



Social and Cultural Functions of Lisu Costumes

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Abstract

Lisu agglomeration is a place where cultures from several ethnic join. Analysis of the Lisu sociocultural function beside its costumes can reveal the path of Lisu cultural development, social customs, lifestyle, and even their sense of beauty and the cultural connotations.

Key words: Lisu costumes; Ceremonial; Function

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INTRODUCTION

Clothing is an important carrier of national culture, it is a direct can reflect the changes and development of culture, the social and cultural functions of Lisu costumes manifest in all aspects of social life. From the differentiation of social classes, life etiquette, to signs of life in all phases (Sun, 1996).

1. LISU COSTUMES HAS CEREMONIAL FUNCTION OF SPECIFIC SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

National dress has social cultural functions, and the ceremonial function is one of them. The Lisu nationality is

mainly distributed in Liangshan in Sichuan, Nujiang, and the rest scattered around Lijiang, Diqing, Dali, Dehong, Baoshan and Chuxiong. People often hold special ceremony for important events, and individuals from all social classes are the main participants. They show up in the rituals with specific missions, as an expression of certain thoughts. During these occasions, the dresses work to regulate the role of the participants as well as to strengthen the atmosphere. These functions are even more profound in ancient time (Wang, 2008).

Even though information about the function of Lisu dress is scarce, we can get a glimpse of it by examination of their clothing. Its function is prominent in their funerals, one of four greatest rituals in a human life. The clothings of both the alive and the death have to match this important event, to address the issues such as life and death, and the commemoration of their ancestors (Ibid.). Influenced by the thoughts that spirits never disappear, the Lisu consider death is another journey of life, therefore the deceased have to dress up properly to earn the dignity. The Han believes that, if a dead body does not take a shower and dress up before it rots away, that person would left naked. People extremely pay attention to dressing ceremony. For example, Han like to use silk as “shroud”, due to “thick child” in order to flourish his posterity (Ibid.). Funerals of Lisu is presided by “Nipa”, who is well-known about astronomy, calendar, epics, myths and traditional classics, Lisu’s death, marriage, good and bad fortune are associate with Nipa. Who hand-held instruments when he practicing, wearing linen clothes, wearing two large goat horn hats, with a long knife which covers blanket and linen, this is a special special attire shaman, Like totem image, thereby seek to obtain totem asylum (Sun, 1996).

“Shroud” includes particular culture to the funeral, the dead go away from the real world, to the unknown world, In this case “shroud” had become an essential equipment of prior to departure. When the relatives of the deceased

received obituary to be dress up-wear mourning clothes, such act reflects the relatives of the deceased etiquette, to express their condolences, memorial and filial respect. It is noteworthy that most of the Southwest Nationalities use the white cloth as mourning apparel, such as Friends and relatives of Lishu after the death of their loved ones, wear white clothes of filial piety, filial shoes, white head scarf, white waistband for several months.

In terms of wedding and marriage, functional of ritual clothing was most expressed fully, *Old Tang* recorded scenes of Tang princess was married to Huihu:

To choose wedding day, Canonized princess to be an empress of Huihu, Kehan sit on floor in east diction, built house for Princes to live and send staffs teach empress custom. Princess took off Tang clothes instead Hu cloth, a lady saved her, she was outside of building and worship, Kehan sit and stare at it, princess went into building again, take off Hu cloth and ware Kedu clothes. (Liu, 1975, pp.5212-5213)

