

Unifying Historical-Research and Drama-Interpretation: A Methodological Exploration of Textile Historical Materials in Chinese Classical Dramatic Literature

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Abstract

This paper puts the relationship between textile phenomena and textile historical materials in Chinese classical dramatic literature under the perspective of literature, history and textiles, introduces the goal orientation of "*unifying historical-research and drama-interpretation*", explains the nature of textile phenomena in classical dramatic literature, and the process of obtaining textile historical materials, and discusses the mechanism of "*multi-dimensional mutual reference*" of textile historical materials. The methodology believes that based on the mechanism of textile historical materials in Chinese classical dramatic literature, the positive process is the historical interpretation of textile phenomena, while the reverse process is the literary evidence of textile historical facts. The corresponding logical system attempts to solve the problem of "*why Chinese classical dramatic literature has become a historical database for Chinese ancient textile research*", and is expected to summarize the common regulations of extracting and studying the historical materials of textiles in various types of classical literary works.

Keywords: classical dramatic literature, textile historical materials, textile phenomena, historical research methods, mutual verification between drama and history

1. Introduction

As a product of history, classical dramatic literature not only reflects its own development, but also accumulates various historical materials such as politics, economy, society, science, technology, and art in different historical periods. The rich textile-related information contained in it can undoubtedly be used as historical materials for the study of textile history. The textile historical materials in classical dramatic literature not only include the technical materials focusing on material civilization, but also include the humanistic materials focusing on spiritual civilization. They not only reflect the material-cultural attributes of textiles as a necessity of human life, but also reflect the social-cultural attributes of textiles as an ideological appendage. Although the creation of dramatic literature is not subjectively aimed at inheriting specific textile skills or textile culture, it is still of practical significance to carry out the screening of textile historical materials in classical dramatic literature. So far, the academic community has involved this type of historical research, but the mechanism and regulation of this type has not been analyzed and elaborated in depth from the perspective of methodology.

This paper attempts to break through the boundary between historiography and literary research, places the relationship between textile phenomena and textile historical materials in classical dramatic literature under the perspective of literature, history and textiles, explains the nature of historical materials regarding textile phenomena in dramatic literature and the process of obtaining textile historical materials, introduces the goal orientation of "*unifying historical-research and drama-interpretation*", and carries out methodological exploration of textile historical materials in Chinese classical dramatic literature.

2. The Composition of Textile Historical Materials in Classical Dramatic Literature

Based on the principle that "literary and artistic works of various genres can be used as historical materials" (Rong, 1987, p. 25), classical dramatic literature provides a source of information for the study of ancient textile history, and the textile phenomena in classical dramatic literature naturally have the possibility of being transformed into textile historical materials. When textile phenomena are included in the scope of historical

research, textile descriptions are selected as textile corpus, which is an indispensable preparation in the process of becoming textile historical materials.

2.1 Identification of Textile Phenomena

In this paper, we define "textile phenomena" in classical dramatic literature as textile-related things presented through the depiction of dramatic literature. The textile phenomena in classical dramatic literature involve a wide range of contents, which intuitively and fully reflect the historical outlook of textile techniques and humanities. As the main embodiment of the historical function of textile phenomena in classical dramatic literature, it can be screened through specific textile technical objects, abstract textile humanistic imagery, or implicit textile cultural phenomena.

Textile technical objects mainly involve the acquisition and processing skills of fibers such as silk, linen, wool and cotton, textile machinery and weaving skills, textile bleaching, dyeing, printing and finishing skills, fur processing and tanning skills, cutting and sewing skills, embroidery skills, hand-knitted skills, and other textile phenomena, which mainly reflect the textile techniques and material culture.

Textile humanistic imagery mainly involves the production and consumption of folk textile in ancient China, textile-related folk customs, multi-ethnic traditional concepts and exchanges in textiles, the image expression and artistic conception creation through textiles, as well as the presentation of literati's social psychological and spiritual life through textiles in classical dramatic literature.

