

Research on Women's Underwear and Aesthetic in Song Dynasty of China

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Abstract: -The underwear system had existed long before the Qin and Han dynasties, but the form of underwear in this period was not complete and did not form a formal system. It began to be systematized until the Qin and Han dynasties. In the Han Dynasty, underwear was roughly divided into Hanyi and Liangdang (names of ancient Chinese underwear), etc.; Sui and Tang dynasties were the period of national integration, which absorbed Hu people's apparel characteristics and culture. The fashionable underwear style was mainly focused on light, thin, and transparent and so on. In the Song Dynasty, although influenced by Neo-Confucianism, its aesthetic concept of apparel and the form of underwear were not eclipsed, but showed its unique charm. This paper mainly introduces the type, shape and pattern decoration of the Song Dynasty underwear, compares it with the outerwear, analyzing the aesthetic of the apparel separated from the inside and outside and the reasons for its formation, and probing into the inner monologue of women in the Song Dynasty society with the ideological imprisonment.

Keywords: -Women's Underwear, Clothing aesthetic, the Society of Song dynasty, Neo-Confucianism

1. Definition of Female Underwear in Song Dynasty

Although the Song Dynasty was restricted by the thought of "Neo-Confucianism", the culture of underwear was not eclipsed, and its color and style of clothing inherited the Tang Dynasty and developed into a unique Central Plains characteristic in the form. For the design style, compared with the prosperous Tang Dynasty, its overall style tends to be simple and natural, elegant and gentle, reserved and introverted and thin and

soft. It can be divided into ordinary underwear and close-fitting underwear from the wearing way.

1. 1 Close-fitting Underwear

Moxiong (tube top): The Moxiong is also called as Weiyao (girdle) or Zhuyao (waistband). A close-fitting suit on the chest. Usually it is made of colorful Luoqu with colored embroidery. When wearing, the two straps are tied behind the neck, the other two straps shall be around the clothing. Its form depended on climate. There are monolayer and interlayer. And a few also has bat wool, which can be used to sit, but also resist the cold.

Guodu: Guodu has upper and lower straps to wrap the abdomen, which is similar to tube top. Guodu is longer than tube top. Guodu focuses on wrapping belly, which is the reason of its name, and it is similar to today's bound belt. On the brick paintings of the cook unearthed in the tomb of the Song Dynasty in Jiuliugou, a woman is raising her hand to tie the crown on her head. She has a special dress on her waist, which appears only in the Song Dynasty. It is a brocade Guodu which can wrap chest. It may be a dress which Song women often

used. Song story-teller's script of Nian Yu Kwan-yin recorded that Xian'an Duke Han Shizhong went out and saw a girl on the side of the road tied a very delicate embroidered Guodu. And ordered YuHou (a kind of position) to take her in the house to do embroidery work that caused a tragedy of love between people and ghost. This story reflected that Guodu was a very common clothing at that time, and a variety of patterns were embroidered on it which made it become a good place for embroidered women to display their skills.

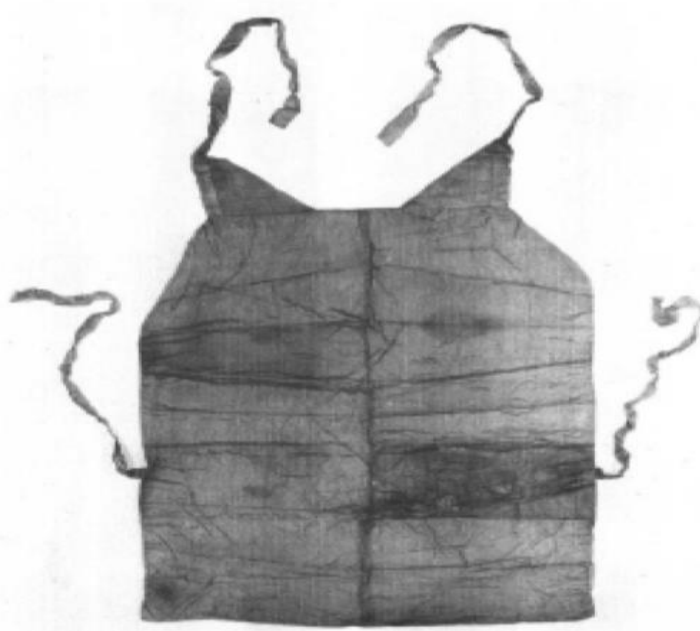


Fig. 1. The Moxiong that unearthed from huang sheng tomb

1.2 Ordinary underwear

In addition, the Song Dynasty women's underwear also has Ru (ancient short jacket), Ao (short Chinese-style coat), waistcoat and Shanzi (unlined upper garment). For example: In the History of Chinese Underwear, Huang Qiang wrote,

