

# Study of New Chinese Costume Design based on the Aesthetic Thought of Huainanzi's Theory of Form and God

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## Abstract

The Huainanzi's exposition of the relationship between form and spirit is of great aesthetic value in the field of artistic creation. However, this philosophical viewpoint is not only a positive guide for artistic creation, but also has its theoretical value in the field of clothing design. The article is based on a profound understanding of the Huainanzi's theory of form and god, and focuses on the analysis of the design of new Chinese dresses in the field of clothing design, by examining the shape, colour and material of new Chinese dresses in relation to their use of form and god.

## Keywords

New Chinese Dress; Colours; Fashion Design; The Theory of Form and God.

## 1. Introduction

In the Huainanzi, the concept of "junxingzhe" emphasises the close relationship between form and god, and at the same time clearly puts forward the aesthetic demand for "the combination of form and god". [1] Shao Huifang's essay "Li Yu's Ideology of Costume" mentions "clothes to chapter the body" and "the combination of form and god", emphasizing that clothing design is not "the decorative nature of clothes for people from the outside" but It is a perfect combination of the 'inside' of the human subject and the 'outside' of the clothing. [2] New Chinese clothing design refers to the combination of Chinese elements with modern new materials and techniques, with a subtle, calm and simple style as the starting point, which can reflect the traditional Chinese charm, but also has a modern sense of new design. [3] The use of the theory of form and spirit runs through the design of the new Chinese dress. At present, there is no special work or master's thesis on the influence of the Huainanzi on the design of new Chinese dresses from the perspective of the Huainanzi theory of form and spirit. This paper is based on the understanding of the theory of form and god in Huainanzi, and analyses the design of new Chinese dresses, emphasising the value of the idea of "form and god" in the design of new Chinese dresses, with the aim of advocating designers to make "connotative" designs through this study.

## 2. Shape Gives Birth to God in the Design of New Chinese Dresses

The Huainanzi's concept of shape and spirit refers to the fact that in the process of describing a thing, one should not only pay attention to the external form of the thing, but also grasp the inner spirit of the thing. From the perspective of modern clothing design, the "shape" of clothing design is modelling, and the "spirit" is reflected in the connotation of the clothing to be expressed and its ability to highlight the temperament of the person himself.

## 2.1. The "Shape" of the New Chinese Dress

### 2.1.1. Styling the New Chinese Dress

Fashion design refers to the design of the overall silhouette and local detailing of the garment, and is the source of the clothing design system. The silhouette of the new Chinese dress has less variation in silhouette compared to modern women's wear, as it is constrained by the form of traditional Chinese women's wear design. The silhouette can give a deep impression of perception, take the cheongsam for example. Whether it is celebrities attending high-end parties or the general public attending everyday wedding celebrations, more and more people are choosing the cheongsam or modified cheongsam as their dress. The cheongsam silhouette is mostly a one-piece shape that saves the chest and waist, with an S-shape at the waist and hips, with a clear difference in the three curves, and an H-shape below the hips, mostly straight, with only variations in length and fatness. Such a silhouette is slightly subtle and conservative, with less variation, and has certain limitations on the body's own body conditions. In accordance with the aesthetics of modern clothing, the shape lacks a certain sense of spatial three-dimensionality and is not conducive to the role of clothing in modifying and enhancing the visual aesthetics of the human body. Modern dress design not only conforms to the aesthetics of the female body curve, but also strengthens the shaping aesthetics of the garment. To a certain extent, it has played a role in modifying and shaping the beauty of human curves. Therefore, the design principles of modern dresses should be cleverly combined with the traditional Chinese clothing design elements to increase innovation and divergent thinking to design better new Chinese dresses. [4] For example, Figure 1 shows Gong Li's modified cheongsam dress worn to the 2015 Met Gala charity ball at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. We can use this as an example with the dress design concept to break through the shape of the cheongsam below the waistline, increase the length and width of the hemline, emphasise the sense of volume and layering of the lower body, and instead use fishtail skirts, pleated skirts and flared skirts to highlight the beauty of the curves of women's hips and legs, showing more of their modesty and elegance.



