction of *Lakshmana*

Source: Lakshmana, As1970,02.105, British Museum

The last case from the British Museum collection is the decoration on the trousers of *Lakshmana* (Figure 4.15), the banished prince in the epic tale of *Ramayana*. This is an ironic example of the combination of positive and negative space techniques. The motifs of the external contours were decorated with positive space technique, while the background around the motifs was formed as a negative space, and the puppet maker had created a series of border repeat patterns to fill the negative space by using the method of hollowed out carving on the motifs in this area, in an intricate manner and arranged in a very tidy and orderly manner.

4.4.8 Comparative Analysis of Visual Elements in Shadow Puppets of Two Regions

Combining the observation of the shadow puppets of the two regions, the differences in traditional culture and making techniques influence the characteristics of the visual elements. Firstly, the shadow puppets design of both regions created a set of the basic shapes, and many basic shapes were similar, such as round dots and crescent dots. However, the Kelantan shadow puppets had a kind of unique triangular or crescent shape, a triangle that did not appear in the Shaanxi shadow puppets. In carving lines, Shaanxi shadow puppets always preferred the use of long, smooth lines instead of straight lines, and the Chinese mural paintings influenced this visual style. Kelantan shadow puppets preferred to use a series of dots or a set of dots and short lines to form lines, similar to dotted lines. This is similar to the artistic characteristics of another Malaysian art product, i.e., the Malaysian batik. The thickness of the lines in Kelantan Shadows was more consistent, while most of the lines in Shaanxi Shadows were thick in the middle and thin at both ends, showing the influence and characteristics of Chinese calligraphy. Obviously, the toils and the chiselling or carving techniques influenced the types of patterns or motives produced.

For the more complex shapes, both regions used a combination of basic figures to construct them, which helped to keep the visual style uniform and also improved efficiency. Shaanxi shadow puppets favoured the use of curling cloud patterns, which has a long tradition in China. Flower petals and leaf patterns were also similar in form to cloud patterns, while Kelantan shadow appears to have many patterns of plants and vines, which could also be found in batik and in the decoration of traditional buildings, where the natural environment has a strong influence.

In addition to carving out the lines, Shaanxi shadows also used brushes to draw the lines for the finer shadows. The hide was kept wet during colouring so that a thin halo technique could be used to paint a gradation of colours. In contrast, Kelantan shadows used a greater variety of vibrant colours.

The facial and body carvings of Kelantan shadow puppets used negative space techniques to make the shapes transparent and retained a large amount of negative space in the shadows. The facial carvings of Shaanxi shadow puppets used both positive and negative space techniques depending on the character, and the same was applied for the motifs and patterns of the other part, the motifs on the garments were made using positive space techniques, while the other placement patterns were made using a combination of positive and negative space techniques.

4.5 Gestalt Theory & Principles of Design in Kelantan and Shaanxi Shadow Puppets

Gestalt theory is an important theory in psychology and is also widely used in design research, especially in the field of visual design (O'Connor, 2015). According to Verstegen (2006), using the analysis method of Gestalt theory, the visual language of an

object could be interpreted to gain a more in-depth understanding of the psychological motivation of the viewer's aesthetic activities when viewing the object.

The principles of design consist of specifications of what is required to create a good composition. Like visual elements, understanding these principles of design helps one

Despite the differences in time and region, the basic principles of design and the characteristics of human visual perception remain the same. This section analyses how the shadow makers of the two regions put these two theories into practice in the design of shadow motifs when making puppet figures.

4.5.1 Categories of Principles of Design

According to Evans and Thomas (2012) the principles of design include rhythm, proportion, emphasis, balance, unity, and repetition. However, design is not a collection of formulas, and they are just principles to follow and apply to achieve the desired results, i.e., it is the role of the designer to think and put into practices based on the designer's intuition, thinking and aesthetic judgement.

The visual styles of the shadow puppets in the two regions reflect in many aspects the design principles. It is mostly inspired by nature and tends to adhere to the artistic and cultural traditions, which is shared by the people of the regions. These visual styles of the traditionally influenced shadow puppet patterns are again consistent and follows other principles of modern design, a phenomenon that reflects the universality and durability of traditional visual culture over time. This is what makes traditional folk graphic design remain a very relevant and valuable work of art while retaining the application prospect in modern design.

4.5.2 Gestalt Theory Applied in the Principles of Design of Shadow Puppets in Two Regions

In understanding the design principles employed in the two regional shadow puppet graphics, the Gestalt Theory was applied in this research to allow a more systematic and in-depth analysis of the graphic features. It could provide insights to understand the visual effects more comprehensively. This is because visual appearance and psychology are strongly interconnected in arts and could mutually influence each other. Gestalt Theory can thus be the key to unlocking these interconnections.

Gestalt Theory is a pioneering modern Cognitive Learning theory that was rapidly developed in Germany after it was proposed in 1912 by Max Wertheimer (1938). According to Britannica (2024), the word "*Gestalt*" is used in modern German to mean the way a thing has been "placed," or "put together." "Form" and "shape" are the usual translations in English since there is no exact equivalent to the meaning.

This theory posits that the process of learning is not a trial-and-error process but rather a process of insight or holistic understanding, wherein the sudden resolution of a problem occurs by combining the entire current context. It investigates how individuals perceive and comprehend what they see (Wertheimer, 1938). There are seven individual laws commonly associated with Gestalt Theory which are similarity, proximity, continuity, closure, figure-ground articulation, symmetry, and common fate (Todorovic, 2008). These laws are often referred to as the "Gestalt laws of grouping" and has an associative with to the Design Principles as depicted in Table 4.12. The manners in which the human minds process visual information affect the guidelines to be followed when creating a well-composed arrangement of visual elements.

Table 4.12: Gestalt Laws of Grouping & the Principles of Design

Gestalt Laws of Grouping	Design Principles
The ways that our minds perceive visual information	The rule to follow to create a good composition
Similarity, Proximity, Continuity, Closure, Figure-ground Organization, Symmetry, Common Fate.	Rhythm, Proportion, Emphasis, Balance, Unity, Repetition.

The most crucial principle of Gestalt Theory is that the whole is greater than the elements. It emphasizes the tendency of individuals to organize elements into a whole when perceiving things. Feldman (1967) stated that this theory is “the act of the perception which gives wholeness and coherence to our experience of a work of art” (p. 278)

The basic idea is that human perception of any visual image is about forms and outlines organized by the perceptual system, rather than a collection of independently existing parts. For example, in a piece of music, even if we change its playback speed, people can still perceive it as the same composition. Changes in the scale or occasional wrong notes do not hinder people from recognizing the piece of music.

Both Gestalt Theory and Design Principles emphasize the importance of different groups of visual elements, such as colours, shapes, lines, etc. Analysing a work of art through the lens of Gestalt Theory and the Design Principles allows for a deeper understanding of the composition and its visual effects. It reveals how the shadow puppet patterns reinforce the viewers’ understanding and memory. Some of these principles are also related to visual guidance, directing the viewer's gaze within the work of art (Todorovic, 2008). Examining and analysing the ways in which visual guidance is

employed in the artworks could provide insights into how these principles could be used to influence the viewer's visual perception.

4.5.3 Similarity and Proximity

It is human nature to group similar things together since people often see similar things as a whole (Wong, 2010). Many visual elements can be grouped such as lines, shapes, colours, and et cetera. The principle of similarity in Gestalt is the idea that we think that elements that share the same characteristics are more related to each other than those that do not have common characteristics.

On the other hand, the closer two elements are, the greater the likelihood of them being combined together, indicating a stronger relationship between them. Even if these elements have different visual characteristics, as long as the distance between them is close enough, people would perceive them as a unified whole. Distance determines whether certain objects are seen as a cohesive entity. It is important to note that the rule of proximity carries more weight than the rule of similarity.

The gorgeous sarong of *Siti Dewi*, a Kelantan shadow play character, is an ideal example of pattern design (Figure 4.16), which exemplifies a wide range of design principles and the Gestalt Theory. The intricate pattern of the sarong consists of many shapes of design elements (Figure 4.17)



Figure 4.16: The Sarong of Siti Dewi

Source: Siti Dewi, Accession No.: XXXX-05379, Asian Civilisations Museum



Figure 4.17: The Design Elements of Sarong of Siti Dewi

These elements are densely packed yet arranged in an orderly manner, and they consist of various shapes. Firstly, following the similarity law, elements of the same shapes are positioned closely and perceived as a unified whole. Secondly, identical shapes are closer to each other than to other non-identical shapes, aligning with the proximity law. Furthermore, the identical shapes are systematically repeated along a path, illustrating the continuity law in the arrangement of objects. Here, the combined influence of the laws of similarity, proximity, and continuity reinforces the overall sense of the pattern as being composed of the same shape.

In addition to this, the repetitive arrangement of shapes shows visual coherence and rhythm. However, to prevent monotony, two neighbouring shapes are always different, and this design demonstrates a flexible application of the Design Principles.

Colour is considered to be the most substantial way to create unity. Colour is the first factor perceived when our brains try to make sense of our surroundings. Another excellent example with strong characteristics adhering to the similarity law in relation to the aspect colour is the Kelantan shadow puppets of Figure 4.18, i.e., part of a collection at the Asian Civilisations Museum. The triangular shapes on the character's bottom wear point in different directions and are divided into groups depending on the direction (common fate law), but it is the colour that reinforces the grouping of the shapes. Visually, it is also the similarity of the colours that makes the same shapes appearing pointing in different directions into a unified whole. The pattern on the crown of the puppet figure also shows the same feature.



Figure 4.18: The Fascinating Colour of *Maharaja Wana*

Source: Maharaja Wana, Accession No.: XXXX-05442, Asian Civilisations Museum

4.5.4 Continuity and Repetition

The eyes perceive the identical elements arranged regularly along a path as a coherent line. This line extends visually, exhibiting a continuation of straight segments in the direction of straight elements and curved segments in the direction of curved elements. This illustrates the concept of visual inertia. Continuity, generated by the repeated

arrangement of objects, creates a sense of rhythm. Therefore, in this context, the consistent arrangement serves as a crucial manifestation of the design principles of repetition and rhythm.

Figure 4.19 is a Kelantan shadow puppet (Jinn), from the collection in the British Museum, and through observation, its design extensively utilizes continuity law and principle of repetition to create a visual inertia. The lines in the image are composed of a series of short lines, arranged systematically along their respective paths. Following the direction of the paths, they are divided into several groups. Each group is considered a whole line relative to other parts.



Figure 4.19: The Character named *Jinn* from the Epic Tale of *Ramayana*

Source: Jinn, As1970,02.118, British Museum

The essence of traditional folk art lies in its patterns, and the design principle of repetition is extensively applied in the pattern design of shadow puppets, i.e. from both regions. Patterns are categorized into four main types: frieze patterns, block patterns, radial symmetrical patterns and confined patterns, the confined patterns are also referred to as a “bounded motif” or an “engineered motif.” It is a type of non-repeating pattern that is

designed to fit a specific shape, form, or structure. The last two of which are discussed in the next section. Figures 4.19 (a)-(c) show examples with frieze patterns and block patterns.

