

ARTICLE

Research on the cultural value and innovation strategy of Hanfu under the background of “The Belt and Road Initiative”

Jing ZOU¹ and Shiqi PENG²

¹Hunan University of Technology, 88 Taishan West Road, Tianyuan District, Zhuzhou City, Hunan Province, PR China, Email:3313409@qq.com,<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-8765-5779>

²Hunan University of Technology, 88 Taishan West Road, Tianyuan District, Zhuzhou City, Hunan Province, PR China, Email:642751994@qq.com,<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-2707-0161>

(Received 2 January 2024; revised 5 January 2024; accepted 8 January 2024; first published online 28 February 2024)

Abstract

This paper expounds on the significance of innovation under the background of “the Belt and Road Initiative” through the analysis of the development status of Hanfu and the exploration of its cultural value. Cultural value is the source of inspiration for costume design. It is proposed that through innovation in design and communication, combined with the culture contained in it, we can break the thinking pattern, present a new interpretation of Hanfu, and create more possibilities for the spread and development of Hanfu culture with the construction of “the Belt and Road Initiative”.

Keywords: the Belt and Road Initiative; Hanfu; cultural value; innovation

1. The background of “The Belt and Road Initiative” and the development status of Hanfu

The year 2023 marked the 10th anniversary of The Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-century Maritime Silk Road (the Belt and Road Initiative). Over the past decade, through the Belt and Road Initiative, China has been promoting mutual learning, openness, and cooperation among civilizations, showcasing and spreading the beauty of the Chinese civilization, spurring the vitality of its cultural industry, increasing the competitiveness of cultural products, and encouraging mutual inspiration among civilizations around the world. With the development of the Hanfu movement and the revival of Hanfu, Hanfu has become a hot topic of social discussion in society in recent years. The public has more and more awareness of Hanfu, and Hanfu lovers wear Hanfu to participate in various social activities

and show them to the public more and more frequently. Academically, there are more and more studies on Hanfu by scholars, but there are still differences in the interpretation of the basic concepts of Hanfu, and there is no single conclusion on the specific concept of Hanfu, so it is worth exploring deeply. In history, the clothes worn by the Han people were once called “Hanfu”. The earliest cultural relic record is a Western Han bamboo tape unearthed in Mawangdui: “Four beauties, two Chu clothes, two Hanfu.” The term “Hanfu” is similar to the concept of “Chinese” and “Chinese characters”, and has situational characteristics. It is not only used for inter-ethnic interpretation but also for international diplomatic interpretation between countries. The category of Hanfu referred to in this study is Han clothing of the Han Dynasty.

2. The cultural value carried by Hanfu

More than 2100 years ago, Qian ZHANG made two missions to the Western regions to open up the “Silk Road”, which ran from East to West and connected Europe and Asia, spreading Chinese silk to the world and the Chinese character embodied in the silk to the world. China is known as the “Kingdom of clothes”. It is recorded in the Biography of Yi Ci that “Huangdi, Yao, and Shun ruled the whole country by hanging their clothes”, and the costume system was established from then on. Clothing is one of the material cultures, showing the profound connotation of the spiritual culture of the Chinese civilization, permeating the psychological emotions, social customs, and aesthetic tastes of people at various times, and having unique cultural value.

2.1 Hanfu contains the philosophical idea of “harmony between man and nature”

Clothing is an important measure of national culture, and it is also the starting point for discussing the concept of clothing and aesthetic value, which is inseparable from the idea of “harmony between heaven and man” in Chinese philosophy. The philosophical thought of “unity of nature and man” is reflected in the material, color, and shape of clothing.

