



## Research on the Cultural Characteristics of Glove Puppetry Costumes in Southern Fujian

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### Abstract

**Background and Aim:** The Minnan Glove Puppetry, a pivotal element of traditional Chinese opera, boasts a rich costume culture that encapsulates the distinct folk characteristics and aesthetic sensibilities of the Minnan region in Fujian. Despite its cultural richness, the limited regional reach and outdated dissemination methods have significantly hampered its wider recognition and influence. This study is dedicated to a comprehensive exploration of the underexplored aspects of Minnan Glove Puppetry's costume culture, particularly its intricate artistic expressions and profound cultural values within traditional drama contexts. It seeks to propose effective strategies for the protection and inheritance of this invaluable intangible cultural heritage, aiming to bolster its popularity and relevance both locally and globally.

**Materials and Methods:** Employing a blend of comprehensive literature review and meticulous field investigations, this research delves deeply into the unique costume culture of Minnan Glove Puppetry. The team conducted field visits to the Jinjiang Puppet Art Protection and Inheritance Center in Quanzhou, where they employed specialized techniques in data collection, including observational studies and structured interviews, to gather primary data on costume design, production processes, and usage in performances. Concurrently, the study features targeted case analyses of costumes from three emblematic plays: "Da Ming Fu", "Nu Zhong Kui", and "Li Dong Jia Xun An", aiming to highlight their role in cultural narration and their artistic significance.

**Results:** The investigation reveals that Minnan Glove Puppetry costumes transcend mere aesthetic roles, serving as vital conduits for the rich cultural essence of the Minnan region. The intricate patterns, vibrant colors, and distinctive shapes of these costumes do not merely adorn; they communicate deep-rooted historical narratives and cultural values, acting as non-verbal lexicons of Minnan's heritage. Recognizing these costumes as dynamic cultural narrative tools, the study underscores their potential in offering modern audiences novel insights and a richer, more engaging cultural experience.

**Conclusion:** To safeguard and perpetuate the costume culture of Minnan Glove Puppetry, it is imperative to adopt a more action-oriented and forward-looking approach. This includes the integration of costume culture into interdisciplinary research frameworks that meld art, anthropology, and technology, thus enriching the academic and practical understanding of these traditional costumes. Additionally, embedding Glove Puppetry into educational curricula will not only enlighten but also ignite the passion of younger generations for this traditional art. Leveraging digital technologies to preserve and showcase these costumes, coupled with encouraging designers to blend traditional elements into contemporary designs, will significantly enhance their market appeal and cultural resonance. Furthermore, fostering community engagement, international collaborations, and leveraging cultural assets for economic development are critical for amplifying the global presence and impact of Minnan Glove Puppetry.

**Keywords:** Fujian Minnan Glove Puppetry; Costume Culture; Preservation and Inheritance; Intangible Cultural Heritage; Traditional Theater Culture

### Introduction

Fujian Minnan Glove Puppetry, as a significant intangible cultural heritage of the Minnan region in Fujian Province, China, not only embodies profound historical and cultural depth but also represents a gem of traditional Chinese theatrical arts. The Glove Puppetry, with its distinctive performance style and rich artistic content, captivates countless audiences and exerts a profound influence on local culture. Within this traditional art form, costume culture holds a central position, serving not only as a crucial medium for conveying character traits and narrative elements but also as a key component in transmitting cultural information and aesthetic values.





In theatrical performances, costumes function as an irreplaceable visual art form, crucial for shaping character portrayals and enhancing dramatic expression. The costumes of Fujian Minnan Glove Puppetry, characterized by their exquisite craftsmanship, unique style, and rich cultural significance, reflect the distinctive folk customs and aesthetic preferences of the Minnan region. However, with the acceleration of modernization and shifts in the cultural landscape, this traditional art faces challenges in preservation and development. Addressing how to effectively protect and perpetuate the costume culture of Glove Puppetry, while revitalizing it in contemporary society, presents an urgent issue.

This study focuses on examining the characteristics of Fujian Minnan Glove Puppetry costume culture. It aims to explore how to protect and perpetuate this traditional art through a detailed analysis of its historical origins, artistic features, and cultural values, employing modern methods and innovative design approaches. The significance of this research lies in its contribution to enhancing public awareness of the cultural value of Fujian Minnan Glove Puppetry and offering valuable insights and methodologies for the preservation and transmission of other traditional arts.

## Objectives

1. To study the historical evolution and cultural characteristics of Minnan Glove Puppetry
2. To analyze the artistic features and cultural value of Minnan Glove Puppetry costumes
3. To propose strategic suggestions for protecting and innovating Minnan Glove Puppetry costume culture.

