

A Study on the Application of Elements of Ethnic Dress in Modern Fashion Design

ETUDES SUR L'APPLICATION DES ELEMENTS DE COSTUMES ETHNIQUES DANS LA MODE

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Abstract: The paper mainly analyzes the importance of ethnic dress from the perspective of the application of ethnic costume's form and various features in modern fashion design to fully acknowledge that national costumes are the inexhaustible source of inspiration for designing creation. Only by understanding, inheriting and enhancing the essence of ethnic costume, we can transfer it into the culture of modern fashion design, and gain enlightenment to integrate the culture of traditional ethnic dress with that of modern fashion.

Key words: National dress style; Fashion; Creation; Design patterns; Color relations; Structural characteristics; Local modeling

Résumé: Cet article a analysé principalement l'importance des costumes ethniques à travers la perspective de l'application de la forme et de diverses caractéristiques de costumes ethniques dans la mode et a reconnu que les costumes nationales étaient la source inépuisable de l'inspiration pour la conception de la création. Ce n'est que par la compréhension, l'héritage et l'amélioration de l'essence des costumes nationales que nous pouvons l'intégrer dans la culture de la mode et combiner la culture des costumes ethniques avec celle de la mode.

Mots-Clés: Style de costumes nationales; Création; Design pattern; Relations des couleurs; Caractéristiques structurales; Modélisation locale

With the advance of the digital age and the fast speed of communication, human is moving towards a brand new time in which the gap between cultural differences is narrowing down. People's values are more in line with each other and fashion, like a cold, quickly spreads throughout the whole world. However, there is also the opposite power in this trend. That is to say, it is due to the integration that people can recognize the cultural differences more clearly, and at the same time respect and cherish the differences. This is the consensus of mankind in a new era, and also a new starting point for re-studying the local culture.

From a global perspective, the performance on ethnic style of clothing has always been prevalent since 1970s. People have explored new design methods and put them into practice. They create new design style, enlightened from the historical, ethnic and natural inspiration. This has fully demonstrated people's desire to return to nature, the spirit of getting back to basics and the necessary respect for history

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and attention to the awakening of consciousness of cultural heritage. Especially since the 1990's, with the increasing awareness of environmental and cultural ecological protection, the subject on ethnic style has been repeatedly performed by many designers, such as the Oriental Subject (China, India, Japan, Arab, etc.); the European subject (traditional folk costumes of the Nordic and the Eastern European); South America topic (Indiana, Mexico, etc.); Africa subject and so on. Ethnic style of dress is also beginning to be widely accepted, and occupy the market. It is well known that the development of China is not synchronized as that of the world before 1980s because of the historical reasons. Since the 1980's, as people started to pursue "the Westernization", suit became fashionable for a long time. People felt excited and also puzzled in such a dazzling costume world, and had to follow. Everything of ethnic has become recognized as conservative and outdated. So until the 1990's, people began to reflect deeply and study the real reason for the success of fashion as well as the failure. During this period, there is also discussion about nationalization, but most are staying at the theoretical stage. It lasts only few years that national style became truly fashionable and widely accepted by numbers of consumers. Especially in the years of 1999 and 2000, ethnic style became the mainstream of fashion. Clear imprint of ethnic style, such as embroidery designs, delicate lace, and bright color is marked on almost any type of clothing, such as fashion, casual wear, denim clothing and many with accessories, such as bags, shoes, scarves and hats, etc. Especially in the summer of 2000, the prevalence of Little Dragon put the national fashion to a climax.

The concept of national dress in a broad sense refers to the existing civil clothes from all parts of the world, narrowly refers to China's 56 ethnic costumes. China is a united multi-ethnic country. Half a century ago, Comrade Mao pointed out in "the Chinese revolution and the Communist Party of China," that "China is one of the world's largest countries. Its territory is roughly equal with the whole area of Europe. In this vast territory, fertile land gives us the source of food and clothing; vertical and horizontal mountains give us the widespread forests and rich mineral storage; a lot of rivers and lakes give us the facilitation of vessels and irrigation; the long coastline gives us the convenience of overseas traffic. From the very early ancient, our ancestors work, live and reproduce in the great land."

