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**Research Paper: Discussion on the Protection of
“Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique” from the Development of
Hong Kong Men’s Cheongsam and Oral Histories of Distinguish Master Tailors**

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Research Paper: Discussion on the Protection of “Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique” from the Development of Hong Kong Men’s Cheongsam and Oral Histories of Distinguish Master Tailors

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Abstract

Hong Kong Cheongsam encompasses various forms of dress for both men and women, and its craft is one of Hong Kong's intangible cultural heritages in the category of traditional craftsmanship. “Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique” has been successively included in the first *Intangible Cultural Heritage Inventory of Hong Kong*¹, the *Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Hong Kong*², and the *National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of China*³ in 2014, 2017, and 2021 respectively. This tiered recognition highlights the high cultural value and urgent need for preservation of this intangible cultural heritage².

Over the past decade, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and higher education sector of Hong Kong have taken various measures to protect this intangible cultural heritage from different perspectives, including identification and documentation, collection and preservation of related materials and carriers, academic research, organization of inheritance programs, and promotion. The majority of these protective measures focus on women's cheongsam, particularly its development since the 1950s, yielding numerous research results and attracting societal attention. However, there has been a lack of focused measures to protect men's cheongsam and other related attires, leading to an unbalanced situation in the preservation of the “Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique”. In light of this, the School of Fashion and Textiles of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University has initiated a series of research projects since 2021 on the history, culture, craftsmanship, inheritance, and development direction of Hong Kong men’s cheongsam. These projects aim to supplement and enrich the data and resources of the intangible cultural heritage, reinvent inheritance models, and investigate the possibilities of revitalizing men's cheongsam from a design perspective.

Our research team has consolidated the results of various preliminary and ongoing preservation efforts, relevant literature, and the memories of practitioners in the local tailoring industry and summarized the development men’s cheongsam in Hong Kong. Based on the findings from the investigation, the team initiates discussions on the preservation work of “Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique”.

Keywords: Men’s Cheongsam, Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique, Traditional Craftsmanship, Intangible Cultural Heritage, Hong Kong Fashion Culture

Definition of Terms

Cheongsam – A type of Chinese long garment derived from the traditional Chinese “Round-neck Right-opening Straight-hem Robe”, encompassing both men's and women's clothing. The basic structure includes a round neckline with a stand collar; opening (where the upper garment or robe opens) located on the right side; bodice hung straight from chest to hem with slits on both sides of the garment hem.

Qipao – Women's cheongsam, including those tailored from traditional Chinese “Small Cut” or the Chinese-Western mixed “three-dimensional Cut” methods.

Large Cut – Traditional Chinese flat cutting method, also known as “Five-body Cut” or “Five-panel Cut”. It consists of three main panels, including the left-front bodice and left-back bodice connected as one piece; the right-front inner flap and right-back bodice connected as another piece; and the right outer flap as a separate piece. It features centre seams at the front and back bodice, flat shoulders without shoulder seams, front and back panels

connected with grown-on sleeves, giving the garment a T-shape. It is used for men's cheongsam and also seen in women's robes from the early Republic of China period.

Small Cut – Traditional Chinese flat cutting method, also known as “*Tou-jin*” and “Discreet Under-flap” method. It has only one main panel, with the right inner flap sewn in the form of a facing. There is no centre seam at the front or back bodice, flat shoulders without shoulder seams, front and back bodice connected with grown-on sleeves (if any), giving the garment a T-shape. It is specifically used for women's cheongsam only.

Three-dimensional Cut – A Chinese-Western mixed cutting method that uses “segmented” cutting principle and “darts” with “*Yun-ba*” (ironing and stretching) and “*Gui-bo*” (gathering and pushing) shaping techniques to give the garment a three-dimensional shape. It consists of three main panels, including one front panel, one right inner flap panel, and one back panel. There is no centre seam at the front or back bodice, sloped shoulders with shoulder seams, separating the front and back panels with sleeves sewn on separately. Darts are present at the sides and waist. It is used for women's cheongsam only.

Master – A term in Hong Kong society for industrial craftsmen. Tailors specializing in Chinese clothing are called “Chinese tailoring masters”; those specializing in Western clothing are called “Western tailoring masters”; and tailors working in garment factories and sample rooms for ready-to-wear garments are called “fashion masters”. In this paper, “master” refers to Chinese attire tailors primarily engaged in making cheongsam.

1. Introduction

“Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique” is an important intangible cultural heritage (ICH) of Hong Kong. Since the early 20th century, Hong Kong's men's and women's cheongsam and their craftsmanship have developed in different directions, resulting in a unique combination of development pattern for this traditional craft. Women's cheongsam has evolved flexibly with the times, while men's cheongsam has remained unchanged amidst social evolution. Through the interplay of cultural, craft, and aesthetic changes and continuities, Hong Kong cheongsam has documented the history and transformation of the Hong Kong society.

Women's cheongsam (commonly known as “Qipao”) is widely recognized by Hong Kong people. Its form and craftsmanship have undergone two significant transformations alongside Hong Kong's social, cultural, and economic development. In the early 1920s, initially led by Shanghai, women's cheongsam evolved from the traditional menswear flat cutting method known as “*Da-cai*” (Large Cut) to the women's “*Xiao-cai*” (Small Cut). By the 1950s in Hong Kong, it further developed into a fusion of Chinese and Western “three-dimensional Cut”, gaining widespread popularity in the 1950s and 1960s and international acclaim as a signature garment for modern Chinese women^{4,5,6,7}. The evolution of the women's cheongsam is revolutionary, transitioning from the flat and loose men's robe style to a fitted and elongated women's robe, and then from a modest “tucked-chest and humped-back” women's robe to a body-hugging “dress”. Despite the dramatic changes in its form and aesthetics, the core structure and craftsmanship remain consistent. Based on the foundational elements of stand collar, right-side opening, and side slits, women's cheongsam has developed a wide variety of shapes and styles, with diverse designs and materials, reflecting societal values and cultural shifts at the time through its evolution^{4,5,7}.

