

On the Traditional Clothing Culture of Korea and Japan under the Influence of China

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Abstract. As an important tool to protect human skin and hide shame, clothing has always been an indispensable part of life. China has a history and culture of five thousand years. After entering the era of civilization, China had produced its own distinctive clothing, which demonstrated different characteristics in various times. Scholars have long studied the influence of ancient Chinese culture on Japanese and Korean culture. This paper studies the following related contents: Japanese words composed with Chinese characters is one obvious example of this. Ancient Japan and South Korea also borrowed from China in the areas of literature, art, politics, costumes, and customs and so on. There is a certain correlation with China, directly or indirectly affected by Chinese traditional culture. The comparison of traditional costumes of China with those of Korea and Japan indicates that whether China had a profound influence on the traditional clothing of South Korea and Japan, through the trading of culture, style, and techniques.

Keywords: Clothing; China; Japan; Korea; Ancient Times.

1. Introduction

It can be seen from the historical evidence that Korea during the Goryeo period (918-1392 A.D.), was greatly integrated with Chinese culture. Political exchange was one of the most significant influences between China and Korea. The Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368 A.D.) was flourishing in all aspects, which via fighting, they grew from tribes into provinces, then finally they conquered the whole Chinese land. Although Han (202 B.C.-220 A.D.), Sui (581-618 A.D.), Tang (618-907 A.D.), and Song (960-1279 A.D.) were widespread, neither could fight against the powerful Yuan. Then, with their great national power, the Yuan began from the desert, passed the Western Xia and the Western Regions, caused the destruction of Nuzhen, forced Goryeo into submission, fought Nanzhao, then crossed the south of the Yangtze River, and ruled much of eastern Asia, which they portrayed as the whole world. After Yuan conquered Goryeo, they used members of the royal Korean family as bargaining chips, which was through marriage, in exchange for peace. When kings, princesses and princes went to the Yuan, they followed more than 1,200 court officials, which shows the huge size of their entourage. The sons of the emperor entered the Yuan city and lived there for as little as one or two days, or as much as one or two years or even longer. As they stayed in the Yuan city for a long time, the entourage of the prince and his accompanying officials and scholars often communicated with the scholar-officials of the Yuan Dynasty and established close ties with them. The frequent exchange of people resulted in the cultures and customs of the two sides influencing each other.

Other than the official exchange, Yuan (1271-1368 A.D.) and Goryeo (918-1392 A.D.) also promoted political exchanges between the two countries through marriage. Since the peoples between the Yuan Dynasty and Goryeo were intermingling, the people of the east enjoyed one hundred years of peace. During more than one hundred years of these alliances, a total of eight Yuan princesses married Korea princes. The arrival of the Mongolian princesses opened a new era of peaceful and friendly exchanges between the two countries. Stable and long-term marriage relationship provided favorable conditions for the dissemination of Yuan costumes in Korea, which was also known as the Goryeo Dynasty during that time period. The son of the Goryeo emperor went to Yuan becoming government officials; Goryeo envoys went between the two countries; Goryeo *gongnu*, the female servants in the palace, were elected by the Yuan Court and were respected as the imperial concubines, and even Goryeo's eunuch obtained a certain status in the Yuan Court. Communication between China and the Korean peninsula was uninterrupted, that closely related to the multiple dynasties of Korea and China, which through the interaction of politics, economy, culture, promoted the clothing

influence on each other, especially regarding the Yuan Dynasty and Goryeo's special political relationship. The Yuan Dynasty opened an inclusive atmosphere for both clothing and communication, which provided favorable conditions for cultural affinity. It was based on such political relations that the Yuan costume had such a profound influence on the Korea costume.

