Exploring Hanfu
Interweaving tradition and youth culture

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ABSTRACT

Hanfu used to be the everyday dress for the ethnic Han Chinese group before the late sixteenth century. Due to historical reasons the clothing disappeared. However, at the beginning of the 21st century, Chinese costumes reappeared in the modern society. Nowadays, the Hanfu or Hanfu movement study is mostly based on the traditional culture and clothing construction. However, very little research has associated Hanfu culture with a modern youth culture, undergoing a change.

This thesis studies a new emerged youth culture, known as Hanfu culture. The main focus of the thesis is to analyze Hanfu culture from the sociocultural perspective, while simultaneously introducing one possible interpretation of Hanfu culture through textile design.

The objective of the study is to point out that Hanfu is no longer confined to the practical or aesthetic function in the traditional sense. In other words, the role of Hanfu has gradually changed from being national symbol, to a fashionable item that both men and women choose for themselves. This project aims to reveal the diversity of Hanfu culture and introduce it in a textile collection. This thesis is divided into two parts: the theoretical part and the design process part, including an interview analysis and the collection of textile designs.

The theoretical part of the thesis is focused on the socio-cultural concept of Hanfu. These topics are researched through a literature review. The first portion briefly introduces and outlines the differences of Ancient Hanfu and Contemporary Hanfu. It also examines the current limitations of Hanfu research. The second portion of the theoretical part is focused on the cultural aspect, discussing the developing process of Hanfu culture. Additionally, it describes the changes in the role and significance of Hanfu clothing in the process of the Hanfu movement. This change has enabled the rise of the Hanfu as a fashion choice. The last theoretical part concludes with the influence of other foreign cultures on the Hanfu culture. It maps out a variety of Hanfu products in the market, which reflects the cultural impact.

The concept of the collection is created based on cultural integration and the results of the interview survey. A character board is used as a tool to conceptualize the collection. My aim was to capture the essence of the traditional Chinese culture, as well as elements of the modern youth culture in the textile collection. From a textile designer perspective, the current industrial Hanfu textiles mainly focus on the traditional pattern. I hope that this collection shows the path to a new way to design Hanfu textiles.

Keywords: Hanfu, youth culture, fashion, traditional culture, textile collection,
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction

1.1 Background
1.2 Goals and objectives
1.3 Research methods

2. Introduction of Hanfu

2.1 Background of Hanfu movement
2.2 Contemporary Hanfu and ancient Hanfu
2.3 Limitations of contemporary Hanfu research
2.4 Difference between Contemporary Hanfu and Ancient Hanfu

3. Development and changes of Hanfu culture

3.1 Cultural diffusion of modern Chinese society
3.2 The changing role of Hanfu
3.3 Current limitations of Hanfu popularizing in daily life

4. The diversity of Hanfu

4.1 Controversy in the Hanfu culture
4.2 The diversity of Hanfu culture
4.3 Textile design of Contemporary Hanfu

5. Design research

5.1 Cooperation with Fanshawe costomized Hanfu studio
5.2 Interview and inspiration
   - Character-board
   - Moodboard
1 INTRODUCTION
My Master’s thesis topic evolved not only from my own interest, but also from my new understanding of Chinese culture after living and studying in Finland. Before coming to Finland, the culture tradition seemed to be something very far away from my daily life. Hanfu refers to the historical clothing styles of China, particularly those before the Qing dynasty. I held a negative attitude when I first learned about Hanfu and Hanfu culture. I used to think Hanfu was not wearable, and Hanfu enthusiasts just wanted to attract attention by wearing Hanfu. I thought Hanfu was something that had disappeared from Chinese history, and that the Hanfu movement was only a time travel farce.

It is quite a weird feeling when one realizes how meaningful one’s mother culture might actually be, especially soon after one leaves that familiar environment. My overseas life experience has provided new perspectives from which I have reacquainted my cultural identity. Traditional things are not distant in my life. Along with a great development of modern culture, modern culture has a tremendous impact on the original local culture. The interaction between traditional and modern culture is a developing trend. The wedding ceremony specific to my hometown is a perfect example of Cultural integration. Most couples wear Western-style black suits and white wedding dresses, exchange rings and vows in the presence of their friends and family. At the same time, they also perform traditional Chinese etiquettes, both the bride and groom kneel in front of their respective parents and serve them tea. I have lived in an intermingling environment of tradition and modernity since birth, so I had previously never paid attention to all the interesting aspects of my own culture. Even though the lifestyle of Chinese people was rapidly re-structured towards global guidelines, tradition still plays and will play an important role in most people’s lives, even if those traditions might have evolved. It is an incredible feeling to discover a new perspective from which to view my culture.