In contrast, the men's cheongsam has been steadily passed down in Hong Kong in a “dormant” mode. Men's cheongsam is a traditional Chinese robe. Unlike the women's cheongsam, which underwent transformations in response to Hong Kong's Westernization, men's cheongsam's form and craftsmanship have remained unchanged since the early 20th century, preserving the classic robe style in its entirety. Dr Brenda Li, a senior scholar of Hong Kong cheongsam studies, explored the origins of the form of men's cheongsam in her e-book *Men's Cheongsam: History, Culture, and Craftsmanship*. She provided a comprehensive review of the development of traditional Chinese men's robes since the pre-Qin period and concluded that men's cheongsam's form is a product of the long history of Han Chinese and surrounding ethnic clothing cultures, as well as modern East-West cultural exchanges⁸. The form took shape in the mid-to-late Qing dynasty and was officially recognized in 1929 by the

Nationalist Government as the “Pao” (robe) in *Fu-zhi Tiao-li* (Dress Code)⁹. It had been commonly seen in formal occasions in Chinese society^{6, 8, 10}. Since the 20th century, Hong Kong's mainstream society has rapidly Westernized while being influenced by other surrounding cultures like Japan, creating a unique cultural ecosystem. Chinese clothing culture has seen a coexistence, mixing, and even fusion of Chinese and Western elements, with women’s cheongsam being one example. The men’s cheongsam, however, has retreated from everyday fashion trends in Hong Kong, retaining its role as formal wear. Unaffected by mainstream Westernization, it has preserved traditional Chinese tailoring and craftsmanship, maintaining traditional societal values, Chinese clothing aesthetics, and tailoring techniques.

Through its combination of revolutionary and dormant development modes, Hong Kong cheongsam has been passed down for over a century, embodying a distinct and vivid Hong Kong identity. This attire carries significant socio-cultural value, playing a role in maintaining community relationships and expressing sense of identity, and holds an irreplaceable position in Hong Kong's clothing culture and history. In 2014, the Government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government (HKSAR) published the first *ICH Inventory of Hong Kong*, recognizing the craft as a local ICH under the category of “Traditional Craftsmanship” as the subitem of “5.71 Hong Kong Chinese Clothing Making Technique” with the title “5.71.3 Sewing Technique of Traditional Chinese Cheongsam in Hong Kong” alongside “5.71.1 Making Technique of Flower Buttons” and “5.71.2 Making Technique of Kwan Kwa Wedding Costume”¹. In 2017, this craftsmanship was included in the *Representative List of the ICH of Hong Kong* with the title “Technique of Making Hong Kong Cheongsam and Kwan Kwa Wedding Costume”, becoming one of the 20 representative ICH items in Hong Kong which addresses the critically endangered situation of the ICH². In 2021, with the title “Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique”, this craftsmanship was independently selected for the more stringent *National List of the ICH of China*³. The national-level certification further highlights the high cultural value and special significance of this ICH, showcasing its distinctive characteristics and important societal impact.



Figure 1. In 2021, “Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique” was inscribed in the *National List of the ICH of China*. HKCA became the designated protection organization. In 2023, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People’s Republic of China presented a Commemorative Plaques for Representative Items of National Intangible Cultural Heritage to HKCA. (Photo taken by the research team)

In 2019, Hong Kong Cheongsam Association (HKCA) was established. It is a non-profit organization connecting various stakeholders to jointly promote and preserve “Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique” and its traditions. Its members include senior cheongsam tailors, scholars, tailoring instructors, fashion designers, cheongsam enthusiasts, clan organizations, and higher education institutions¹¹. HKCA is currently the designated safeguarding unit for “Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique”. In 2021, the association officially registered eight individuals dedicated to the transmission of the craft as HKCA registered inheritors, including (in order of age) Master Ting Chao-wen, Master Fung Yau-choi, Master Chun Cheung-lam, Master Lau On-hing, Master Po Ming-wah, Master Fu Nga-kwan, Dr Brenda Li, and Master Chau So-mui¹². Except for Master Po Ming-wah, a traditional Shanghai-style flower button artisan, all registered inheritors are proficient in both men’s and women’s cheongsam craftsmanship and have participated in the preservation of men’s cheongsam traditions. Our research team consulted the seven inheritors regarding the inheritance of men’s cheongsam craftsmanship and had the valuable opportunity of conducting in-depth oral history interviews with two senior Hong Kong cheongsam masters – Master Chun Cheung-lam and Master Lau On-hing. This article is based on interview recordings, reference materials provided by the two masters and other research project participants.

2. The Origin and Local Development of Hong Kong Men’s Cheongsam

Hong Kong men’s cheongsam and *Chang-pao* (robe) (unlined one is called a “Sam” while lined one is called “Pao”, generally referred to as cheongsam in Hong Kong) is a traditional Chinese men’s robe that retains the classic flat cutting. It encompasses various structures and craftsmanship, including unlined, lined, fur-lined, and padded cheongsams^{10,13,14,15}. Its basic form can be traced back to the “Right-opening Straight-hem Robe” of the Qin and Han dynasties. This Chinese men’s robe style underwent cultural integration between the Han, Wei, Jin, Northern and Southern Dynasties, and Sui and Tang periods, gradually evolving into the “Round-neck Right-opening Straight-hem Robe” during the Tang dynasty, becoming one of the two mainstream styles of ancient Chinese men’s robes. This robe became the formal attire for scholars and officials during the Five Dynasties, Song, and Ming dynasties, as well as the outer robe for upper-class men. The round-neck robe became the dominant robe style during the Qing dynasty and developed a stand collar in the 19th century^{8,10,16}. Over thousands of years of evolution, the traditional Chinese men’s robe developed into the form of men’s cheongsam by the late 19th century. In 1929, the Nationalist Government promulgated *Fu-zhi Tiao-li* (Dress Code), designated the men’s cheongsam and kwa (jacket) as formal attire for men. This style has been preserved for over a century since the late 19th century, becoming a classic. Today’s men’s cheongsam is the result of the cultural integration, simplification, and refinement of Han and surrounding ethnic cultures, as well as modern East-West cultural exchanges. It can be regarded as a representative men’s formal attire signifying Chinese national identity^{6,8,9,10}.



Figure 2. MaKwa is originated from a short jacket worn over a long robe for travel attire, featuring the same flat cutting, seamlessly joined shoulders and grown-on sleeves, and a round stand collar. It can be centre-fastened (as shown above), or alternatively, right-fastened or with a pipa-shaped closure. It can be made from a variety of fabrics, such as the Navy Worsted Wool Suiting Lined Makwa (left) and Dark Brown Gambiered Canton Silk Crepe Unlined Makwa (right) above, showing different styles with the same form. (Photos taken by the research team)