After the founding of People's Republic of China, it is identified through scientific method that there are totally of 56 nations in our country, including Han, Mongolian, Hui, Tibetan, Uygur, Miao, Yi, Zhuang, Buyi, Korean, Manchu, Dong, Yao, Bai, Tujia, Hani, Kazak, Dai, Li, Lisu, Wa, She, alpine, Lahu, Shui, Dongxiang, Naxi, Jingpo, Kirgiz, soil, Daur, Molao and Qiang, Brown, Saracens, Maonan, brave guy, Xibe, Achang, Pumi, Tajik, Nu, Uzbek, Russian, Ewenki, Deang, security, Yugur, Jing, Tatar, single lung, Oroqen, Hezhen, door Pakistan, Geba and Keno. In addition, there are still some peoples unidentified the nationality. According to the census statistics calculated in 1982, in the 55 ethnic groups, the Zhuang is the largest in population, about 13,380,000. In addition, the fourteen minorities with popularity above a million are Uygur, Yi, Miao, Manchu, Tibetan, Mongolian, Tujia, Buyi, Korean, Dong, Yao, Bai and Hani. As the contrary, the smallest in population is Hezhens, only 1476. Less than 7% of the total population of China, ethnic minorities account for a total area of around 50 - 60% of the whole area in China, especially in the southwest, northwest and northeast. They devoted tremendous contribution to China's independence and prosperity, and also created its own culture.

Due to the differences on geographical environment, climate cultural backgrounds, religious beliefs, customs and habits and the imbalance in the development of productive forces, etc., the style of ethnic dress displays in great diversity. Based on the geographical point of view, the national dress can be divided into North and South, known as North skirt and South gowns, that is, skirt is mainly popular in the South and robe is the mainstream in the north. The climate in southern China is warm, so that clothing is diverse in styles, simple in cutting and structure. They mainly wear head type, double-breasted type, slanting-breasted style and kinds of pleated skirt, tube-shaped skirt and trousers.

Decoration is various, showing not only gorgeous pattern, but also accessories to beautify the dress, in which way the characteristics of dress is highlighted and strengthened. In need of keeping warm, peoples in the north created long-neck style robes which is made of brocade, fur, worsted and cotton, etc, and requires high techniques in cutting in order to flanging the edge as the main means of refined decoration. China's national dress belongs to the East planar structure in the clothing structure (except for Russia and other peoples), which is different from the West three-dimensional structure characterized by showing of body shape. This is influenced by subtle oriental philosophy and aesthetic concept. This planar structure is not to reflect the human body, but in the purpose of highlighting the smooth overall clothing lines, graceful beauty, and showing the sway of pretty posture while moving, and dignified while stated.

At the beginning of a new century, as people lead a life with increasingly artificial environment, human's way of life is away from the nature farther and farther. Thus they hold more eager to return to nature and the past. Therefore their native culture becomes the source or people's desire on seeking root of origin. All local culture with original and honest things has attracted people with great temptation. Ethnic style is rich, flexible, and personalized which fulfills people's spiritual needs. Thus, in the field of costume design, performance of ethnic style has become a major topic.

The ethnic style is comparative to other artistic styles, such as classical style, urban style, etc. In terms of "ethnic style of dress", it refers to modern clothes with the characteristics of a national dress style. Standing on the point of view of form, the modern dress is embodied some elements of ethnic dress, such as structural characteristics, local modeling features, pictorial patterns, color relationships, and all kinds of handmade jewelry as well as fabrics. Its style is impressed as decorative, romantic and honest, and also reflects the desire to return to nature and the spirit of yearning for getting back to basics. Ethnic style, seeing from the whole, is absolute modern clothing, whereas the local or partial details or materials on it reflect the characteristics of national dress style. The design of ethnic style clothing should be based on the contemporary aesthetic requirements and the wearing habits; otherwise, it can not enter the market, although beautiful. Therefore, acute capturing of fashion hot points, and suitable application them into their own style of design will be the keys to success.

In the use of ethnic elements into design, if we neglect its fashion, we will easily be trapped in the blind state and be difficult to break away from the bound of the prototype. In fact, a successful fashion brand has always melted the fashion elements into their own style not only to maintain a consistent style, but also to adapt the changes into fashion to achieve consumers.