## Literature review

### 1. Historical Evolution of Fujian Minnan Glove Puppetry

There is no clear consensus in academic circles regarding the origins and evolution of Southern-style glove puppetry. Two main viewpoints exist:



(1) The Perspective of Bai Yonghua and Hong Shijian: They suggest that Southern-style glove puppetry originated during the Eastern Jin Dynasty, became popular during the Song Dynasty, and reached its peak during the Qing Dynasty (Bai & Hong, 2012).

(2) The Perspective of Ye Mingsheng: He argues that Southern-style glove puppetry originated during the Southern Song Dynasty, became popular during the Ming Dynasty, and flourished during the Qing Dynasty (Ye, 2004).

While there is disagreement about the exact origins of Southern-style glove puppetry, both perspectives agree on its flourishing periods. The following table summarizes the viewpoints and supporting references from the two scholarly camps:

**Table 1** Summary of Scholarly Perspectives on the Origins of Southern-style Glove Puppetry

Scholar Representation	Period	Supporting Literature	Viewpoint
Bai Yonghua Hong Shijian	Eastern Jin	"Shiyi Ji" records: "In the southern edge, there is the country of Fulou, whose people are skilled in intricate changes... sometimes performing hundreds of plays in the palm, flexibly twisting and turning between the fingers. Human figures vary in size, from several inches to a few inches, with gods and monsters appearing suddenly, exquisitely in style..." (Wang, 2012)	The description in the text is similar to later "finger puppetry" performance forms.
	Five Dynasties	"Hua Shu·Hai Yu" by Tang Qiao: "Observing puppetry, there is no doubt" (Tang, 2009)	Suggests that puppet performances existed in Quanzhou, Minnan,

Scholar Representation	Period	Supporting Literature	Viewpoint
			during the Five Dynasties.
	Tang Dynasty	 <p>Figure 1 Dunhuang Mogao Caves, Cave 31, mural fragment (Ouyang, 2017)</p>	The mural depicts two young girls playing with a cloth puppet, whose size is close to later wooden puppets.
	Song Dynasty	 <p>Figure 2 Anonymous Song Dynasty "Jiaoshi Yingxi Tu" (<a href="https://minghuaji.dpm.org.cn/paint/appreciate?id=5a8951d614da4e99b79dbed8d9eb0bea">https://minghuaji.dpm.org.cn/paint/appreciate?id=5a8951d614da4e99b79dbed8d9eb0bea</a>)</p>	The puppet performance depicted in the image is very similar to glove puppetry.
Bai Yonghua Hong Shijian Ye Mingsheng	Southern Song Dynasty	Liu Kezhuang (1187-1269) in his poem "Ji Wei Yuan Ri": "Long sought to remove the play shirt from the performance venue, and there was no cloth bag or staff puppet."	Bai Yonghua believes that Xinhua, originally the same county as Quanzhou, had glove puppetry in the Song Dynasty. Ye Mingsheng interprets "removing the play shirt" as a form or technique in the theater similar to the modern glove puppet.
	Ming Dynasty	"Taiwan Tongzhi," Vol. 6 "Learning Arts" records: "(Glove Puppetry) originated in Quanzhou about 300 years ago, where Liang Binglin, who repeatedly failed the exams, went to Jiuli Xian	The recorded form of puppetry



Scholar Representation	Period	Supporting Literature	Viewpoint
		Gong Temple one day. The deity held his hand and wrote: Success is in your palm. Waking from the dream, he was delighted, thinking it was a sure success. He saw a neighbor operating puppets, was inspired, carved wooden puppets, and performed them in the village." (Zeng, 1999)	matches the modern glove puppetry.
	Ming Dynasty	"Yongchun County Records," Vol. 18, Cultural Records, records: "During the Ming Tianqi period, Yongchun had two puppet troupes: one was Li Shun and his son's glove puppetry in Taiping Village; the other was Zhang Sen and his brothers' string puppetry in Qingyuan Village." (Yongchun County Records, 1990)	Documented in contemporary county records, proving that glove puppetry was popular in Minnan during the Ming Dynasty.
	Qing Dynasty	"Jinjiang County Records, Vol. 72 "Customs and Ballads" records: Wooden head plays, commonly known as puppetry. Recently, there has also been palm manipulation, commonly known as glove puppetry." (Zhou, 1990)	In the 30th year of the Qianlong reign (1691), glove puppetry officially appeared in Jinjiang County Records, showcasing it as an artistic genre.

