

The Plain Exploration of Practical Function in Chinese Traditional Costume

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Abstract

Clothing has many functions, such as decorative function, symbolize function. Practical function is one of the most essential function of clothing , the origin reason in clothing changing, the pursuit of the utility function in clothing is the reason why the costume be created and popularized. Utility function is the absolutely necessary functions of the clothing. Without the practical function, clothing will lose its existent significance. In this article, the practical function in costume would be analysis with several parts like Sang's appear and fade out, the evolution of pants, the develop of Shenyi and Shenyi's Youren, the apron and the waist skirt of Ru shirt in the Ming Dynasty, the appearance of belt, and the design of embroidery in wristband.

Keywords: Chinese traditional clothing, the practical function

Introduction

Function, means for using. It is practical with pragmatic value, which can made a positive effect in order to adapt to the needs of life when it was created and used means it is practical. The ancestors of human beings is naked at the first, and then leafage and hide were used to covered not only for cover up embarrassment but also can keep warm and harm to body can be reduced by the protected. For thousands of years, Chinese clothing has always been changed with the lapse of time, the pursuit of practical function is also one of the reasons except the impact of the changing aesthetic vision, the author will illustrate the function use in Chinese traditional clothing with specific examples.

1. Sang's Appear and Fade Out

In the history of Chinese costume, the traditional costume points for coat and skirt, upper and lower connecting two shapes, the coat and skirt shape according to legend, in the era of the Yellow Emperor, was related to the concept of advocating natural world, and no more specific instructions here. For the up and down shape of clothing, the down part with skirt called Sang, refers to one kind of shirt could around the lower part of body. At the Shang and Zhou dynasties, both men and women could wear the Sang. It could divided into two pieces, the front and the back to respectively covered the body. This is because at that time although there have trousers, but only a kind of pant without the crotch with the sleeve used in the legs , and can not cover the private parts, so it is necessary to use the Sang to help covering the private parts. And then due to the pants with crotch had been created, private parts has been obscured, Sang gradually was replaced by the skirt, fading out of people's daily wear, just as the main shape of ceremonial dress retained. Through the emergence and vanish of Sang, it was created when needed, be replaced when not needed, all decided by the the utility function of it.

2. The Evolution of Pants

At the earliest, pants existed mainly in the form of the underwear, in Period of spring and autumn and Warring States pants was already existed, but because the shape is not perfect. it is a kind of pants without waist and crotch just trouser legs, known as Shin Yi, Sang was needed to wear to cover up and action should be careful when it was dressed ,action should without large amplitude motion, and it also not adapted to do the horsemanship and archery activities.

In order to increase the combat effectiveness of the army, the emperor Zhao learning the pants with crotch which was created by the Hu nationality. The pants were changed by adding the crotch. It is not surprised when it became popular in the civilians because of the comprehension of the function.

To the period of Wei, Jin and southern and Northern Dynasties, the Hakama fold was emerged with the influence of minority, Hakama fold is a suit type with coat and trouser which is come from nomadic people's clothing, which is in order to adjust to facilitate nomads activities. At the beginning, the sleeve and bottom of Hakama fold are relatively narrow. At first it was almost used in the uniform, and then always worn by the common people in the daily life because it is fitting. Afterwards when some official go to court with wearing pants like hakama, causing some conservatives questioned because it is too far from ancient style of dress. Therefore a compromise way came, with making the originally thin trousers weighty, so they can stand like wearing skirt, but due to the trouser legs were too fat, inconvenient action, people come up with a way that the trousers can be gently lift with two ribbon in the knees, called tie pants. Some scholars think that the inspiration of bell-bottoms is extracted from the tie pants. From the production of tie pants can we see clothing still cannot be avoided the trend be changed to improve the practical function even so much emphasis on etiquette ancient Chinese clothing.

3. Shenyi's Youren and the Develop of Shenyi

The traditional costume points for coat and skirt, upper and lower connecting two shapes, and the first one-piece dress style is Shenyi. Shenyi emerge the earliest is in the period of spring and autumn and Warring States, was gradually replace by robe until Wei Jin Southern and Northern Dynasties,. But the later costume like hakama fold, ru skirt and other clothing were affected by Shenyi. Shenyi is made by cutting in the middle and stitch them together ,with keeping the round sleeve like Compasses, square collar like rectangular, the back straight like vertical rope, hem balance like auncel (from the introduction of Chinese traditional costume illustrations edit by Wei Li). another feature of Shenyi is Youren, Ren means the one or two pieces making up the front of a Chinese jacket, Youren is the left Lapel pinned by the right lapel present like "Y" shape and tied by a belt or chinese button. At that time in order to avoid exposure Shenyi was worn with pants without crotch were worn inside, that's why Shenyi was made with Youren (most of the minorities' cloth is left Lapel) but straight lapel to blocking exposed due to the key part tibial inserted is not perfect; In addition Youren (or left Lapel) compared with straight lapel having overlapping part can also play roles of keeping body's warming.

