

Women in Cheongsam: Female Images in Chinese Movie *The Flowers of War*

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ABSTRACT

Cheongsam is the most oriental traditional dress of Chinese women. With its unique design-fitted waist and Chinese style collar, it reflects the curvaceous beauty of women and the elegant temperament of traditional Chinese women. In some film or TV dramas describing life in the 20th century, cheongsam is regarded as a symbol of women in the Republic of China, showing the charm of Oriental women and the charm of Chinese culture. During the history of the Republic of China, great changes have taken place in Chinese society and Chinese traditional clothing. This change not only liberated the body of civilian women, but also became a sign that women accepted new ideas and began to get rid of feudal patriarchal forces. At the same time, it has witnessed the development track of Chinese female consciousness. China's feminist culture not only opposes the old society, but also constructs a new female image.

Keywords: *Cheongsam, Movie, Feminism*

1. INTRODUCTION

The characteristics of clothing can not only reveal the background of an era, but also be an important carrier of human civilization and culture. Clothing not only meets the basic needs of human beings, but also embodies the cultural characteristics of an era. Cheongsam is the most Oriental traditional dress for Chinese women, and it can also be said to be the most typical symbol of Chinese women's dress. Through the fashion style of recent years and the costume characteristics of various films and TV plays, we can find that it has been accumulated historically as the aesthetic psychology of the Chinese nation.

First of all, the beauty of harmony reflected in cheongsam is mentioned. The core of Chinese traditional aesthetics is "the beauty of harmony". Chinese traditional aesthetics requires the object to conform to the aesthetic standards of The Times, which can be well reflected on the Cheongsam. In order to highlight the beauty of women's bodies, cheongsam mostly adopts the design of body retraction, and specially adjusts the proportion of waist and chest. Cheongsam precisely reflects the "beauty of harmony" in traditional Chinese aesthetics. With its unique design--the fitting waist and the Chinese collar,

cheongsam reflects the curvaceous beauty of women, which makes women realize the beauty of their bodies and they try cheongsam one after another to highlight their graceful curves, which also reflects the elegant and beautiful temperament of traditional Chinese women.

Secondly, cheongsam embodies the elegance and serenity of traditional aesthetics. In the traditional Chinese aesthetic concept, the ideal state of a good lady is to see whether a woman is elegant and quiet. This aesthetic concept is precipitated in the traditional thinking of Chinese people, so the performance of cheongsam is also like this. Because cheongsam is characterized by tight fitting and wrapping. Therefore, in addition to constraining women's body shape, the movement range of the wearer is also affected to a certain extent. Traditional Chinese women are seen as gentle and elegant, dignified and rigorous, modest and prudent, gentle and elegant, which is consistent with the feeling conveyed by cheongsam. So, cheongsam can more accurately express the beautiful feeling of Chinese women.

2. CHEONGSAM AND FEMALE IMAGES IN MOVIES

Female characters are indispensable objects in film

and television works. Costumes in some works largely influence the portrayal of female characters. On the one hand, the costumes are not only a cultural representation, which means that the garment highlights the symbol of a particular era in the drama. In addition, by various of clothing patterns, styles, and colors, reflecting distinct personalities of the characters from the side, as well as making the image of the characters more multi-faceted, harmonious. However, some film and television series which depicting the 20th century's life, cheongsam is regarded as a symbol of women in the Republic of China, showing the charm of oriental women and that of Chinese culture. It is of non-ignorable importance in Chinese works. In the movies "In the Mood for Love", "Lust Caution", and "The Flower of War", female's exceedingly fascinating and charming and curvaceous beauty are incisively and vividly displayed. In some TV dramas, for example, the classic "Deep Love and Rain" and "The Family of Gold Powder" It more reflects the elegance of cheongsam and the classical beauty of oriental women. There are even some Republican spy dramas such as "The Pretender" and "The Sparrow", which add a sense of mystery to the performance of the characters. The images of women in these films are not uniformly displayed through cheongsam. On the one hand, it can also explain that women in the 20th century can do more than serve both the husband and the child in a traditional way, which means they are able to participate more workforce than decades before, and the role positioning they give is richer.

2.1. Differences between Two Female Characters: Schoolgirl and Prostitute

Takes Nanjing during the War of Resistance Against Japan as the background. It shoots from the perspective of a female student to describe a group of prostitutes, who bravely take the place of the students to be abused by the Japanese. The film mainly describes two female figures who are opposed to male social concepts: a group of female students with marriageable age who are knowledgeable and a group of humble prostitutes in the theater on the Qinhuai River. The first appearance of two characters can reflect their social status at that time. Firstly, for the prostitutes, they ride by their horse-drawn carriage through the war-torn city of Nanjing, and the most distinctive feature of them are the brightly colored cheongsam. In their later appearances, their red lips, trimmed eyebrows, fluffy curly hair made them look out of place in this devastated city.