In summary, the viewpoint of Bai Yonghua and Hong Shijian, proposing that glove puppetry originated during the Eastern Jin Dynasty, appears more accurate. However, their assertion that glove puppetry existed in Quanzhou during the Five Dynasties lacks precise evidence, as the cited documents do not explicitly refer to the puppetry form as palm puppetry. Additionally, the Tang and Song Dynasty pictorial references, while showing puppet shapes similar to later string puppets, do not provide direct evidence linking these depictions to the Minnan region. Nevertheless, the Southern Song Dynasty poetry referenced by both scholars suggests that glove puppetry existed in Quanzhou during that period. Ming and Qing Dynasty historical records further substantiate the development of Southern-style glove puppetry.

## 2. Artistic Characteristics of Fujian Minnan Glove Puppetry

Fujian Minnan Glove Puppetry has a long history and is one of the main forms of traditional puppetry in Fujian. It features singing in the "Nanqu" style of Quanzhou and integrates elements from other regional performance arts. The repertoire draws heavily from traditional string puppetry and Liyuan opera, and its music blends the Min puppetry tune with selections from Liyuan opera and Nanyin. These characteristics highlight the strong connection between the art form and the region's traditional culture, deeply rooted in the daily life of the local people.

### 2.1 Fusion of Singing and Language

Performed in the Quanzhou dialect, Fujian Minnan Glove Puppetry combines traditional storytelling with the musical styles of Min puppetry, Liyuan opera, and Nanyin. The art places great

emphasis on vocal expression, focusing on two key aspects: varying tone and emotion to reflect the characters' feelings, and using lively, colloquial language to convey personality (Yan, 2021). Singers adhere to precise rhythmic patterns, with five distinct tempos, ranging from slow and measured beats to rapid ones, contributing to the dynamic nature of performances.

## 2.2 Diverse Role Types

Scholars differ on how to classify the roles in this puppetry. Li Rongzong identifies four main types: "Sheng" (male roles), "Dan" (female roles), "Jing" (painted face roles), and "Za" (miscellaneous roles), with 28 subcategories (Li, 1962). Bai Yonghua and Hong Shijian expand on this, classifying roles into six categories, adding supernatural figures such as gods and monsters, with over 240 specific roles (Bai & Hong, 2012).

## 2.3 Exquisite Puppet Head Carving

The puppets consist of a carved head, a cloth costume, a helmet, and props. Each puppet is designed with flexibility in mind, allowing for creativity and artistic expression. Though the heads are only about 1 inch in size, they are intricately detailed and express varied emotions. Quanzhou, with its rich history as a cultural hub along the Maritime Silk Road, has influenced the puppet head designs, often incorporating elements of Buddhist art. The heads reflect the aesthetic style of traditional Quanzhou, maintaining a graceful and subtle artistic charm (Huang, 1996).



**Figure 3** Comparison of the shapes of local Buddha statues and puppet heads in Quanzhou  
**Note:** Chen, 2008

## 2.4 Unique Costume Production Techniques

Puppet costumes are divided into five types—"Mangs," "backs," "capas," "pleats," and "clothes," similar to those in Peking Opera. However, the costumes in Minnan puppetry stand out due to the use of the Jincang embroidery technique, which adds a vivid and intricate quality (Yan & Lu, 2020). Jincang embroidery, originating from the Ming and Qing dynasties, is characterized by the use of gold thread on grosgrain, with patterns often linked to religious or festive motifs. This technique has been a popular form of decoration in Fujian, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia (Chen, 2008).