2. The Comparison of Korean and Chinese Clothing Korean Clothing had a Lot of Similarities with Chinese Traditional Clothing, Including the Costumes of Different Classes, the Style of Clothing, and the Techniques in Production

For the official dress of an emperor in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 A.D.), the emperor wore a "dragon robe". This robe had the main decoration of twelve lines, and twelve dragons, which were made of peacock feathers. The dragons were decorated three in the front, three in the back, one for each of the shoulders, and two for the lower body. Jade pieces were above the leather boots and belt, which was known as the jade belt. The Korean king of the Lee family had the same dress style as the Ming emperor, but they made some detailed changes in the costumes. The records show that the color was in red, and was a robe with four groups of dragon patterns. The woven gold dragon patterns were embedded in front and in back of the robe, and on two of the shoulders. There were the same leather boots and jade belts as the Ming dynasty's emperors. In the case that the more dragons on the clothing of ancient emperors, the higher status and power they symbolized, Korea could only improve the clothing for the emperor after the introduction of the dragon robes into Korea. What's more, regarding the color of the emperor's clothing, yellow was the color exclusively reserved for the emperor in China, as well as for Korea's emperor. During the ancient times, the Kings wore yellow clothing, which was a symbol of the center of the universe. When leaders were influenced by Chinese dress, the dress of the officials would change accordingly. The forty-volume book *On the Crown of the Kortatu Sutra* by the Emperor Xuanhe mentioned the matching of official clothing with "goldfish" or "silverfish" many times. The accessory called "fish" was the fish bag used to express the status in the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.) in China, and the fish bag was regarded as a gift in the Tang Dynasty. Similarly, Goryeo made the fish bag an integral part of the coat, which indicates that the costume system of the Tang Dynasty had a profound influence on the costume system of the Korean Peninsula. In addition to the clothing details of the emperor and government officials, women from the upper class also underwent a transition when Chinese clothing was introduced into Goryeo (918 -1392 A.D.). The clothes of aristocratic women were mostly wide sleeves before the cultural exchange between Yuan (1271-1368 A.D.) and Goryeo. Under the influence of the close relationship between the two countries, the sleeve type of clothing changed, and the cuffs gradually became smaller, prompting a new form of small mouth and large sleeves.(See Appendix A) What's more, Chinese embroidery techniques were also being spread throughout Goryeo. The resource shows that in Chinese folk embroidery patterns, auspicious patterns were widely used, such as cranes and deer sharing the same spring, magpies climbing plums, phoenix wearing peonies, auspicious eight treasure and other patterns, reflecting the Chinese nation's wish for a happy life. Hanbok, as Korea's traditional clothing contains a rich content of embroidery patterns. Chinese embroidery was introduced to Korea around BC, and the birds, fruits, bamboo, flowers and other natural patterns were being widely used on Hanbok, which were meant for praying for a happy life. When compared to the content of Hanbok's embroidery to Chinese traditional clothing, it can be easily discovered that they were influenced by Chinese folk embroidery, because the folk embroidery has the characteristics of painting art and a vivid sense of life.

3. How Chinese Culture affects Japanese clothing

Equally as important as Korea, Japan during the Nara time period (718 A.D.) was also greatly influenced by Chinese culture in many different ways. For the most part, political exchange between the two countries opened the gates of cultural exchange and knowledge for the Japanese, which

ordered Chinese clothing style to be populated throughout Japan in ancient times. In the Japanese era of Nara, a Japanese delegation came to China and was received by the emperor of Tang (618-907 A.D.), who presented a large number of court clothes to the delegation. These dazzling costumes were so popular in Japan that they were the envy of all the civil and military officials in the Japanese court. After the Japanese emissaries returned to Japan with the imperial clothes given by the emperor of Tang, the Japanese decree of "*The First Order to the People of the World*" was issued. The emperor of Japan ordered all people to wear clothes on the right side of the top instead of the left side of the top. The decree came at a time when Japan was actively learning from the Tang Dynasty. At this time, the garment lapels of the Tang Dynasty were on the right side. The Japanese Crown Prince Sunde (574-622 A.D.), who, although he died at the age of 48 and did not succeed to the throne, was zealously importing Chinese culture during his reign. This ancient statesman, who was a strong advocate of imitating China, wore a complete set of clothes typical of men from the Sui and Tang dynasties. Wufu, a type of Chinese traditional clothing, originated from the Wu (12th century B.C. - 473 B.C.) in China and was a costume of luxury. One of the earliest history books in Japan also recorded this political exchange of clothing. The Chinese Court appointed two people who were good at making Wufu to the Japanese Court, and along with the clothing they also brought educational books, which were significant at the time.

