

How did the national Qipao become the hottest trend during the Republic of China?

Liu Yu

Donghua University, Shanghai

Royal College of Art, London

liuyu32@dhu.edu.cn

Abstract

When we are talking about “Non-Western Fashion” today, Qipao should be a very successful example in China during the first half part of 20th century. As the most typical traditional women’s wear of China, Qipao was always being adjusted and changed to keep the balance between tradition and fashion (Chinese elements and Western trends), during its popular times (from 1920s to 1940s). In this paper, the popular times of Qipao is divided into four periods (1910s, 1920s, 1930s and 1940s) to trace its evolution and development. By analyzing on the styles, silhouettes, design details, typical elements and matched accessories of Qipao from these four periods, the reformations and innovations are obtained obviously. Especially by comparing with the main western trendy pieces of the given time, it is focused on what are the similarities and differences between Qipao and the most popular women’s fashion. The further research is trying to answer the key question ---how Qipao was adjusted over time to keep up with the steps of the western trends, while still maintain its national style and traditional taste. It is just because of these wise adjustments that wearing a national traditional dress could become the hottest trend among fashionable women at that time. On the basis of attempting to find the reason why Qipao was so deeply and widely accepted by modern Chinese women during the Republic of China, and why wearing Qipao was not just national, but fashion as well at that time, it is finally aimed to discuss the advices on how to transfer the national to fashionable for today’s “non-western fashion”.

Keywords: Women’s Wear, design, Qipao(Cheongsam), Western Trend, the Republic of China