The phenomenon of textile culture is to examine the cultural connotation associated with textile things from a historical perspective, in order to summarize the cultural path of the integration of textile elements and dramatic art, as well as the historical role that textile historical materials in classical dramatic literature play on the accumulation and dissemination of traditional culture.

2.2 Characteristics of Textile Depictions

The original textual reflection of textiles in classical dramatic literature can be regarded as textile description. Textile depiction can be both realistic narrative and abstract presentation, both objective record and subjective expression. As a linguistic intermediate in the transformation of textile phenomena to textile historical materials, textile description is the linguistic and written form of textile phenomena. Textile descriptions play a bridging role, and can be transformed into textile historical materials through the comprehensive analysis of textile corpus (as transitional intermediate), and the process of multi-dimensional mutual reference. In short, the textile historical materials of classical dramatic literature are obtained by the textile description in classical dramatic literature through differentiation of textile corpus. Although textile depictions in classical dramatic literature have the potential to transform into textile historical materials, they are usually not directly used for textile history research due to their characteristics of mixing fiction with reality, diverse genres, wide categories, and discrete distribution, thus need to go through the processing of textile corpus.

2.3 Processing of Textile Corpus

Corpus, i.e., linguistic material, is the basic unit that constitutes a corpus in the context of linguistics. This paper borrows the concept of "corpus" to form a certain number and scale of textile-related linguistic material collection by classifying and sorting the complicated textile descriptions in dramatic texts through the phalanx processing of textile-related expressions. In order to interpret the true appearance of ancient textiles from classical dramatic literature, it should be based on the correct interpretation and analysis of the textile corpus in classical dramatic literature, so as to ensure the scientificity of textile corpus processing. Therefore, it is necessary to avoid speculation or subjective sentence assertion, and to absorb the correct annotation results of predecessors. The textile corpus in classical dramatic literature is often not isolated and closed, but is related through rhetorical devices such as extension, analogy, and symbolism. The rhetorical devices that are common in classical dramatic literature are important medium for discerning textile corpus. The key is to connect them to the connotation and essence of textile phenomena through literal associations.

2.4 Acquisition of Textile Historical Materials

Historical research must start from specific historical facts, and in terms of specific forms, it must start from historical materials (An, 2010, p. 419). Starting from the basic concept of historical materials, textile historical materials can be understood as the relevant traces left in the development process of textile techniques, which can be recognized, explained and reconstructed, and are manifested as texts, images, physical objects and other materials that can be used in the study of textile history. The difference in historical interpretation is often rooted in the difference to the degree of collection of historical materials and the depth of analysis. (Deng & Zhong, 2016)

The transformation process from textile description to textile corpus is included in the relationship between textile phenomena and textile historical materials in classical dramatic literature. From the textile phenomena to textile historical materials, it usually has experienced four forms, namely, conceptual form of textile phenomena, linguistic form of textile descriptions, transitional form of textile corpus, and solid form of textile historical materials.

It can be seen that from the textile phenomenon to the textile description stage, on the basis of referring to the existing textile historical materials, the "textile phenomenon form of classical dramatic literature" can be established, and the text description of textile technical objects, textile humanistic imagery, and textile cultural phenomena in classical dramatic literature is identified. From the textile description to the textile corpus stage, the collected textile descriptions can be sorted out by "Core textile vocabulary", "Extended textile vocabulary" and "Relevant textile vocabulary", and the "textile vocabulary phalanx of classical dramatic literature" can be constructed, so as to further sort out the textile corpus by extracting and summarizing relevant examples. From the textile corpus to the textile historical materials stage, the collection of excerpts was selected, and representative examples were selected to form the "collection of textile corpus in classical dramatic literature" for the subsequent selection and analysis of historical materials.

3. Mechanism on Textile Historical Materials Under the Goal of "Unifying Historical-Research and Drama-Interpretation"

Textile historical materials in classical dramatic literature are used for textile history research, but still need to go through scientific procedures on historical materials. From the perspective of mechanism, it is necessary to carry out the practice of "multi-dimensional mutual reference" of materials under the guidance of the goal of "*unifying historical-research and drama-interpretation*" and under the methodology of *researching history with drama*, *interpreting drama by history*, and *mutual verification between drama and history*. This helps to reveal the historical value of textile-related information in Chinese classical dramatic literature.