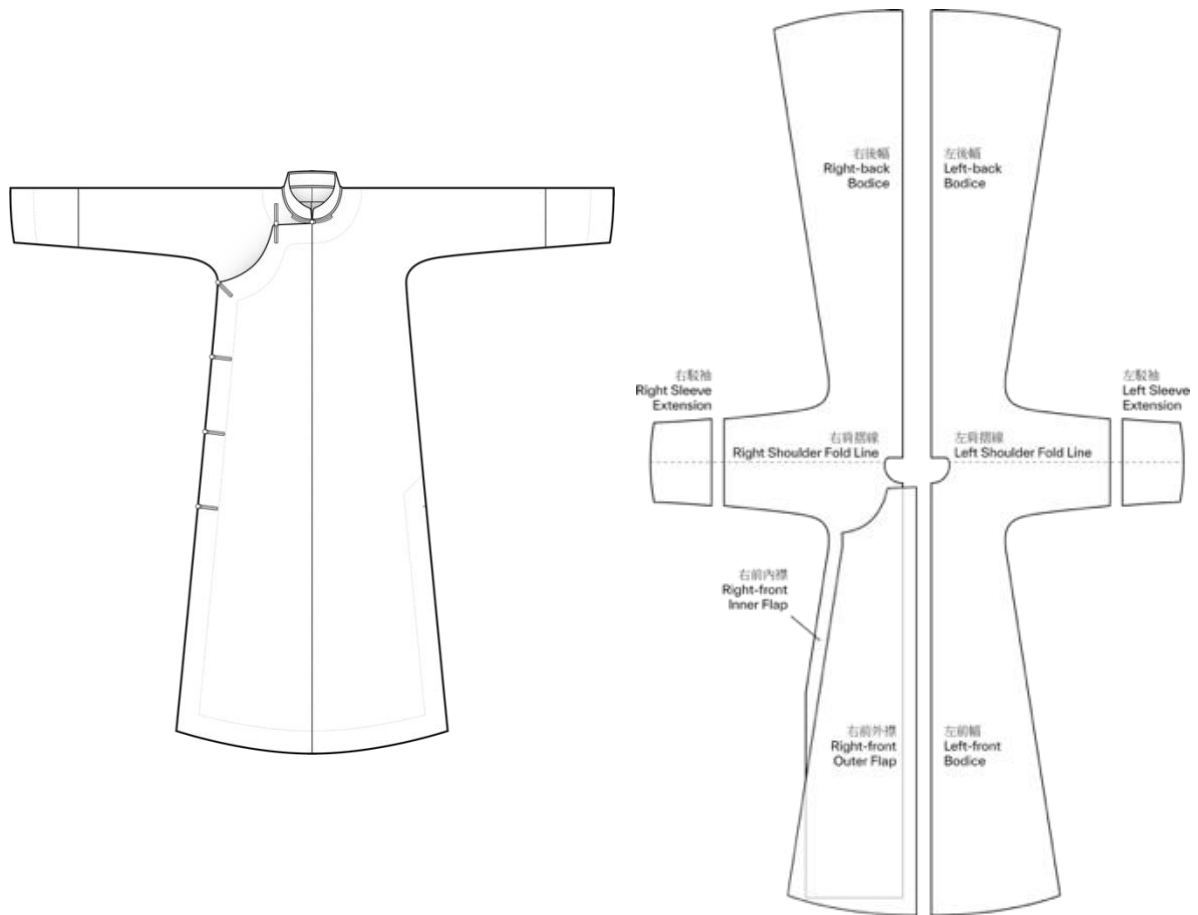


Figure 3. Men's cheongsam inherits the traditional form of ancient Chinese "Round-neck Right-opening Straight-hem Robe", adopting the T-shaped cutting in a bell-shape. There are three main panels, including left-front bodice and left-back bodice joining as one piece; right-front inner flap and right-back bodice joining as another piece; right-front outer flap as an independent piece. The robe is fastened on the right side with a vertically hanging hem and a round stand collar⁷. (Composed by the research team)



Figure 4. In accordance with *Fu-zhi Tiao-li* (Dress Code)⁴⁶, cheongsam and makwa are paired as the formal attire of men, serving as ceremonial dress in solemn occasions. (Photo taken by the research team)

From the late 19th century to the early 20th century, Chinese men in Hong Kong society primarily wore traditional Chinese attire. Men's cheongsam was commonly seen in Hong Kong, worn by prominent figures such as social elites, village gentry, merchants, scholars, and literati. Notable examples include Sir Robert Ho-tung, a renowned entrepreneur and philanthropist; Sir Tang Shiu-kin, Permanent Advisor to the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals; Professor Xu Di-shan, Head of the Chinese Department at the University of Hong Kong; the famous scholar Lin Yu-tang; and the celebrated opera singer Sun Ma Sze-tsang. Later, as Eastern and Western cultures further collided and merged in the city, the ideas and culture of Western countries gradually gained acceptance in Hong Kong society. Starting with the academic and upper-class circles, Chinese men began to adopt Western-style clothing, leading to the coexistence of cheongsam and Western suits in society^{6, 8}.

By the late 1940s, under changing political circumstances, the traditional cheongsam gradually faded from men's everyday wardrobes. Cheongsam and makwa became ceremonial attire for formal occasions such as ceremonies and rituals and were mainly worn by men of status and position in society^{6, 8, 10}. In the 1950s, a large number of merchants, manufacturers, and laborers from mainland China migrated to Hong Kong, bringing with them capital, labour force, and traditional craftsmanship. At the time, Hong Kong's garment industry was in its developmental stage, and locally produced ready-to-wear clothing had not yet monopolized the market. There was still significant demand for mid-to-high-priced custom-made garments like cheongsam. The Chinese tailoring industry flourished rapidly, entering its golden age^{4, 5}. During the 1950s and 1960s, the cheongsam industry in Hong Kong thrived. Although men's cheongsam had faded from everyday wardrobes and had fewer customers compared to women's cheongsam, there were still orders for custom-made men's cheongsam from time to time. Workshops normally received one or two orders for men's cheongsam per month^{14, 15}, mostly for formal occasions such as banquets and celebrations, as well as orders for funeral attire¹⁵.



Figure 5. Hong Kong society in the 1950s embraced both Chinese and Western clothing cultures, with cheongsams and Western suits coexisting. The image above depicts guests at the wedding banquet of the late Hong Kong film entrepreneur Mr Raymond Chow Man-wai and his wife, Ms Yuen Hei-wah, in 1952. In the photo, a male guest (first from the left) is seen wearing a light-coloured cheongsam as his banquet attire. The photo showcases the unique charm of both Chinese and Western formal wear for men and women. (Photo provided by Ms Roberta Chow Chung-hang)

The master tailors recalled that from the late 1960s to the early 1970s, the social instability in Hong Kong led to the relocation of many businesses away from the city. At the same time, Western-style clothing and ready-to-wear garments gradually became the mainstream in Hong Kong society. As the cheongsam tailoring industry declined, many tailors switched to other professions, and no new apprentices entered the industry. The transmission of this craft within the industry ceased by the late 1960s^{14, 15, 17}. From the 1970s to the 1980s, the classic form and exquisite craftsmanship of the traditional men's cheongsam gradually faded from public memory and were overshadowed by the influence of popular martial arts dramas, leading to theatrical and simplified versions⁸. Additionally, the public primarily encountered men's cheongsam in traditional village festivals and religious rituals. The image of men's cheongsam and other traditional Chinese attire became associated with these events. Public perception of men's cheongsam was gradually stereotyped as ceremonial clothing only for religious and "red and white" events (weddings and funerals), particularly with a strong association with funerals, giving the cheongsam a somewhat taboo impression^{14, 15, 18}.

