

## DOCTORAL THESIS

### Modes of production in post-war cantonese cinema: bricolage and sing-song comedy

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**Modes of Production in Post-war Cantonese Cinema:  
*Bricolage* and Sing-Song Comedy**

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## ABSTRACT

Cantonese opera and film were two important integrated arts, and were two of the most popular and influential forms of entertainment in post-war Hong Kong. There were countless ties and associations between their practitioners, content, creative practices, and modes of performance. The interaction between these two art forms facilitated the hasty production of low-budget Cantonese films in the post-war era. Nevertheless, intensive research on this unique mode of production and the relationship between these two industries is rare. Among all the Cantonese film genres, sing-song film was an important genre which consisted of film and Cantonese opera features with relative equal weight. This research examines post-war Cantonese sing-song comedies to analyze the interaction between these two entertainment industries. Since most of the post-war Cantonese films were produced by independent film companies, related texts and information were not systematically preserved and recorded. This research employs Claude Lévi-Strauss's concept of *bricolage* as both theory and methodology to study the production of sing-song comedy. Bricolage is a mode of tackling problems according to the experience and cultural background of the *bricoleur*. Film bricoleurs were the kernel of the bricolage mode of production in post-war Cantonese cinema. This research investigates three aspects of the modes of production of Cantonese sing-song film and the related film bricoleurs. Performers with superb skills were essential because of the tight shooting schedules and the lack of proper scripts. Thus, the first part of this research looks at the mode of performance practiced by performers with Cantonese opera training. This kind of performing practice was closely related to the practices of Cantonese film song writing. Songs were treated as interchangeable discrete units of bricolage in sing-song films, and the *zhuanqu* (撰曲) practices of Cantonese

opera played an important role in creating them. One famous songwriter, Ng Yat-siu (吳一嘯), and his works, are used as examples to demonstrate the *lianquti* (聯曲體) creative process of Cantonese film songs through the manipulation of pre-existing tunes. The characteristics of these film song lyrics are analyzed to demonstrate the effects of the various degrees of vernacularization of written Chinese used in them. Finally, it was the director who determined how the songs were manipulated and incorporated into a film; in this study, two directors, Chan Pei (陳皮) and Chiang Wai-kwong (蔣偉光), who were known for all-singing film (全部歌唱片) and plot-driven sing-song film narrative patterns respectively, are chosen to better understand the interaction between the Cantonese opera and film industry through their works, collaborating bricoleurs, and production support.

## 中文提要

粵劇和電影是兩大綜合藝術，且亦是粵語地區戰後兩項重要娛樂。無論從創作人員、創作手法、內容和表演模式，兩者的運作和習慣於戰後粵語電影中均有着千絲萬縷的關係，但有關的深入研究卻很少。在眾多的粵語類型片中，時裝粵語歌唱片兼具粵劇和電影藝術的特色，是研究兩種藝術互動關係一個很好的起點。由於戰後粵語電影工業以獨立製作為主要製作模式，缺乏有系統的文獻保存和記載，因此本研究採用列維－斯特勞斯（Claude Lévi-Strauss）的「修補術」（*bricolage*）作為理論框架和研究方法。「修補術」是一種根據修補匠（*bricoleur*）過往經驗和對要完成項目的感性認知，然後挪用源自不同領域的資源或技巧去完成項目的一種工作模式。「修補術」亦是一種較務實、策略性和自我反射（*self-reflective*）的研究方法，本研究透過現存不同類型的資料，以三種電影修補匠和其創作習慣為切入點，以戰後粵語歌唱喜劇為例，梳理當年粵劇和電影藝術對粵語電影製作的影響。

受制於市場規模，粵語電影須採取低成本高效率的製作模式，經常在沒有劇本的情況下進行拍攝工作。粵劇演員（特別是伶星）久經舞台磨練的即興演出方式，成為資源匱乏的粵語電影製作的關鍵，是本研究探討粵劇演出習慣與粵語電影製作模式關係的起點。歌曲是歌唱片的重要元素，撰曲是流行於粵語地區的歌曲創作模式，粵語電影亦採用此創作模式。本研究從撰曲人吳一嘯和其作品，瞭解粵語電影歌曲按劇情和人物所需，以聯曲體創作方式，將既有旋律撰作成歌曲的「新」旋律。歌詞分析方面，則集中在不同程度口語化的歌詞與人物、劇情和喜劇元素的關係。歌曲是電影敘事可替換組件之一，導演是決定如何處理和將歌曲嵌入電影的電影修補匠，本研究以陳皮的全部歌唱片和蔣偉光的劇情歌唱片為例，從兩方面去討論電影歌曲與敘事樣式（*narrative pattern*）的關係：一是歌曲與電影情節的關係，二是表現和再現表演模式的運用。

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