In order to highlight the difference between these two images and the responsiveness of these two forces, in terms of dress styles, prostitutes' clothing mainly reflects the curvilinear shape of the female's figure, and the length of the gowns over the knees, The students' clothing has abandoned the traditional church

dress or civilization new dress. It is a two-section clothing. The top is a traditional style with a stand-up collar and a slanted front. The lower half is generally a dark long skirt, which reflects the clean and simple style of the students. In the film, it has been changed to a cheongsam with consistent contours and more spacious. In this aspect, the plain-colored robe not only retains the students' simple and generous temperament, but also forms a comparison with the prostitutes' clothing in shape. The two types of people wear different styles of cheongsam, and there is a strong contrast between their fortunes and social status. The contradiction between the two types of people is also reflected through clothing fabrics and patterns. The costumes of prostitutes are mostly silk lace underwear and satin gowns, as well as expensive fox fur shawls, exquisite, embroidered shoes and show flower bras. At the same time, their patterns are mostly peony of various shapes, and show the strong beauty of colors, the collision of pink, black, and sapphire give a strong visual impact to the audience, which are the same as the glass color of the church. Compared with the clothes of prostitutes, the inner lining of students is white cloth cotton robe, and the color is limited to azure blue, black, pale and other low key colors.

2.2. Differences between True History and Fiction Movie

Historically, cheongsam originally developed from the national costume of the Manchu people. At that time, the Manchu people lived a nomadic and farming lifestyle, and robes were effective against wind and cold, so robes became their first choice of daily clothing. Unlike the Han robe, their robe retained the characteristics of the horse's national costume. At that time, cheongsam was still in its embryonic stage, and its meaning was functional to facilitate warmth, riding and hunting.

After entering the Central Plains from northeast China, the primitive life of fishing, hunting and nomads turned to stable farming, and the Manchus also changed from working hard for livelihood in the bitter and cold land to the court salary. The transformation of social identity led to a change in lifestyle, and the Manchu became so obsessed with the gorgeous silk materials and exquisite embroidery of The Han costume culture that by the end of the Qing dynasty the practical function of the Manchu robe had given way to its decorative function.

Cheongsam in modern sense, which has really become the representative of Chinese dress culture, was born in the early 20th century, and prevailed in the 1930s and 1940s. During the Period of the Republic of China, Great changes took place in Chinese society, as well as in Chinese traditional clothing.

In the real era of the Flowers of War, the costumes of schoolgirls and prostitutes are also of contemporary significance. Lv (2016) described that at that time, with the demise of the feudal monarchy, progressive female student clothing can be roughly divided into three types. The first is the western dress, which is mainly affected by the concession area and foreign students; The second is the improved cheongsam. Compared with the traditional straight tube and wide style, the improved cheongsam has a smaller neckline, shorter hem, and tighter waist. The third was characterized by a blue cotton blouse with a dark knee-length skirt and white yarn socks with round cloth shoes. It was the most popular style at that time and was officially recognized as a female school uniform, reflecting the new style of simple and generous, beautiful, and lively female students in the Republic of China. At that time, the female students' clothing as a whole reflected the characteristics of the vigorous times, abandoned the defects of traditional women's depressing and depressing, and got rid of the complicated and cumbersome loose clothes and fat sleeves in the past, allowing women to move freely while tightening their waist, highlighting the curvedness of women and showing their free and independent personality. The uniform of students with the same color symbolizes the social civilization of equality.

At that time, prostitutes, wearing exquisite cheongsam, fully displayed their body curves, even prostitutes cut out their own style of cheongsam and popular today. In the society at that time, ordinary women's clothing was mainly gray with many restrictions, but the prostitutes never gave in to the secular conventions of black, white, and gray, and their clothing must be beautiful and eye-catching colors. Other girls get married to wear red, prostitutes wear every day, bold and unrestrained; The yellow can only be worn when visiting teachers, prostitutes used to make underwear, shoes, embroidered with gold lace, bright and colorful, fragrant, and incomparable. There are many styles of jewelry. As for dress collocation, as the earliest prostitutes to accept western material and style, they also have the courage to break the convention, western-style coat cover high-collar cheongsam, British cap pressure Chinese tight-fitting vest are very common, men's suit mandarin jacket is necessary at home. Their makeup and hair style are leading the trend, bold avant-garde, in that era of rigid rules, complicated etiquette, outdated ideas, for the liberation of women in the new society to contribute. Many prostitutes went to the streets to distribute leaflets to boycott Japanese goods and help patriotic students. Many patriotic prostitutes donated their income and sent letters to the newspaper to show their determination. At that time, they not only broke the secular world, emancipated the mind, but also retained their deep patriotic feelings. In a sense, they have much in common with female students.

Female students wear civilized new clothes to match their identity; Dust woman wear improved cheongsam to highlight their self-charm. The differences and changes between the two kinds of clothing clearly reflect women's pursuit of convenience, beauty and functionality. The shaping and expression of women's aesthetic image is the embodiment of the continuous exploration and development of women's consciousness. It presents different forms in different historical periods and is restricted by women's unique physiology and social and cultural conditions in the same period.