Men's cheongsam is closely tied to Hong Kong's social practices, rituals, and festive activities, carrying significant socio-cultural meanings. In traditional New Territories clans, men's cheongsam is a symbol of seniority. Male clan members are required to wear the cheongsam upon reaching the age of sixty, to inform their ancestors and establish their status as clan elders^{8, 10, 19}. The Spring and Autumn Ancestral Worship of Clans and the *Jiao* Festival (Great Peace Ritual) have a long history and are representative intangible cultural heritage items in Hong Kong. During the spring and autumn ancestral worship, clan members gather at ancestral halls or hillsides to worship their ancestors, which is an important clan activity where men's cheongsam serves as the ceremonial attire. In solemn ancestral worship and deity-offering rituals, the officiants, attendants, and clan elders all wear dignified Chinese cheongsam to show respect and uphold the clan's dignity. This custom has been practiced in Hong Kong for hundreds of years^{8, 10, 19}.



Figure 6. The autumn ancestral ceremony of Ha Tsuen Village in the year of *Gui-mao* (2023). The chief officiant, assistant officiants, ritual participants, attendants, and clan elders are seen wearing long gowns during the ancestral hall ceremony in the photo. (Photo taken by the research team)

Today, only a few traditional Hong Kong cheongsam tailors remain, most of whom are at their senior ages, particularly those skilled in the classic men's cheongsam craft. The craftsmanship of the men's cheongsam is on the verge of being lost and urgently requires preservation^{8, 14, 15, 17, 20}. In response, cultural, higher education, and Chinese tailoring sectors have recently collaborated with HKCA to actively research, preserve, and promote the classic form of men's cheongsam.

3. Overview of the Protective Work of "Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique"

Since the Hong Kong government initiated local efforts to protect ICH based on the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the ICH* adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the importance of "Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique" and the urgent need for its protection

have received layered official recognition^{1, 2, 3}. Relevant government departments, local higher education institutions, and various organizations have also conducted research and promotion on this traditional attire while implementing various protective measures. In 2019, HKCA was established and collaborated with the South China Research Center of Hong Kong University of Science and Technology to apply for the “Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique” to be included in the *National List of the ICH of China*, and successfully obtained the designation in 2021. The association is now responsible for organizing and supporting the protection efforts of relevant stakeholders^{3, 11, 12}.

Table 1 summarizes the protective work undertaken by the Hong Kong government, higher education institutions, and HKCA over the past decade, with most projects focusing on the development of women's cheongsams, especially the three-dimensional cut women's cheongsams that emerged after the second transformation in the 1950s. The efforts have yielded considerable results, successfully creating a favorable atmosphere for the conservation and development of cheongsam in society. Since the decline of cheongsam tailoring industry in the 1970s and 1980s, women's cheongsam has regained public attention. However, case studies of the protective work indicate that prior to the 2019 application for national ICH status, protective measures were primarily focused on publicity and cultural promotion, often involving the display of physical artifacts, storytelling about the history of cheongsam, and simple skill demonstrations. There has been a lack of in-depth and systematic academic research, records and analyses of the craft, and relevant literature and materials are sparse, failing to meet the needs of primary reference. Professor Liu Rui-pu from Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology and his doctoral student Zhu Bo-wei have made similar observations and conclusions. Between 2018 and 2019, Professor Liu's research team conducted extensive historical investigations across the mainland, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, compiling related research in the development of women's cheongsam in various regions over different periods, highlighting in the book *Historical Drafts of Chinese Qipao* published in 2021 that the lack of academic research is a disadvantage for Hong Kong's application for the ICH to be inscribed in the *Representative List of the ICH of Humanity*²¹.

Additionally, the transmission part of the protective work were pilot programs in nature, targeting secondary school and fashion design students in the tertiary institutes by providing one-time experiential training courses. Taught by master tailors, most of the courses primarily aimed at teaching students to make women's cheongsam in three-dimensional cut. The course for secondary students (Item 17 in Table 1) includes two theoretical classes and five practical classes, totaling about ten hours. The curriculum incorporated elements of contemporary art creation, aiming to spark interest in cheongsam among youth. On the other hand, courses for fashion design students in tertiary institutes (Item 15, 21, 23, and 34 in Table 1) focused on traditional craft transmission and practice, spanning thirteen sessions, totaling about fifty-two hours. Because the programs are pilot in nature, the techniques taught were at a basic introductory level, and the fabrics used were relatively easy to handle. However, for students who are new to cheongsam making, the process remains challenging, especially for younger students. From the final products of the secondary school courses, it is evident that many students struggled to acquire the sewing techniques, with some final products failed to meet the basic requirements for women's three-dimensional cheongsams and even exhibiting incorrect dress form and structures such as “left opening”. Tertiary students, who have more experience in garment making and are able to grasp the techniques taught. Additionally, the longer course duration and systematic contents enable all students to complete their works with correct forms and craft standards. Nevertheless, many students reflected that the making process was complex, technically challenging, arduous to learn, and impossible for them to complete independently²⁰. Indeed, cheongsam tailoring skills are advanced techniques that require a basic understanding of garment-making concepts and skills as a foundation for learning. Secondly, practical experience accumulated through repetitive practices and applications are essential for solidifying the skills and advancing to higher-level craftsmanship. Having learners who are too young or lack a foundation significantly reduces the learning and teaching effectiveness and may even lead to misunderstandings or feelings of frustration. Furthermore, one-time experiential training courses have limited effectiveness in transmitting the skills and solidifying the knowledge and values they carry.