This process, Tang princess dressed twice, to express different symbolic intention. The first is change clothes Tang into Hufu, she expressed marry husband with his vulgar; second dress Kedun clothes, expressed formally accepted the position Uighur Kedun. Clothes ceremonial functions are evident. Choose colors of clothes is strict, mostly ethnic wedding in red tone, in the Lisu's mind, "Red" is a symbol of good luck, bridal wear red canonicals in the wedding, although the style is different, but most choose red dress, in order to the purpose of rendering a lively, festive atmosphere, highlighting its evil, seeking kyrgyzstan mind. In addition, Lisu love "red" the best, that is in the grand festival "Daogan Day", at that time women and men revel around the campfire carnival, when the bonfire turn into the red coals, men passed the fire, washed with carbon fire, spark was spraid in four directions by naked food. They make the bones clean with red form, these activities explain the pursuit and worship of red. Also metaphor more profound content, performer's forces reserves and courage demonstrated. Red plays a regulatory psychological status, morale and gives people courage. For example Lisu like to use seashells, agate, bamboo, feathers and other animals as decoration. Lisu cut bamboo roots into half, embedded in the "Pillay incense", at the end of the skirt and strap. This furnishing became dark red for a long time, looks so beautiful; it demonstrated the love of red once again. Besides clothes also has communicative function, for example clothes still as gift to others, parents send skirt to daughter as gift on rites of passage, while the clothes and various accessories as a keepsake of love to the lover, it is a typical example of clothes ceremonial function. Lisu in Nujiang and other places at both fall in love, the girl sent elaborately embroidered "Hualie hat" to the man, the man places gifts loopback. Clothes ornaments of national include irreplaceable cultural meaning, "Hualie hat" and skirt, interpersonal act as a kind of intermediary, reflect communication function, while reflect praying and seeking kyrgyz culture psychological, People through

adult ceremonial dress as a carrier to reflect peace and happiness, express better life wish for himself, Lisu became powered in spirit by costumes, clothes as silent carriers express silently significance of cultural costumes, also reflect "Lishu directly worn auspicious on the body", in this nearest "luck" and "blessing" way to accept these auspicious patterns in order to bring their own good fortune.

2. LISU COSTUMES HAS SYMBOL FUNCTION OF DIVIDE ALL PHASES OF LIFE

All phases of life: Young, youth, strong, middle aged and old like the four season's course of life. All ethnic groups use their own dress to interpret four stages of life, to use cultural nutrition of clothing to guard the truth of life. Lives of children is precious need to intensive care, therefore, children's clothes showed strong guard significance, such as children of Han is popular to wear "Tiger" cap and "Baijiayi", aimed at kids like a tiger, "Baijiayi" means to give one hundred families care to kids. Tiger hat, Wa shoes and Baijiayi contain the provision of exorcism disaster. Lisu children's clothes are similar to this, like sling of children in Gongshan are decorated with boar tusks to ward off evil and protect life.

In addition clothes to distinguish sex, but also distinguish age, mark the adult or not, the difference of sex, age, marital status, geography and wealth etc. mainly in accessories. Unmarried woman of Lisu like long hair, pigtail, with "Ole" hats, decorative seashell, silver in the chest, pants is made of fire grass or wear pleated skirts, the swaying swing when walking, seems graceful. Guy like nailed shells and white buttons on the Baotou cloth, decorated it with red wool tassels at both ends; a part of man like long hair, comb braid wrapped behind head.

It is worth noting that the married women or not is marked by headwear, Lisu in Baoshan and Tengchong head wrapped scarf, headwear of married women is decorated with red and white beads, shell, buttons and so on, named "Zhuzhu cap", ear wear big copper ring or silver ring; Unmarried like to line braided with small white shell. Pay attention to the difference between clothes of married and unmarried, why, it is freedom for young men and women make friends before marriage, majority of the population are reasonably tolerant of premarital sexual behavior, and women must be strict with behavior after marriage, which reflects a cultural function of dress.

Middle-aged and old clothes express concise and solemn style, comfortable and inner demands. Headwear of women is highlighted in Sichuan, youth like to keep three Angle on the head, with time went by, at the age of 50, filled up hair, wore a "Wodi hat" in wool, others shaved the hair, at the back of the beam of a short braid, older people tend to single and light color, give

a person the sense with light and grave, again embody the characteristics of older people comfortable and agile, accord with the physiological and psychological characteristics of old people.

In a word, from young to old age people has suitable clothes, reflect different stages of psychological and demands of life, this demand is inheritance for a long time, come into being a kind of inertial navigation system, manifests the Lisu social and cultural functions of all ages.