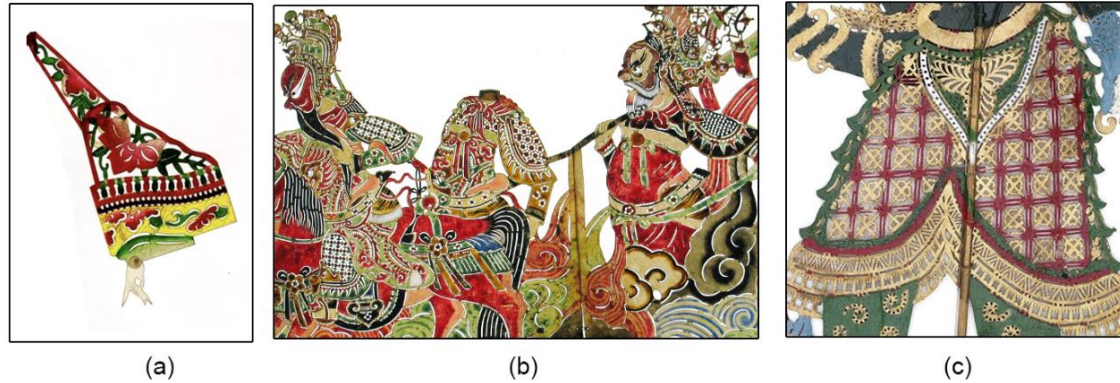


Figure 4.20: Examples of Frieze Patterns and The Block Patterns

Source: Jinn, (a) Arm of female character in Shaanxi shadow puppets, Author's collection. (b)Yunduozi (cloud likeness board, detail), Registration No. SXY1, China Shadow Play Digital Museum. (c) Seri Rama, Accession No.S.995-2011, Victoria and Albert Museum.

Figure 4.20 (a) shows the sleeve of a female figure with frieze patterns at the cuff. Figure 4.20 (c) showcases Seri Rama wearing a sarong made of *Songket* fabric. Its graphic design combines a variety of ways. The edge features frieze patterns, while the internal fillings present block patterns which are how *Songket* are formed. Only the *Songket* fabric appears to have a block pattern in the Kelantan shadow puppets. Figure 4.20 (b) represents a scenery board depicting the three generals, *Liu Bei*, *GuanYu*, and *Zhang Fei*, from the Chinese literary classic *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. In Shaanxi shadow puppets, block patterns are exclusively used to depict the generals' armour.

4.5.5 Law of Closure

People always desire to maintain the integrity of form, finding order amidst chaos. Our brains tend to perceive incomplete images as a whole, with the ability to automatically filling in the missing parts to create a visually complete figure (Todorovic, 2008), skilfully

utilizing the rule of closure to help reduce the complexity of a graphic, making it more concise.

In the design of shadow puppets in both regions, many such cases can be found because the carving techniques of shadow puppets dictate that their forms and lines cannot be continuous. All the elements in the design need to connect with each other. To illustrate these illusionary effects, the following three examples are used.

Figure 4.21 illustrates the head of *Sun Wukong* (Monkey King), a character from the Chinese classical novel *Journey to the West*. The outline of his face differs from that of an ordinary character, indicating that he belongs to the supernatural category. Many lines on his face also imply that he is not a real human being. Upon closer inspection, the audience would notice that these lines on his face are disjointed. This is one of the most distinctive visual features of shadow puppet and paper-cutting art. However, these disjointed lines do not disrupt our brain from automatically connecting them together.



Figure 4.21: The Head of *Sun Wukong* (Monkey King)

Source : Xi'an Shadow Puppet Art Museum

The second example of closure is related to the partial absence of the outline. Figure 4.22 is a supernatural being with its abdomen replaced by a strange head. However, people could still perceive the appearance of a supernatural being. Due to the missing parts in the outline of the abdomen, our brains automatically fill them in.



Figure 4.22: A Supernatural Being

Source : Xi'an Shadow Puppet Art Museum

The law of closure is also evident in confined and radial symmetrical patterns design. As shown in Figure 4.20 (a), the plant pattern on the lower arm and the three-fold symmetrical pattern composed of leaves on the waist in Figure 4.20 (c) are both confined patterns. The item of such confined patterns is enclosed and bounded to a specific space, a common occurrence in folk art pattern designs. For example, in Figure 4.23, the semi-circular pattern on the costume of the monkey god *Sun Wukong* in "Journey to the West" is another instance of this.



Figure 4.23: The Confined Pattern on the Monkey King's Costume

Source : Registration No. 48076, China Shadow Play Digital Museum

4.5.6 Figure - Ground

Whether it is a three-dimensional or two-dimensional object, people instinctively differentiate between the foreground (figure) and background (ground) when observing. Furthermore, when smaller elements overlap larger ones, our visual perception tends to categorize the smaller elements as the main subject (figure) and the larger area as the background. Additionally, our perceptions tend to assign greater importance to the foreground than the background. Skilfully applying this rule could make an image more engaging. The artwork of M. C. Escher, in Figure 4.24, is an ideal representation of the applying the law of figure-ground.



Figure 4.24: "Birds and Fish" by Maurice Escher in 1960, the Dutch Tile Museum in Otero

Source: Wikimedia Commons

Similar to the cases discussed earlier regarding the use of positive and negative space in shadow puppets (refer to 4.4.5), there is a close relationship between figure-ground and positive-negative space. Generally, people refer to the background as negative and the figure as positive space.

In the design of shadow puppets, there is often a transformation between figure and the ground. Taking the example of the head of Guan Yu in Figure 4.25, the eyes serve as to highlight the figure, and the hollow area around the eyes is the ground. However, if we consider the hollow area around the eyes as a whole, it becomes the figure, and the adjacent red face then becomes the ground.



Figure 4.25: The Part of *Guanyu*'s Head

Source: Xi'an Shadow Puppet Art Museum

Another example is the scenery board of Figure 4.25 i.e., Shaanxi shadow play depicting the three main characters from the Chinese literary classic *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* transformed into celestial beings standing on clouds (Figure 4.26). The scene demonstrates the puppet makers use of the figure-ground law, as each cloud resembles a flower, being smaller than the background cloud and having a lighter contour colour. The graphic of the clouds displays a sense of hierarchy in the two-dimensional space in this way, creating the illusion of a three-dimensional scene where each small cloud appears above the larger cloud serving as the background.

Moreover, the outlines of the clouds are similar, with each cloud above shrinking proportionally towards the centre. This reinforces the unity of a graphic unit through the application of Design Principles, and surprisingly does not show disorder despite the complexity of the outlines and colours.



Figure 4.26: The Scenery Board

Source: Registration No. SXY2, China Shadow Play Digital Museum

4.5.7 Symmetry and Balance

In the process of observing objects, symmetry provides a sense of comfort and harmony, while asymmetry could evoke feelings of imbalance and a sense of missing. Symmetrical elements are naturally perceived as a unified whole, regardless of the distance between them (Verstegen, 2006). The principle of balance is similar; people prefer to see visually balanced things, as imbalance could lead to psychological anxiety and a sense of insecurity. Symmetry is the perfect form of balance, offering a sense of stability and order. In the patterns of shadow puppets, there are many designs incorporating symmetry. Figure 4.27, the wings of the Kelantan shadow puppet *Jentayu*, is a classic example showcasing symmetry and balance.



Figure 4.27: Kelantan Shadow Puppet Jentayu Showing Strong Principles of Symmetry and Balance

Source: Jentayu a Great Mythical Bird, As1970, 02.107, British Museum

4.5.8 Law of Common Fate

Motion in the same direction or objects moving towards a common direction are perceived as a harmonious whole compared to situations with relative disorder. While the graphics may not actually be in motion, they could give the impression of movement (Wong, 2010).

In Figure 4.27 and Figure 4.28, a series of shapes oriented in the same direction is demonstrated for its impact on visual perception. *Jentayu* in Figure 4.27 is depicted as flapping its wings in battle with *Rawana*, and in a segment of Shaanxi shadow puppet, *Lei Zhenshi* (deity) is shown in Figure 4.28 holding a drum-like weapon while spinning it. In both scenes where motion needs to be conveyed, the creators employed the principle of directional consistency. Both graphic elements, feathers, and flames, are oriented in the same direction, imbuing a sense of movement in these static images.



Figure 4.28 : Shaanxi Shadow Puppet,*Lei Zhenshi*(deity)

Source: Xi'an Shadow Puppet Art Museum

4.6 Visual Style of Kelantan and Shaanxi Shadow Puppets

Visual style refers to the specific visual characteristics and unique artistic features presented in visual expressions such as art, design, photography, etc., (Kozbelt, 2016). It encompasses a combination of visual elements, design principles, techniques, and styles of expression within a work of art. Visual style is often associated with specific eras, regions, cultures, or artists (Honour& Fleming, 2010). It can be a distinctive feature unifying the personalized works of an artist, designer, or creator, as well as a representative expression of a particular period, region, genre, or culture (van Tonder, 2015).

According to Kozbelt (2006), Kemp and Cupchik (2007) as well as Müller (2011), research on visual style typically encompasses the following aspects:

- i. Visual elements and design principles: Analysing how elements like lines, shapes, colours, and textures, along with design principles such as contrast, balance, and rhythm, contribute to the overall style of artwork.

- ii. Techniques and expression: Investigating how various creative techniques, painting methods, photography, and image processing impact the visual effects and style of artworks.
- iii. Cultural context and heritage: Examining how the visual style of artworks reflects cultural background and historical heritage, comparing different art movements and periods.
- iv. Themes and emotions: Analysing how visual style relates to themes, emotions, and intentions in artworks, identifying emphasized themes, emotions, and atmospheres.
- v. Artist's personal style: Studying individual visual styles of artists, exploring their creative approaches and expressive characteristics, revealing how their works reflect personal style and emotional expression.

Based on the descriptions provided by the scholars regarding the study of visual style, coupled with the theme of this research—comparative study of the visual styles of shadow puppet in Kelantan and Shaanxi, this research study focused on the analysis of visual elements and features, and understanding the cultural context.

The research did not involve specific artists or artworks, nor did it encompass the performative aspects of shadow play. As a dying art form, the emotional connection between performance and audience has diminished. Contemporary shadow play performances, driven by entertainment and tourism, have detached from their traditional cultural context. Therefore, this study did not address audience perception and emotional expression of themes. Instead, this research focused on examining shadow puppet characters as folk-art shadow puppet characters as folk art pieces, exploring their cultural value through a comparative analysis of artistic features.

In summary, the author defines the visual style in this study as the investigation of the following aspects:

- i. The visual elements and the design principles.
- ii. The overall visual style characteristics.
- iii. The cultural context and its historical heritage.

The discussions in the previous sections of this chapter revealed the differences in visual styles in terms of visual elements and design principles, and this section discusses the unique visual style characteristics of the shadow puppets of the two regions (in the light of the previous research results).

4.6.1 Features of the Figure

Specific physical features can aid viewers in quickly identifying and remembering characters. Shadow puppets are often depicted in a simplified and exaggerated manner to demonstrate the character's physical features. The physical features of shadow puppet can be categorized into three aspects: body proportions, outline, and heads with facial features.

In pursuing the discussion, four shadow puppets as shown in Figure 4.29 are selected for discussion. *Lakshmana* of Figure 4.29 (c) from the Kelantan shadow puppet and a *Zhangfei* (General in *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*) of Figure 4.29 (d) are paired for the discussion. These two characters are crucial characters in shadow play performance in both regions, and their appearances reflect typical characteristics of the shadow puppets from the respective countries. In comparisons, two characters with a Supernatural Being Figure 4.29 (a) from Shaanxi shadow puppet and *Subali* of Figure 4.29 (b) from the Kelantan shadow puppet are paired.