There were two main kinds of clothing materials in the early period, plant fiber and silk and cotton. The “Ci” said: “In the past, the leather of the garment was short. Today, the silk linen cloth made of clothes is long, so it is said that the clothes are hanging.” It can be seen that with formal clothes, social roles have been identified, social order has begun to take shape, and thus the country has been governed. From the perspective of the origin of clothing, with clothing, human beings gradually evolved from the years of naked life to the use of natural or artificial objects to cover and package the body, so that human beings can better adapt to changes in the climate environment or protect the body from foreign objects. The relationship between nature and man is closer, and “heaven” is compatible with man. The formation of this ideology enables man and nature to achieve a high degree of harmony and harmony in spirit and body. The “unity of heaven and man” has become the ideological source of future generations’ devotion to mountains and rivers and love of nature.¹

“Change the New Year, easy to dress” is an important political tradition in ancient China. In the ancient dynastic society, the rulers had to determine the calendar and the color system

1. Shaoxiong LIN. The Deep Implication of Chinese Costume Culture[J]. Journal of Fu Dan (Social Science Edition), 1997(03):62-68+110.

used in their costumes to prove that the rulers ruled the world by the will of heaven and by the will of heaven, and only by the will of heaven can the country be prosperous and the people be safe. This design concept is recorded in the “Kaogong Ji”: “Heaven is sometimes, the earth is gas, the material is beautiful, the work is skillful. If you combine these four, then you can be good.” Obviously, the color system is also closely related to the concept of “the unity of heaven and man”. In addition, in Chinese philosophy, the formation of color has mysterious meanings and rich cultural connotations. Influenced by the ancient Chinese concept of the universe and the theory of the five elements, color superstition has been formed. For example, in the Shuide of the Qin Dynasty, “Clothes and flags of the Yak Festival all wear black colors”. Emperor Wen of the Han Dynasty was fashionable and had yellow clothes, while the Eastern Han Dynasty advocated fire and morality and had red clothes. The clothing system of the Han Dynasty was “red for the top dress, green followed, officials dressed in black, civilians dressed in white, criminals dressed in ochres”, which shows that the color of clothing requirements in the etiquette concept has been reflected. The T-shaped silk painting unearthed in Mawangdui No. 1 Han Tomb shows Lady Xin Zhuan wearing purple robes with colorful patterns, while the maids around her are wearing red, yellow, and white robes respectively, and the two men kneeling to meet are red and cyan robes. The man in the T painting unearthed in Mawangdui No. 3 Han Dynasty Tomb is also wearing a purple robe with a red collar, and the maids beside and behind him are dressed in red, blue, and black robes. The master of the tomb in the “Chariot and Horse Marching Picture” is also dressed in black and purple robes with red collar and white sleeves, followed by 18 officers with long swords in their hands, dressed in red, purple, blue, white and black clothes (see Fig1 (a), Fig1 (b), and Fig 2.)

The shape and system of Hanfu are also the manifestations of the idea of “unity of heaven and man”. There are mainly two kinds: “under the coat” separate deep clothing system and “under the coat” continuous deep clothing system. First, the blouse is the earliest style of clothing, but also the most culturally representative style of Hanfu, is the ancient court officials used in the sacrificial occasions of the main clothing. Top, more for the right side, waist tie, under the skirt, to protect the lower body of the clothes, skirt meaning. “Ancient and modern books integration · Etiquette” recorded on dry days on, clothes like. The clothes are closed and round, with Yang Qi. Kun in the next, Chang Xiang. Under the two strands, there is the Yin idol. Under the coat, can not be reversed, so that people know the upper and lower, not chaos, then the people will be fixed, and the world will be ruled. The blouse must be a pure color, the blouse under the dress system conforms to the law of heaven and earth, so it is used by the highest level of the clothing system, which has become the standard system of major ceremonial activities of the ruling level in the past dynasties, and has important ritual value. Second, the “shirt under the dress” belongs to the deep clothing system, according to the “Li Ji” recorded: “The system has two pieces so that ten should have February. The sleeve should be regulated, and curved such as the moment should be squared, the negative rope and ankle should be straight, such as the balance should be flat. Therefore, the rule, the line of hands that the capacity, the negative rope to hold the square to direct its administration, its righteousness also. Therefore, “Yi” said: “Kun 62 move, the straight square also. The next Qi is like a weigher, with a will and peace.” We know that clothes are cut and then connected, a total of six, each and two, to a total of 12



(a) T-shaped paintings on silk unearthed from Mawangdui No.1 Han Tomb. It is now stored in Hunan Museum



(b) T-shaped silk paintings unearthed from Mawangdui No. 3 Han Tomb. It is now stored in Hunan Museum

Figure 1. T-shaped paintings unearthed from Mawangdui No. 3 Han Tomb

months a year; Deep clothes and jackets fit, the lower clothing is broad, longer than the ground, because the ground has the meaning of insult; Blouse and skirt cut, waist together as a whole, the back seam vertical connection, to show people square, bottom like a yard flat and straight, to show “Zhian and flat heart”, reflecting the following Confucian “ritual law of nature”, the relationship between people and nature in the “ritual” to promote the evolution to a higher level.

