

# **A Study on the Development and Popularity of the Mean Clothing**

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## **Abstract**

**As the quintessence of ancient culture, the thought of the mean in the East and the thought of the middle way in the West have influenced every aspect of the society, and as an important embodiment of the social life, the clothing has been deeply influenced by the "doctrine of the mean". In this paper, the development and popularity and influence of the "doctrine of the mean" in clothing are discussed from the following several aspects, so as to provide a theoretical basis for the study of collocation aesthetics of the clothing accessories, especially for Zigong tie-dyed clothing accessories.**

## **Keywords**

**Doctrine of the mean; Costume Accessories; development and popularity.**

## **1. Mean Clothing**

### **1.1. Meaning**

Clothing is the second layer of skin of the human body, equipping with two basic characteristics, namely, materiality and spirituality. From the spiritual point of view, the clothing which is designed with the idea of the "doctrine of the mean" or with the concept of the "doctrine of the mean" is called as the "mean clothing". As the carrier, the clothing of the "doctrine of the mean" is the basis and the expression body, the "doctrine of the mean" is the spiritual appendage and also the people's ideological response. The "doctrine of the mean" is reflected in the clothing and expressed through the clothing, thus, it has become the mean clothing.

### **1.2. Performance**

The "doctrine of the mean" in clothing shall be understood from aspects of the emotional and psychological appeals, presenting people the realm of "man is an integral part of nature" and "peace and harmony". Clothing displays harmony and balance and can be designed and made to blend with people and nature. In line with ergonomic design, the use of environmental friendly dyes or showing peaceful and elegant colors and low-carbon, biodegradable, environmental friendly, as well as natural materials are the characteristics of the mean clothing. Mean clothing is much similar with the environmental friendly clothing, but environmental friendly clothing is for the rational use of the natural environment and sustainable development, as long as the clothing is environmental friendly and sustainably developing, it is free of any concept and form, while the mean clothing is more about the harmony and coordination with people, the nature, as well as the society.

### **1.3. Development and Popularity**

In the development and popularity of history, it can be seen that China highlights the plain and loose Chinese clothing and emphasizes on ancient Greek and Roman clothing with human health beauty, and moreover, the plant dyeing cloth and the application of the materials such as silk, cotton as well as hemp have the shadow of the mean. For the ancient Chinese society inspired by Confucianism, our country has spread the wide-ranging and large-sleeved Chinese clothing for thousands of years, which is characterized by a harmonious culture, emphasizing

the balance, symmetry and unity of the style of clothing, advocating the beauty of implicitness, propriety as well as smoothness. As a result, there is almost no Chinese clothing which is deviated from the "doctrine of the mean". For example, as for the Shenyi (Fig. 1) which was prevailed in the Warring States Period and the Western Han Dynasty, the clothing was given the meaning of social symbols, there were strict provisions on tailors, its different parts symbolized the tools such as the compass, square, straight rope, as well as scales in the daily life, the upper part and lower part were tailored separately and then stitched together, with round sleeves and square collar, straight back seam, the level lower hem, indicating to have formal manners and to act in accordance with the standards, to be honest, and to be fair, the social function of clothing has been raised to the level of moral standards, emphasizing tradition and rules; as for the Beizi (Fig. 2) which had the most characteristics of the Times in the Song Dynasty, with a straight shape, straight collar and buttons down the front, the clothing to be symmetrical at the left and right, and the same rolling edge of collar, sleeve, side swing and hem can best reflect the rules, balance and smooth beauty of Chinese clothing. In modern society, people are pursue low-carbon, environmental friendly and healthy life and make clothing by applying all kinds of natural materials and new environmental friendly materials, with simple, relaxed and casual styles, and the peace and tranquility brought by pure and natural dyeing also reflect the spirit of the mean.



**Fig. 1** Shenyi



**Fig. 2** Beizi



**Fig. 3** Bind Small Feet

## **2. All Kinds of Clothing that Deviate from the "Doctrine of the Mean"**

### **2.1. The Clothing that Deviates from the "Doctrine of the Mean" in the History of China**

Although ancient China's thought of "doctrine of the mean" contains the experience and reflection of the ancient sages on the value of life, in the view of the ruling class, it is a tool to serve their own interests, and as a result, most of the clothing culture is determined by the ruler's personal preference besides inheriting the ancient tradition. Historically, our country also had the clothing which was deviated from the "doctrine of the mean", such as some of the bad habits of our country, like women's foot binding (Fig. 3), this kind of naked body (namely, the direct decoration of the human body by using various methods) clothing decoration culture is said to have started after the Southern Tang Dynasty Lord Li Yu, because his concubine danced very well with silk feet binding, it became popular from the royal family, and thus in the Song Dynasty, the Yuan Dynasty, the Ming Dynasty and the Qing Dynasty, it became the "beauty" that women had to follow, which led to the popularity of small shoes. This kind of damage to the body had been popular in our country for thousands of years, which has greatly damaged women's health, and runs counter to the "doctrine of the mean" of "human harmony" advocated by Confucianism in our country.