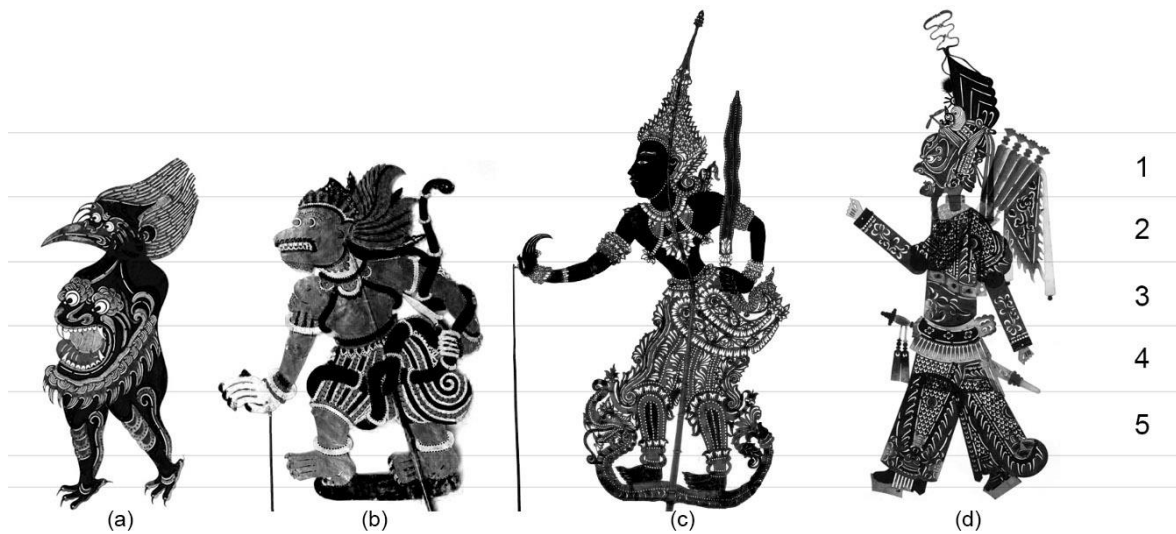


Figure 4.29: The Body Proportions of Shadow Puppet

Source: (a) Supernatural Being, Xi'an Shadow Puppet Art Museum.(b) Subali,As1970,02.131, British Museum. (c) Laksmana, As1970,02.105, British Museum.(d) Zhangfei, Author's collection.

Figure 4.29 shows the body proportions of four shadow puppets. The body proportions for both noble characters, as shown in Figure 4.29 (c) and Figure 4.29 (d), are identical, at $1:5\frac{1}{3}$. Similarly, the body proportions for the two humanlike creatures' characters are nearly the same, at $1:4\frac{1}{3}$. However, the bodies of Shaanxi shadow puppets are longer than those of Kelantan shadow puppets, and the limb lengths of Kelantan shadow puppet are closer to those of real humans in body proportion terms.

Despite the independent development of shadow play in the two regions, they share the same body proportions. In addition, they also share some common rules. Emphasizing the proportion of the head highlights distinctive characteristics, with larger heads relative to the body making facial features more prominent. The length of the headdress is also significant, as traditional cultures in many countries' associate headdresses with different social statuses and occupations. Adopting such proportions also serves the needs of

performance, making the shadow puppets easier to manipulate and present while enhancing audience understanding and appreciation.

Additionally, compared to Kelantan shadow puppets, the shadow puppets from various regions in China have their own consistent body proportions. This is because the design of Chinese shadow puppets separates the head and body, requiring puppets from the same region to maintain relatively consistent sizes for convenient rearrangement based on the needs of the story content.

It is worth noting that the distinguishing characteristics of the Kelantan shadow puppet's posture is that the upper body and head are tilted forward, Javanese shadow puppets. According to Sukasman (Keeler, 1992), a master Indonesian shadow play performer, the purpose of this is that the performance is more like a conversation when the two characters are looking at each other, whereas the Shaanxi shadow puppet's body is upright and focuses more on the expression of gesture when it is being performed. As mentioned in Chapter 4.3, Kelantan shadow play performance has more dialogue, while Shaanxi has more varied movements.

Kelantan shadow puppets have more intricate outlines compared to Shaanxi shadow puppets (Figure 4.30). This is because Kelantan shadow puppets such as that of Figure 4.30 (c) only have one movable right hand, while the outline of the arms, upper body, and lower legs in Shaanxi shadow puppets Figure 4.30 (d) are very simple, making them appear rather stiff in static mode. Kelantan shadow puppets have more curves in their outlines, such that their simple movements can be more prominently reflected by the curves due to their simpler construct.

However, the movement of Shaanxi shadow puppets is more complex; their bodies consist of six parts: chest, hips, legs, upper arms, lower arms, and hands. The legs, upper arms, lower arms, and hands are all in pairs, plus the "head bolt," resulting in eight joints for one shadow puppet character, which requires 11 components to articulate. Figure 4.30 illustrates the differences in body structure and joints between the two regions' shadow puppets.

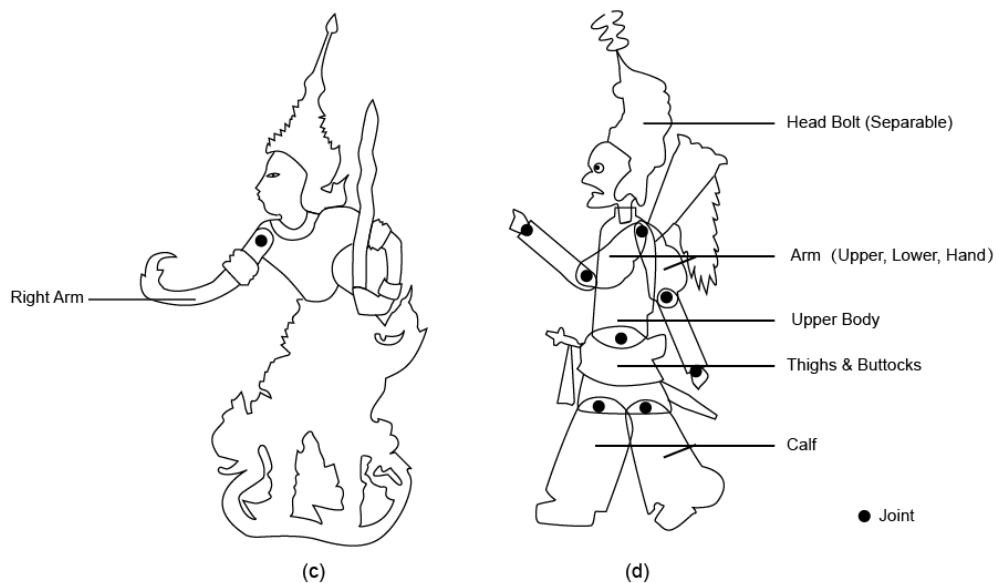


Figure 4.30: The Simplified Outline of Shadow Puppets showing their Articulated Parts

4.6.2 Multi-angle Perspective

As Panofsky (1991) pointed out, perspective is a type of representation that stems from larger cultural needs in addition to a direct replication of the visual world. Multi-angle perspective refers to the observation of objects from different angles and distances in order to highlight their visual characteristics.

The earliest evidence of this is the ancient Egyptian tomb painting of Nebamun's garden (as shown in Figure 4.31, b). Traditional Chinese art has also followed this expression method of highlighting the visual characteristics of objects (Law, 2011).

Modern schools of art have also taken inspiration from African tribal art, using multi-angle perspectives to represent objects. Multi-angle perspectives in this context are in reference to single-point or linear perspective.

The system of single-point perspective began in Ancient Greece in the 5th century B.C. as a technique for creating illusions in paintings of stage-sets, (Thibodeau, 2003). Due to the influence of the way of seeing in the traditional Western art of painting, single-point perspective is one of the visual customs that is still believed in, whereas “the art of classical antiquity recognized as artistic reality only what was tangible as well as visible” (Panofsky, 1991, p. 41). The traditional Kelantan and Shaanxi shadow puppet makers never use single-point perspective and shade or shadow but replaced them with a multi-angle perspective. The main idea of this multi-angle perspective system is to emphasize the perceived importance of the characteristic and object.

With reference to angle of perspectives, or of the visual style, the overall perspective of both Kelantan and Shaanxi shadow modelling is from the side, as the side best represents the shape of the figure. However, if careful observatory analysis is made as what is done in Figure 4.31, various contradictory perspectives are revealed, that is, actually the front and the side seem to appear at the same time in the shadow puppet. Figure 4.31 is a dissections and extraction made from the shape of the shadow puppets, it is obvious the body objects are actually composed of body parts collaged from a variety of perspectives, with mixed viewing angles. The reason for using such multi-angle perspectives is to make the shadow puppets even easier in recognitions by the audience as soon as they are displayed. The essence is that different parts of a person's body have the most appropriate viewing angles, i.e., making them to be quickly recognised. For example, the side profile of the puppet's body and the face creates a more recognisable silhouette,

while the eyes and feet displayed in their frontal perspective would make them easier to spot and recognise.