3.1 Literary Evidence of Textile History

The realistic tradition of Chinese poetry, which has been continuously consolidated and strengthened by Chinese dynasties, advocates that literature should make a true reflection of history (Zhao, 2010). In a certain sense, "poetry" has the nature of "history". The existence of history provides materials for literary creation, and literary description supplements the narration of history, so that future generations may read history in literature (Huang, 2015). Drawing on the traditional method of "using poetry to examine the correctness and error of history" or "using poetry to make up for the gaps in history" (Zong, 2011) has been a common practice of studying history through literary works. On the basis of fully affirming the historiographical reference function of poems and drama as "realistic" literary works, it is used as historical materials to verify the authenticity of specific historical facts.

"*Historical-research*" is to prove that textile historical materials have the function of objectively reflecting the historical facts of textiles, and the key is to grasp their intrinsic historical value. From the practical experience in studies of textile history, judging whether the textile historical materials extracted from classical literature have reasonable historical value mainly depends on whether it can objectively answer the textile-related historical questions, whether it can fill the data gap in the study of textile history independently or in combination, whether it can provide a reference for historical research in other fields other than textiles, and whether it can provide specialized explanations for the interpretation and research of classical dramatic literature from a historical perspective.

The limit of "*drama-interpretation*" determines the rationality of the interpretation of classical dramatic literature and textile historical materials. Only by limiting the textile historical materials in classical dramatic literature to the appropriate historical background, and by understanding of the specific historical period while analyzing them, can we obtain the interpretation of the textile historical materials in classical dramatic literature close to historical facts. In such process, it is required not only fully referring to the annotations of reference books and literature, but also taking into account the terminology-object exegesis with the attributes of textile cultural expressions in classical dramatic literature.

3.2 Historiographical Interpretation of the Textile Phenomena

In view of the unique economic forms and lifestyles of ancient China reflected in the textile phenomena in classical dramatic literature, as well as the integration of multi-ethnic textile culture on this basis, this paper introduces the method of "interpreting drama with history". This refers to the definition of "interpreting poetry with history" of ancient Chinese hermeneutics, that is, "the background of the poetic text can be clarified with

the help of the evidence in historical classics" (Kang, 2015). The purpose is to verify the connotation of the textile phenomena in classical dramatic literature in terms of historical facts, and the relevant historical evidence can also be used as a footnote to the content of the drama, so as to provide a reference for a more in-depth interpretation of the historicity and culture of the textile phenomena in classical dramatic literature.

Historical events can be seen in classical dramatic literature, sometimes vividly presented in combination with textile phenomena. The colors, patterns, styles, and shapes of textiles depicted in classical dramatic literature reflect the state of social production and life evolution in history, and show evident characters of the times as well. Moreover, it is also of certain significance from the perspective of expanding the sources of historical materials. Classical dramatic literary works not only provide specific images that reflect the thoughts and personalities of the characters, but also reveal the feelings contained in artistic images, as well as certain ideological tendencies connected by such feelings (Yan, 2001). Textiles reflect the cultural pattern, aesthetic taste and social psychology of different ethnic groups, and have profound cultural connotation and aesthetic value. Although textiles themselves often cannot be regarded as aesthetic objects alone, once woven and dyed clothing is organically combined with folks and things, it will naturally become an object of scrutiny and appreciation. An in-depth historical interpretation of the cultural implications of the textile phenomena is beneficial to understanding how classical dramatic literature conveys unique historical aesthetic values.

3.3 Mutual Verification Between Drama and History

Due to the realistic characteristics of classical dramatic literature, and the practical convention of mutual evidence between literature and history, the concepts of both can be integrated and mutually verified to a certain extent. As a research method to jointly study literature and history, the "*mutual verification between drama and history*" in the field of researching textile historical materials in classical dramatic literature contains the internal connection between drama and history. It is characterized by the combination of the internal mechanism of historical interpretation of the two genres of classical dramatic literature and historical classics, and cross-references with "text realism" and "historical truth", so as to give a great perspective to the interpretation of textile history and culture.