Dynasties continue to change, and the political views of the rulers are also different, but under the influence of the unified social background and the philosophical thought of “unity of heaven and man”, the clothing system of Hanfu is also constantly changing, the social function of the pursuit of clothing hierarchy and order is the primary purpose, and this pursuit is to seek the embodiment of the heavenly order in the human world for the deep meaning.



Figure 2. “Chariot and Horse Rites” unearthed from Mawangdui Han Tomb is now in Hunan Museum

2.2 *Hanfu contains the aesthetic taste of “simple to elegant”*

As mentioned above, Hanfu is the material carrier of ancient philosophical thoughts, and clothing is also the carrier of beauty. In texture, color, and shape, we can also glimpse the aesthetic taste of “elegance in innocence” and “beauty in harmony” in the Han Dynasty.

A large number of textiles from the Western Han Dynasty have been unearthed from the Han Tomb of Mawangdui in Changsha, Hunan Province. They are made of silk and hemp. Plain fabrics are silk and yarn, hidden flowers and twisted fabrics are Luo and Qi, and there are brocade fabrics of peacock brocade with hidden flowers and corrugated peacock brocade and the earliest pile fabric found in China so far. The rulers of the Western Han Dynasty mostly believed in the Taoist thought of “ruling without doing anything”, so the Western Han Dynasty clothing presented a style of “simple, natural and neutral”. The plain yarn single garment unearthed in the Han tomb of Mawangdui is the best proof (Fig. 3). The body of the single garment is made of yarn, and there are even square holes distributed on the surface of the yarn, so there is a saying of “square holes said yarn”. The ancients often used “light yarn as thin as empty” to describe the texture of yarn. The bottom swing and the edge of the sleeve are decorated with ochre brown velvet brocade, and the velvet circle brocade is interwoven with multi-colored warp silk and monochrome weft silk, and the pattern on the surface of the fabric is presented with a circular velvet circle, which has a three-dimensional effect. The plain yarn single garment is matched by a large area of fine and smooth yarn and a small area of textured velvet circle brocade, which not only forms a contrast but also presents a harmonious, simple, and neutral beauty.

In the early period of the Western Han Dynasty, dyeing and weaving technology had developed to a very high level. Silk fabrics were of various colors. Through the contrast of cold and warm colors, plain clothes were matched with gorgeous patterns to form just the right “elegant beauty”. The longevity embroidery unearthed in Mawangdui Han Tomb adopts five colors of embroidery thread, which is embroidered by the lock embroidery method. The colors used are yellow, green, blue, red, and brown. Each color has shades



Figure 3. A Single garment with plain yarn (Train) is now in the Hunan Museum

of light, and the color matching is regular, reflecting the characteristics of stylization. Yellowish-brown silk “longevity embroidery” quilt fragments (Fig. 4), with light brown red, purple gray, olive green, dark green, and other colors of silk embroidery. More than ten fringed streamers are light brown red, purple gray, and olive green, respectively. Among the fringed streamers are dark green moire patterns. The distinctive feature of the four-scroll head fringe cloud is the phoenix-bird pattern with a single bud crown beside it. Tea yellow rhumb Roti “Letter period embroidery” silk robe with plain silk inside and the robe edge and floss inside. The embroidery pattern of the robe body contains two swallowtail fringed clouds, the upper one is light brown-red, and the lower one is composed of dark green, light brown-red, and yellow. The flowers and plants around the two clouds are dark green with some vermilion and dark green leaves. The color of the robe is warm, plain, and rustic, and the color of the embroidery line is beautiful and neat, full of artistic colors and romantic sentiment, which is the true sense of “plain to da ya”.