### **2.2. Costumes that Deviate from the "Doctrine of the Mean" in Western History.**

Western clothing is different from Chinese clothing. In the course of its history, it has experienced a change from plane to three-dimensional. In the ancient West, its clothing structure is mainly composed of non-shaped waist clothing, hanging clothing and winding clothing. In the later period, semi-formed pullover and loose pleated clothing appear. It is represented by ancient Greek and Roman clothing. Their clothing has a kind of simple and pure beauty, which shows the beauty of human body. Nature and simplicity are its main style, with the shadow of the mean in the West. But since the beginning of the Middle Ages, the clothing form developed from two-dimensional to three-dimensional, changing the classical plane and simplicity, and entering the era of three-dimensional composition. During this period, Western clothing was transited from wide clothing to narrow clothing, and shared and substantial are its advantages. However, along with the development of the society, the Western history also had the clothing which deviates from "doctrine of the mean".

Since the Renaissance in the 16th century, women in the West have used close fitting chest dress to tighten their waists and the skirt support to make their buttocks bigger. The popularity of wearing clothes to change the shape of their bodies, to change the lines of a woman's breasts, waist, abdomen, and buttocks, and to pursue narrow shoulders, large chest, thin waist and large buttocks, has been going back and forth for about five centuries.

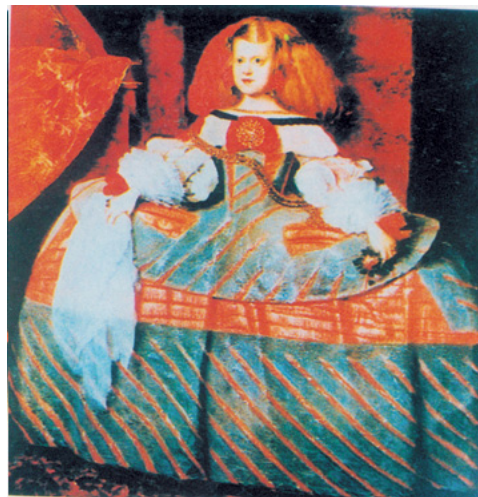
The close fitting chest dress (Fig. 4) has two kinds, namely, hard material and soft material, the materials include the iron fold, the wire, the whale whiskers, the cloth, the lining and so on, beginning to wear since the childhood, and it has been used for a long term use to artificially change the female body shape, it is just like the foot binding which severely destroys the female health. There has always been opposition in Western history, but it has failed because it is an essential tool for shaping the women's ideal body shape.

The skirt support (Fig. 5), which had been popular three times between the 16th and 19th centuries, is a perfect match for the close fitting chest dress, and such supports for opening furbelow had different forms and names at different times because they swell up the lower half of a woman, make it a strong contrast to the upper half, and complete the ideal body type of a woman, which, though extremely inconvenient to walk and very inactive, is still popular with women.

The close fitting chest dress and the skirt support became the tools for people to pursue beauty in those times, women became toys and appendages for people to appreciate, and in those days of extravagance, people were desirous, wars were broken out frequent, the people forget the most essential human nature and the nature, forgot the utmost sincerity and goodness, even if they don't have the most basic practical function, they should also become "walking gardens". This is caused by the social environment at that time, and this kind of "beauty" also deviates from the "doctrine of the mean".