In the second aspect, my friend has been a long time Hanfu enthusiast. In discussions with her, I have gained some knowledge about the Hanfu. Through curiosity, I often found myself thinking about the Hanfu culture and Chinese traditional culture; what is Hanfu culture and what does traditional culture mean to me, do others see the Hanfu culture in the same way; in what ways might modern culture affect our identity and Hanfu culture?

I decided to put aside my prejudice against Hanfu and take this opportunity to rediscover this newly emerging subculture. In the process of research, I found the inherent contradictions and diversity of Hanfu culture. I know that the foundation of Hanfu culture is the inheritance of traditional culture, but I have never touched upon its modern side. I began to think about how modern culture affects Hanfu. The culture behind the clothes and the sociological aspect of the Hanfu movement is very appealing. Thus this project gave me a chance to get out of my comfort zone and make an attempt on something unfamiliar as well as improve my skills in artistic expression.
1.2 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

This thesis summarizes the content of Hanfu and Hanfu culture based on current research and explores why Hanfu and Hanfu movement is laden with controversy. It also discusses the changing role of Hanfu culture under the influence of other modern cultures and its diversified status quo. The aim was not to fully understand the Hanfu and Hanfu culture. The expansive breadth of research would require a larger format paper. The goal was rather to give one possible answer from my personal interpretation and provide some examples as an introduction to the current situation of Hanfu culture. Therefore, I chose to design a Hanfu textile collection that serve as a visual story regarding my personal interpretation of Hanfu culture. In my design study method, I developed sketching and woven fabrics to create an Hanfu textile collection, in order to demonstrate my understanding of Hanfu and Hanfu culture. The study reviews how to concretize a fabric design step by step, and how to visualize the cultural environment in which tradition and modernity coexist through Hanfu textile design.

The collection portfolio will support a design case that takes place in collaboration with the Chinese Hanfu design studio Fanshawe. Because of the consultation requirements of Fanshawe studio, the final textile series is a woven-textile-based collection. However, due to time constraints, this thesis will exclude the content about cooperation with the company, as well as how to improve the design onwards into industrial production.

Thus, the study consists of three parts: Hanfu and Hanfu culture research based on previous studies and literature; exploration of how the cultural diffusion and cultural blending shape Contemporary Hanfu culture and the functional change of Hanfu; and the final design case includes the development of the textile collection from concept to design execution.

The challenge was to create a method that would show the connection between the abstract “sense of feeling” and the visual material. Moreover, there are only a few studies on Hanfu and Hanfu culture, so it was difficult to get academic papers for reference, most of the research and knowledge regarding Hanfu have come from Hanfu enthusiasts. In the early stage of this research, I have learned and drawn from from kimono related studies. The traditional Japanese costume known as the kimono shares similarities with Hanfu.

Mo Zhiyi (2017) from University of Macau analyses Hanfu constitutes an intangible subcultural heritage upon the meta-cultural nature of intangible cultural heritage. Ji Zihui (2016) divided Hanfu into “Ancient Hanfu” and ”Contemporary Hanfu”. He also explores the reasons behind the difficulty of pursuing progress in the study of Hanfu clothing construction. He investigates the field of structural characteristics of Contemporary Hanfu and digital implementation from the perspective of a fashion designer. Kong Deyu (2016) explores the development process of Hanfu as well as the status quo of the spread of Hanfu culture abroad.
Zhang Xiaolin (2016) analyses Hanfu from the perspective of semiotics, describes Hanfu as a nonverbal sign and expression of social concept. Her research is mainly focused on Ancient Hanfu especially the connection between traditional culture and Hanfu. Professor Zhou Xing discussed the national attributes of Hanfu in his paper (2014) and interpreted the Hanfu movement from the perspective of historical factors (2012). Stephanie Assmann (2017) argues the role of the Japanese kimono has changed from a formal duty dress to a fashion choice. The reasons for this change are also described in her research. Xiao Huifen (2009), in her "Modern Times of Traditional Culture", she mentioned how traditional culture was transformed and integrated with modern society. He also points out that Chinese contemporary design should draw inspiration from traditional culture and integrate modern culture with traditional culture. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger’s “The Invention of Tradition” (1983) claims that although the traditional culture will change in form and content, it will continue to exist in modern culture in some way. Old traditions will eventually be abandoned or combined with a new culture and become new traditions.