3. DISCUSSION

The shaping and expression of female aesthetic image reflects the process of continuous exploration and development of female consciousness. It presents different forms in different historical periods and is restricted by women's unique physiology and social and cultural conditions in the same period. This change not only liberated the body of civilian women, but also became a sign that women accept new ideas and begin to get rid of feudal patriarchal forces. At the same time, it also witnessed the development path of Chinese feminist consciousness.

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Even after such a long process of evolution and progress, the topic of "gender equality" has not faded out of people's sight. Looking back at the liberation and progress of women at that time from a modern perspective, we will find that this development still has limitations.

In the turbulent and chaotic social background, it is also an important period of ideological transition and sublimation. After the new culture movement and the May 4th movement, the influence of western feminism prompted more and more Chinese women to go out of their homes, seek liberation, and the rise of the Chinese feminist movement, which is the most intuitive embodiment of women striving for equal status for themselves. With the improvement of scientific understanding of health, many enlightened people in society have been calling on women to emancipate their breasts. In 1927, at the meeting of the Guangdong Provincial Government Committee, it was proposed to discuss and adopt the "ban on women's breasts". The

movement for women to liberate their breasts is also known as the "heavenly milk movement".^[10] With the appeal and promotion of various enlightened people, women in big cities took the lead in opening up in a short time, removed the underwear that bound their breasts and replaced it with Western underwear to protect and set off women's breasts, It's your chest curve. Ruan Lingyu, a famous actress in the period of the Republic of China, was the first female representative to support the "tianru(natural breast) movement". She first started from herself. She wore a Western-style bra and became an "ambassador" for the spread of bra with the matching of cheongsam, which pushed the "tianru movement" to a climax, enabling many women to understand the significance of bra and the harm of breast restraint to women's body, which is of great significance to the government "tianru movement" undoubtedly accelerated the pace of activities. Therefore, the promotion of "tianru movement" also directly promoted the awakening of women's ideology in the Republic of China.

We regard the women's liberation movement before the outbreak of the Anti-Japanese war in 1937 as the completion of a phased goal and task. After the revolution of 1911, the May 4th Movement and baptism, and continuous ideological liberation, modern Chinese women basically bid farewell to the oppression of feudal conservative forces and achieved a certain degree of equality between men and women. New ideas and new ideas began to be widely recognized and popularized in Shanghai and other coastal cities, women are more open and independent, which is different from women in the old era.

Friedrich Engels had believed that the first prerequisite for women's liberation is that all women return to public undertakings. Due to the women's role in hierarchical society is always on their responsibility for childcare and household management, as well as to be crowned with virtues of virtuous. In China, after the NEW CULTURE MOVEMENT, women were liberated by the influx of Western culture, they began to contribute more on the society. Nonetheless, the majority of the women were placed in the family, and blocking their views on opportunities to enter the public political sphere. However, as a result of the feature of gender distinction in educating, such the sensibility of women's thoughts, intuitive dependence, they could not be competent for some rational and speculative knowledge education, and probably more, about the natural characteristics of women, namely the difference in body shape and physical sensitivity, which result in the absences of female's careers. But these ideas are all based on the protection of patriarchy, it is up to men to take control of the discourse on the definition of ration, which prevents women from having equal opportunities for education. Therefore, the first

condition for emancipating women is to ensure the equal educational opportunities between different genders and to break the judgment of female's rationality and nature under the guidance of male thinking.

Women wear cheongsam to emancipate the mind and show their true self, but now it seems that there is a great possibility of male aesthetics and materialization, which needs further study.

4. CONCLUSION

Cheongsam is not just a piece of clothing; it is also a sign of Chinese feminist culture. It enables the construction of the "female image" in the new era through the control of the body, self-identification and identity confirmation on the level of women's personal experience; The recognition and affirmation of "image" gives cheongsam a cultural meaning with nationality and Chinese characteristics. The cheongsam itself has no meaning, and once it comes into contact with the body, it shows different levels. On the one hand, it is the performance of the personal experience level. Cultural meaning, but this cultural meaning is constructed by male eyes, and at the social level, it is through consumer culture, popular culture, and cultural and political affirmation of cheongsam, which makes more and more people accept cheongsam, but this acceptance It was done under the advocacy and inspiration of men. It can be said that the recognition and cultural significance of cheongsam from the personal experience level to the social level, as well as the creation of different female images, are all completed under male advocacy; but under the male advocacy and vision construction, the cheongsam has made progress. The meaning of nationality, so China's feminist culture not only shows the characteristics of opposing the old society and building a new female image, but also because it is fundamentally constructed and advocated by men, it does not fundamentally impact male authority. Although this is related to China's national conditions, it has to be said that this is also the embarrassment of Chinese feminist culture.

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