4. The Development of Chinese and Japanese Clothing under Historical Background

Since the political exchange gave the opportunity for cultural communication, Japan learned knowledge of clothing hierarchy and manufacturing techniques from China. The era of Nara (718 A.D.) in Japan was also the time when the Tang's national strength was the strongest. A large number of Japanese scholars went to the Tang to learn the advanced culture of China. These special envoys brought this cultural knowledge to Japan by learning the culture and art of the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.) as well as the legal system of China, thus setting off a trend of learning from China in Japan. Japan copied the Tang Dynasty system, by issuing the "Clothing Order". This system stipulated that people should be dressed differently. Different official positions and grades should wear different clothes. It stipulated the rules of formal dress and court dress. It also stipulated that civil servants without official positions should wear uniforms, and different kinds of uniforms were used in different professions. In a word, Japanese clothing in the Nara era was hierarchical and professionalized to distinguish different clothing. What's more, for the techniques of manufacturing clothing, during the time of Ying Shen, Japanese learned the silkworm farming and weaving industry from the Qin and Han people in China, which would be developed remarkably later.

Because of the exchange and communication, Japanese clothing developed a lot of similarities with Chinese traditional clothing, which are the clothing of different classes, the style of clothing, and the techniques in production. During the time of Nara (718 A.D.), a very similar style of Chinese clothing emerged in Japan. That is, the coarse fabric clothing began popular, in which the sleeves became narrower and longer, and the skirt changed into a slanted direction. (See Appendix B) The emperor of Japan's coronation clothing was painted with the sun, moon, stars, dragon, phoenix, tiger, ape and other designs. Other Japanese patterns were based on Chinese patterns, such as clouds of cranes, waves and so on. Most of the patterns evolved and were processed after they were introduced to Japan in the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.). Among the patterns used in kimono, pine, bamboo, plum and animal patterns imported from China accounted for the majority, and were very popular among native Japanese. The auspicious dragon, kylin and phoenix patterns were not only used to decorate the ceremonial clothes of the imperial court, but also on some happy festivals of peasants. These patterns were clearly influenced by traditional Chinese culture and concepts. Other than the emperor's clothing, during the Nara period (710-784 A.D.) Japanese court circles adopted Chinese court dress, the most characteristic feature of which was the long kimono-style *pao* garment. It is clear that emblematic colours and patterns as well as the *pao* style were borrowed from China because

modern court dress in Japan, which has been little changed since the 12th century, has many purely Chinese characteristics. This evidence indicates that the influence of Chinese culture on ancient Japan was palpable. Additionally, more detailed similarities are observed by diving into the accessories. Japan's laws not only regulate clothing, but also monitor accessories such as shoes and socks. According to the decree, soldiers in war must wear "Tang style straw sandals". And "Tang style sandals" required the soldiers to weave them themselves. Also, according to relevant historical records, clogs have a history of more than 2,000 years in China. There are also many records about wooden clogs in Chinese literature. Xie Lingyun (385-433 A.D.), a famous poet in the Southern Dynasty, made a kind of wooden clog, which is called "Xie Gong clog" for the convenience of mountaineering.

5. Conclusion

China had a profound influence on the traditional clothing of South Korea and Japan, through the trading of culture, style, and techniques. Even though Chinese, Japanese, and Korean traditional costumes have different national characteristics, which were mainly reflected in the external elements of costumes. There still exists common points, which were mainly reflected in the inherent character of clothing. We should take a positive attitude towards the valuable costume cultural heritage of the three countries, carefully sort out and summarize it, and carry it forward. In addition, China, Japan and South Korea are close neighbors with similar historical and cultural backgrounds and a common foundation of Confucianism. Nowadays the three countries are also in an open and changing international environment. The garment circles of the three countries should cooperate closely, strengthen exchanges, draw on each other's strengths in the exchanges, and make efforts to carry forward their national costume cultures and contribute to the revitalization of oriental costume cultures.

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Appendix

Appendix A:



Fig 1. Yuan, the big sleeve robe

Appendix B:



Fig 2. A vision of the traditional costume in Japan