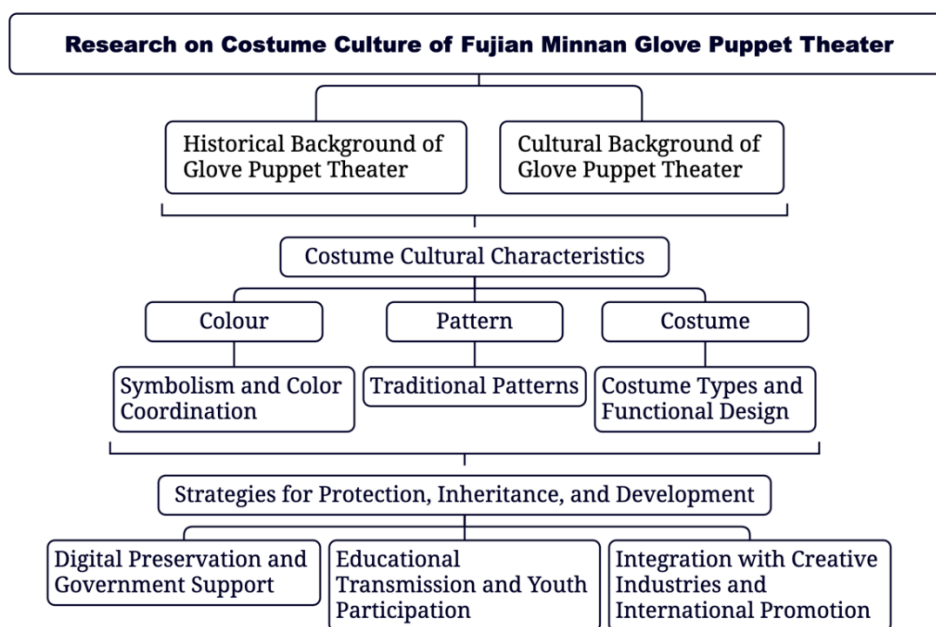




**Figure 4** Jincang embroidery  
**Note:** Photographed by researchers

## Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is shown in Figure 5



**Figure 5** Conceptual Framework  
**Note:** Constructed by the author

## Methodology

### 1. Literature Review Method

The literature review method systematically collects, evaluates, and synthesizes existing research and literature within a specific field. It helps to establish a theoretical framework, identify knowledge gaps, and position the current research within a broader academic context. In this study, extensive literature was gathered and analyzed, including research articles, government publications, news reports, and online resources related to Fujian Minnan glove puppetry. This enabled us to clarify its historical development and deepen our understanding of its cultural significance, economic contributions, and social impact, particularly in terms of preservation and promotion. To enhance the transparency and replicability of the research, the literature selection was based on specific search terms, databases, and inclusion/exclusion

criteria, ensuring comprehensive coverage and high relevance. This study specifically addresses gaps in costume culture research, filling the void in studies of glove puppet costume design, craftsmanship, and symbolism.

## 2. Field Research Method

The field research method investigates social phenomena through scientific approaches and objective observation, allowing for the collection of substantial data for analysis. The goal is not only to uncover truths but also to generate hypotheses that can be tested and refined through systematic design and empirical research. In this study, field investigations focused on the costume culture of Fujian Minnan glove puppetry. The researcher visited performance venues, craft studios, and exhibition spaces, conducting in-depth discussions and observations. Particularly during these visits, the researcher engaged in multiple interviews with glove puppetry artists, craftsmen, and experts, exploring the significance of costumes in artistic creation and performance. These dialogues provided valuable firsthand data, revealing their unique insights into the cultural significance of glove puppet costumes. To ensure the representativeness of the data, a purposive sampling strategy was employed, selecting interviewees with diverse backgrounds and experiences to reflect the current state and challenges of glove puppet costume culture comprehensively. This fieldwork provided key data support for the research and enriched our understanding of the artistry behind puppet costumes.

## Results

### 1. Characteristics of Costumes in Minnan Glove Puppetry

This study examines the costumes used in three classic Minnan glove puppetry works, Li Dong Jia Xun an, Nv Zhong Kui, and Daming Fu, focusing on patterns, colors, and shapes. The key findings are as follows:

#### 1.1 Pattern Characteristics

The costumes in Minnan glove puppetry feature diverse themes, with pattern usage closely reflecting the characters' personalities. These patterns can be categorized into plant patterns, animal patterns, and natural geometric patterns, providing clear distinctions among the types..

##### 1.1.1 Plant Patterns with Auspicious Meanings

The plant patterns commonly found on Minnan glove puppetry costumes (Figure 6) include peonies symbolizing wealth and prosperity, chrysanthemums symbolizing perseverance, and the sacred and dignified Baoxiang patterns, which combine elements of lotus, peony, and chrysanthemum motifs. Each of these plant motifs carries distinct symbolic meanings that align with the identities and social statuses of the characters, contributing to the overall cultural narrative. This reflects the stylized and standardized approach to patterns used in traditional drama costumes.



**Figure 6** Collection of plant patterns

**Note:** drawn by the researcher.

#### 1.1.2 Animal Patterns Representing Power and Status

Animal patterns (Figure 7) are prominently featured in Minnan glove puppetry costumes, particularly on the Mangs, which often display dragon motifs and fish scale designs. Dragons represent supreme power, while fish scales suggest resilience and adaptability. These motifs, though differing slightly in form depending on the character's role, universally symbolize supreme power and formidable ability.



**Figure 7** Collection of Animal Patterns  
**Note:** drawn by the researcher.

### 1.1.3 Natural Geometric Patterns for Embellishment

Natural geometric patterns (Figure 8) exhibit the abstract and rational beauty of traditional art through simple, symmetrical, and regular designs. Common examples include cloud motifs, sea wave patterns, mountain designs, and wavy lines. These geometric designs not only enhance the decorative aesthetics of the costume but also serve as a metaphor for the order and harmony within the cultural system.



