

The Influence of Chinese Traditional Costumes on Contemporary Trends

--Taking Horse-face Skirts as an Example

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Abstract: This study explores the influence of traditional Chinese dresses on contemporary fashion trends using the Horse-face skirt as an example. In ancient China, the Horse-face skirt was one of the notable skirts for women and maintained its typical style of women's dress during the Ming and Qing dynasties. With the passage of history and the revival of traditional Chinese culture, it has begun to arouse interest in traditional Chinese dress. Among them, Hanfu, including the Horse-face skirt, has attracted significant attention in modern dress, where ancient design elements are combined with modern dress. Through a comprehensive analysis of relevant literature, historical documents, and fashion resources, this study analyzes the development of the Horse-face skirt and its influence on contemporary fashion trends. The study shows that the development of new media, the spread of ethnic culture and the innovation of ethnic dress are important factors that contribute to the development of ancient traditional dresses influencing modern trends.

Keywords: horse-face skirts, Hanfu, cultural heritage, traditional dress, modern fashion design

1. Introduction

In ancient China, the Horse-face skirt was a prominent skirt accessory for women, and it remained a typical style of women's clothing during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Over time, traditional Chinese clothing, including the Horse-face skirt, has experienced stylistic changes and influences from various eras. With the passage of history and the revival of ancient Chinese traditional cultures, there has been a renewed interest in traditional Chinese clothing. Among these, Hanfu, which includes the Horse-face skirt, has garnered significant attention, with ancient designs and elements finding their way into modern garments. Existing literature has shown the influence of traditional Chinese clothing on modern trends, with modern skirts bearing a resemblance to "Shang" in Hanfu, as well as other garments adopting basic styles from Hanfu [1]. In addition, some scholars pointed out that the inheritance of traditional "things" in contemporary design should focus more on the understanding and communication of the concept of "things". Only such design expression can enrich and extend the vitality of Chinese traditional excellent culture [2].

The research topic focuses on exploring the influence of traditional Chinese clothing, using the

Horse-face skirt as an example. While traditional Chinese clothing, particularly Hanfu, has gained popularity and contributed to contemporary fashion trends, there is limited research on the combination of traditional Chinese clothing with current fashion concepts. Exploring this connection not only sheds light on the evolution of fashion but also highlights the cultural inheritance and significance of Chinese traditional clothing. This study will employ the literature method to investigate the influence of traditional Chinese clothing on contemporary trends, with a specific focus on the Horse-face skirt. Through a comprehensive review of relevant literature, historical documents, and fashion resources, this paper analyzes the development of the Horse-face skirt and its integration with modern fashion concepts.

2. Case Description

2.1. History and Development of the Horse-face Skirt

The Horse-face skirt can be traced back to the Song Dynasty at the earliest. For the convenience of riding, two skirts were designed with front and rear slits. In the Ming Dynasty, pleats began to be made from both sides of the waist, which was the prototype of the Horse-face skirt. At that time, the Horse-face skirt was very popular in society. The Horse-face skirt was developed in the Qing Dynasty and was one of the basic dresses for women in the Qing Dynasty. According to Mr. Bao Mingxin's book *Modern Chinese Women's Clothing Fact*, he pointed out that the Horse-face skirt is one of the main skirt styles in ancient China, the most typical Horse-face skirt was popular in the Qing Dynasty [3].

Different grades of Horse-face skirts are different in color and material. The different decorations on the Horse-face skirts also sent out different wishes of the ancients. For example, in the Song Dynasty court, the Horse-face skirt was usually regarded as an important part of women's clothing and was regarded as a symbol of nobility and elegance.

In the Ming and Qing dynasties, Horse-face skirts were the same in terms of shape and manufacturing process. The difference lies in that, based on inheriting the Ming system, the Qing Dynasty's Horse-face skirt became more complicated and decorative. This is in line with the great development and prosperity of the Qing Dynasty [4]. According to Qi, Z.Y, during the Ming and Qing Dynasties, Horse-face skirts underwent great changes in four aspects [5]. The first is to increase the binding and strengthen the rectangular structure of the placket. The second is that there are more diverse changes in the two ribs, and there are many types. The third is to use solid color satin patchwork on the material. The fourth is the integration of religious beliefs into the design of Horse-face skirts.

With the continuous advancement of modern technology and the continuous enrichment of clothing materials, Horse-face skirts are gradually divided into two basic shapes: dry skirts and pleated skirts. In terms of production technology, the cutting and laying out method of the dried skirt is ingenious, which is the embodiment of people's thought of cherishing things at that time. The connection of fabrics does not have too many complicated processes. In addition, the use of dried satin edge has the function of preventing silk from falling off. It also has the decorative effect of an integrated pattern [6].