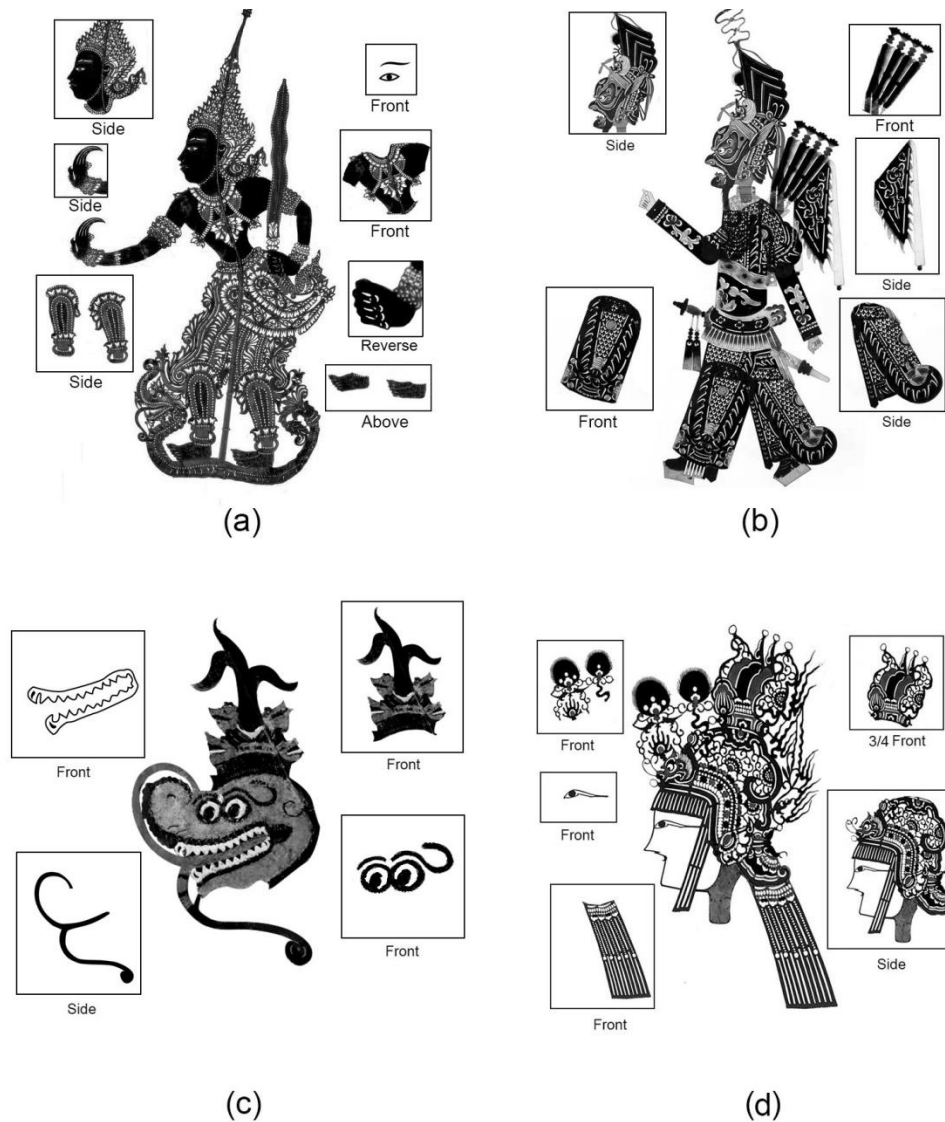


Figure 4.31: Multi-angle Perspective Applied in the Construct of Shadow Puppets

Source: (a) Laksmana, As1970,02.105, British Museum.(b) *Zhangfei*, Author's collection.(c) Sakso, As1970,02.15, British Museum(d) Head of female character in Shaanxi shadow puppets, Author's collection.

Figure 4.31 (a) shows that one of the distinguishing characteristics of Kelantan shadows in terms of perspective is that the character's head and legs are on the side, and the eyes and upper body are on the front. It may be a coincidence that this is similar to the features of ancient Egyptian tomb painting (Figure 4.32), which is also evidence of visual

thinking based on cultural needs. The shape of its hand holding the weapon is inverse compared to the normal human behaviour, where a human being cannot make such an action, and the design was also made to consider the shape of the hand's features. In this case, reality is being replaced by the need. Interestingly, such a perspective is also seen on many Kelantan shadow puppets that hold weapons in their hands.

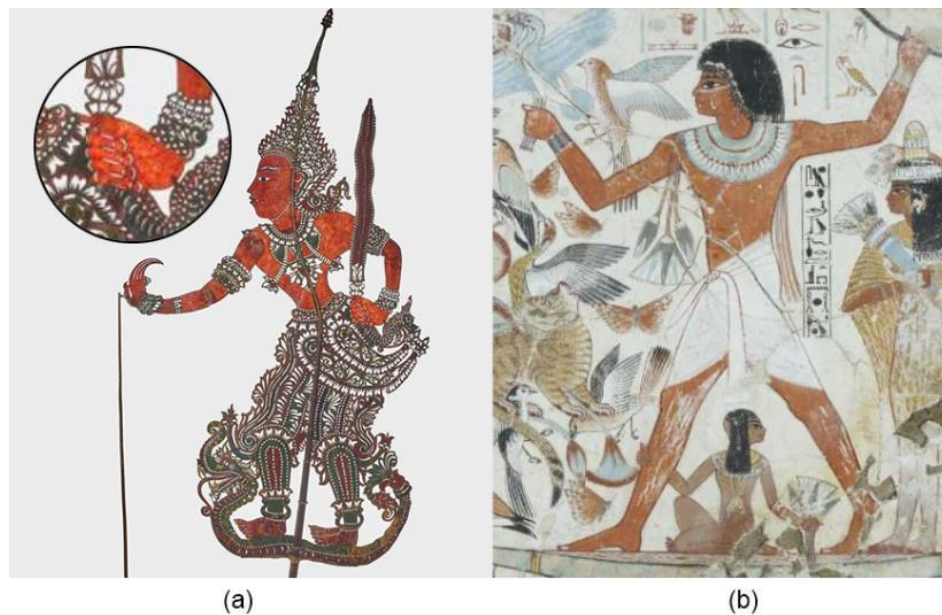


Figure 4.32: Comparison of the Kelantan Shadow Puppet with an Egyptian Tomb Painting

Source: (a) Laksmana, As1970, 02.105, British Museum. (b) Tomb-painting Nebamun's garden, EA37977, British Museum.

Figure 4.31 (b) is the Shaanxi shadow puppet, *Zhangfei* with the most distinctive characteristic of the Shaanxi shadow puppets in terms of perspective is the two legs, to show the trousers as fully as possible, the maker designed one trouser leg (the left side) as the front, and the other trouser leg as the side (the right side). This is one of the features that distinguishes Shaanxi shadows puppets from those of other regions in China.

Figure 4.31 (c) shows the head of an ogre *Sakso*, with its eyes, the crown of its head is on the front, its teeth like those of a crocodile, are also based on the front perspective,

and its tongue, which looks like that of a reptile, is on the side. All these parts are perfectly combined to form the head shape of the character.

Figure 4.31 (d) is the head of a female character in Shaanxi shadow puppets, which has the eyes on the front, the outline of the head based on the side perspective, the braid on the front again, and especially the adornments at the top of the head crown, which is angled 3/4 side in order to best show its visual characteristics. Again, creatively they are all harmoniously designed and combined to create recognizable visual elements.

4.6.3 Characteristics of the Pattern

The upper body of the Kelantan shadow puppets is normally bare, and they do not don any shoes, so its adornment mainly lies in the headdress, chest, and lower garments. These adornments have very typical stylized characteristics. Firstly, a large number of lines connected by a series of circles or triangles, which could also be regarded as dotted lines, and it avoids the appearance of continuous long lines, so that the design could make the shadow puppets more solid and durable, and it is said that it can be used for more than 100 years. Secondly, the patterns of the lower garments use both frieze and block patterns, with frieze pattern accounting for most, except for the very elaborate characters. The themes of these frieze patterns include geometric and botanical and striped shapes.

Similar to Shaanxi shadow puppets, Kelantan shadow puppets headdress is very intricately decorated, because the crown indicates the identity of the character, it is one of the most recognizable parts of the different shadow puppet characters, where different types of characters have corresponding crowns. The hats that people wear at work in modern society serve the same function. In addition, the head and body of Shaanxi shadow

puppets are composed of two different parts, which can be flexibly matched, and the identification of the characters relies even more on the headdress and face painting.

Colour wise, Kelantan shadow puppets use more vibrant colours than Shaanxi shadows, whereby noble characters have fixed colours, *Siri Rama's* body is blue, *Lakshmana's* is red, *Siti Dewi's* is yellow, and Hanuman is usually white. The colours are important in helping the audience to identify the characters quickly.

The colours of Shaanxi shadow puppets serve the same purpose, but the characters only have their faces exposed, so the colours of the faces represent different character personalities, for example, red for loyalty and bravery; white for duplicity; black for straightness; yellow for fierceness and composure; blue for rigidity and primness; and green for chivalry. In addition to the relatively fixed use of colours, for the parts where they were free to match colours, makers in both regions preferred to use a combination of red and green. Yellow is rarely used, and blue is used in Kelantan shadows puppets, but is rare in Shaanxi.

Like the characters, the costumes of Shaanxi shadow puppet figures are also derived from those of the traditional Chinese opera, and in comparison, the outlines of the figures are simpler than those of Kelantan shadow puppets, and the forms tend to be fixed. Whereas the internal patterns are highly intricate. The biggest difference in design elements is that continuous dots are not used to form the lines, instead, long, curved lines are used. Women's costume motifs employ confined patterns, with the frieze pattern at the edges of the garment. Only on the armour of the warrior the block patterns are employed. In general, Shaanxi shadow puppets use fewer repeating patterns, the whole figure is covered by clothes, and for the figures with elaborate and complicated adornments, they

are often carved with patterns from head to toe, leaving even a small piece of intact cowhide in no place.

The most significant difference in terms of patterns between the two regions is that Kelantan Shadow puppets pays more attention to expression through the repetition of stripes and rhythmic through simple visual elements. While Shaanxi shadow puppets, on the other hand, avoids repeating the same visual elements over a large area, and generally the frieze patterns appear only at the edges of the garment, placing more emphasis on the adoption of confined patterns in the design according to the space in which they are bounded.

4.7 Cultural Anthropology and the Socio-Cultural Context of Kelantan and Shaanxi Shadow Play

As is well known, individuals cannot live solely in the present, and the meaning of life is inseparable from memory, especially the "collective memory" from the same ethnic group. German scholar Assmann & Czaplicka (1995) believed that in collective memory, there exists "cohesive structures" known as cultural memory. Cultural memory encompasses the common values and behavioural norms within collective memory. Through intricate symbolic systems, folk art preserves cultural memory, endowing its cultural connotation with universality and shared significance (Geertz, 1973).

When we are confronted with artistic expressions of other cultures that are far removed from our own, it is crucial to understand the cultural connotations they represent. It is only through an understanding of a people's cultural memory that one can learn to respect differences. Therefore, it is important to keep an open mind and an attitude of respect in the process. Instead of imposing one's own cultural and aesthetic concepts on a piece of work, it is crucial to understand its cultural uniqueness and different aesthetic

criteria. This can help to better understand and appreciate the artistic expressions of other cultures while expanding one's own horizons and aesthetic experiences.

4.7.1 Cultural Anthropology in the Visual Style Research

According to Nanda and Warms (2019), Cultural Anthropology is a branch of Anthropology that focuses on the study of human cultural phenomena, change and differences. It could be used as a tool to study cultural memory. Assmann (2011) pointed out the cultural memory is preserved in symbolic cultural heritage, which individuals resort to in order to build their own identities and confirm themselves as part of a group. In simple terms, if one wishes to belong to a community, he or she has to follow the rules of how and what to remember.

The visual style of shadow is utilized as an important vehicle of cultural memory in this study. Different shadow art forms could reflect the aesthetics and values of different cultures. Moreover, as a traditional performing art form, it represents ancient art and performance traditions, is an important part of traditional culture, and also reflects the social changes of specific ethnic groups and the diversity of regional cultures. Cultural Anthropology is also employed in the following Iconographic studies to analyse the cultural origins of the visual symbols of the shadow puppets.

4.7.2 Influence of Folk Art Traditions on Shadow Puppets Visual Style in the Two Regions

In a region, folk art often undergoes mutual fusion and borrowing, where different art forms, in their developmental process, assimilate elements from diverse cultures, giving rise to art forms with multicultural characteristics. As a multicultural country, Malaysia exhibits diversity in its folk art traditions due to geography, ethnicity, and religion.

Kelantan Shadow Play is a vivid example. Its stories are adapted from the Indian epic *Ramayana*. It was once banned as it was “un-Islamic” because in its opening rituals, stories about Hindu god-heroes or local spirits, the concept of god-clowns, and other elements that were termed *Syrik* (worshipping a god other than Allah)” (Whitney Humanities Center, n.d.). However, the ban was lifted in 2019.

Geographically, Kelantan shares a border with Thailand, and this fostered close cultural exchanges, influencing the visual style of Kelantan Shadow Play with Thai *Nora* dance and Java Shadow Play due to the close ancient bloodline connections between Malaysia and Indonesia. The patterns in shadow play also connect with Kelantanese wood carving, as illustrated by the one example of *Nora* dance.