**Figure 8** Collection of Natural Geometric Patterns  
**Note:** drawn by the researcher.

## 1.2 Color Characteristics

The study categorizes color use within Minnan glove puppetry according to traditional Chinese color theory and the adaptation of these color schemes in regional practices. As a traditional Chinese performing art, Minnan glove puppetry is heavily influenced by Peking Opera costumes. Its color schemes follow the fundamental principles of traditional Chinese costume design while incorporating local aesthetics, resulting in a unique style.

### 1.2.1 The "Upper and Lower Five Colors" System

The concept of "Upper and Lower Five Colors" is rooted in traditional Chinese color theory, deeply intertwined with ancient China's centralized political structure and religious beliefs. This color system is closely related to Chinese cosmology, particularly the Yin-Yang and Five Elements theory, and extends to various elements such as seasons, directions, internal organs, flavors, and vital energies. The five primary colors (blue, red, yellow, white, and black) and their secondary counterparts (green, red, azure, purple, and yellow) serve as a primitive expression of the cultural worldview.











In traditional costumes, "upper and lower" carry dual meanings. Structurally, "upper" refers to the upper garments and "lower" to the lower garments. Ethically, they signify a social hierarchy, where "upper" pertains to the colors worn by the upper classes, and "lower" to those of the common people. In theatrical costumes, this system diverges somewhat from tradition. The "upper five colors" consist of red, green, black, white, and yellow, while the "lower five colors" include purple, pink, royal blue, lake blue, and fragrant colors (Qi, 1935). These color schemes are adapted within Minnan glove puppetry to reflect



hierarchical status and dramatic performance needs. For instance, the color preferences for iconic figures such as Guan Yu evolved to suit dramatic requirements, which demonstrates the flexibility of the traditional system in responding to artistic and audience demands.

The specific color correspondences for Minnan glove puppetry costumes are adapted according to these considerations, as shown in the following Table 2:

**Table 2** The color system of theatrical costumes, "upper and lower five colors"

Color Attributes	Red	Green	Yellow	Black	White
The upper five colors					
Color Application	(1) Upper clothes (2) Upper-class clothing (3) Highlighting the character's personality characteristics				
Color Attributes	Pink	Royal Blue	Lake Blue	Purple	Fragrant
The lower five colors					
Color Application	(1) Lower clothes (2) Commoner class clothing (3) Highlighting the character's personality characteristics				

**Note:** The above color standards refer to "Analysis on the Formation and Characteristics of the Wearing Rules of the 'Five Colors' of Traditional Peking Opera Costumes" (Cui et al, 2020) and "Opera Costume Design" (Tang, 2000)

### 1.2.2 Principles of Using Colors to Shape Characters

The color palette used in Minnan glove puppetry plays a significant role in character depiction. As shown in Figure 9, green is prominently used in character costumes to symbolize bravery and loyalty, while red conveys festivity and prominence. These qualities frequently appear in the characters from the three selected plays: Li Dong's Fake Patrol Case, Female Champion, and Daming Mansion. Additionally, green is often used as an accent color for Sheng and Dan roles, further elevating its prominence in the costume design.

Yellow primarily appears as a decorative element, used mostly in patterns on clothing. Red, in traditional Chinese culture, symbolizes energy, festivity, and prosperity. Therefore, it is prominently featured during festive occasions or worn by important characters in dramas, either as a main costume color or as decoration. Blue and pink are typically reserved for younger, more vibrant characters, particularly in Dan and Sheng roles, symbolizing their beauty and vitality.

From a chromatic perspective, mid-purity colors dominate the palette, aligning well with the composed and restrained personalities of many characters. The balance between bold and neutral tones ensures that the costumes complement rather than overwhelm the theatrical performance.

Regarding brightness, mid-brightness hues are favored due to their adaptability to stage lighting. These tones provide a balanced, comfortable visual experience for the audience, especially under the dynamic lighting conditions of the theater.

### 1.2.3 Emphasis on Contrasting Color Matching Rules

The color matching in Minnan glove puppetry costumes emphasizes contrast, particularly through the use of complementary and adjacent color schemes. The designers employ contrasts in brightness, saturation, and color temperature to create dynamic visual effects, avoiding monotony. This approach, combining warm and cool tones, allows for dynamic visual contrasts that evoke emotional depth and enhance audience engagement. Light and dark contrasts emphasize the characters' moral qualities or hierarchical status, while combinations of cold and warm colors evoke emotional depth. The balance between color areas also contributes to a harmonious and expressive overall composition.

### 1.3 Costume Modeling Characteristics

The modeling of Minnan glove puppetry costumes can be categorized into five distinct types: Mang, Kao, Pei, Xue (Pleats), and other miscellaneous garments. Each category is linked to the social hierarchy and character role within the play, further reinforcing cultural and symbolic values.