Then the front lapels were lengthen on the basis of Shenyi, should be worn around till the back, known as Qu garment Shenyi. Qu garment Shenyi is the most common women's cloth in Han Dynasty, the hem of clothes can drag on floor looked like trumpet shaped, it is very elegant without feet's exposed. (adapted from Chinese dress, editor: Zhang Wanlin) Qu garment Shenyi, with tight shape and closed waist ,is not only beautiful with making women looks graceful can also play the role of preventing exposure of private parts .With several layers in the waist wrapped tight it is more security and not easy to be exposed. Based on Qu garment Shenyi with collar around was made. It is similar with Qu garment Shenyi. A plain Chinese style jacket was made at the beginning of the Western Han Dynasty, was worn by woman an first and then became popular and replaced Shenyi at the end of Western Han Dynasty. The plain Chinese style jacket's lapel turned into straight, it was created because of the perfection of underwear. So the exposure of lower body should never be worried, that many loose patterns were made not like the Qu garment Shenyi always tightly wrapped around the body. From the development of Shenyi can we seen that the utility function is causes of the change. At first Shenyi's shape is formed in order to meet the practical function, when pants' utility function has been improved and Shenyi can not play the shielding effect any more, Shenyi gradually start to change in the artistic style . Of course, aesthetic is a very important factor, but practical function is the dominant factor at first. Based on the practical function, decorative function could be developed.

4. The Apron and the Waist Skirt of Ru Skirt in the Ming Dynasty

The apron is a kind of square scarf above knees, could be used around the waist, usually worn to work by woman. Band and rope could be jointed on the towel of the apron and tied together in the neck. Also can man wearing when they are working. Apron can protect the complicated ancient dress from dirty in labor, and clothe could be bound with an apron so that people can work more flexible. Apron is existed in Shang and Zhou dynasties, not named as apron at that time. Apron is the labors' crystallization of wisdom to improve labor conditions.

Ru shirt was existing As early as the Han Dynasty , but at that time, the hem of skirt is still relatively narrow, until the Ming Dynasty, skirts' decoration was paid more and more attention , skirt hem increased gradually, with fine plait on waist part, the flexible is reduced with beautiful appearance, skirts became more onerous. That why in the Ming Dynasty young woman liked wearing a Ru skirt out of dress looks like a short skirt at the waist part, some maid also like wearing this, because short waist skirt can made a female moved more convenient with reduce the shapes' change of skirt, they can stay beautiful at the same time. It is a improvement of practical function.

5. The Appearance of Belt

Because of the Chinese ancient advocating nature and man, most of chinese ancient costume were flat structure different with Western clothing what was emphasize the body line. most of chinese ancient dress are loose and comfortable, belt was needed to fixed on the waist, that's the reason why the belt's appearance is inevitable. In ancient times, most women like to wear jade in order to prevent the wrinkle of skirt , due to the melodious ringing from the jade when walking can warning woman walk carefully and stay elegant otherwise the voice would be louder and noisy. Ancient men usually wear jade either, jade can play to the role of identity. So ancient belts Thus belt is necessary that jade could be tied on and waist could be fixed at the same time. Even the belt seems like small part in ancient costume clothing, it's practical and essential. No production will be product for no reason, but for its practical function which made it needed.

6. The Design of Embroidery in Wristband

The sleeves of the Chinese ancient traditional garments are made of the stitching of the pattern with different the fabric. Due to the limitations of the prevailing level of textile technology, ancient cloth width is narrow to achieve the length of two arms opening. Therefore, sleeve always made by splicing technique. But in fact, this splicing techniques are not only because of ancient cloth width limitations. In addition, in the activities, activities of the hand, sleeves are relatively abrase more , embroider with decorative pattern is usually making the fabric stronger, that can slow down the speed of sleeves' abrasion to paly the role of protection ,meet the feature of beauty at the same time.

Summary

Overall, the effect of practical function is subtle to clothing, since ancient times practical function of clothing is inevitable, the change of costume is unavoidable on the way of improving the utility function. Even in the ancient China which always pay attention to etiquette and manners, practical functions still seize every opportunity to affects the morphology of ancient traditional costume. Utility functions plays a crucial role in ancient Chinese tradition clothing, clothing from generation to improve, the root cause is the pursuit of utility function, it's the fundamental reason for garment improving and perfect .Clothing shapes and styles can go toward the other direction only base on the practical function's finishing. As can be seen, the improvement of practical function is a so important reason for chinese ancient traditional clothing 's change.

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