**Fig 1.** Gong Li's modified cheongsam dress worn to the 2015 Met Gala charity ball at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York

### 2.1.2. The Colours of the New Chinese Dress

Of the various attributes of clothing, such as style, colour, pattern and fabric, the most direct one to people is colour. Colour acts on the visual organs of people with its own colour and conveys emotional meaning to them. At the same time, colour is also symbolic, for example, white is pure and noble; gold is gorgeous and noble; blue is soft and calm; green is youthful and energetic; red is festive and passionate, etc.

At present, the colours of the domestic dresses are mostly black, white, red, blue and green, such a colour scheme is basically consistent with the international popular hues, which can be seen in the increasingly close combination of China and the world. 2008 Beijing Olympic Games

Miss Ceremonial dresses, one of the series of celadon series dresses (Figure 2), it is blue and white simple and bright shades, very casual outline celadon-like Chinese style of noble and elegant, cultural longevity. It is a very simple and simple blue and white colour palette that casually evokes the noble elegance of Chinese style and culture. The choice and matching of colours for social dresses is the first thing to convey a specific clothing language, the so-called sensory first impression is on the eyes; to most fully reflect the connotation of the cultural language, the colours to be more simple and simple tones better; in the choice of clothing colour to be different from person to person, must be consistent with the occasion and the identity of the wearer, with irreplaceable, but also has this irreplaceable, will be various classes of people of all professions can be It is also with this irreplaceability that people from all walks of life and all professions can get a dress series that suits them, truly making the popular dresses popular but also a hundred flowers. [5]



**Fig 2.** 2008 Beijing Olympic Games Miss Ceremonial dresses, one of the series of celadon series dresses

### 2.1.3. Materials of the New Chinese Dress

Clothing fabrics are the carrier for clothing designers to express their design concepts and show their personalities. Through the clever application of clothing fabrics in the design of clothing, it can fully express the distinctive personality of clothing, so that clothing exudes a unique artistic charm. On the whole, the innovation of new Chinese dress fabrics and other series of clothing, need to combine the latest achievements in contemporary technology, the choice of new fabrics, fabric recycling, fabric innovation reorganisation and other aspects of design. With the development of high-tech era, new clothing fabrics are emerging, such as ecological cotton, coloured cotton, coloured silk, nano fabric, soybean fibre, 3D fabric, etc. These new clothing fabrics not only provide material guarantee for the clothing designer's artistic creation, but also in the context of visual effects and materials to win in the era. The use of new clothing fabrics will be an important way to improve the grade of clothing brands and show the cultivation, identity, personality and taste of the wearer. Combined with traditional Chinese crafts, such as through printing and dyeing, embroidery and hanging paste on the basis of existing fabrics. As shown in Figure 4, the traditional Chinese embroidery is used in the new Chinese dress in the improved cheongsam dress worn by Liu Shishi at an event in 2015.



**Fig 3.** A modified cheongsam dress worn by Liu Shishi at an event in 2015

## **2.2. The Divine Charm of the New Chinese Dress**

### **2.2.1. The Beauty of Inner and Outer Unity**

Whether it is 'God is precious to form' or 'God and form are transformed', this is what the Huainanzi wants to pursue, and what it ultimately emphasises is the importance of 'God' over 'form' in artistic creation. This is what the Huai Nan Zi wants to pursue, which ultimately emphasises the importance of "God" over "form" in artistic creation, i.e. the harmonious unification of "God is more valuable than form" and "God and form are transformed", in order to reach the highest state of art. The "form" is a product of the universe and nature, while the "God" is given by man. To harmonise these two views of art, we must achieve harmony between man as the subject and nature as the object.