Mang      Kao(male)      Kao(female)      Lao Dan Pei      Xue(female)      Gong Yi

**Figure 10** Clothing Modeling Diagram

**Note:** drawn by the researcher.

#### 1.3.1 Mang

The Mang is the most formal costume in the Minnan glove puppetry, worn by characters of high status or during solemn ceremonies. The robe features a round collar, a large lapel, and is ankle-length, with water embroidery at the bottom symbolizing the sea or rivers. Dragons, whether in full or fragmented forms, adorn the satin fabric, representing authority and power. In the selected plays, both red and black Mangs are featured, symbolizing officials of significant rank. These robes are intricately embroidered with gold and silver threads, enhancing their grandeur.

#### 1.3.2 Kao

Kao, an armor-like costume worn by military generals, evolved from ancient soldiers' armor. Kao can be divided into hard and soft types, with the hard Kao featuring a small flag at the back (resembling the command flags used in ancient warfare). The overall shape includes a round collar, tight sleeves, and a wide waist, designed to give the character an imposing presence on stage. Female Kao are similar in structure, with additional skirts and streamers for decorative effect.

#### 1.3.3 Pei

Pei is a casual robe worn by wealthy or noble characters, marked by its front opening, large collar, and embroidered patterns. These patterns, typically round flowers and folded flowers, are arranged symmetrically on the lapels, shoulders, and sleeves. Male Pei extend to the ankles, while female Pei are shorter, reaching below the knees and worn with skirts.

#### 1.3.4 Xue

Xue, also known as pleats, is the most common type of costume in drama costumes. In glove puppet shows, it is a casual dress that can be worn by characters of all ages and statuses. Xue is divided into male Xue and female Xue. Male Xue has a larger collar that extends down to the ankles. In terms of status, Xue can be classified into martial arts Xue and literary Xue. Martial Xue is often in dark colors, decorated with plant and animal patterns; Literary Xue is mainly worn by scholars and is often adorned with floral designs. Female Xue has a round collar, double-breasted front, and chest ties, and can be divided into two types: floral and plain. Floral female Xue is worn by young ladies, featuring brightly embroidered patterns around the collar and bodice, while plain Xue is worn by elderly women.

#### 1.3.5 Clothing

"Clothing" in Minnan glove puppetry encompasses a wide range of attire, including long and short garments, special costumes for specific roles, and inner garments. Long garments include formal robes, scholar's attire, and palace costumes, while short garments include items like Ma Gua (vests) and



cloaks. Special costumes, such as Bagua robes or monks' robes, are used for specific character types, while inner garments include waistcoats, cloaks, skirts, and colorful pants, serving as important accessories to complete the costume ensemble.

## 2. Cultural Value of Minnan Glove Puppetry Costumes

### 2.1 Historical Value:

Minnan Glove Puppetry, as a form of traditional Chinese drama, is a living repository of historical knowledge and craftsmanship. The costumes used in Minnan Glove Puppetry offer insights into the lifestyles and aesthetic values of various social classes across different historical periods and document the evolution of traditional craft techniques. Specific design elements, such as embroidery styles, fabric choices, and decorative motifs, serve as primary sources of historical information, providing researchers with invaluable material for the study of traditional customs and cultural practices.

As a significant aspect of cultural heritage, Minnan Glove Puppetry costumes have been integral to the development of traditional Chinese drama. The evolution of costume designs through different historical epochs reflects broader shifts in social, political, economic, and cultural contexts, thus serving as a mirror to the changing historical landscape. This provides empirical evidence for the scholarly examination of traditional Chinese drama and social history.

### 2.2 Artistic Value:

The color schemes, pattern designs, and structural elements of Minnan Glove Puppetry costumes are not only aesthetic but are also imbued with cultural significance. These artistic features are emblematic of traditional Chinese aesthetics, particularly the principles of harmony, balance, and symmetry. Analyzing these aesthetic features helps to uncover the deeper relationship between artistic form and cultural content, shedding light on how costume design communicates the personality, emotions, and moral qualities of theatrical characters.

### 2.3 Cultural Symbolic Value:

The design of Minnan Glove Puppetry costumes is imbued with clear cultural symbolism. Variations in costume color, shape, and decoration signify the social status, personality traits, and professional roles of characters. For example, costumes for officials often feature dragon motifs and vibrant colors, symbolizing power and authority, whereas simpler designs and more subdued colors may represent common folk, emphasizing humility or servitude.

Minnan Glove Puppetry costumes transcend their functional role as theatrical props, representing a crucial component of the Minnan region's cultural identity. Through their design and construction, these costumes encapsulate the unique characteristics of Minnan culture, serving both as a medium of cultural preservation and as a reflection of regional identity. The study of these costumes provides insights into the formation and evolution of local cultural heritage.