2.2. Re-popular of the Horse-face Skirt

In 2022, a Dior skirt with a price tag of 29,000 yuan caused controversy on social media, bringing people back to the traditional Chinese costume Horse-face skirt. In the 21st century, with the Internet as the medium, the Hanfu movement emerged, advocating the inheritance and development of Chinese culture, and the Horse-face skirt has been promoted to a certain extent. The revival of Hanfu takes various forms. In society, mainly young people start to wear Hanfu in their daily lives.

There will be clubs and lectures on Hanfu on campus to let students know more about traditional Chinese clothing and culture. The promotion of Hanfu can also be integrated into music, and many videos and documentaries promoting Hanfu have appeared on social media. The market and scale of Hanfu continue to expand in the 21st century.

Contemporary designers pay attention to the innovation and development of traditional clothing. For example, the new Hanfu will abandon the cumbersome wearing steps and make the way of wearing clothing simple and convenient. The design of contemporary Hanfu embodies the combination of ancient and modern, Chinese and Western. Instead of being retro and slightly improving on the correct form, the major international brands are moving in the direction of combining Hanfu elements with fashion design to convey the culture of Chinese design and traditional clothing [7].

Based on this background and research, this paper continues to explore the history of the development of the Horse-face skirt, the reasons for its resurgence in popularity, and how traditional Chinese dress has positively influenced contemporary fashion trends.

3. Analysis of the Influence of Traditional Dress on Modern Trends as Exemplified by the Horse-face Skirt

3.1. The Influence of Traditional Chinese Dress

In 2022, Dior's Horse-face skirt event triggered the attention of everyone. With the Horse-face skirt re-popularization, the public is more concerned about the history and origin of the Horse-face skirt. They are also concerned about the development and inheritance of traditional Chinese skirts. The Horse-face skirt's widespread impact, along with its ongoing changes, has led people today to explore its historical importance. This has caused the Horse-face skirt to regain popularity for significant reasons.

In recent years, Hanfu has become popular. Designers are innovating while preserving ancient styles, combining modern fashion concepts and wearing methods to showcase the beauty of traditional clothing. On the spring/summer 2019 Paris high fashion stage, Chinese designer Guo Pei used the unique expression of "Chinese learning for the essence, Western learning for practical use" to innovate the design of traditional Chinese clothing, showing the beauty of the Orient. Belgian designer Dries Van Noten transformed the appliqué structure of the Qing Dynasty Horse-face skirt into a fabric pattern in the Fall/Winter 2012 Paris Fashion Week, and applied it to fashion design, using the techniques of cutting and splicing into the shape of the garment to create a new visual impact [8]. Additionally, the development of modern technology has guaranteed the large-scale popularity of Hanfu, allowing more and more people to experience Hanfu culture.

Chinese traditional costumes provide a reference for contemporary trends and lead the development of contemporary trends to a certain extent. Taking the Horse-face skirt as an example, as a representative skirt of ancient times, the cultural meaning it contains has also been inherited today, and today's Horse-face skirts still preserve some of the ancient styles and techniques. Designers innovate them to make them better integrated into the contemporary culture. Guo Pei, a famous Chinese designer, has designed the Golden Wedding Dress, borrowing the shape of the Horse-face skirt. The dragon and phoenix in pairs, the fish and the curly grass symbolize the endlessness of the sea, pouring out the best wishes for the Chinese bride.

Traditional Chinese skirts have enriched the way of contemporary trends, using retro as a style as well, as constantly innovating. Presenting traditional skirts in a contemporary manner is bolder and more inclusive, constantly enriching the cultural significance of the skirt. This ensures that Chinese culture is better preserved, propagated, and developed. The cultural essence embedded in traditional attire contributes to the heightened core and influence of contemporary fashion. The interplay of

innovation and heritage within clothing mirrors cultural exchange, fusion, societal progress, and national unity.

3.2. Reasons for the Resurgence of Traditional Dress

3.2.1. Development of Technology and Social Media

The internet and social media have accelerated the global dissemination of traditional culture, enabling an increasing number of individuals to acquaint themselves with traditional Chinese culture. Through social media, people can share information about the origins and crafting techniques of traditional attire, thus propagating the history and cultural significance of traditional clothing. Moreover, the development of technology can provide people with more goods of good quality so that traditional costumes can be integrated into the market on a large scale and be presented in better quality. Therefore, it will make the costumes with traditional elements more competitive and attractive in the modern market.

3.2.2. Cultural Diffusion

Another point is that with the change of the times, people's cultural awareness has awakened, and their cultural self-confidence is growing. More Chinese people are proud of traditional Chinese culture and believe that culture is global, leading more foreigners to recognize and spread Chinese culture. What's more, with the help of modern media, cultural dissemination has become more convenient and faster. Hanfu is constantly adapting to the development of the new era and realizing innovation and integration, which has a positive reference to the contemporary trend.