As the oldest shadow play in China, Shaanxi shadow play has also undergone a process of integration and fusion in its development. Firstly, in terms of artistic expression, shadow play is known as the earliest form of drama, and as a traditional performing art, it has a very close relationship with Chinese opera. It is noted that most shadow play stories originate from traditional repertoires, and the costumes also influence the attire of shadow puppet characters. Some of the supernatural stories also come from China's local religion - Taoism. The teachings of Taoism being very old, have also influenced and integrated into many of the stories. Secondly, the visual style of Shaanxi paper cuttings art also provides a lot of inspiration for shadow puppet makers. Meanwhile, the lines and colouring of shadow puppets are influenced by traditional temple murals.

4.7.3 Thai Nora Dance and Kelantan Shadow Puppets

As introduced by the Thailand Foundation (n.d.), *Nora* is the icon of the South. *Nora* is also known as *Menora*, and it has been a traditional dance prevalent in Southern

Thailand and Kelantan for over 500 years. It was banned by the government of Kelantan state in 1991, along with *Wayang Kulit* (Shadow Puppet) and *Mak Yong*, a type of dance found in Northern Malaysia, but the ban on *Wayang Kulit* and *Mak Yong* were lifted in 2019 except for *Nora* dance which is still not allowed to be performed in public (New Straits Times, Jan 27, 2020). *Nora* was inscribed in 2021 (16.COM 8.b.42) on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Unlike the Kelantan shadow play, whose performance and stories are based on the former lives of Buddha or about legendary Hindu heroes, the styling of the Kelantan shadow puppets influenced by the costumes of the *Nora* dance. In an interview with Eyo Hock Seng (Personal communication, Aug23, 2023), it was learnt that Eyo, apart from being a *Tok Dalang* (Master), has himself performed *Nora*.

The picture on the left of Figure 4.33 shows *Nora*'s costume in worn during the dance performance. The key visual features include a heavy, tapering gilded crown on the head and long metallic fingernails that curl out from the finger tips and bracelets are worn on the upper arms and wrists. In addition, most prominently as may be seen is the key evidence for the connection which is the unmistakable bird-like wings. There are several traditional folk dances in Thailand, but only the *Nora* costume would have the wing-like extensions in the back of the costume, which is probably derives from the half- bird and half-human *Kinnari* of the *Manora* story. Currently, no academic articles discussing the origin of the wing-like shape of Kelantan shadow puppet have been published.

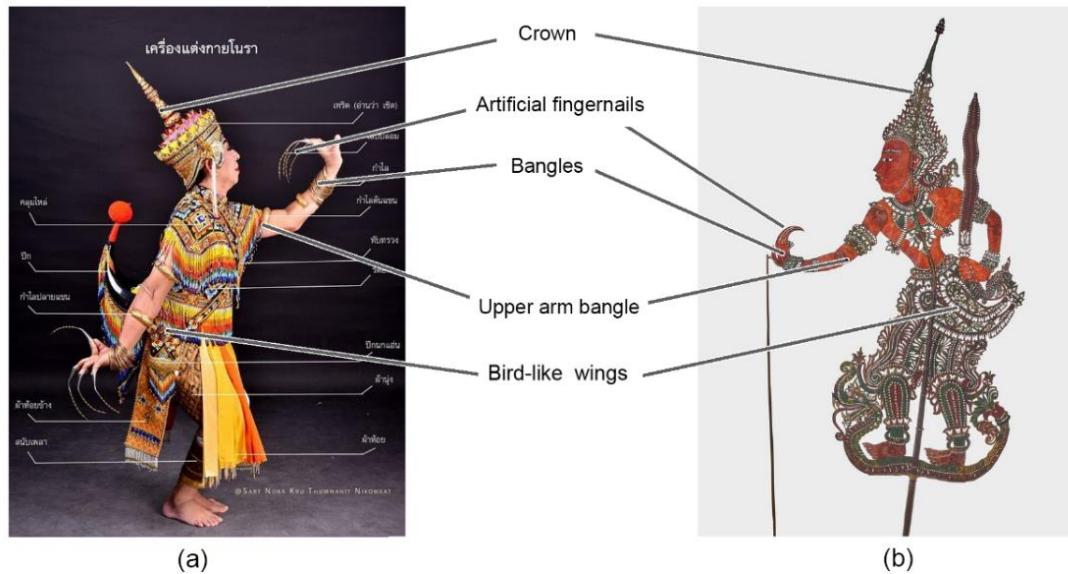


Figure 4.33: The Comparison of *Nora's* Costume and Kelantan's Shadow Puppet Styling

Source: (a) Photograph: Worawudh Pusirorungsee, © Ruendorkrak Songkhla, Thailand, 2017. (b) Laksmana, As1970, 02.105, British Museum.

4.7.4 Indian, Balinese and Kelantan Shadows Puppets

The connections discussed here involved only the shadow puppet's design elements and visual style aspects. Indian epics, dance and other art forms have made their way to Southeast Asia since ancient times and profoundly influenced traditional arts throughout Southeast Asia, especially in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Figure 4.34, from left to right, shows the Indian Kerala shadow puppet (a), the Kelantan shadow puppet (b), and the Indonesian Bali shadow puppet(c). Comparing these shadow puppets in the figure to the Shaanxi, it can be seen that the visual style of the shadows in these three regions is relatively consistent, especially as both (a) and (b) use similar patterns. The face in (c) appears distorted and deformed due primarily to Islamic teaching prohibits the carving of idols. Nevertheless, visually the three shadow puppets show stunning similarities, constructively, all using a series of dots, with the edges of the bottom wear in (c) appearing to be a combination of dots and lines commonly used in

Kelantan shadow puppets. In addition, the noble royal characters of the Kelantan shadow puppets tend to all stand on a *Naga* (M. J. Yusoff, personal communication, Aug 20, 2023), in various Asian religious traditions, the Nagas are a divine, or semi-divine, race of half-human, half-serpent beings. which is obviously influenced by the *Naga* worship in Thai culture (Bangkok Post, Nov 2, 2022).

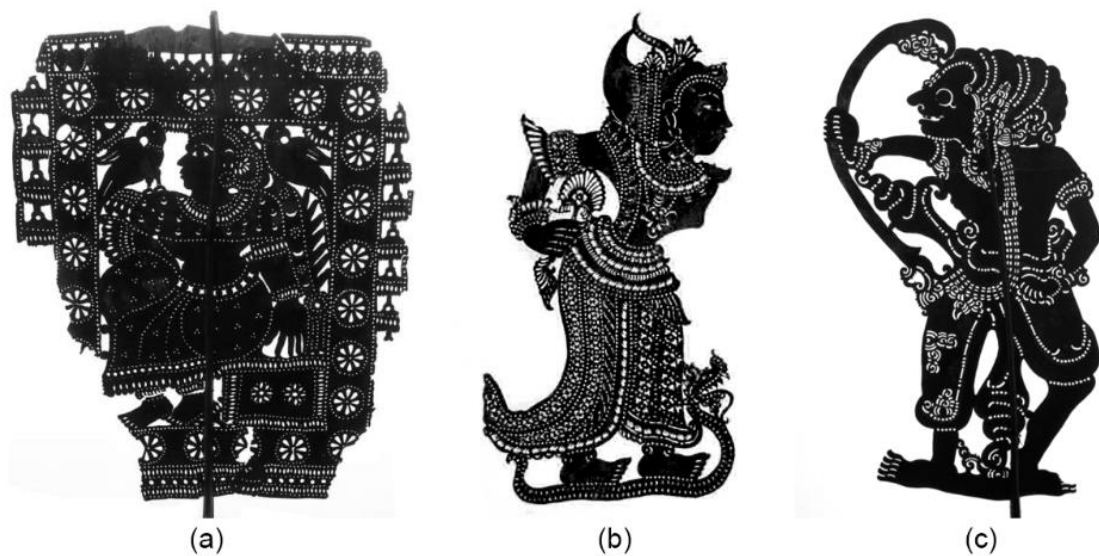


Figure 4.34: Comparison of Visual Styles in Indian, Kelantan and Javanese Shadow Puppets

Source: (a) Siti Dewi, Kerala, India, 02/01in034, Museu do Oriente, Lisbon. (b) Siti Dewi, Kelantan, Malaysia, Accession No.: XXXX-05379, Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore. (c) Rewang, Bali, Indonesia, As1969,07.43, British Museum.

4.7.5 The Stone Carvings and Shaanxi Shadow Puppets

Stone carvings are a type of traditional Chinese culture and art, also known as stone paintings. It began and flourished in the *Han* Dynasty (202-220 BC), and existed for about 400 years, representing the cultural traditions and aesthetic concepts.

Like shadow puppets and paper cuttings, the art of stone carving depicts figures in two dimensions using the artistic expression of positive and negative space. One of the

most outstanding representatives of *Han* dynasty stone carving is located on the wall of *Wuliang* Shrine in Shandong Province. Figure 4.35 (a) is a rubbing of stone carving from *Wuliang* Shrine, which tells the famous story of the Chinese *Qin* Dynasty (221 BC-207 BC), *Jing Ke* stabbed the *Qin* King.



Figure 4.35: A Stylistic Comparison between the Stone Carving and the Shadow Puppet of China

Source:(a) Rubbing of Stone Carving, National Costume Museum of Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology. (b) *Zhangfei*, Author's collection.

A lot of similarities can be seen in the comparison of the two images. The body proportion is similar, and the outline of the figure is mainly employed to show the figure's posture, only in the later stage of the development of shadow play, due to the fact that the *Qing* Dynasty (1636-1912) society's aesthetic tastes pursued intricate and exquisite decorations. Hence the decorative motifs appearing inside the shadow puppets became more complex and more exquisite. However, noting that these two images spanned a period almost two millennia apart, the overall style has not changed much giving strong evidence that the Shanxi shadow puppets are very much Chinese.

4.7.6 The Murals and Shaanxi Shadow Puppets

As many of the murals remained in the temples, the final investigation examining the connection between the visual styles of Chinese temple murals and shadow puppets. Chinese temple murals have developed a unique style in painting techniques, expressive methods, and colour application. Similar to shadow puppets, these murals convey not only educational and enlightening aspects of religious beliefs but also served as a means to preserve and showcase traditional Chinese culture and values. In this research, the example of the *Yongle* Palace murals is examined and used for the comparative analysis described here.

The *Yongle* Palace murals are masterpieces from the *Yuan* dynasty (1271-1368), and have the essence of Taoism. It is regarded as propaganda paintings, like shadow play, *Yongle* Palace murals were a display art designed to reveal teachings and appeal to the hearts and minds of people. Although the murals are similar in technique to Chinese ink paintings, Chinese ink paintings were for the appreciation of the academic class and elite.

The *Yongle* Palace murals cover a total of 1,000 square metres, date from 1325, slightly before the European Renaissance. The most significant characteristic of this mural lies in its use of line. It inherited the rigour of the lines of the *Tang* Dynasty (618-907), with the influence of calligraphic styles being apparent and strong.

Figure 4.36 (a) on the left is a part of the mural of *Yongle* Palace, and (b) the scenery board of shadow play on the right. Comparing the lines of the two artworks, one can find that the lines of the shadow puppets and the mural paintings are actually quite similar, even though shadow play were made by using knives instead of brushes and carving instead of using the drawing techniques, free flow lines appeared in both artworks.