As a paradigm of historical evidence, the "multiple evidence method" is based on the traditional evidence practice. Taking historical materials as the research object, combining different disciplines, and using a variety of evidence to verify the research object are practical evidence methods that jointly seeks the truth of historical facts (Xiao, 2013, p.119). The authenticity of history is an essential value criterion for the creation of drama art (Ning & Lu, 1987, p.16). For instance, the historical themes in the Yuan Za Ju (元杂剧), i.e., dramas in Yuan Dynasty, expresses the real life of the contemporary through the wearing of ancient characters, and since the Song Za Ju (宋杂剧), i.e., dramas in Song Dynasty, it has formed a deep-rooted tradition (Cheng, 2013, p.20). Therefore, to objectively and rationally analyze and use this part of the historical materials, the key is to examine whether the textile phenomenon is reasonable and whether there is a historical basis for reference. For the study of the history of material culture such as textiles, it is necessary to fully absorb the historical materials referring weaving, dyeing and clothing preserved in addition to the official historical documents, technical information, miscellaneous records, chronicles, and sufficient anthologies, to subsequently combine the inherited images and unearthed physical information, and to use the means of document-text analysis, physical-comparison analysis, image-visual analysis, etc., to run the practical concept of "multi-dimensional mutual reference" of materials through the textile historical materials study.

4. The Logical System of "Unifying Historical-Research and Drama-Interpretation"

The goal-oriented setting logic of "*unifying historical-research and drama-interpretation*" in the study of textile historical materials in classical dramatic literature is based on the internal connection between dramatic and historical narration in the Chinese literary tradition, and constitutes a logical system at the following six levels.

4.1 Problem-solving Level

According to the problem-solving orientation of "*why classical dramatic literature has become a historical database of ancient textile research*", focuses are on how to present another perspective of skill inheritance, dimension of cultural representation, and cross-learning of textile civilization of ancient China through the textile historical materials in classical dramatic literature, as the starting point of the logical system.

4.2 Target Level

While setting up the value orientation of "*unifying historical-research and drama-interpretation*", focuses are put on the synchronization of historical verification and dramatic analysis, on the coordination of historical analysis and dramatic interpretation, and also on the equal emphasis on historical value and literary connotation.

4.3 Theoretical Level

Inspired by the classical principle of "mutual verification between poetry and history" and the theory of the "multiple evidence method", both jointly play the role of theoretical support for introducing "multi-dimensional mutual reference" of the materials in relevant study on textile history.

4.4 Methodological Level

The path design is composed of three aspects: "researching history with drama", "interpreting drama by history" and "mutual verification between drama and history", which is the core of this logical system.

4.5 Practical Level

Through the mutual support and confirmation of textual documents, hand-me-down images, unearthed objects or information and other related materials, as well as the mutual reference of multidisciplinary knowledge, it practices correspondingly to the textile technical objects, textile humanistic imagery, or textile cultural phenomena in classical dramatic literature, and carry out historical data analysis on textile technique , historical material investigation on textile humanities, and discussion on history and culture of textiles, respectively.

4.6 Effect Level

Pay attention to the evaluation of "integrating of science and art", "connecting technology with society", and "correlating history and culture", and form a closed-loop logical system that echoes the goal of "unifying historical-research and drama-interpretation".