The Han Dynasty also showed simple shapes in clothing. The thought of “etiquette” and “harmony between heaven and man” influenced the style of Shenyi. Wearing Shenyi should conform to the etiquette rules, while the behavior should be reserved and restrained. Two kinds of Shenyi were unearthed from the Mawangdui Han Dynasty Tomb: square and neat straight train robe and elegant and graceful curved train robe. A straight train robe was used for underwear in the Western Han Dynasty, which required a curved train robe. In the Eastern Han Dynasty, trousers were improved and pants with crotch appeared. At this time, the curved train robe became redundant, and the straight train robe began to be popularized. The straight train robe had the opening straight down from the collar, the sleeves were flat and straight, and the lower hem was square with the robe’s body. Qu trains robe, that is, the opening curved from the collar to the armpit, is called “Qu”. The tea yellow rhumb-patterned “letter embroidery” silk wool robe mentioned above is a Qu train robe. This kind of garment is tight and narrow, long and draggable, and fits the body very



Figure 4. Yellow brown silk “longevity embroidery” quilt fragments



Figure 5. Tea yellow Rhomboid roti “Letter period embroidery” silk wadded robe

well when worn, with the lower hem generally shaped like a trumpet and walking without revealing feet, to express the quiet and elegance of women. The division of the curve makes the robe show the characteristics of mobility, elegant and subtle.

3. Hanfu’s innovative strategy in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative

Since the rise of the “Hanfu Movement” in 2003, the awareness of Hanfu in the whole society has gradually increased, and the Hanfu market has gradually expanded. There is a high level of attention to keywords such as “Hanfu culture”, “Hanfu innovative design” and “Hanfu inheritance”. Under the background of the continuous deepening and promotion of the “Belt and Road”, brings opportunities for the spread of Hanfu culture in the countries along the route. However, innovation is also needed in the revival, inheritance, and transmission of Hanfu.



Figure 6. Plain yarn single garment (Straight train) is now in Hunan Museum

3.1 Design innovative strategies

3.1.1 Modern technology collides with traditional culture

“Science is the first productive force”, in the 21st century today, people’s lives have been inseparable from science and technology, innovation and technology interaction, Hanfu innovation design is inseparable from science and technology, science and technology can promote the development of Hanfu design, so it is particularly important to integrate modern science and technology into Hanfu design. Artificial intelligence, big data, virtual design 3D printing, and other technologies are gradually developed and improved. In recent years, there have been cases of integrating science and technology into modern fashion design, but there are few cases of integrating science and technology into Hanfu design. The integration of science and technology into Hanfu design is bound to be the future development trend. In Hanfu design, science and technology are linked with it, whether it is the early market research, the presentation of the mid-term design concept, the production of garments, or the promotion of the final sales link. All in all, the continuous development of science and technology will provide a source of innovation for Hanfu design, making Hanfu constantly radiate the charm of Chinese culture under the background of “the Belt and Road Initiative”.

3.1.2 Modern design ideas are integrated with traditional craftsmanship

There are many intangible heritage techniques behind Hanfu. The copper printing relief plate unearthed in the tomb of King Nanyue in Guangdong Province is the earliest fabric printing tool known in the world. Although the size is small and the number of parts is only two, the patterns printed by it are delicate and exquisite, which has a unique charm. At the time of creation, a copper printing letterpress plate was held in hand, and a meter of printing yarn had to be stamped 600 times (see Fig.7 and Fig.8). In addition to the traditional printing process, there are also traditional dyeing, embroidery, silk making, embroidery, makeup flowers, silk weaving, velvet flowers, and silk flowers, which are all hand-made skills

contained in Hanfu. In the process of inheriting traditional intangible cultural handicrafts, it is also necessary to integrate modern design ideas into Hanfu. While deeply understanding Hanfu culture, one should be good at thinking out of the box, preventing roadwork, and “running through ancient and modern times, integrating Chinese and Western” is an effective way to keep pace with The Times of Hanfu. For example, in the pattern, traditional patterns should be broken up, reconstructed, transformed, and created. To make the design of the pattern conform to modern aesthetics; In the shape, pay attention to proportion and size, repetition and level, and improve the cutting method, based on plane cutting to make Hanfu more suitable, to adapt to the modern rhythm of life; In the choice of color and fabric combined with popular trends, to meet the needs of fashion.