"Women's Underwear in Song Dynasty mainly consists of Ru, Ao, waistcoat and Shanzi. Song Dynasty women's close-fitting underwear mainly is tube top and Guodu." Both Liao Liangyun's Book of The Chinese Clothing and Chen Maotong's Headdress Garments and Accessories System in Previous Dynasties of China had written that

aristocratic women wear Ru, mostly as underwear, and wear other apparel outside. Zhou Xibao wrote in History of Chinese Ancient Garment that Ru or Ao, used in ancient times as an underwear lining. Tube top and Guodu both are close-fitting

underwear. In Huang Sheng's tomb of the Southern Song Dynasty in Fuzhou, it said "Women's maid and concubine also take waistcoat as casual clothes, generally as close-fitting underwear in the room and home."



Fig. 2. Folding flower pattern yarn shirt (Shanzi)



Fig. 3. Peony flower waistcoat

2. the Aesthetic Characteristics of Women's Underwear in Song Dynasty

2.1 Rationality and Sensibility of Song Dynasty Underwear

In the Song Dynasty, with the implementation of the thought of Neo-Confucianism, which opposed "justice" and "human desire", and then restrained the human desire with natural reasons and restrained the emotional desire with self-consciousness and personal consciousness. Therefore, the aesthetic concept "tied skirt slowly with half breast exposure" in the Tang Dynasty was gradually abandoned, while the introverted, simple and elegant rational fashion was gradually sought

after. Breast undoubtedly becomes one of the factors that make people "ashamed", and underwear is then reduced to something private and cannot show to outsiders. But as a close-fitting apparel, the underwear is not seen by outsiders, so it has not been eclipsed. On the contrary, it has become a way to tell their inner feelings and pray for wishes, conveying the Song Dynasty women's cymbidium. Through the study of related literature and the objects and images, this paper holds that the women's underwear in the Song Dynasty reflects the apparel aesthetic of the coexistence of "rationality" and "sensibility".

Firstly, for the rational point of view, due to the influence of Confucianism, the Song Dynasty literati do not like the style of courtyard. They like taking flowers, birds and plants as the painting subjects, such as "there are more than ten categories of flowers in Zhou's tomb in Jiangxi De'an, such as gray-green twigs camellia dark flowers silk, fragrant twigs plum dark flowers silk and so on". This kind of anthropomorphic noble quality flowers were quite popular because they accord with the literati aesthetic ideals of gentleman in Song Dynasty. Therefore, the Song Dynasty took such elegant plants as women's underwear patterns. Moreover, the animal patterns unearthed in Huang Sheng's tomb were also rich in life breath, such as the chest decorated with lively mandarin ducks, dragonflies, lotus and other patterns. The patterns of flowers, birds and plants not only conveyed a sense of the real nature, also extremely rich in implied meaning. This kind of quiet, comfortable, and advocating natural clothing patterns all reflects that the Song Dynasty women's underwear has a characteristic of "rational beauty", reflecting its plain and indifferent social psychological demands.

Besides, from the point of view of sensibility, the apparel style of Song Dynasty was more conservative as a whole, and its color was biased towards fresh and elegant, and the color of outerwear was no longer like the Tang Dynasty which used the strong and sensational primary color,

but to choose the soft intermediate color. But as a close-fitting apparel, underwear was not seen by outsiders. In the premise of keeping similar tone with the outerwear its tone is brighter. From physical color unearthed from Huang Sheng's tomb in the Southern Song Dynasty, we can see its underwear color was mostly tangerine, yellowish brown, gray green, light pink, pink white and so on. With the same, similar, weak contrast color proportion, and the different position and area layout design, the color sentiment is unified and harmonious, making female underwear convey a kind of hidden perceptual beauty. Moreover, thanks to the scale of the official silk workshop at that time, the handicraft industry was unprecedentedly developed. Song Dynasty underwear mainly are Luo, silk, yarn. In the Northern Song Dynasty poet Zhao Lingzhi's "Love of Butterfly", there is a verse: "plain chiffon always hides the breast", that is to say, the Song Dynasty women wore plain silk tube top. Although it covers the whole chest and abdomen, which caters to the strict etiquette thought at that time, but the silk tube top is no lack of sensibility.

Therefore, this paper holds that women's underwear in the Song Dynasty embodies the aesthetic characteristics of the coexistence of "rationality" and "sensibility" from the aspects of shape, color, pattern, material and wearing attitude.