From the three elements of the new Chinese dress design: shape, colour and material, we can learn that the new Chinese women's clothing probably has a sense of design beauty. The traditional concept of "a gentleman's proper dress and the unity of man's clothes" still has deep meaning today. Firstly, the new Chinese dress is a symbolic beauty, which not only symbolises the aesthetics of Chinese clothing, but also implies the development of a country and a society. The traditional culture of the nation contained in the new Chinese dress is not just a flashy form, but has the essential requirement to express the inner spirit of the nation through the external design form. Secondly, the beauty of internal and external unity is the beauty of the silhouette, or 'form', and the detailing, or 'spirit', in terms of actual design. The aesthetics of internal and external unity referred to here is based on a relationship between the contained and the contained, in which a close relationship is maintained with each other, and the aesthetics of the external silhouette cannot be destroyed by the treatment of the internal details, nor can the design of the internal details be neglected due to the limitations of the external silhouette.

### **2.2.2. A Neutral and Dominant Beauty**

The Huainanzi is a synthesis of a hundred schools of thought, and its aesthetic thought in particular is based on a blend of Confucianism and Taoism. The Huainanzi begins with the commonalities between Confucian and Taoist aesthetics, and absorbs and even transcends them in a spirit of inclusiveness and inclusion. This compatibility is always accompanied by the way of thinking of 'harmony'. "Harmony" is always opposed to "opposition", "conflict" and "struggle". Both Confucianism and Taoism believe that things are not opposed to each other, that they are in conflict, that they can be completely different, but that they are in harmony with each other, that they are diverse and harmonious.

The aesthetic concept of unity between people and clothes is implemented in clothing design, which means that clothing should be able to express both the spiritual connotation of people

and their own external beauty, and be able to make the two coordinate and complement each other. To insist on a complementary and mutually supportive relationship between the new Chinese dress and the person is to reconcile this relationship to the middle. If a person's own qualifications cannot withstand the external beauty of the dress, it will make the dress the focus and the person the accompaniment, no doubt the wrong focus; if the beauty of the dress exceeds the person's qualifications, and the person cannot manage this beauty, it will make a certain distance in the social process. The neutral beauty of the new Chinese dress places great emphasis on the degree of design, both in terms of aesthetic guidelines and in terms of grasping the scale of openness and the relationship between flamboyance and elegance. Excessive openness in the form of clothing will only result in vulgarity and the loss of the nation's identity, while excessively conservative clothing forms the style of the feudal society, which is contrary to modern aesthetics and the pursuit of human beauty, and is not faithful to the wearer himself; too much openness to foreign clothing culture will result in the loss of the nation's clothing culture and make people lose their sense of cultural confidence, so clothing should be open in a measured way. Therefore, when it comes to restraining the width and tightness of the new Chinese dress, it is necessary to adhere to the attitude of "neutrality".

### 3. Exploring and Developing the Value of the Idea of "Form and Spirit" in the Design of New Chinese Dresses

In the design of new Chinese dresses, "shape" - modelling - is the material medium that embodies the garment itself, and the three elements of the garment - form, fabric and colour - constitute the linguistic symbols of the garment modelling and convey the "spirit" of the garment itself. - the characteristics of the new Chinese dress itself and the occasions for which it is suitable, the cultural connotation and design concept behind the new Chinese dress, and people's emotional and rational aspirations for the new Chinese dress. This sense of "both form and spirit" is an important guide to the innovative design development of new Chinese dress design.

### 4. Conclusion

An outstanding new Chinese dress is one that not only has the heritage of traditional Chinese culture but also conforms to international TPO principles in terms of shape, colour, fabric and connotation. Combining nationalisation and internationalisation, it goes from the local culture to the international stage. It is not simply the pursuit of one of the above aspects, but a rich whole composed of some elements, i.e. a unity of "form and spirit". This is in line with the Huainanzi's view of the harmonious coexistence of form and spirit. To do a good job of designing new Chinese dresses, we must focus on inheriting the culture and spirit of the Chinese nation, which is a process of combining thought and art, art and technology. Fashion designers should not be bound by the inherent mode of thinking, but should integrate the elements of traditional Chinese dress with modern dresses in a reasonable and clever way, and apply them innovatively to create new Chinese dresses that meet the needs of contemporary people for material, cultural and spiritual aspects.

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