In addition, the intensity and fading technique of the colouring of both artworks uses the technique of colour transitions to create layers of colours, which all of which are techniques learned from murals and Chinese ink paintings.



Figure 4.36: Comparison of the strokes and colors of the murals and shadow scenes of the *Yongle Palace*

Source : (a) National Arts Archive. *Yunduozi* (cloud likeness board, detail), Registration No. SXY1, China Shadow Play Digital Museum.

4.8 A Case Study - Adopting Iconography in the Study of Traditional Folk Art Form

According to the influential art historian Panofsky (1970), “In a work of art, 'form' cannot be divorced from 'content': the distribution of colour and lines, light and shade, volumes and planes, however delightful as a visual spectacle, must also be understood as carrying a more-than-visual meaning” (p.168). Kopp-Schmidt (2004) argued that the aim of Iconography is to describe or reconstruct the significance of images that have been forgotten over time so that layperson and non-specialists in art history can understand the substance of these works of art.

To better understand the cultural contexts of shadow play, Iconographic was used for in-depth analysis. Iconography is a way for art historians to deeply interpret

Renaissance paintings deeply. Panofsky (1970) contributed his vast knowledge to the study of numerous topics, mostly to the study of Renaissance Art. Iconography is not only for the Renaissance arts but also could be used in analysing other works of visual art. The study of Iconography is divided into three steps, namely description (Pre-iconography), analysis (Iconography), and interpretation (Iconology)i.e., the process of understanding the object of study from the superficial visual description to the content analysis, and then to the interpretation of the image as a cultural symbolism.

In relation to the subject of this research, the visual style of the shadow puppets is directly about the first and second steps of Iconography, in which the research key focus is more on the "Form". However, it is necessary to advance the research into the third step (Iconology) through a case study to gain a deeper understanding of the cultural symbolic "Meaning", which the cultural symbolism is shown by shadow puppets. This is because the images of traditional folk art are often rich in icons and symbols, which are elements closely, related to local culture, religion, customs and many more life influences. The power of Iconology is that it is a method to interpret the symbols and meanings in the images and derive the cultural connotation within the traditional folk art works.

The Kelantan shadow puppet, *Siri Rama* was selected as a sample study for this section (Figure 4.37).

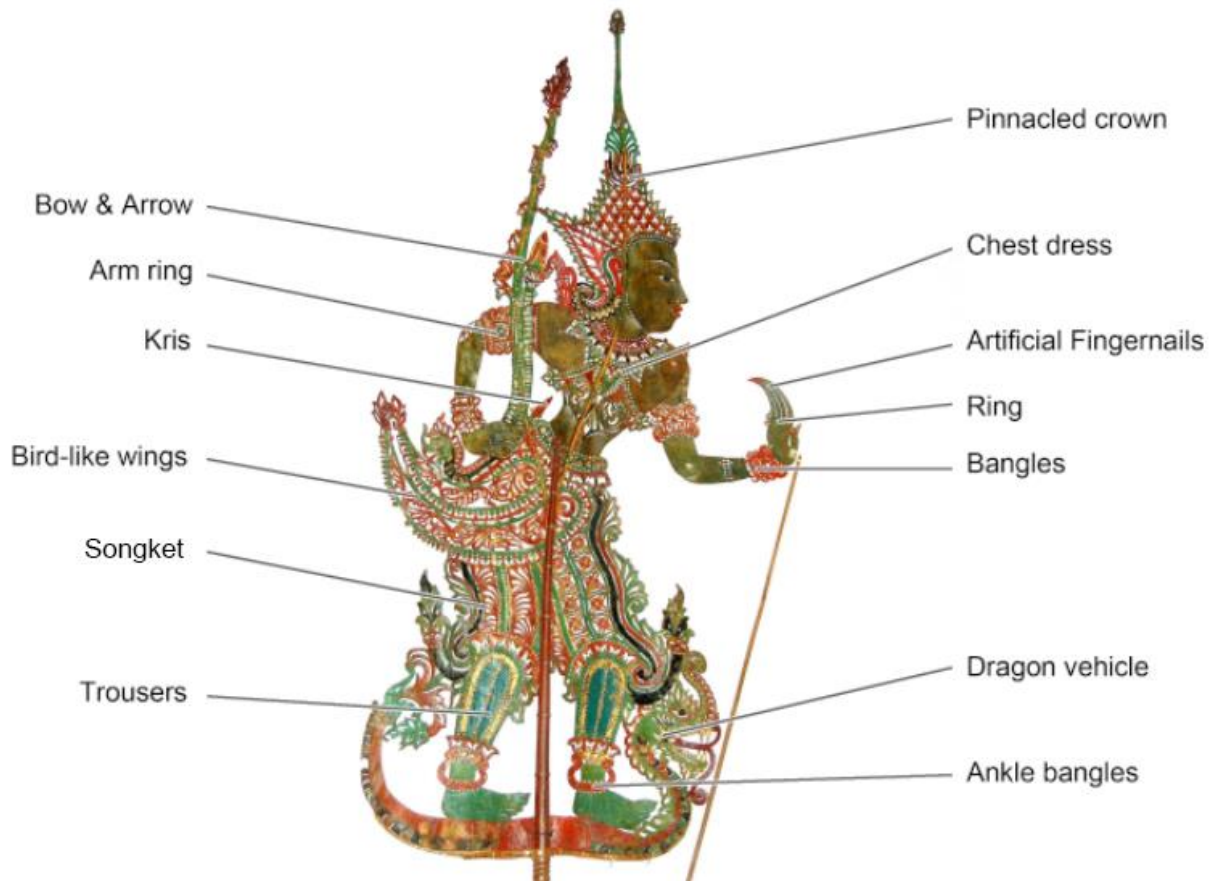


Figure 4.37: Seri Rama

Source: Seri Rama, As1970, 02.109, British Museum

4.8.1 Description– Pre-Iconography

This is a typical, intricately decorated Kelantan shadow puppet. It has the same body proportion as the Shaanxi one. *Siri Rama* wears a pinnacle crown with a pointed top. The body is leaning slightly forward, with the head slightly stretched out in front, and the gaze is levelled at the front. One arm is movable, with the palm in an inward curved position, and a ring is worn on the hand. The other hand is fixed as one with the whole body, and this hand holds a long, curved stick with a botanical design on it, the end of which is morphed into a dragon's head.

The upper half of the body is bare, and the chest is covered with an ornament. Both hands wear bangles on the upper arms and wrists. The waist is slightly curved, and there are two teardrop-shaped motifs. The bottom wear is divided into two parts too, with the upper part reaching the length of the knee and the lower part reaching the length of the ankle. The bottom wear is carved with very intricate motifs, they are some teardrop-shaped and square-shaped motifs. The ankles also wear bangles. The figure stands on a curved, dragon vehicle.

The skin is all green, but as the face, body and arms have faded, only the feet retain their original colour. The rest of the adornments are mostly made up of two colours, red and green, with a little bit of blue and black. The green of the decorated parts is not the same as the green of the body, which is more yellowish.

4.8.2 Analysis - Iconography

From the storytelling, one would know that *Siri Rama* is the protagonist in the *Ramayana* story, and he is depicted as a moral, intelligent, and strong man. This is one of the story's two similar royal male characters, and the other one is *Lakshmana*. The two characters are similar in physics, only the weapons held in their hands differ. The weapons held in the hands are arrows and a bow, which is the symbol of *Siri Rama*, and the head of the bow is a dragon's head, which indicates status, which is the symbol of royalty (Jufry & Rahman, 2018).

The arrowhead is next to the crown, the arrow and the bow are designed together to show the interdependence of the two in war. According to the narrative, the arrow is magical and would return back on its own after it has been released, and the arrow cannot be released if the bow is not present. The plant decoration on the top of the bow also

indicates that the material used for the bow is a plant. Yousof & Khor (2017, p. 20) stated that behind the neck on the ground shoulder is a mystical flower that can detoxify any poisonous harm. It also shows that Siri Rama could not be harmed as he is well protected.

His posture, with a *kris* (a Malay sword) in one hand, orientated parallel to his body, shows its connection to Java shadow puppets. The slight stooping posture is a strong reflection that the figure is strongly influenced by the *Nora* dance of southern Thailand (as shown by Figure 4.32), and his feet, separate and in profile, also demonstrate a connection to Java shadow puppets. The pinnacle crown and artificial fingernails also represent a strong associate with the *Nora* dance. The two teardrop-shaped at the waist is a pair of wings, since according to the *Nora* dance, it tells of a prince attempting to save a half-human, half-bird princess. As for the bottom wear a sarong made from a *songket*, stretching from the waist to knee length. This is a traditional Malay dressing dress originating from Royal Malay.

Siri Rama is noted to be standing on top of the *Naga*. *Naga* is common in traditional Southeast Asian art, but in a different shape, which is associated with water, so it is believed that the *Naga* governs rain and good harvests, as well as protecting people and treasures from harm. As Widayat (2022) stated that the *Naga* in Javanese and Balinese batik motif has some connection with the Chinese dragon, but without legs, with an elephant's trunk and a snake's tongue.

4.8.3 Interpretation –Iconology

From the above analysis, there is various evidence of multicultural integration to be found in the character *Siri Rama*. First of all the green colour of the skin clearly shows the influence of Hinduism, in fact in Hindu mythology, blue is the colour of God because it is

the colour of the sky, and it represents holiness, eternity and omnipresence (Olson, 2007). However, in the shadow puppet silhouette, the hide of the cattle is originally yellow and when combined with the blue colour, it became green.

Secondly, the *songket* in the costume proves that the shadow puppet design has been influenced by the Malay culture, ever since the *Ramayana* epic was introduced to the Malay Peninsula. Moreover, the costume is traditionally worn only by royalty and their families, a symbolising of *Siri Rama's* royal status.

Siri Rama's gesture is from Pataka Mudra, A single-hand gesture that is used to portray the action of blessing in Indian classical dance, which symbolizes blessing. *Naga* is also a symbol of royalty, the dragon represents power and Hindu religious beliefs suggest that the dragon is an animal of Vishnu, who rides it on water such as rivers, lakes, and oceans. Therefore, the image of *Siri Rama*, a descendant of Vishnu, is carved as riding the *Naga*. This also reflects the power this figure wields due to his royal status. The shape of the dragon also symbolises of royalty and power in both East and Southeast Asia. Chinese legends say that the dragon is in charge of rainfall and ensuring a good harvest, so cloud and water motifs around it always accompany the dragon's shape in Chinese shadow.

The shape of the feet in Kelantan shadow puppet could also be taken as a barometer of the political environment as shown in Figure 4.38, which shows the feet of three different *Siri Rama* from different periods. In fact, it should be noted that the samples depicted in Figure 4.38 are all taken from three different museums. Generally, folk art is anonymous, and it is difficult to determine when it was made. Of the three shadow works here, only Figure 4.38(c) is labelled with the date of production. However, according to Jufry (M. J.Yusoff, personal communication, Aug 20, 2023), the three shadows are from different periods, i.e., based on the quality of the work, it was deduced that they were

likely made in Pre-20th century for Figure 4.38(a), Early 20th century for Figure 4.38 (b) and Figure 4.38 (c) being Mid-20th century.