In addition to the overall protection measures being incomprehensive and superficial, there is also an imbalance in the early protective work for men's and women's cheongsam. Before 2019, there were very few protective

measures for men's cheongsam and the related attires. Relevant literature, images, physical artifacts, and the records of folk memories and tacit knowledge were fragmentary and loose while systematic research findings have not effectively reached the public, nor has there been comprehensive craft transmissions. Among the seventeen projects listed (Item 1 to 17 in Table 1), only one project, the “Local Men's Cheongsam Research” initiated by the Hong Kong Museum of History in 2017 (Item 9 in Table 1), focused specifically on men's cheongsam²², and one certificate course, “Certificate of Cheongsam Design and Production Programme” at the HKU School of Professional and Continuing Education (HKU SPACE) (Item 4 in Table 1), which included a unit on men's cheongsam making⁸. The museum's thematic research explored the origins and development of men's cheongsam through literature and field studies; examined about 130 existing men's cheongsam artifacts in the museum collection and documented the production demonstrations of two masters for craft analysis. The project results are stored in the form of a research report²² at the museum but have not reached the public as broadly as the women's cheongsam projects, resulting in a limited impact. The certificate course at the HKU SPACE only covers the craft of unlined cheongsam and does not further address the advanced making techniques such as lined, fur-lined, and padded cheongsam. Since 2018, the Intangible Cultural Heritage Office (ICHO) has conducted a series of proactive research and protection efforts for cheongsam, such as publishing information about cheongsam to the *Hong Kong Intangible Cultural Heritage Database*, organizing seminars, lectures, exhibitions, and fashion shows, and funding higher education institutions to host transmission schemes. However, the protective measures still exhibit a bias towards women's over men's, with public attention primarily focusing on the post-1950s women's cheongsam while possessing shallow understanding of their origins – men's cheongsam and its history, culture, and craftsmanship, and often encountering stereotypes, taboos, and misunderstandings, particularly among the younger generation⁸. The tailoring skills of men's cheongsam have become increasingly marginalized within the unbalanced protection efforts, gradually becoming the most endangered aspect of this ICH^{8, 14, 15, 17, 20}.

In light of this, the author initiated an action research and craft practices to develop systematic research on men's cheongsam making technique in 2019 with the assistance of the HKCA and several senior cheongsam masters. A series of research projects have been unfolded in 2021 at the School of Fashion and Textiles of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University¹³, focusing on the history, culture, craftsmanship, transmission, development, and reinvention of Hong Kong men's cheongsam with an aim to fill the gaps in the knowledge in the “Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique” and investigate the possibilities for reforming transmission models and design practices. Some research findings have been published in the form of seminars, exhibitions, and academic articles (Item 25, 28, 30, 31, 33-35, 39, 40, 42-44 in Table 1).

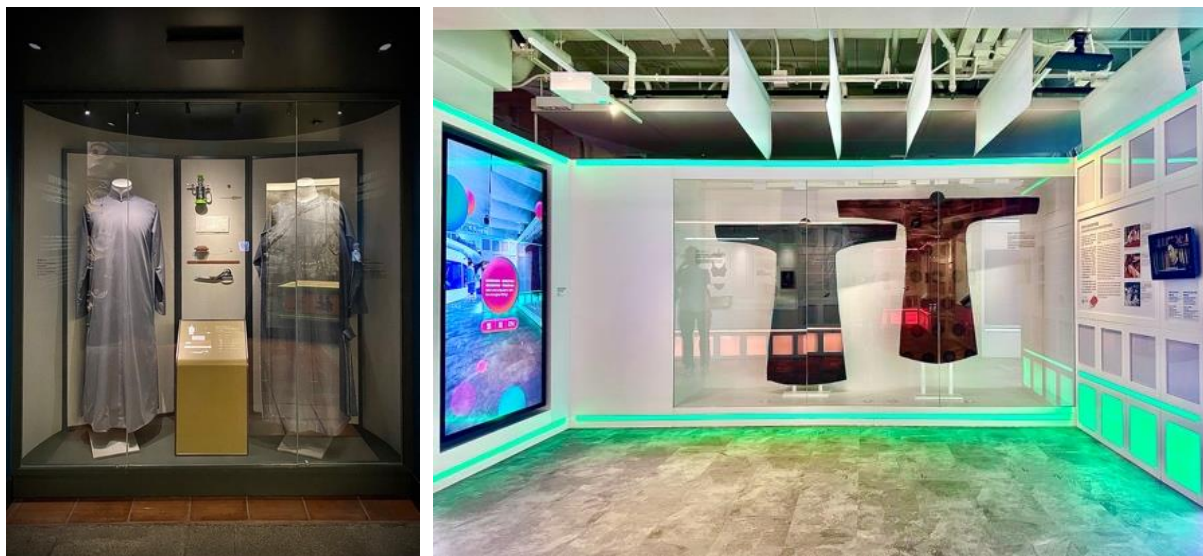


Figure 7. The men's cheongsam and semi-finished specimen created by Master Fun Yau-choi are exhibited at the “Lost and Sound Exhibition Series I: Hong Kong Festivals and Traditional Craftsmanship” organized by the Intangible Cultural Heritage Office (Left); The “Traces of Human Touch — Hong Kong Intangible Cultural Heritage Exhibition” at the CLP Pulse is showcasing the traditional and innovative men's cheongsam created by Master Chun Cheung-lam and the author (Right). (Photos taken by the research team)



Figure 8. In 2023, the School of Fashion and Textiles of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University organized “Awakening the Classic Poise: Hong Kong Men’s Cheongsam Making Technique and Intangible Cultural Heritage Inheritance Exhibition”, showcased twenty-nine pieces of unlined, lined, fur-lined, and padded cheongsams. (Photos taken by the research team)