3.2.3. Innovative Design

Innovation in traditional dress is an important way to increase its impact. Contemporary ethnic dress is an innovation of ancient styles, making the style more diversified, unique, and personalized. This transformation will increase the audience and expand the consumer market. In addition, traditional costumes can inspire designers and facilitate designers to combine contemporary concepts, which is conducive to the spread of fashion. Innovation can inject new elements and design concepts into traditional clothing and influence the trend of contemporary trends.

4. Suggestions

4.1. Leveraging New Media for Cultural Promotion

Efficient utilization of new media platforms can significantly amplify the influence of China's rich traditional culture. This approach not only widens the impact of traditional culture but also helps it resonate with broader audiences.

4.2. Cultivating Cultural Confidence and Patriotism

Establishing cultural self-assurance is pivotal. It instills a strong belief in the value of China's cultural heritage and fosters a greater fondness for the national culture. This surge in cultural pride is essential for nurturing a sense of patriotism and a commitment to preserving national culture. People should learn about the history and traditional culture of China, along with the cultural meanings and national sentiments it encompasses. This will help to enhance their sense of identity, pride, and responsibility, while also bolstering their national self-confidence and ensuring the continued transmission of this exceptional cultural heritage. Active participation in cultural

dissemination activities is crucial, enabling the full expression of our cultural strengths and enriching its content.

4.3. Embracing Cultural Education

Cultural education is crucial for reaching a wider audience. By blending tradition with popular culture, it can educate and engage more individuals in appreciating China's historical and cultural treasures. Both the government and society should increase efforts in promoting national culture and emphasize cultural education. Utilizing media and other channels effectively, more individuals should be exposed to traditional culture and gain insights into national attire. Education stands as a pivotal method for the preservation and advancement of national culture, as only by enabling the younger generations to learn about these traditions can the culture be perpetuated from one era to another.

4.4. Empowering National Trend Designers

National trend designers should enhance their understanding of traditional culture. By innovating design concepts and tapping into the reservoir of China's exceptional cultural elements, they can create new avenues for integrating tradition into modern aesthetics. In addition, designers specializing in national trends must delve deeper into traditional culture. By doing so, they can infuse their designs with fresh and innovative concepts, effectively utilizing China's cultural wealth to create compelling products. According to Beal, the global fashion market has become increasingly international and multicultural [9]. It is important for international fashion designers and manufacturers to understand the historical significance of traditional Chinese clothing, decorative motifs, and their influences on modern fashion.

4.5. Strengthening Innovation in National Costumes

Innovative development of traditional culture is of paramount importance. With the continuous advancement of contemporary society and the economy, along with increasing societal expectations, the endeavor to enhance the significance of traditional culture, especially national attire, remains an ongoing objective in modern times. Aspects of innovative development encompass the reform and innovation of traditional techniques, novel pattern designs, innovative styles of wearing, and creative amalgamation with Western civilization. Hong and Lingwei pointed out that in contemporary China, Chinese costumes keep changing with the aesthetic needs of the time. Under such circumstances, filtration, screening, and sublation have become the basic methods with which to inherit and carry forward the essence of traditional Chinese costumes [10].

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to explore the influence of traditional Chinese dress, especially represented by the Horse-face skirt, on contemporary fashion trends. It is found that traditional Chinese dresses have a profound influence on contemporary fashion, thus prompting contemporary designers to fuse classical elements with modern concepts to create creative fashion pieces. The study shows that combining traditional culture with contemporary trends through the power of modern media helps to spread China's rich cultural heritage. By emphasizing cultural self-confidence and patriotism, people can better understand, appreciate, and pass on traditional Chinese culture, thus fostering love and pride in traditional dress.

It is found that the Horse-face skirt, as a representative of traditional women's dress, has experienced historical changes and the influence of the times, and has gained a new life in

contemporary times through continuous innovation and reform. Through the rise of the Hanfu movement and the cultural inheritance in modern society, the Horse-face skirt has received renewed attention and its historical significance and cultural value have been passed on. Through innovation and fusion, modern designers have incorporated ancient dress elements into contemporary fashion, bringing tradition and modernity into a new balance. The influence of traditional culture is not only reflected in the design but also through the dissemination of new media, allowing more people to understand and recognize China's traditional dress culture.

Overall, the findings of this study emphasize the importance and influence of traditional Chinese dress in shaping contemporary fashion trends. In the context of globalization, traditional costumes not only represent a country's culture but also the intersection and fusion of various cultures. Through the rational use of new media, the cultivation of cultural confidence, and the promotion of design innovation, traditional Chinese culture can be further promoted and given a new luster in contemporary fashion. At the same time, continuing to explore the combination of traditional dress and modern trends will help to better pass on and develop China's unique cultural heritage.

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