At present, the ethnic subject becomes the hot topic of many domestic designers, such as Wu Haiyan, Zhang Tianai, Zhang Zhaoda, and Chen Jiaqing etc. Some costume brands are with national characteristics, such as Beijing's Red Phoenix, five-colored soil, Pu Jade, Splendor Shannon Dressing, Guangzhou's Tong Ran, and Shenzhen's Fish, Heaven and so on. No matter it is suit, casual wear or ceremonial clothing, all shows the promising market of national style dress. In the first exhibition of Chinese apparel, Zhou Liya, from Institute of Science and Technology in Wuhan, designed Tujia ethnic dresses "Xi Lanka Shop" of a group of six series total of 80 costumes, typical style of west of Hubei. The costume is well recognized by the domestic and foreign experts. "Xi Lanka Shop" in west Hubei Tujia, known as "beating blanket flower" and also called as "Soil Brocade", is listed as China's five major tapestries. It uses dark brocade thread as meridian line, and a variety of colorful thick thread, cotton thread, plush thread as latitude line through hand-pick texture to make Tujia brocade, which is colorful, exquisite and attractive. Zhou Liya takes it as major design elements, selecting fashionable and simple pure linen as the cloth to embody the characteristics, and pays attention to dress changes on decorative detail to design, through different colors, "daughters", "Watchtower", "Xi Lanka Shop", "ten sisters", "Baishou Dance", "Dragon Boat Melody"--six parts to make up the national costumes. Slanting-breasted shirt, short long sleeve and Ba Fuluo skirt and coat, possessing the traditional costumes of Tujia, are inlaid with elegant and wide-lace. Jewelry and accessories are under modern concept of design and processing. "Xi Lanka Shop" of strong colors contrast and coordination matches the dark fabric cloth, taking consideration of the proportion of area and combination of fashion clothing to reflect the design concept possessing the spirit of age based on the traditional costumes and to integrate the culture of Tujia ethnic minority with modern dress.

Thus, we can see that the emergence of creative design depends on the accumulation of professional knowledge and social experience. Being sensitive to information on fashion, well known on clothing structure, materials, technology use and color techniques assist on the creative design. In the text, creativity is the search for combining elements of national dress with modern costumes by emphasizing the creative way of thinking, extensive association, multifaceted attempts and breaking the stereotypes. At the beginning, in the face of such a complex ethnic costumes, perhaps we find it difficult to start, because the form of national dress is the result of the accumulation of thousands of years and have been handed down the specific symbols of spirit and national landmark, which is, in the form, already very full and can not be altered. However, we do not change it for the better, but to create, so we have to break away the prototype to be bound, select the elements of characteristic and use them into our own design.

There is a lot of creative way of thinking related with national costumes. Usually it will not be considered to be deliberately used a certain way of thinking, but have a sudden originality. The main approach is from overall to local, as well as from the local to the whole approach. The approach from the

overall to the partial is based on how to position the design, for example, it is supposed to be creative or practical clothing, or what is the specific style and so on. From the overall requirements, it corresponds to the progressive style, collocation level, local modeling, materials selection and color application, eventually form a complete design. From the local to the whole, we can say that it is a reverse way of thinking, for the emergence of the creativity is often sparked from interest, such as patterns of the national characteristics, dressed in a special way, a very texture of the materials and so on. And then put the interest into specific types of clothing and style. In terms of the material selection on national dress, generally we use natural materials, such as cotton, hemp, feather, woolen, silk, brocade, etc. Besides, synthetic materials and chemical materials are used also, which have good plasticity and wrinkle-free performance, making up for the inadequacy of natural materials. In addition, a number of hand-weaving cloth, civil dyeing fabric, handmade batik cloth, tie-dye cloth, brocade, lace, are good material, directly embodying national dress style. Seen in this light, the main design ideas on ethnic costume, in general, includes drawing on a variety of patterns, clothing structural, local shape, with the new collocation, as well as the direct use of accessories. Only making full use of the unique culture on ethnic costumes, we can combine them with elements of modern fashion design, to achieve harmony between the two.

The above text focuses on the analysis on the application of the features of ethnic costumes into the modern dress. By knowing that our national dress is the inexhaustible source of inspiration on creative design, inheriting and carrying forward the essence of ethnic dress, we can transfer them into modern clothing culture. We have the responsibility and obligation to continue this study in depth, no matter individuals or research institutions. Apart from the studies on cultural patterns and arts origins, the most important is to practice and master a variety of techniques, including a variety of tapestry, embroidery, and printing and dyeing processing to enable them not only to be handed down and keep continuity, but also can be applied these ancient techniques into modern design to embody its value.

At the early twenty-first century, the world has entered a personalized time, China's emerging modernization is embodied by the combination of national aesthetic consciousness with the world's aesthetic consciousness. When we consider the nationalization issue, we should first know the cultural heritage of national dress and from which we learn to explore elements consistent with the modern time to make it conform to international trends and the world of aesthetic consciousness. Therefore, awareness of time in the fashion is a reflection on the international trend. The nationalization process is in fact borrowing the characteristics in traditional clothing and combining them with the international clothing trends, and finally achieving the unity of time.

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