## 3. Strategic Recommendations for the Protection and Innovation of Minnan Glove Puppetry Costume Culture

### 3.1 Protection and Inheritance of Traditional Craftsmanship:

**Establish a Craft Archive System:** Develop a systematic archive documenting the production processes of Minnan Glove Puppetry costumes, including material sources, procedural workflows, and production techniques. This database should be made accessible to researchers and practitioners to ensure the long-term preservation and sharing of traditional craftsmanship knowledge.

**Establish Inheritance Centers and Training Institutions:** Create specialized centers for the preservation and transmission of traditional craftsmanship, such as craft workshops and training institutions. Engage experienced craft masters and artisans to provide on-site instruction and skill transfer. Through targeted training programs, nurture a new generation of artisans to sustain traditional skills.

**Promote the Master-Apprentice System:** Foster the master-apprentice model to enable the transfer of expertise from veteran craftsmen to emerging practitioners. Provide institutional support and recognition for master artisans, and incentivize their participation in training apprentices through grants and cultural heritage awards.

### 3.2 Cultural Research and Education Promotion:



Conduct Systematic Academic Research: Advocate for comprehensive academic studies on Minnan Glove Puppetry costumes to explore their historical, artistic, and cultural dimensions. Collaborative efforts between universities, cultural institutions, and independent researchers should be promoted to ensure interdisciplinary research and the production of high-quality scholarly work.

Promote the inclusion of hands-on experiences, such as workshops and costume-making demonstrations, to engage students more actively with traditional culture. Facilitate public lectures and exhibitions to broaden societal understanding of traditional cultural practices.

### 3.3 Modern Innovation and Integrated Development:

Encourage Innovative Design: Promote the integration of modern design principles and functional requirements into traditional Minnan Glove Puppetry costume design. Support the exploration of new materials, technologies, and designs that maintain the essence of traditional craftsmanship while catering to modern aesthetic and functional needs, such as for fashion or theatrical productions.

Promote Cross-Border Cooperation: Facilitate collaborations between traditional craftsmanship and contemporary art, design, and technology sectors. These collaborations can result in cross-disciplinary innovations, such as using digital technology to create virtual costume archives or partnering with fashion designers to introduce traditional elements into modern fashion collections.

## Discussion

In the study of the cultural characteristics of Minnan Glove Puppetry costumes, this research presents several notable innovations and addresses key issues in comparison to previous studies. Unlike earlier research, which primarily focused on the artistic performance and theatrical forms of Minnan Glove Puppetry, this study provides a more in-depth exploration of the costumes' cultural characteristics, including their historical, artistic, and symbolic values. By connecting these findings to previous research, this study situates its contributions within the broader field of traditional Chinese puppetry and costume culture, thereby filling critical gaps in the literature. Furthermore, a comparative analysis with other similar research highlights the unique contributions of this study, demonstrating its broader implications for traditional drama studies.

Firstly, this study systematically analyzes the patterns, colors, and design features of Minnan Glove Puppetry costumes, revealing their role in conveying the characters' personalities and social statuses. This research not only addresses a theoretical gap in traditional theatrical costume design but also deepens our understanding of traditional craft aesthetics. In particular, the study highlights how the visual and symbolic elements of the costumes can be used as tools for preserving cultural heritage. By providing practical examples from successful case studies, this research offers actionable strategies for integrating these findings into policy-making, educational programs, and cultural initiatives aimed at preserving this intangible heritage. Secondly, this research innovatively integrates the historical background of the costumes with contemporary preservation needs, proposing specific strategies for protection and innovation. These strategies include systematic documentation and transmission of traditional craftsmanship, as well as modern design innovations and cultural communication methods. This approach not only ensures the costumes' preservation but also encourages their adaptation and innovation in modern contexts, such as digital archiving, virtual exhibitions, and collaborations with contemporary designers. These interdisciplinary strategies provide a forward-looking model for cultural preservation that aligns with modern technological advancements. Additionally, this study emphasizes the sustainable development of cultural heritage by establishing multi-party cooperation mechanisms and formulating sustainable development plans. This approach promotes the continuation and flourishing of traditional culture in the new era. It also addresses the limitations of previous studies, such as the narrow focus on performance art, by providing a broader framework that considers the socio-economic impact of cultural heritage preservation.

In summary, through systematic analysis and innovative protection strategies, this study enriches the understanding of Minnan Glove Puppetry costumes and provides new perspectives and practical references for the protection and innovation of traditional culture. These findings are not only significant for the study





of Minnan Glove Puppetry but also offer valuable experience and insights for the preservation and development of other traditional cultures.