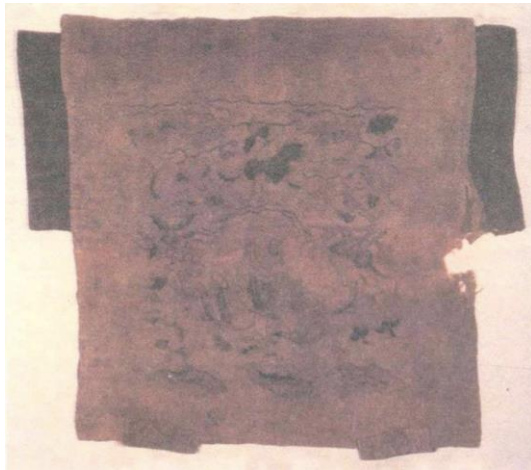


Fig. 4. Brown Moxiong with emotional pattern



Fig. 5 .Story Picture of Eight Eminent Monks and
Tea Garden Gambling Market Picture

2.2 Aesthetics of apparel separated from inside and outside

On one hand, "beauty" is the perceptual existence of matter, which is directly related to people's perceptual needs, enjoyment and senses; on the other hand, "beauty" has social meaning and content, which relates to human group and rationality. As the second layer of human skin, apparel plays an irreplaceable role in communication. We can not only express ourselves, but also understand and influence others via apparel. Influenced by the Neo-Confucianism, the emphasis on the feudal ethical principles and the requirements of "leaving the natural reason and removing the desire of human" made the society of Song Dynasty stress on "implicit moderation". As an apparel showing outside, outerwear has become a kind of "barrier" for women to keep a foothold in the society. Being tested by etiquette and society, outerwear has become more formal and

conservative with less variation. Different from the previous periods, the style of apparel is also contrary to the complexity and gorgeous of Tang Dynasty, the color is elegant, quiet, and use more intermediate color, such as pink purple, black purple, onion white, silver gray, agilawood color and other more advanced neutral gray tone. The style of dress tended to be concise, generous, and appropriate. "Plain" and "natural" are the important aesthetic standards of Song Dynasty. People in Song Dynasty pursue "lingering charm" and leave people a comfortable and fresh feeling, which proves that "beauty" is clothing aesthetics with rational existence of material. Many people firmly support that Chinese society began to tend to be conservative and stagnant since the Song Dynasty with irrefutable evidence. Many scholars who study the history of apparel even say that women's apparel is influenced by the Neo-Confucianism which makes it more overcautious and rigid. But in fact, we can find that culture of women's underwear

in Song Dynasty did not suffer an eclipse, but showed its unique "mysterious color" from various human body pictures (such as Spinning Wheel Picture, Silkworm Weaving Picture, Story Picture of Eight Eminent Monks and Tea Garden Gambling Market Picture), partial murals in tomb chambers of Song Dynasty and numerous unearthed women's underwear of Song Dynasty. The color of underwear is mostly bright red, pink and orange with beautiful embroidered decorative patterns, such as flowers and mandarin ducks, which forms a sharp contrast with the light and elegant outerwear. We can see that in this period, women were constrained by the feudal ethical code and could not express their real inner feelings, while underwear, as a close-fitting dress, was not seen by others so that it became a way for them to express their inner feelings and pray for their wishes, which was implicit and full of reverie and proved that "beauty" is apparel aesthetics with the perceptual existence of material.

From the unearthed underwear of Huang Sheng's tomb of the Southern Song Dynasty, we can see the

color of underwear is mostly in smoky yellow and not reflected by a certain color like the outerwear, but mainly appeared in the color of the surrounding decoration and the pattern of the heart and chest part. Using the large-scale color contrast between simple and elegant outerwear and bright-colored underwear, the overall image is set off with layering sense and the figure image is more stereoscopic on the basis of plump and full figure. The gorgeous and beautiful inner part is more like the finishing touch, which reveals the graceful and charming inner heart of the female.

Hence, the outerwear becomes a way for women to respect the dignified and steady feudal ethical code while underwear become a way for them to express their inner feelings and pray for their wishes. A kind of apparel aesthetics separated different from inside and outside is formed among the female. That is to say: Sentimental inner feelings with dignified outer figure.



Fig. 7. Spinning Wheel picture

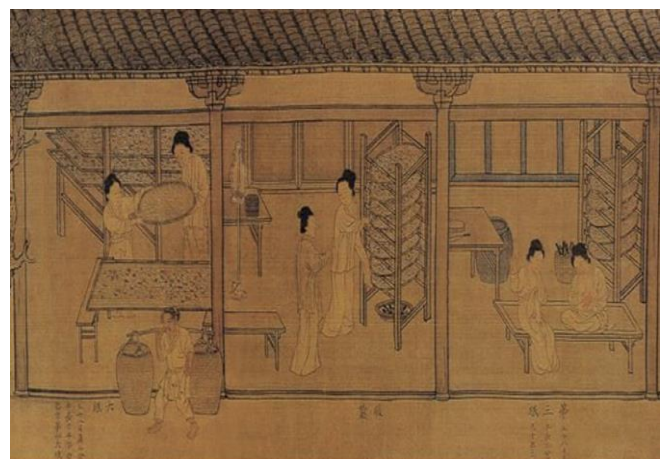


Fig. 8. Silkworm Weaving Picture

3. Causes of Apparel Aesthetic in Song Dynasty

The apparel style of the Song Dynasty with the coexistence of "rationality" and "sensitivity" is developed by its special social and cultural background. This characteristic is closely related to the richness of the societal culture and the education level of the people.