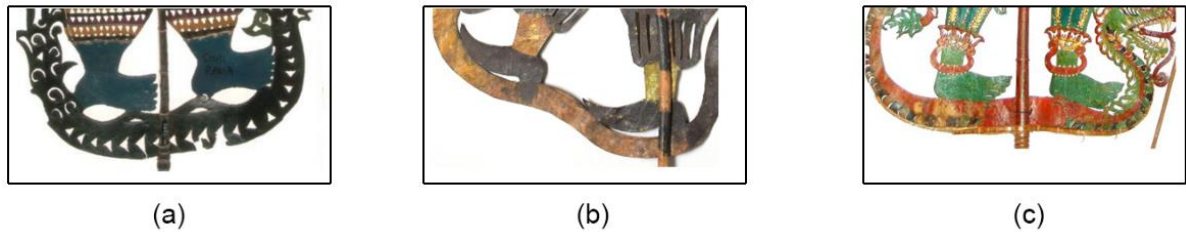


Figure 4.38: *Siri Rama's feet*

Source: (a) Accession No.: XXXX-05293, Asian Civilisations Museum. (b) Accession No.: IS.127-1986, Victoria and Albert Museum. (c) As1970, 02.109, British Museum.

The design changes that occurred from Figure 4.38 (a) to (c) clearly show the evolution of the social environment. Figure 4.38 (b) shows that the bare foot changed significantly as it wore shoes. Whereas earlier, the foot of Figure 4.38 (a) appeared to be rough and naive in shape. The mid-twentieth century foot of Figure 4.38 (c) added some detail and the shape of the foot was more realistic. The earlier depiction of *Siri Rama's* tends to be bare feet, in line with the epic story, and Figure 4.38 (b) resembles the wearing of shoes. This could be because of that time period. Kelantan was in the hands of the British and the government situation then indirectly influenced the design, for example the influence of British aristocratic costumes was thus influenced and carried over into the design of Kelantan's shadow puppet.

4.9 Endeavours to Revitalise Traditional Art Forms in the Modern Era

Traditional art forms such as shadow play are a cultural heritage and integral part of history. Many traditional ethnic cultures are facing extinctions. Efforts must be made to preserve them. Utilizing the visual elements in a modern context is one way of preserving these cultural treasures, preventing them from gradually fading away.

Furthermore, applying modern technology and innovatively giving a new form, looks and visual effects may make it more captivating. In addition, applying interactive technology in creating aesthetics or entertainment may expose it to modern audiences, catch the attention, and bridge the gap between traditional and contemporary preferences, thus promoting broader appreciation.

Hence, by integrating shadow play into modern artistic expressions in modern media, its relevance could be extended and to ensure that the essence and cultural significance of the tradition are not lost. This preservation contributes to the continuity of cultural identity for future generations.

True, traditional art forms are not as attractive anymore for new generations. If nothing is done, they will be forgotten very soon. By infusing visual elements of shadow play with modern aesthetics, it has a potential to become a dynamic and relevant form accepted by modern audiences, i.e., through innovative expressions and creative inspirations. Consequently, more modern interactive cultural exchange and collaboration, this can open doors for cross-disciplinary partnerships, allowing for the fusion of different artistic styles and traditions.

For example, artists could rekindle interests by adapting traditional storytelling methods, characters, and themes in a modern context, using modern technological and media means, and collaborating with contemporary artists, being open to incorporating diverse elements, can all create a rich and innovative tapestry, that will be more fitting to today's tastes, by attracting existing enthusiasts' attention, as well as drawing in those who may be mesmerised by it, especially when they have not previously engaged with this traditional art form.

The adoption of modern technology integrating augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR), are all feasible approaches and ideas, capable of extending the relevance and ensuring the longevity and accessibility of traditional art forms to the current and next generations. This approach, while embracing the past, ensures the traditional vibrancy is passed down for the next generations.

4.9.1 Adapting Traditional Storytelling Characters, and Themes

Fusion WK (Fusion Wayang Kulit) is an establishment based in Malaysia, it is the brainchild of Tintoy Chuo and Take Huat. In 2012, collaborating with the 13th accredited Master Puppeteer (*Tok Dalang*), Mr. Pak Dain, who serves as the chief engineer, the team aims to engage and captivate the younger generation's interests in this century-old tradition. They breathed new life into the age-old art by drawing inspiration from a diverse range of subject matters, thereby infusing fresh vitality into it with the current generation. (Shalini, Nov 2, 2015).

For example, they ingeniously incorporate iconic figures from contemporary pop culture, including beloved characters from Star Wars, DC superheroes like Batman and Wonder Woman, martial arts legend Bruce Lee, musician Ed Sheeran, sci-fi entities like Predator, and Japanese mecha such as Evangelion and Gundam's Zaku, along with Tokusatsu favourites like Ultraman and Kamen Rider (Figure 4.39), making them as puppet characters with new storylines.



Figure 4.39: Works of Fusion WK

Source: <https://theedgemalaysia.com/article/fusion-wayang-kulit>



Figure 4.40: Gallery of Fusion WK

Source: <https://www.fusionwayangkulit.com/gallery>

A careful observation as shown in Figure 4.40 revealed that the visual style of Kelantan shadow puppets is present, e.g. the repetitive use of dot shapes. Their innovative approach has garnered international attention and recognition from the official Star Wars channel. The Fusion WK team has also showcased their performances on the global stage, captivating audiences in Singapore, Thailand, China, Austria, and Germany.

4.9.2 Integrating Shadow Puppet into Contemporary Art

Turning the attention to China, Wang Tianwen is a Shaanxi shadow play master and an inheritor of China's intangible cultural heritage. Chinese contemporary artist Wu

Jianan and Wang collaborated and successfully showcased their installation *Continuum-Generation by Generation* at the 2018 57th Venice Biennale art exhibition (Figure 4.41). The exhibit received many accolade as it is the first time that Chinese shadow puppets were exhibited at the Venice Biennale, one of the world's three major contemporary art exhibitions.

The multi-media interactive artwork that combines traditional elements with modern light and shadow art created a new creative space. Wang Tianwen said that as a humble craftsman and inheritor of ancient tradition, it was a pleasant and refreshing experience to be able to see the traditional art being transformed and innovated to become a contemporary art. He agreed that shadow puppets and their artists should think outside the box, to try more innovative ideas and changes so that they can be revitalised and not be forgotten.



Figure 4.41: Continuum-Generation by Generation Exhibition

Source: https://www.sohu.com/a/142546219_114886

4.9.3 Boosting Shadow Play Entertainment by Innovative Technology

Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) are two technological advancements that hold great potential for the arts today. They are the latest visual technology that hold great potential and is crucial for boosting traditional art forms' vitality. It is a hot research topic and both China and Malaysia are making notable attempts to find the convergence between traditional art and modern technology, as it provides an added dimension which enhances the immersive experience of shadow play, and at the same time extends their presences.

Taking the classic tale of *Tian Ji Races His Horse* as an example—a widely known historical story in China and a classical tale in shadow play repertoire appeared in 2019 China Tourism Industry Expo, when participants get to wear VR goggles and be transported into the world of the shadow play (Figure 4.42). They not only get up close with the traditional characters, and horses and chariots vividly presented before their eyes, the participants could also virtually mount a horse and engage in a race with King from Chinese history (Mao & Zhang, Sept 9, 2019). In this case, the experience was immersive, and they also get to appreciate the traditional shadow play and the art itself. In this case, it is noted that the shadow play, a two-dimensional art form, gained expressive power by incorporating AR and VR technologies.



Figure 4.42: Shadow Play Interactive Game Experience on Site

Source: https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_8257740

Likewise, in Malaysia, Telekom Malaysia Berhad (TM) under its "Mengukir Malaysia" initiative, i.e. the objective is to celebrate, preserve and sustain local culture through cutting-edge technology, has enlisted the founder of Fusion WK, Tintoy Chuo, to create shadow play that is infused with VR technology (Figure 4.43). This innovative approach narrates stories of Malaysian national heroes, inspiring Malaysians to unite and stand up as one. It was also videoed, aiming to enable Malaysians of all ages to appreciate better the diverse heritage of Malaysia (Telekom Malaysia Berhad, Sept 1, 2022).



Figure 4.43: Interactive Wayang Kulit 360 °Experience Project

Source: <https://tm.com.my/mengukirmalaysia/wayangkulit.html>

4.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter, spanning seven sections, intricately examined the craftsmanship, performance, visual elements, design principles, visual style, cultural influence, and innovative development dimensions of Kelantan and Shaanxi shadow puppets. By integrating Cultural Anthropology and Iconography, it analysed and interpreted the socio-cultural context and visual styles of Kelantan and Shaanxi shadow puppets. The chapter enhanced the understanding of deeper meanings and cultural connotations embedded in the visual styles from a cross-cultural perspective through comparative analysis.

This chapter commenced with a comparative examination of craftsmanship and performances in the two regions, followed by an in-depth analysis of the visual elements, design principles, and, subsequently, a comparison of the visual stylistic features of shadow puppets. The research employed a Cultural Anthropological approach, establishing connections between Kelantan and Shaanxi Shadow puppets, Thai *Nora* Dance, Indian and Javanese Shadow Puppets, stone carvings, and Chinese temple murals. This approach provided a broader perspective on the influences and cultural exchanges that have contributed to shaping the visual styles of shadow puppets in both regions.

The study utilized Iconography, inspired by Panofsky, to comprehensively understand shadow puppets' visual style. A case study employing Iconography facilitated a nuanced exploration of the Kelantan shadow puppet, *Siri Rama*. The research decoded the symbolism embedded in *Siri Rama*'s form through meticulous Pre-iconographic description and subsequent Iconographic analysis, revealing multicultural influences that have shaped its visual representation.

Finally, the chapter explored, through three case studies, the possibilities of innovative development of shadow in modern era with the support of the latest technology in order to preserve cultural heritage in Malaysia and China.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Overview

This chapter begins with a research summary, outlining the key achievements of this study. By accomplishing three main research objectives—analysing the similarities and differences in visual styles, investigating social and cultural influences, and exploring practises emphasizing cultural identity in a globalized context—the research delves deep into the visual characteristics of shadow puppets in Kelantan and Shaanxi. Subsequently, it discusses the contributions made by this study to the body of knowledge, encompassing research findings, innovative research methodologies, and the encouragement of exploring the integration of traditional art forms with modern technology. Lastly, the chapter presents suggestions for future research, offering valuable directions for preserving and maintaining traditional arts.

5.2 Summary of Research

This comprehensive research adopted a qualitative, inductive approach. It explored the visual styles, craftsmanship, and cultural dimensions of Kelantan and Shaanxi shadow puppets, employing a multidisciplinary approach that integrates elements and principles of the arts, Gestalt theory, Cultural Anthropology, and Iconography. A four-phase research plan was used, encompassing historical reviews, sample selection, visual data extraction, comparative analyses, cultural context interpretation, and cutting-edge technology integration, with the clear objective of preserving cultural identity and promoting diversity.

A comprehensive review of the historical background, religious context, current research status, and existing challenges pertaining to shadow puppetry performances in the two regions was first conducted. This approach facilitated a holistic understanding of the art of shadow puppetry in Kelantan and Shaanxi. Subsequently, the theoretical framework and research methods employed in the study were elucidated, along with an explanation of the research design and details regarding data collection.

