SUMMARY

Cantonese Opera (the Opera) is one of the most popular forms of public entertainment in southern China. Its origin dates back to the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 A.D.). It experienced drastic changes during the past century. It is found that the scripts, role-types, style of performance, costume and make-up have often been changed as society transforms. In fact, the effects of political upheavals in China in the late nineteenth century, the introduction of western performing arts, the urban economic development of Guangzhou, Hong Kong and Macau, and keen competition among opera troupes have shaped the course of this traditional art form.

Much research investigated the Opera from historical, anthropological and literary perspectives. This study, however, analyzes the Opera from the perspective of social history. The study undertakes to explore and evaluate the Opera in the 1930s, based on advertisements, news and specialized columns from the newspaper, the Hong Kong Chinese Mail《华字日报》(since 1863).

Chapter One explains the objectives and the methodology adopted for the study as well as a review of related research work that has been done so far.

Chapter Two focuses on the different developments of the Opera in Guangdong and Hong Kong in the 1930s. This includes the political, economical and social aspects of both places.

The Third and Fourth chapters analyze the characteristics of the Opera in the 1930s under four categories: (a) performance venue; (b) organization of troupes; (c)librettos; and (d)costume and make-up.
Chapter Five fully examines the performance of the Opera in Guangdong and Hong Kong. The decline of the Opera in the former and its success in the latter are also analyzed with reference to the social and economic background of both places discussed in Chapter Two.

Chapter Six focuses on how the Opera developed in Singapore and Malaysia in the 1930s. The reasons for its spread to these foreign countries are also analyzed.

The concluding chapter is a summary of the above chapters. It also points out the limitations of the present study. It is hoped that further study can be carried out in the future since there is still much information about the Opera in the forty years of history of the Hong Kong Chinese Mail.