Table 1: The Cheongsam Protection Works Carried out by the Hong Kong Government, Higher Education Institutions and Designated Protection Organization from 2013 to 2023						
No.	Year	Main Organizer	Project	Nature of Measure	Project Contents / Outcomes	Dress Form Covered
1	Continuous Work	Museums under Leisure and Cultural Services Department	Collection of Cheongsams and Related Materials	Preservation	Collection of more than 1200 women’s cheongsams and 130 men’s cheongsams ²²	Men’s and Women’s Cheongsam
2	2013 – 2014	Hong Kong Museum of History	A Century of Fashion: Hong Kong Cheongsam Story	Research Promotion	Book: “A Century of Fashion: Hong Kong Cheongsam Story” ⁵	Women’s Cheongsam
					Forum: “Hong Kong-Taiwan Academic Forum” ²³	Women’s Cheongsam
					Exhibition: “A Century of Fashion: Hong Kong Cheongsam Story” in Hong Kong and Taipei ²⁴	Women’s Cheongsam
					Exhibition: “Legacies & Innovation: Cheongsam Exhibition” ²⁵	Women’s Cheongsam
					Fashion Show: “Legacies & Innovation: Cheongsam Fashion Show” ²⁵	Women’s Cheongsam
3	2014	Intangible Cultural Heritage Office	First Release of “Intangible Cultural Heritage Inventory of Hong Kong”	Identification Documentation	“Sewing Technique of Traditional Chinese Cheongsam in Hong Kong” listed in the “Intangible Cultural Heritage Inventory of Hong Kong”, falling under the “Traditional Craftsmanship” category as a sub-item “5.71.3 Cheongsam” under “5.71 Sewing Technique of Traditional Chinese Costumes in Hong Kong” ¹	Men’s and Women’s Cheongsam
4	2015 – now	University of Hong Kong School of Professional and Continuing Education	Certificate of Cheongsam Design and Production Programme	Transmission	Part-time Training Course: Self-financed Part-time Certificate Course “Certificate of Cheongsam Design and Production Programme” ²⁶	Men’s and Women’s Cheongsam
5	2015 – now	University of Hong Kong School of Professional and Continuing Education	Qipao Production Workshop	Transmission	Part-time Training Course: Self-financed Part-time Short Course “Qipao Production Workshop” ²⁷	女裝長衫 Women’s cheongsam
6	2017	Intangible Cultural Heritage Office	ICH @ New Year	Promotion	Display and Demonstration: “The Sewing Techniques of Kwan Kwa Wedding Costume and Hong Kong-style Cheongsam” ²⁸	Men’s and Women’s Cheongsam
					Fashion Show: “Children Cheongsam and Chinese Costumes Fashion Show” ²⁸	Women’s Cheongsam
7	2017	Intangible Cultural Heritage Office	First Release of “Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Hong Kong”	Identification Documentation	“Technique of Making Hong Kong Cheongsam and Kwan Kwa Wedding Costume” listed in the first “Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Hong Kong” ²	Men’s and Women’s Cheongsam
8	2017 – 2018	Hong Kong Film Archive	The Star, the Silver Screen and the Qipao	Promotion	Exhibition: “The Star, the Silver Screen and the Qipao” ²⁹	Women’s cheongsam
					Seminar: “The Charm of Qipao: The Daily Wear that Became a Cultural Icon” ³⁰	Women’s cheongsam
9	2017 – 2018	Hong Kong Museum of History	Local Men’s Cheongsam Research	Research	Research Report: “Local Men’s Cheongsam Research” ²²	Men’s Cheongsam
10	2018 – now	Intangible Cultural Heritage Office	“Hong Kong Intangible Cultural Heritage Database”	Documentation	Online resources: “Hong Kong Intangible Cultural Heritage Database: Traditional Craftsmanship: Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique” ³¹	Men’s and Women’s Cheongsam
					Online resources: “Hong Kong Intangible Cultural Heritage Database: Traditional Craftsmanship: Technique of Making Hong Kong Cheongsam and Kwan Kwa Wedding Costume” ³²	
11	2018	Intangible Cultural Heritage Office	ICH Fun Day	Promotion	Demonstration and Experience: “Stylish” Cheongsam Experiential Session” ³³	Women’s Cheongsam

					Tailoring Master Class: The Sewing Technique of Hong Kong-style Cheongsam Demonstration ³³	Men's and Women's Cheongsam
12	2018	Leisure and Cultural Services Department	The Muse Fest HK 2018	Promotion	Master Class: The Sewing Technique of Hong Kong-style Cheongsam Demonstration ³⁴	Women's Cheongsam
					Talk: The Sewing Technique of Hong Kong-style Cheongsam cum Cheongsam Show ³⁴	Men's and Women's Cheongsam
					Experience: "Experiencing the Tales of the Old Hong Kong - Cheongsam & Nanyin Party"; "Photo Taking in Clean-cut Cheongsam" ³⁴	Women's Cheongsam
					Exhibition: "Experiencing the Tales of the Old Hong Kong - Cheongsam & Nanyin Party"; "Hong Kong Cheongsam Story Exhibition" ³⁴	Women's Cheongsam
					Fashion Show: "Experiencing the Tales of the Old Hong Kong - Cheongsam & Nanyin Party"; "Cheongsam Catwalk Show" ³⁴	Women's Cheongsam
					Sharing Session: "Experiencing the Tales of the Old Hong Kong - Cheongsam & Nanyin Party"; "Beauty of Cheongsam" ³⁴	Women's Cheongsam
13	2018 – now	Intangible Cultural Heritage Office	"Fun in ICH" Series	Promotion	Demonstration: "Fun in ICH" Series – 2020: "The Transmission of Craftsmanship - Sharing cum Demonstration on Sewing Technique of Hong Kong-style Cheongsam" ³⁵	Men's and Women's Cheongsam
14	2018	Intangible Cultural Heritage Office	Ich Ambassador Training Courses 2018 – Young Eyes on ICH	Promotion	One-time Training Course: "Ich Ambassador Training Courses 2018" Lesson 4 introduced about "Sewing Technique of Hong Kong-style Cheongsam and Kwan Kwa Wedding Costume" ³⁶	Men's and Women's Cheongsam
15	2018	Intangible Cultural Heritage Office Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong	Transmission Scheme for Hong Kong-style Cheongsam Sewing Technique 2018	Transmission Promotion	One-time Training Course: "Transmission Scheme for Hong Kong-style Cheongsam Sewing Technique 2018" ³⁷	Women's Cheongsam
					Book: "Faithful to the Craft: Transmission Scheme for Hong Kong-style Cheongsam Sewing Technique 2018" ³⁷	Women's Cheongsam
16	2018	Leisure and Cultural Services Department Prince Kung's Palace Museum	"The Oral Legacies: Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region" Exhibition Month of 2018	Promotion	Fashion Show: "Faithful to the Craft: Fashion Show and Sharing Session of Hong Kong-style Ladies' Cheongsam" ³⁸	Women's Cheongsam
					Exhibition: Cheongsam displayed in "The Oral Legacies: Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region" ³⁸	Women's Cheongsam
17	2018 – 2023	Lingnan University Hong Kong Art School	Jockey Club "ICH+" Intangible Cultural Heritage Education Project – Phase 1	Transmission Revitalization Promotion	One-time Training Course: "Pass It On @ Secondary 2018/19 – Cheongsam Sewing Technique" ³⁹	Women's Cheongsam
					Exhibition: Cheongsam Display in "Annual Showcases 2018/19" ⁴⁰	Women's Cheongsam
					Exhibition: Cheongsam Display in "Annual Showcases 2019/20" ⁴⁰	Women's Cheongsam
					Exhibition: Cheongsam Display in "Annual Showcases 2020/21" ⁴⁰	Women's Cheongsam
					Exhibition: Cheongsam Display in "Annual Showcases 2021/22" ⁴⁰	Women's Cheongsam
18	2019	Intangible Cultural Heritage Office Hong Kong Cheongsam Association	Application for "National List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of China"	Research	Hong Kong Cheongsam Association was Established and Applied for "Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique" to be Inscribed in "National List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage China" ⁴¹	Men's and Women's Cheongsam
19	2019	Leisure and Cultural Services Department	ICH Talk: "The Aesthetics and Sewing Craft of Cheongsam for Men and Ladies"	Promotion	Talk: "The Aesthetics and Sewing Craft of Cheongsam for Men and Ladies" ⁴¹	Men's and Women's Cheongsam
20	2019	School of Fashion and Textiles The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	Youth & Beauty: Research of Qipao and Textiles in Republic of China by GONG Jianpei	Promotion	Exhibition: "Youth & Beauty: Research of Qipao and Textiles in Republic of China by GONG Jianpei" ⁴²	Women's Cheongsam
					Talk: "The Images of Qipao in Republic of China" ⁴³	Women's Cheongsam
21	2019 – 2020	Intangible Cultural Heritage Office Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong	Transmission Scheme for Hong Kong-style Cheongsam Sewing Technique 2019	Transmission Promotion	One-time Training Course: "Transmission Scheme for Hong Kong-style Cheongsam Sewing Technique 2019" ²⁰	Men's and Women's Cheongsam
					Book: "Men's Cheongsam Making Technique: Transmission Scheme for Hong Kong-style Cheongsam Sewing Technique 2019" ²⁰	Men's Cheongsam
22	2020 – 2023	Intangible Cultural Heritage Office Lingnan University	Research and Publication on the Items of the "Representative List of the ICH of Hong Kong" (Funded Project of Partnership Projects of Intangible Cultural Heritage Funding Scheme 2019)	Research Promotion	Book: "Hong Kong Intangible Cultural Heritage Series: Technique of Making Hong Kong Cheongsam and Kwan Kwa Wedding Costume" ⁶	Men's and Women's Cheongsam
23	2020 – 2021	Intangible Cultural Heritage Office Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong	Courses and Database on Hong Kong Cheongsam (Funded Project of Community-driven Projects of Intangible Cultural Heritage Funding Scheme 2020)	Research Transmission Promotion Preservation	Exhibition: "Succeeding the Grace – Hong Kong Cheongsam Exhibition" ⁴⁴	Men's and Women's Cheongsam
					One-time Training Course: "Transmission Scheme for Hong Kong-style Sewing Technique 2020" ⁴⁴	Women's Cheongsam
					Online resources: "Cheongsam Database" ⁴⁴	Women's Cheongsam