Detailed examinations of craftsmanship and performances in Kelantan and Shaanxi shed light on the unique processes shaping these traditional art forms. Comparative analyses revealed distinctions in hide treatment, carving techniques, stage setups, performance, and storytelling styles, offering a comprehensive view of the cultural and technical intricacies involved.

The analysis of visual elements and design principles focused on exploring lines, shapes, colours, and space. Augmented by applying Gestalt law and design principles, provided a theoretical framework for analysing the visual styles of Kelantan and Shaanxi shadow puppets. The comparative analyses underscored differences in line characteristics, shapes, colours, and space usage, enhancing our understanding of the distinct visual languages in each tradition.

Cultural Anthropology served as a valuable lens through which to explore the socio-cultural contexts and influences on the visual styles of Kelantan and Shaanxi shadow puppets. This part of the study investigated the mutual influences of Nora dance, Javanese shadow play, Indian shadow play, Chinese traditional murals, and stone carving in the two regions. The integration of Iconography showcased through a case study of Siri Rama unveiled layers of cultural symbolism and meanings within the visual elements, enhancing a nuanced understanding of these traditional folk art forms.

The research concluded with exploring three cases that combined the latest technology, popular culture, and shadow puppet visual styles. These cases revealed efforts in contemporary society to utilize shadow play to preserve diversity and enhance cultural identity.

5.3 Research Finding

This comparative study delved into the distinctive visual styles of Kelantan and Shaanxi shadow puppets, exploring the intricate craftsmanship, shadow play performances, and underlying cultural influences that shape their unique characteristics. The research revealed nuanced findings that contribute to a deeper understanding of the visual styles within these traditional art forms.

In Kelantan, the craftsmanship emphasized intricate treatment on the dry hide, detailed chiselling, and vibrant traditional colouring. The use of cattle hides and meticulous processes result in puppets with elaborate patterns and vibrant hues. Conversely, Shaanxi employed treated cattle hide, carving techniques on the moist hide, and natural pigments, creating modular puppets with simpler outlines and subdued colors. The distinctive craftsmanship in each region significantly contributed to the visual divergence observed in their respective shadow puppets.

The characteristics of Kelantan's shadow play performance involved storytelling, with *Tok Dalang* manipulating the puppets improvisationally on stage while also taking on the role of a singer. The performances were relatively lengthy. In Shaanxi, shadow play performances typically involved specialized troupes consisting of five people, featuring intricate characters' movements and showcasing precise manipulation of roles. The

repertoire was diverse, and the use of modular puppets allowed for a greater variety of characters. The distinct performance styles contributed to the different visual impact.

Visual elements played a pivotal role in distinguishing the shadow puppet styles of Kelantan and Shaanxi. Due to the different puppet-making processes, Kelantan preferred continuous patterns with dots, while Shaanxi used longer and smooth lines. Kelantan's puppets exhibited intricate outlines, vibrant colours, and complex patterns, showcasing influences from Javanese shadow play and Thai Nora dance. In contrast, Shaanxi's puppets featured more straight forward outlines, less saturated colours, and intricate internal patterns, reflecting influences from traditional Chinese opera, other folk art and murals. The visual elements served as a visual language that communicated the cultural influences embedded in the puppets.

The study uncovered the socio-cultural contexts influencing the visual style of shadow puppets. Kelantan's visual style reflected influences from Javanese and Thai cultures, evident in posture, body proportions, and vibrant colours. Shaanxi's visual style drew from traditional Chinese opera and Taoism, shaping the overall simplicity and subdued palette. The intricate relationship between cultural background and visual style emphasized the significance of cultural anthropology in understanding the unique aesthetics of shadow puppets. The findings showcased how socio-cultural contexts shape the distinct visual languages within these traditional art forms. The incorporation of Iconography added depth to the understanding of the layered meanings embedded in the visual narratives, contributing to the preservation and appreciation of these unique cultural heritages.

5.4 Achieving the Research Objectives

The three research objectives were effectively accomplished by:

5.4.1 Determining Visual Style Variations in Shadow Puppets from Kelantan and Shaanxi

This research meticulously analysed specific visual elements of Kelantan and Shaanxi shadow puppets, including character design features, multi-angle perspectives, pattern design, and colour usage. It underscored the differences between the two in terms of visual style, body proportions, the complexity of contours, and colour application, providing in-depth insights into their distinct characteristics.

5.4.2 Investigating How Social and Cultural Influences Intricately Mold the Visual Style

Cultural Anthropology applied to the research of visual styles. Examination of how both Kelantan and Shaanxi shadow puppets integrated and absorbed diverse artistic traditions, emphasizing the significance of shadow puppetry as a carrier of cultural memory. Through the analysis procedures of Iconography, the research explored societal changes related to folk art.

5.4.3 Exploring Ways of Emphasizing Cultural Identity in a Globalized Context

The research explored the challenges of preserving traditional arts in a contemporary context and discussed how to integrate the latest technologies, such as Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) to enhance the appeal and accessibility of traditional art forms. Additionally, it examined the possibilities of combining popular culture with contemporary artistic forms and shadow puppetry. The practical application of

this concept was illustrated through examples like the Fusion WK team and the artwork of Wang Tianwen.

5.5 Contributions to the Body of Knowledge

This study contributed to three main aspects of innovative methodology, key findings, and the preservation of cultural diversity.

The research introduced an innovative interdisciplinary approach, diverging from conventional methods. By integrating Cultural Anthropology and Iconography, it pioneered a structured analysis of visual styles, offering a novel framework for interpreting symbols and meanings. The inclusion of comparative cultural analysis extended the understanding of the evolution of traditional visual art.

The research illuminated the distinctive visual styles of Kelantan and Shaanxi shadow puppets, providing in-depth insights into their craftsmanship, performances, and cultural influences. It offered a nuanced understanding, enriching our comprehension of the unique characteristics embedded in traditional art forms.

By emphasizing the significance of traditional visual art forms, the research significantly contributed to the preservation of cultural diversity. Through unique perspectives, artistic languages, and historical narratives, it inspired the younger generation to uphold their cultural identity. Advocating the continued practice and adaptation of traditional art forms, the study served as a preventive measure against cultural erosion in the era of globalization.

5.5.1 Innovative Research Approach to Traditional Visual Art Form

Traditional research methods in the study of visual style often adhere to certain established paradigms such as formalism, historical analysis, artist-centric perspectives, mono-disciplinary, and mainstream aesthetic viewpoints. This conventional approach might be characterized by its emphasis on the formal elements of artworks, historical contexts, individual artists, single-discipline methodologies, and adherence to prevailing aesthetic norms within specific periods or regions.

This study adopted an innovative interdisciplinary research approach, providing a creative approach to the in-depth analysis of traditional visual art forms. Grounded in the theoretical frameworks of Cultural Anthropology and Iconography, and the innovation included the following aspects.

Cultural Anthropology Analysis of Visual Styles:

Employing Cultural Anthropology for the analysis of visual styles allows the researcher to unveil the aesthetics and values of different cultures. This method facilitated a deeper understanding of the cultural origins of traditional art forms, showcasing how these forms reflect the social changes within specific ethnic groups and the diversity of regional cultures. By exploring visual styles through the lens of Cultural Anthropology, the study provided a nuanced examination of the intricate symbolic systems preserving cultural memory.

Iconographic Approach:

The utilization of Iconography is a distinctive feature of the research methodology, dividing the in-depth analysis of art forms into three stages: description, analysis, and interpretation. This structured approach offered researchers a framework for interpreting

symbols and meanings embedded in visual elements. Through a systematic examination of visual symbols and elements in traditional art forms of shadow puppets, the study delved into the cultural connotations and symbolic richness present in these artworks.

Comparative Cultural Analysis:

A crucial innovation lay in the incorporation of comparative cultural analyses. This approach established connections between diverse folk art traditions, illustrating the mutual borrowing that occurs in their developmental processes. The study expanded beyond singular origins by exploring the multicultural dynamics influencing visual styles, presenting a comprehensive understanding of traditional visual art's evolution.

In contrast to conventional approaches, this approach offered a holistic framework for unravelling the complexities of traditional art, connecting form and content within cultural symbolism. Rather than just focusing on formal visual elements, it also delved into cultural memory, collective symbolism, and the dynamic interplay of diverse influences within traditional art. This research provided a richer understanding of the intricate relationships between form and cultural content.

5.5.2 Preserving Diversity for the Future

As Russell (2004) stated that: "Diversity is essential to happiness" (p.480). Cultural diversity stands as a global treasure, enriching all of humanity. The essence of this study lay in its contribution to preserving cultural diversity, mainly through preserving traditional art forms. By offering unique perspectives, artistic languages, and historical narratives, the study aimed to inspire the younger generation to maintain their cultural identity. Focusing on traditional visual art forms, such as shadow play, the research actively contributed to safeguarding the richness and uniqueness of cultures.

Traditional art forms are not mere relics of the past; they represent a living heritage passed down through generations. Preserving these art forms ensures that diverse cultural expressions of various communities are not lost but cherished and handed down to the future.

The study endeavoured to bridge the generation gap by exploring the application of the latest technology, presenting traditional art forms in ways that resonate with contemporary audiences. This effort helped deepen the understanding and appreciation of traditional art among the younger generation, connecting them to their cultural roots. Engaging with traditional art provides a sense of identity and belonging, often carrying a collective memory, values, and traditions. Preserving them fosters pride and connection to cultural heritage.

In an era of rapid globalization and cultural homogenization, unique cultural expressions are at risk of fading away. By emphasizing the importance of traditional visual art forms, the study encourages people to continue practicing and adapting these art forms, ensuring that the global society continues to benefit from diverse cultural expressions. This serves as a preventive measure against cultural erosion.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Research

Future research could investigate efforts and challenges related to the preservation of intangible cultural heritage associated with Kelantan and Shaanxi shadow play is recommended. Evaluate the effectiveness of existing measures for safeguarding cultural relics and propose sustainable strategies for cultural heritage preservation. Essential to this is a detailed exploration of on-going conservation initiatives, assessing the roles of cultural institutions, local communities, and governmental organizations in protecting these

traditional art forms. Document various programs, workshops, and events organized by Kelantan and Shaanxi to promote, practice, and inherit shadow puppetry heritage. Identify and analyse challenges encountered in the preservation process, including economic constraints, changing societal dynamics, urbanization, and globalization, and examine potential threats to the sustainability of Kelantan and Shaanxi shadow puppetry and their impact on cultural continuity.

Explore new possibilities in merging technology with traditional arts. Particularly in the digital age. Investigate collaborations between shadow puppetry and other art forms such as theatre, music, or contemporary visual arts. Research how these collaborations promote the evolution of visual styles and enhance overall artistic experiences. Analyse the impact of initiatives fostering collaboration between traditional artists and contemporary figures, similar to Fusion WK's amalgamation of popular culture idols. Assess the effectiveness of such collaborations in attracting diverse audiences.

An intriguing avenue for future research involves the application of the innovative research methods employed in this study to other realms of traditional art. The interdisciplinary approach, blending cultural anthropology and iconography, has proven instrumental in unravelling the complexities of shadow puppetry. Extending this methodology to diverse traditional visual art forms, such as traditional wood carving and batik, can enrich our understanding of their cultural nuances.

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APPENDICES

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