**Fig. 4** Close Fitting Chest Dress



**Fig. 5** The Skirt Support

### **2.3. Clothing that Deviates from the "Doctrine of the Mean" in Modern Times**

Since the 20th century, various trends of thought have sprung up, and all kinds of clothing have emerged. Standardized, machine-operated, mass-produced clothing industry thrives. The high-grade ready-to-wear between high-grade women's clothing and ready-to-wear has also been rising rapidly, and in comparison with the low-quality and batch production general ready-to-wear, the high-grade clothing is high in quality and small in quantity, and the advantages are design personality and good taste. There are also haute couture towards the single-piece of clothing and tailor-made clothing, which is a fashion of the newly rich. Today, the clothing trend changes ceaselessly and the designers are lots in quantity, we can see the novel dress idea from a lot of talented designers, however, although some ideas are avant-garde and eye-catching, it is just like the high-end ready-to-wear or high-end custom clothing which only have small masses of consumer, and when facing a lot of strange dress, we can just appreciate them. If deviated from the human body itself, deviated from the human body harmony, beyond the "degree", and deviated from the "doctrine of the mean", the clothing can only be considered as the concept clothing, and the clothing is just used for showing in the T stage, and its purpose is to prove the strength of brands and designers. As like well-known genius designer John Galliano, his famous classic show Dior 2006/2007 autumn / winter high-end custom-made clothing with the theme of "futuristic Renaissance", medieval armor model (Fig. 6), splicing by tough armor and soft chiffon at right and left side, pineapple-like skirts (Fig. 7), and these exaggerated elements presented people a dramatic shock, it can only shine in front of the flash bulb, and normal people will not wear it to the streets, because it goes against the basic principles of human clothing, it is discomfort, however, the designer's intention is only to show his extraordinary creativity.





**Fig. 6** Dior 06/07



**Fig. 7** Dior 06/07

### **3. Analysis of the Popularity of the "Mean Clothing" from the Perspective of Clothing Aesthetics and Psychology**

The reason why the mean clothing is always popular and favored and accepted by people should be viewed from the perspective of clothing aesthetics and clothing psychology. As an important part of the basic theory of aesthetics, clothing aesthetics shows people's recognition of beauty and pursuit of beauty in clothing. It is human instinct to pursue good things. In nature, beauty often shows harmony, symmetry and equilibrium in form, which can be directly understood by people through perception, and this kind of nature beauty becomes one of the basic theories of "doctrine of the mean" and is used in thought. And the beauty of nature recognized and accepted by people will also be extended to the beauty of clothing. The beauty in form meets the aesthetic needs of people. It has three natural attributes, namely, form, color as well as sound. It also has six laws of internal of these natural attributes and combination of all elements. They are "neat and pure", "symmetrical balance", "harmonic contrast", "appropriate proportion", "rhythm" and "harmony", respectively. From the most simple principle of the beauty in form, that is "neat and pure", the partial of things is in order, simple and pure to the highest principle of the beauty in form, that is "harmony", the variety and unity of things, we can see that symmetry and harmony are people's innate aesthetic appreciation, and are gained by the human beings in the long-term practice through their own observation of themselves and the surrounding environment, and are a law reflecting the structure of things and the activities of people, it is just like the human hands, feet, eyes, and other organs which are symmetrical, and it is just as people think the golden ratio is the most beautiful thing. Similarly, the beauty in form is expressed in people's aesthetic appreciation of clothing. The form is the shape of clothing, which is related to the structure of the human body and the activities of the people. The color is the color of clothing, while the sound is expressed in the psychology of clothing. The harmonious unity of these elements is also the recognition and pursuit of the beauty of clothing by people.

Clothing psychology researches the relationship between human psychological activity and behavior style and clothing, the human psychology decides their dress, the clothing itself has no meaning at all, and it can truly manifest its significance and the value only when the society human beings wear it. From the psychological point of view, no matter how people act on the society in their practical activities, they always want to achieve the results of the natural state of unity and harmony. The human beings are the natural person, produce and develop from the nature, and they cannot exist alone by separating from the nature and the society, and when it

ascribes to the human psychology to the clothing, now matter how they seek the new and the changes, they will always return to the harmonious unity between the nature and the society. The theories of clothing aesthetics and clothing psychology have proved the reason why the mean clothing which has the idea of human harmony, nature harmony as well as society harmony is accepted and always popular in history.

#### 4. Conclusion

From the development process of the mean clothing and the non-mean clothing in the clothing life history, it can be seen that the mean clothing with strong cultural connotation has been playing an important role and developing continuously in the clothing history, which is consistent with the theory of clothing aesthetics and clothing psychology and has been proved by practice, while the clothing which deviates from the "doctrine of the mean" can only be popular for a short time because of novelty, although it enjoys a high reputation and drives the popularity of the later generation, it can only be a flash in the pan in terms of the clothing itself, and eventually it will be weeded out in history.

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