24	2021	Intangible Cultural Heritage Office	The Release of the Fifth Batch of "National List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of China"	Identification Documentation	"Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique" listed in the Fifth Batch of "National List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of China" ⁵³	Men's and Women's Cheongsam
					Hong Kong Cheongsam Association Became the Designated Protection Organization of the "Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique" ⁵³	Men's and Women's Cheongsam
25	2021	School of Fashion and Textiles The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	Hong Kong Cheongsam Seminar "Deconstructing Male and Female Cheongsam: Aesthetics and Craftsmanship"	Promotion	Seminar: "Deconstructing Male and Female Cheongsam: Aesthetics and Craftsmanship" ⁴⁵	Men's and Women's Cheongsam
26	2021 – now	Intangible Cultural Heritage Office	Lost and Sound Exhibition Series I: Hong Kong Festivals and Traditional Craftsmanship	Promotion	Exhibition: Cheongsam displayed in the "Lost and Sound Exhibition Series I: Hong Kong Festivals and Traditional Craftsmanship" ⁴⁶	Men's Cheongsam
27	2022	Leisure and Cultural Services Department	Muse Fest HK 2022 – "Joy with ICH" Fun Days	Promotion	Talk and demonstration: "Talk and Demonstration on the Hong Kong-style Cheongsams Making Technique" ⁴⁷	Women's Cheongsam
28	2022	Hong Kong Cheongsam Association	Intangible Cultural Heritage Seminar – Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique	Promotion	Seminar: "Intangible Cultural Heritage Seminar – Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique" ⁴⁸	Men's and Women's Cheongsam
		Intangible Cultural Heritage Office				
		Hong Kong Museum of History				
29	2022	Hong Kong Post	Issuance of "Intangible Cultural Heritage — Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique" Special Stamps	Promotion	Stamp design: "Intangible Cultural Heritage — Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique" Special Stamps ⁴⁹	Women's Cheongsam
30	2022 – 2023	Hong Kong Design Institute	"An Alluring Inheritance of Beauty: Chinese Cheongsam"	Promotion	Exhibition: "An Alluring Inheritance of Beauty: Chinese Cheongsam" ⁵⁰	Women's Cheongsam
					Exhibition: Art in Community (II): An Alluring Inheritance of Beauty: Chinese Cheongsam ⁵⁰	Women's Cheongsam
31	2022 – now	Intangible Cultural Heritage Office School of Fashion and Textiles The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	"The Craftsmanship of Hong Kong Men's Cheongsam — Archive, Analysis, Inheritance, and Implementation" (Funded Project of Community-driven Projects of Intangible Cultural Heritage Funding Scheme 2021)	Research Preservation Promotion	Seminar: "Awakening the Classic Poise: Hong Kong Men's Cheongsam Making Technique and Intangible Cultural Heritage Inheritance Seminar" ⁵²	Men's Cheongsam
					Book: "Oral History of the Distinguished Masters: A Century of Classic – Hong Kong Men's Cheongsam"	Men's Cheongsam
					Book: "Craftsmanship of the Distinguished Masters: Hong Kong Men's Cheongsam Making Technique"	Men's Cheongsam
					Research Paper: "Discussion on the Protection of "Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique" from the Development of Hong Kong Men's Cheongsam and Oral Histories of Distinguish Master Tailors" (This Paper)	Men's Cheongsam
					Research Paper: "Investigation on the Craftsmanship Transmission and Dress Form of Hong Kong Men's Cheongsam"	Men's Cheongsam
					Video Editorial – "Oral History of Distinguished Masters Series: Master Chun Cheung Lam"	Men's Cheongsam
					Video Editorial – "Oral History of Distinguished Masters Series: Master Lau On Hing"	Men's Cheongsam
Video Editorial – "Craftsmanship of the Distinguished Masters Series: Master Chun Cheung Lam"	Men's Cheongsam					
Video Editorial – "Craftsmanship of the Distinguished Masters Series: Master Lau On Hing"	Men's Cheongsam					
32	2023	Intangible Cultural Heritage Office	Hong Kong Week 2023@Bangkok — "Hong Kong Intangible Cultural Heritage Carnival" Exhibition	Promotion	Exhibition: Cheongsam displayed in the "Hong Kong Intangible Cultural Heritage Carnival" ⁵³	Women's Cheongsam
33	2023	Intangible Cultural Heritage Office South China Research Center	Seed for Intangible Cultural Heritage – Appreciation of Intangible Cultural Heritage (Funded Project of Community-driven Projects of Intangible Cultural Heritage Funding Scheme 2019)	Research Promotion	Exhibition: "Hong Kong Cheongsam" (Spring Ancestral Worship) ⁵⁴	Men's Cheongsam
					Exhibition: "Hong Kong Cheongsam" (Autumn Ancestral Worship) ⁵⁵	Men's Cheongsam
34	2023	School of Fashion and Textiles The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	"From Inheritance to Innovation: Preserving Intangible Cultural Heritage of China"	Transmission Revitalization Promotion	"From Inheritance to Innovation: Preserving Intangible Cultural Heritage of China" ⁵⁶	Men's and Women's Cheongsam
35	2023	School of Fashion and Textiles The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	Awakening the Classic Poise - Hong Kong Men's Cheongsam Making Technique and Intangible Cultural Heritage Inheritance Exhibition	Promotion	Exhibition: "Awakening the Classic Poise - Hong Kong Men's Cheongsam Making Technique and Intangible Cultural Heritage Inheritance Exhibition" ⁵⁷	Men's Cheongsam
36	2023	Intangible Cultural Heritage Office	Presentation Ceremony of the Commemorative Plaques for the "Representative Items of the National Intangible Cultural Heritage"	Promotion	The Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China Presented the "Representative Items of the National Intangible Cultural Heritage" plaques to Hong Kong Cheongsam Association ⁵⁸	Men's and Women's Cheongsam
37	2023	Intangible Cultural Heritage Office	"Meet the Masters!" Series	Promotion	Talk: "Talk on Men's Cheongsam" ⁵⁹	Men's Cheongsam
38	2023	Hong Kong Film Archive	"Cinderella and Her Qipao" Exhibition	Promotion	Exhibition: "Cinderella and Her Qipao" Exhibition ⁶⁰	Women's Cheongsam