There is no doubt that these researchers have contributed greatly to Hanfu research. However, no recent Hanfu culture study relating to the sociocultural perspective has been done. I expect my work will provide research reference for other students who have an interest in this costume culture.

RESEARCH METHODS

I reviewed related literature, observed the Hanfu community group and conducted interviews to gain my research data. Some of the theoretical Hanfu knowledge is gathered from the literature reviews. However, due to the lack of academic research material and the unclear standard of Hanfu itself, I needed to use the data from research reports published by enthusiasts on the Internet. In addition, participant observation was conducted in order to gain an understanding of the Hanfu culture from an internal perspective. I joined an online Hanfu club and talked to them and observed their daily chatting records. They have helped me greatly, especially for some non-understandable problems about Hanfu clothing construction argument. They patiently explained to me the specific reasons behind those controversial Hanfu issues and their own views. The research method of the interview was conducted to help me clarify my design concept. So the interview content tends to get the interviewee’s personal opinion about Hanfu and Hanfu culture. I use character boards that are based on interview data as the bridge between the abstract feeling and final visual outcome. The results of the thesis are visually presented in a textile collection.
2
INTRODUCTION
OF HANFU
BACKGROUND OF HANFU MOVEMENT

Subsequent to the arrival of Western clothing in the late nineteenth century, Western clothing has gradually become the mainstream every day wear for Chinese people. It was on 22 November 2003, Mr. Wang Letian appeared in public with a DIY gown, the design of which was based on his own imagination of ancient clothing. This clothing hooked the passer-by’s attention and also caused controversy. People were curious about the strange robes the man was wearing. Wang Letian and his Hanfu story was labeled as the beginning of the Hanfu movement and was reported by Lianhe Zaobao newspaper, the largest Singapore-based Chinese language newspaper.

Hanfu Movement” is an emerging transnational youth culture, which reinterprets Hanfu as the traditional costume of ethnic Han Chinese associated with the historical and cultural roots from imperial China. (Mo, 2017) The movement is a social movement seeking to revitalize traditional Chinese fashion, improve the cultural and social identity consciousness of the ethnic Han people, and revive the traditional culture. Movement proponents claim that Hanfu’s main characteristics were symbolic of Chinese traditional cultural moral and ethical values.

Hanfu as the carrier of Hanfu culture, in a broad sense, is the traditional style clothing worn by ancient Han Chinese people, which due to the historical reason was banned, replaced and disappeared. At the beginning of the 21st century, the “Hanfu” was reintroduced into Chinese people’s daily life. The concept of Hanfu has not yet been recognized officially or academically. Participants in the Hanfu movement are still making, promoting or using public events to introduce the Hanfu and Hanfu movement to the public (Zhou, 2014). Through these activities, the participants hope that Hanfu can be officially certified and receive government support.

Hanfu culture and Hanfu industry have developed rapidly in recent ten years, which has created substantial economic value for society. The Internet has played a crucial role in the Hanfu movement. The Internet provides a low-cost platform for small Hanfu-making business, and Hanfu culture spreads through the Internet and links Hanfu enthusiasts together through the online Hanfu association.

With the expansion of the influence of the Hanfu movement, online forums have gradually developed into university Hanfu clubs and local Hanfu enthusiasts’ organizations of many regions. There are also a number of Hanfu overseas associations based in Australia, Malaysia, UK, and other countries, especially in the surrounding areas of the trans-Pacific Ocean. The “Robe” is the title that Hanfu enthusiasts call each other inside their associations. Some Robes mentioned that while there is little or no chance for them to wear their Hanfu in everyday life, Hanfu associations provide more opportunities to stay with other Robes or wear Hanfu dress in public. There is no true sense of membership for these Robe
communities or clubs, participation is free to anyone who likes Hanfu culture and wants to wear Hanfu. Members’ objective is to rejuvenate traditional clothing and carry forward the national culture. Association activity is not just focused on reviving the traditional costume, with smaller groups also involved in promoting traditional folk music, dances, literature, martial arts, or archery.