3. LISU COSTUMES HAS FUNCTIONS TO DIFFERENT REGIONS AND CLASS OF POPULATION

Lisu as descendants of the ancient Di and Qiang lived nomadic life, it formed "big scattered, small settlement" living pattern for one thousand years. The diversification of natural environment and economic state makes the Lisu clothes style diversifies. Regional features of Lisu costumes, which mainly difference is on the headwear. Man in Sichuan Dechuang wear striped linen suit, women wear Youren coat collar in red and yellow color decorative pattern, wear the linen crepe skirts, tie with ribbons, wear ring. Man leave a small bunch of hair on the head, the "skin" avoid being touched. People in Lisu wear a black and white linen waistcoat called "Lisu gowns". In addition, it is cold mountain climate, it is easy to crop linen than cotton, wool and linen clothing mostly dominated, for example, women wear embroidered blouse in Weixi County, linen skirt, head with a red and white pearls, coral and other decorative objects. Men wear jackets and the linen coat, sword left and right arrow hanging bag. Examples of such a number is in the Lisu same ecological environment, also due to the extent of the similarities and differences of national integration, ethnic enclaves of different factors, showing different clothes style. In general, terrain residence is more complex, traffic more block, the more types of clothes; the more closed environment obstruction, the easier preserved traditional costumes (Guan, 2005, pp.75-76).

Class and class differentiation came into being, for the different of social structure, organization, members and occupational division of labor, clothes in this process play a function for divide the class. Class nature of functional clothes, different classes have different color dress, customs and standards. mainly reflected in two ways: First, Ruling group in order to achieve the purpose of its rule, made standard to regulate all sectors of clothing by administrative means, members of society through dress to define their identity, position, to make a restricted from external appearance to psychological; second, above the range specification, sections of the population accord to their own life and work needs to choose their own clothes. The clothes reflect a more prominent feature of

professional needs. By dress, the dress will know the social and occupational status (Wang, 2008).

Thus, in hierarchical society, judge the status of a person by her clothes, as the Jiayi said: "high or low...distinguish clothes and know price." In the long process of historical development, in class society, it is strict in clothes material, color, the way of dressed, for example, in the past time Lisu chieftain worn cotton, silk, wool and silk clothes in Weixi, worn gold and silver; civilian worn burlap and crude clothes. Shell plate as currency exchange of goods in ancient, therefore shellfish in Lisu heart is a symbol of wealth, that the clothes and body decorate more seashells explains more rich. Someone of wealthy or prestigious, who left ear wear red coral beads to show their social status or wealth and dignity.

From the class functions of Lisu clothes can be exhibited social class division and status of the level of hierarchy; on the other hands reflects the randomness and uniqueness of laborer clothes. Functional of class clothes, Degree and performance of various ethnic groups are not the same, with development of nation culture, part of the national cultural accumulation in shallow performance weakened. Of course, the progress of human culture, the general trend is the promotion of human equality, clothing class nature of the boundaries have been weakened. Clothes class nature consequent weakening, reflect the difference in class only from objective economic conditions, and other aspects of personal aesthetic features (Wang, 2008).

4. THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF LISU NATIONALITY COSTUME

With the development of commodity economy and the diversity demand, national costumes faced great challenges. It's not only difficult to tailor, inconvenience to wear, but also in short supply. Many young people have already evolved to han costume in national regions. And in individual national area, where national costume even disappeared. View of this solution, on the one hand the national costume must be protected actively. On the other hand, initiatively, purposefully and planned reform of costume should be carried out as soon as possible. We should also organize some experts and designers to design some new pattern national costume, which should be based on the native masses opinions. On the premise of retain the characteristics of national costumes, the new designed costume should be elegant, beautiful, simple and applicable. It must be convenient for work and life, acceptable for modern large-scale machine production, so that it can settle for the modernization construction (Li, 2006).

Thus,

Lisu clothing, it is a carrier of national culture. When we try to research the symbols, we can catch a sight of the development

of Lisu culture. It has a great significance for us to understand the Lisu lifestyle and the history. National costumes, as a materialized spirit, it maintained distinctive national features. It also presents the regional and social characteristics, mode of production, religion, folk-custom, which reflected the Lisu abundant taste and aesthetic tendency. Nowadays, with the development of the society, national costumes and other cultures interacted. Whatever, it will present a diversified situation. (Sun, 1996)

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