Figure 7. Copper printing letterpress plate. It is now in the Nanyue King Museum, Guangzhou

3.2 Dissemination of innovative strategies

3.2.1 Build Zhonghua clothing civilization and highlight cultural confidence

As designers, brands, consumers, and all kinds of media bear the mission of inheriting Chinese clothing civilization, sorting out the lineage of Hanfu culture knowledge, constructing the Hanfu system under different scenes, enabling new technologies to make the tailoring of Hanfu more suitable, use the young expression, combine the current fashion trend, meet the fashion needs, and make Hanfu culture “alive”.

3.2.2 Rely on digital technology to create diversified communication

With the help of smart wearable devices and virtual dressing technology, immersive experience scenes such as the Hanfu experience hall and dressing experience can be created to create a panoramic, three-dimensional, and three-dimensional experience mode for the public. With the blessing of digital technology, it breaks the boundaries and achieves cross-border integration with animation, games, film and television art, live broadcasting, and other fields to give Hanfu more diversified cultural expression.

3.2.3 The symbolization of Hanfu culture promotes the living inheritance of Hanfu culture

With the help of enterprise brand effect, the development of new Chinese clothing, and the integration of new media, the traditional culture can be empowered by digital, the sensation,



Figure 8. Patterns printed on fabric

contextualization, and symbolization of Hanfu wearing can be strengthened, the national confidence can be enhanced, the communication channels can be updated, and the audience of Hanfu culture can be broadened, to promote the spread of Hanfu culture at home and abroad.

4. Summary

Thousands of years ago, the Silk Road opened the door of Chinese culture to the world. Now, under the background of the Belt and Road Initiative, new opportunities have been brought, and more and more Chinese people are familiar with Hanfu. Bearing the philosophy and aesthetic taste of ancient people, Hanfu is a symbol of Chinese culture. The key to giving new value to Hanfu culture is to integrate the culture and preferences of the countries along the route through innovation of technology, concept, and form in design and communication.

FUND

1.This paper is the phased result of the “Textile finishing and Research of Mawangdui Han Tomb” project of the Major project of Hunan Provincial Philosophy and Social Science Foundation in 2020 (“Academic Hunan” quality cultivation project, project No. 20ZDAJ008); 2.Hunan Philosophy and Social Science Foundation Project: Research on the Promotion of Traditional Chinese Clothing in Southeast Asia under the Background of the Belt and Road Initiative (Project number: XSP21YBZ087, 2020-2022)

References

- [1] Wang Zihuan, Xing Le, Wang Lei. Research status and trend analysis of Chinese Hanfu based on CiteSpace [J]. *Silk*,2022,59(06):17-26.
- [2] Zhou Xing. Essentialist Hanfu Speech and Constructivism Cultural Practice: Demands, gains and Bottlenecks of Hanfu Movement [J]. *Folklore Studies*,2014(03):130-144.
- [3] Yu Binxia. Weaving, dyeing, embroidery and printing of silk fabrics unearthed from Mawangdui Han Tomb. *Collector*,2014(02):15-22.
- [4] Lin Shaoxiong. The Deep Implication of Chinese Costume Culture [J]. *Journal of Fu Dan (Social Science Edition)*,1997(03):62-68+110.

Cite This Article

Jing ZOU,Shiqi PENG.Research on the cultural value and innovation strategy of Hanfu under the background of “The Belt and Road Initiative”[J]. *Costume and Culture Studies*, 2024, 2(1):16-26, DOI:<https://doi.org/10.6914/ccs.020104>

©The Author(s) & Creative Publishing Co., Limited 2024.

Costume and Culture Studies, ISSN 3005-7809 (print), ISSN 3005-7817 (online), DOI 10.6914/ccs, Volume 2 Issue 1, published on 29 February 2024, by Creative Publishing Co., Limited,ISBN 978-988-79866, <http://www.ssci.cc/>, Email:wtocom@gmail.com,kycbshk@gmail.com.