## Conclusion

Based on the above research results, the researchers arrived at the following conclusions:

### 1. Costumes as Dynamic Cultural Narrative Tools:

The costumes of Minnan Glove Puppetry serve not only as the external attire of theatrical characters but also as dynamic tools for narrating cultural stories and expressing values. The study reveals that the patterns, colors, and shapes on these costumes act as non-verbal symbols that convey complex historical narratives and emotional depth. By emphasizing the symbolic meanings embedded in these visual elements, the research highlights how costumes function as living archives of Minnan culture, preserving its essence while adapting to modern contexts. This dynamic interpretation of costumes provides a novel perspective for modern audiences, enhancing cultural engagement and understanding through non-verbal communication.

### 2. Preservation and Modern Interpretation of Cultural Value:

The cultural value of Minnan Glove Puppetry costumes extends beyond mere preservation and encompasses active reinterpretation and innovation. The research indicates that these costumes serve as repositories of historical knowledge, while also acting as platforms for cultural renewal and creative expression. In the context of globalization and modernization, it is crucial to adapt these traditional costumes to contemporary aesthetic preferences and cultural needs. This includes leveraging their design elements for modern applications, such as in fashion, creative industries, or cultural tourism. By doing so, the costumes can continue to be relevant, offering both cultural and economic benefits.

## Recommendation

### 1. Theoretical Suggestions:

#### 1.1 Interdisciplinary Exploration of Cultural Elements:

It is recommended to employ an interdisciplinary approach, integrating theories and methodologies from fields such as art, anthropology, education, and information technology. This approach will facilitate a more comprehensive understanding and disseminate the cultural significance of Minnan Glove Puppetry costumes. Specifically, interdisciplinary studies could help highlight the role of costumes in both preserving historical narratives and adapting to modern contexts, enhancing their educational and cultural value.

#### 1.2 Policy Support and Protection:

Local governments and cultural departments should implement detailed policies that provide financial support and legal protection for the preservation and inheritance of Minnan Glove Puppetry. Such policies could include tax incentives for artisans, grants for preservation projects, and collaborations with international cultural bodies to ensure a sustainable framework for cultural preservation. Additionally, encouraging community and individual involvement in the protection of this art form is crucial.

#### 1.3 Integration of Cultural Education:

The education sector should integrate knowledge about Minnan Glove Puppetry into specific educational programs across various levels. For example, integrating glove puppetry into arts, history, and language curricula at primary and secondary levels, or including it as part of university-level cultural studies programs, would provide a more structured educational approach. Furthermore, partnerships with cultural institutions can help develop interactive workshops, virtual exhibitions, or school visits, making learning more engaging for students.

### 2. Application Suggestions:

#### 2.1 Digital Protection and Dissemination:

Utilize modern information technologies, such as 3D scanning, augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR) for the digital preservation and display of Minnan Glove Puppetry costumes. These technologies can create immersive experiences for users, allowing broader access to costume exhibitions, especially for younger, tech-savvy audiences. This will facilitate broader dissemination and educational opportunities.

#### 2.2 Integration of Innovative Design and Modern Life:



Encourage designers and artists to incorporate elements of Minnan Glove Puppetry costumes into contemporary designs, such as fashion clothing and home decoration. This fusion of traditional culture with modern life can enhance market value and cultural influence.

### 2.3 Community Participation and Cultural Revitalization:

Promote community involvement in the production, performance, and dissemination of Glove Puppetry by organizing community-driven projects such as local festivals, puppet-making workshops, or storytelling sessions that involve local artisans and performers. Additionally, emphasizing the role of community leaders and influencers can help foster a sense of pride and ownership within the community, further strengthening the cultural identity.

### 3. Future Research Directions:

#### 3.1 The Relationship Between Clothing Culture and Social Change:

Investigate how Minnan Glove Puppetry costumes reflect and influence social changes and adapt to different historical periods. Exploring the socio-economic conditions that shaped costume design over time will provide deeper insights into the cultural evolution of the Minnan region.

#### 3.2 Cross-Cultural Communication and Influence:

Examine the role of Minnan Glove Puppetry costumes in cross-cultural communication and explore ways to enhance their global popularity and influence through international cooperation and exchange. For example, collaborations with international museums or participation in global cultural festivals can help elevate the global profile of Minnan Glove Puppetry.

#### 3.3 Economic Value Development of Clothing Culture:

Explore strategies to enhance the economic value of Minnan Glove Puppetry costumes through cultural tourism, derivative product development, and other means. By leveraging the cultural and artistic value of these costumes, new opportunities in creative industries and cultural tourism can be explored to support regional economic growth.

By implementing these suggestions, we can enrich the theoretical framework of Minnan Glove Puppetry costume culture research and improve practical applications, thereby maximizing its positive impact on cultural heritage, economic development, and social progress.

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