3.1 Influenced by the Strong Cultural Atmosphere

In Song Dynasty, Confucianism was advocated and learned, and profound knowledge was valued more than any other dynasty. The cultural atmosphere in the Song Dynasty was unprecedentedly strong. All levels of society followed suit, not only men, but also women with low social status also started studying poetry and books following the trend. Reading became common practice, which formed the elegant and indifferent "rational beauty" of Song people consequently.

3.2 Thriving of Women's Education

With the further improvement of women's status and role in social education in the Song Dynasty, it was very common to educate descendants to be talents through the lessons of their mothers in the Song Dynasty with many examples and outstanding stories. In Song Dynasty, mothers had high expectations for their sons, which could be shown from their pregnancy dreams, such as a dream of Zhang Dexiang's mother (climbed the mountain and

met the immortal gave her with a jade elephant), and a dream of Liu Hang's mother (dressed man said that the ox husband had come then she woke up and found herself pregnant and gave birth to Liu Hang). Teng Yuanfa, a famous general who guarded the border and well-known in the northwest, "his mother dreamed of a tiger walking through moonlit night and falling into her room" on the eve of his birth. Fan Zuyu, a celebrated historian of the middle period of Northern Song, "when he was born, his mother dreamed of a man in gold armor entering the bedroom and said: "General Deng Yu of the Han Dynasty", she remembered it when woke up, so use "Yu" as the name of Fan Zuyu." In terms of the concept of teaching children, they not only have motherly feelings, but also more strict requirements. They have devoted their earnest inculcation to their children's studies, career, self-cultivation and other aspects during the period of development, which play a considerable role in their children's development of becoming a useful person.

In Song Dynasty, it was advocated that women should have certain cultural accomplishment. Therefore, the connotation of women's underwear in Song Dynasty tended to be simple or even plain. While the certain lingering charms contained in the underwear coincide with the aesthetic pursuit of women and the whole society in Song Dynasty. And the coincidental part is just social aesthetic

standard for plain and elegant. The elegant and indifferent lingering charm of underwear and the plain and elegant beauty of women in Song Dynasty have achieved the above-mentioned social aesthetic pursuit.

3.3 Social aesthetic under Neo-Confucianism

The Neo-Confucianism is a combination of positive and enterprising Confucianism and lofty and refined Taoism. The content and specification of the harmonious and open-minded spirit of Buddhism influenced all aspects of social life in the Song Dynasty. The mission of women given by social and ethical concepts is to assist the husband and bring up children and be diligent and thrifty. Therefore, most women in the Song Dynasty can only cultivate the necessary and virtuous virtue without overstepping. Influenced by Neo Confucianism, the overall style of apparel in the Song Dynasty is in the opposite way of Tang Dynasty, namely, it tends to be introverted. The shape of underwear is gradually narrower with less exposure, and its color becomes lighter. In a word, it becomes more rigorous, natural, simple and stable to meet the requirements of Neo-Confucianism.

3.4 Fashion of Slender

The aesthetic standard of women in Song Dynasty seems to be the same as slender, which is very popular nowadays. Slender figure leaves people a

tender and delicate sense, which is easier to be loved by people. Therefore, in order to cater the slender body, women's underwear in Song Dynasty, such as Beizi (an ancient coat), became more slender and narrower. The slender and soft underwear in Song Dynasty sets off the petite figure of the women in Song Dynasty. The clothing leaves a delicate and elegant impression as they move slowly, which captures the imagination. This is exactly an aesthetic lingering charm pursued in such a rational and elegant society of the Song Dynasty with countless graceful and implicit feelings.

4. Conclusion

Although it was restricted by the thought of "Neo-Confucianism", the underwear culture in Song Dynasty did not suffer an eclipse, such as Ru (ancient short jacket), Ao (short Chinese-style coat), Shanzi (unlined upper garment), waistcoat, Moxiong (tube top) and Guodu (ancient bound belt), etc. The shape of underwear has developed into narrow, thin, strange and long with a unique Central Plain characteristic; The soft intermediate color is selected, which is gentler, more implicit, elegant and graceful compared with the rationality of outerwear; which can show the class differentiation via the dress. In the era of contradiction and conflict between the traditional etiquette system and folk customs, i.e. Song Dynasty, the combination of sensibility and rationality makes the development

of women's underwear in Song Dynasty more exquisite beyond compare, which just likes culture history with feeling and reflects the system, culture and ideology of this dynasty and has a profound impact on later generations.

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