39	2023	Hong Kong Cheongsam Association	Men's Cheongsam and Makwa and Hong Kong Social Practice	Promotion	Talk: "Men's Cheongsam and Makwa and Hong Kong Social Practice" ⁶¹	Men's Cheongsam
		Tung Wah Group of Hospitals			Exhibition and Experience: "Hong Kong Men's Cheongsam and Makwa Exhibition" ⁶¹	Men's Cheongsam
40	2023	Hong Kong Cheongsam Association Musicus Society	Jockey Club Musicus Heritage Stories: Neoclassicism Refashioned	Transmission Revitalization Promotion	Exhibition: "Jockey Club Musicus Heritage Stories: Neoclassicism Refashioned Exhibition" ⁶²	Men's and Women's Cheongsam
41	2023 – Now	Lingnan University Hong Kong Art School	Jockey Club "Pass It On" Intangible Cultural Heritage Education Project – Phase 2	Transmission Revitalization Promotion	Training Courses: "Pass It On @ Tertiary – Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique – Advanced" ⁶³	Women's Cheongsam
42	2023 – now	Intangible Cultural Heritage Office	Traces of Human Touch — Hong Kong Intangible Cultural Heritage Exhibition	Promotion	Exhibition: Cheongsam Display in the "Traces of Human Touch — Hong Kong Intangible Cultural Heritage Exhibition" ⁶⁴	Men's and Women's Cheongsam
43	2023 – now	School of Fashion and Textiles The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	Reformation of Master-Apprentice Transmission Model for the Preservation of Hong Kong Men's Cheongsam Making Technique	Research Transmission Promotion	Training Course: "Hong Kong Men's Cheongsam Making Technique Programme" (Project specified output, work in progress.)	Men's Cheongsam
					Research Paper: "Transmission Model of Hong Kong Men's Cheongsam Making Technique: A Practitioner Approach" (Project specified output, work in progress)	Men's Cheongsam
44	2023 – now	The Hong Kong Polytechnic University School of Fashion and Textiles	Digitalized Intangible Cultural Heritage Preservation – Application of Computer-aided Pattern Generation and Digital Jacquard Weaving Technology in Reinventing Men's Cheongsam Design and Development Practice	Research Revitalization Promotion	International Conference Paper: "Digitalized Intangible Cultural Heritage Preservation – Reinventing the Design Practice of Hong Kong Men's Cheongsam" IASDR Congress 2023 ¹⁷	Men's Cheongsam
					Exhibition: "Rhythm of Media – International Fashion Art Invitational Exhibition" ⁶⁵	Men's Cheongsam
					Research Paper: "Digitalized Intangible Cultural Heritage Preservation – Computer-aided Pattern Generation and Men's Cheongsam Design and Development Practice" (Project specified output, work in progress)	Men's Cheongsam
					Research Paper: "Digitalized Intangible Cultural Heritage Preservation – Application of Computer-aided Pattern Generation and Digital Jacquard Weaving Technology in Reinventing Men's Cheongsam Design and Development Practice" (Project specified output, work in progress)	Men's Cheongsam

4. Discussion on the Strategy for Men's Cheongsam Protective Work

Based on case studies of preliminary conservation efforts, the author believes that the overall conservation process is still in its primary stage and has not yet achieved the impact for long-term inheritance and development. Firstly, the focus of ICH conservation for such traditional crafts often deviates from their most crucial production techniques and core values. Public attention is generally drawn only to eye-catching designs, fabric patterns, styling effects, and celebrity stories, without understanding nor appreciating the exquisite craftsmanship. While extensive "firework-style" promotions may create fads and short-term market demand, they contribute little to preserving the craft, cultivating inheritors (future market suppliers and holders of tacit knowledge), or building a robust and enduring cultural ecosystem for cheongsam. Without a foundational understanding of the aesthetics, core values, and cultural essence of traditional tailoring techniques, the emphasis on promotion may backfire, causing this unique and refined classic attire in traditional Chinese culture to be overshadowed by counterfeit products that prioritize appearance over craftsmanship, or even reduced to a "photo-op" costume in the passing fads.

Secondly, the information of the forms, specifications, tailoring techniques and processes of various cheongsams is insufficient and fragmented, lacking a comprehensive and integrated primary point of reference. Some cutting techniques and production procedures remain as tacit knowledge in the form of experiences and memories of senior master tailors, without being documented nor analyzed. With the number of existing and practicing master tailors (the primary holders of cheongsam making techniques and tacit knowledge) dwindling due to their aging, retiring, or passing away one after another, the recording, preservation, and research of their knowledge are urgently needed, particularly for men's cheongsam craftsmanship^{8, 14, 15, 17, 20}. Since tacit knowledge is difficult to explain solely through text and images, multimedia and diverse recording methods are essential for analyzing and preserving related knowledge, including text, images, audio, video, physical samples, scans, image analysis data, and virtual models.

Furthermore, current inheritance programs have not strategically addressed the urgent situation of this craft's near-extinction situation. Many inheritance projects were positioned as introductory experiential courses, focusing only on basic skills and single forms, without covering the full range of techniques of this ICH. At the same time, these programs have not focused on identifying, discovering, and cultivating potential seed inheritors capable of carrying on the tradition and craft. Given that the ICH is already in a critically endangered state, and the limited number of senior master tailors and their available time and energy for teaching, the current inheritance strategy should prioritize the training of seed inheritors and trainers, followed by expanding to a broader reach. In the long term, the inheritance strategy can develop in parallel through “focused seed training” and “general training” directions.

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