According to the investigation report of the Hanfu Information Platform in recent five years (from 2014 to 2018), the proportion of female Robes has increased year by year, from 60.61% in 2014 to 71.9% in 2015, 78.83% in 2016, 89.2% in 17 years, and slightly dropped to 88.21% in 2018. In the first four years, the average annual growth rate was about ten points. This reflects the absolute female dominance in today’s Hanfu community. Hanfu community members are from various professional backgrounds: among them are students and office workers. The number of Robes under the age of 25 and those who are students or who have just graduated from universities accounted for 86.92% of the total. This shows that the majority of practitioners of Hanfu movement are well educated young female Chinese.

1 From 2014 to 2018, more than 3,000 samples were surveyed each year.
2.2 CONTEMPORARY HANFU AND ANCIENT HANFU

Hanfu is a new term that was born after the year 2000. Historically and archaeologically, there was no term for Hanfu, which refers to the costumes of the ancient Han nationality. It is important to note that the term refers to a socio-cultural concept, dissimilar from the archaeological concept involving the discovery or the survival of objects related to ancient costumes. It is a newly invented and consumption-based concept within a certain community, namely a youth culture or subculture (Mo, 2017). However, the academic research on Hanfu has barely started and there is no accurate academic definition of “Hanfu”; there is an extensive range of various opinions concerning the understanding of Hanfu. Wu Jiaxin (2015) argues in her paper based on the semiotic analysis of Contemporary Hanfu that the concept of Hanfu is difficult to define in academic research. With various interpretations of Hanfu symbols, the definition of Hanfu moves between “traditional costume of the Han nationality” and “national costume of the Chinese people”.

Ji Zihui divided Hanfu into two types in "Research on the Structure Characteristics of Contemporary Hanfu Pattern Making and Digital Implementation" (2016): “Ancient Hanfu” and “Contemporary Hanfu”. “Ancient Hanfu” refers to the traditional costumes evolving from the end of the Zhou Dynasty (256 B.C.) to the beginning of Qing Dynasty (A.D. 1644). “Contemporary Hanfu” is defined as the clothes that Hanfu enthusiasts have worn since the revival of the Hanfu culture movement in 2003. The modern clothes not only have the characteristics of Ancient Hanfu but also conform to the aesthetic standards of contemporary society in terms of style, color, clothing construction, and material.

The standard definition of Ancient Hanfu has now been generally established, at least to some degree, while there are some disputes in relation to the definition of Contemporary Hanfu. The “Contemporary Hanfu” referred to in this thesis involves the clothes that appear subsequent to the beginning of the Hanfu movement and inherit certain characteristics of the traditional Ancient Hanfu. Contemporary Hanfu is a product of cultural industrialization and social conditions that combine new materials and modern technologies. It is the product of contemporary culture and traditional culture – as well as cultural pluralism.

Aesthetically, Contemporary Hanfu retains the characteristics of traditional Ancient Hanfu. Hanfu clothing is usually cut in two dimensions. This way of cutting will not pay too much attention to the three-dimensional shape, and the costume features an emphasis on the concealment of the shape of the body. Contrary to the characteristics of modern Western fashion, which emphasizes gender and the body’s shape, Hanfu did not conform to the Western norm of beauty. Instead, Hanfu commoditized grace and inner strength, with the body completely covered by a voluminous robe creating a sense of implicit and restrained beauty. (Cheng, 2018)
[3a] *Smoke-coloured gown* (烟色罗广袖袍)
Song Dynasty
Unearthed from Huang Sheng Tomb, Fuzhou

[3b] *Embroidered skirt* (白罗绣花裙)
Ming Dynasty
Confucius Family Mansion old collection.