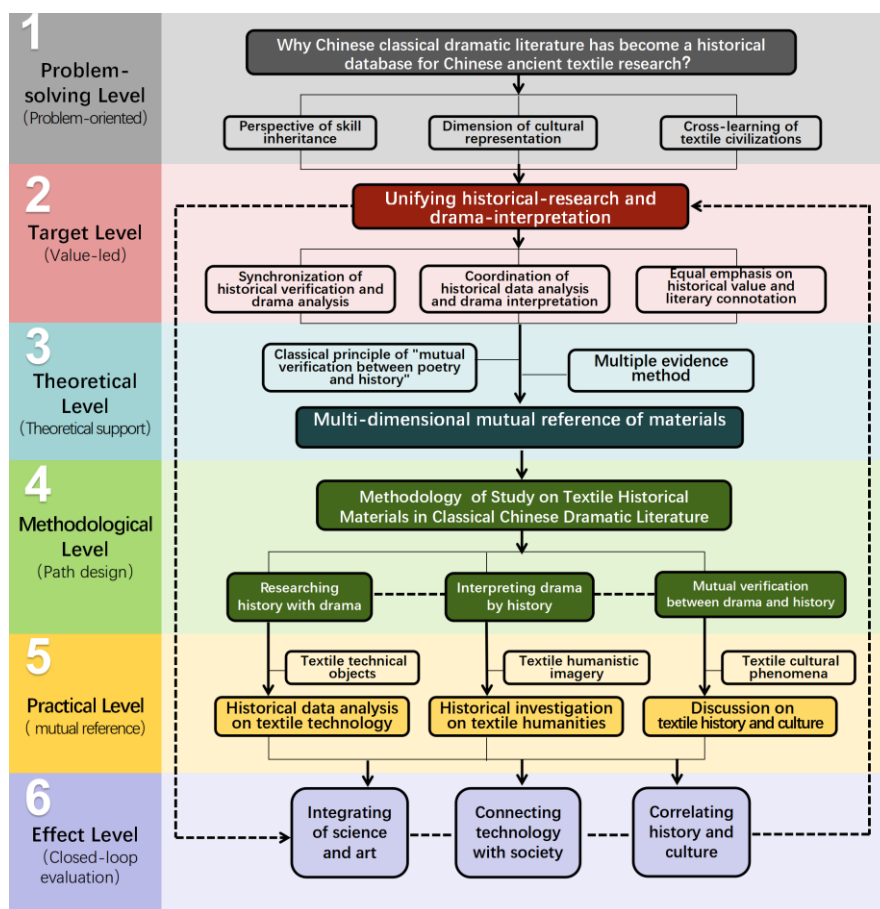


Figure 1. The schematic diagram of the logical system for "unifying historical-research and drama-interpretation"

The schematic diagram of the logical system is illustrated in Figure 1. The essence of the logical self-consistency of the research on textile historical materials in classical dramatic literature is to study relevant texts with reference to the historical process of textiles, try to restore the social environment and cultural atmosphere produced by the dramatic texts, to investigate the author's personal experience, ethical stance and principles of life in the period. The one task is to explore the truth of textile history from the perspective of "diachronicity" as

much as possible. And the other task is to interpret the connotation of textile phenomena in dramatic texts from the perspective of "synchronicity". In this way, the classical dramatic literature is "restored to a historical and cultural field that runs through diachronic and synchronicity" (Yang, 2014). Through methodological exploration of textile historical materials research, literature and historiography reaches a consensus on the point of connection between drama and history. Correspondingly, "*unifying historical-research and drama-interpretation*" has also become a historiographical response to the reality of literature.

5. Summary

From the perspective of historiography, the function of textile phenomena in classical dramatic literature is mainly to provide historical information, which has the nature and function of historical materials. But they still need to be transformed into textile historical materials with research value through scientific analysis. The reasonable classification, analysis and correlation of textile descriptions in classical dramatic texts, as well as the correct understanding, interpretation and evaluation on this basis, are all fulfilling the requirements of textile history research for the historical processing of textile corpus in classical dramatic literature. The textile word phalanx and textile corpus collection play a role in this process. Based on theoretical support from the principle of "mutual verification between poetry and history" since ancient times in China, and the theory of the "multiple evidence method" that has been widely adopted by historical academics, the method of "multi-dimensional mutual reference" of materials under the goal of "*unifying historical-research and drama-interpretation*" is introduced. And the methodological path of "*researching history with drama*", "*interpreting drama by history*" and "*mutual verification between drama and history*" is designed. The logical system composed of six levels, including problem-solving, target, theory, method, practice and effect, is expected to provide support for the methodology of the research on textile historical materials in Chinese classical dramatic literature.

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Authors contributions

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