[3c] *Silk Pants*
Song Dynasty
Unearthed from Huang Sheng Tomb, Fuzhou

[3d] *Quyi* (马王堆曲裾)
Han Dynasty
Unearthed from Mawangdui, Changsha, Hunan

[3e] *Half sleeve top* (唐代半袖)
Tang Dynasty
The Shosoin treasures collection, Todaiji Temple, Japan

[3f] *White Zhongdan* (白色素纱中单)
Ming Dynasty
Confucius Family Mansion old collection

[3g] *Narrow-sleeved gown with purple-grey crepe lace* (紫灰色绉纱镶花边窄袖袍)
Song Dynasty
Unearthed from Huang Sheng Tomb, Fuzhou

[3h] *Brown printed pleated skirt* (褐色印花褶裥裙)
Song Dynasty
Unearthed from Huang Sheng Tomb, Fuzhou

[3i] *Purple Ru Top* (紫缬襦)
Wuliang and Sixteen Kingdoms Period
Unearthed from Bijiatan Tomb in Huahai, Gansu
LIMITATIONS OF CONTEMPORARY HANFU RESEARCH

Ancient Hanfu used to be the everyday dress for the ethnic Han Chinese group before the late sixteenth century. However, the research sources of Hanfu mostly rely on secondary sources such as historical literature, historical relic materials, museum documents and reports detailing archaeological discoveries rather than from the previous generation of artisans. In other words, so-called Hanfu clothing lost its previous status for centuries, not to mention the craft skills, clothing construction or other knowledge.

Ji Zihui (2016) mentions in his study that many Ancient Hanfu styles have only been broadly introduced in existing historical documents without detailed analyses and only a small amount of research has been done on Hanfu clothing construction. Most of the Chinese traditional crafts knowledge of Hanfu was handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. As a result, the documents explaining Ancient Hanfu pattern making catalogs (tailored catalogs) were never found or introduced to the world. Currently, research on Ancient Hanfu is more or less in a state of re-learning its history by looking for clues in literature, ancient artworks, and surviving historical material objects.

Shen Congwen’s “Research on Ancient Chinese Costume” (2011) has a brief introduction to ancient clothing construction, but there is a lack of research based on physical specimens. In archaeology, many pieces of research and reports on excavations published by famous experts and scholars in the field of Chinese traditional culture, textile and clothing also seldom involve the intuitive narration of Ancient Hanfu clothing construction. At present, few academic studies have been published on Hanfu Form

Most of the research comes from the spontaneous research of Hanfu enthusiasts. Because the Tang Dynasty (618–907 A.D.) and the period before the Tang Dynasty are so ancient, historical clothing from the periods is rarely found in archaeology compare with later dynasties. Therefore, researchers can only infer the specific Hanfu clothing construction from objects such as sculptures, paintings, art objects, and historical records. However, it is difficult to tell what the specific structures of the clothing displayed on a Han Dynasty terracotta figurine might have been. Are all the details of the costumes in Tang Dynasty paintings realistic? Are these cultural relics true to life? Before the specific Ancient Hanfu objects are discovered, many questions remain open to speculation. Accordingly, the Hanfu styles which do not refer to a real Ancient Hanfu object are considered as a baseless conjecture by some conservative Hanfu enthusiasts and researchers. Therefore, as new material objects of Ancient Hanfu and its related historical data are discovered, the existing Hanfu Form research data is updated in accordance with the continuous progress of research. Some existing Hanfu Forms previously widely accepted by the market may not even be strictly considered as Contemporary Hanfu anymore as new research emerges.

However, in the Hanfu industry, some controversial Hanfu Form designs still occupy a larger market share. Apparently, a portion of Hanfu consumers is indifferent to whether the products they buy accord with historical facts or not. The term “chest-length skirt” as an instance refers to a Hanfu style of women’s skirts tied to the chest during the period between Sui, Tang and Five Dynasties (581–979 A.D.). There are two kinds of design of chest-length skirt on the market. The one-piece style has widely received recognition. The purple and gold embroidered skirt unearthed from the underground palace of Famen Temple in Shanxi Province has proved the correctness of one-piece style pattern structure. The two-piece style, with a slit under the waist, is highly controversial. Unlike

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1 In the study of Contemporary hanfu, the term “Hanfu Form” points to the requirements of shape, style, tailoring method and clothing construction of a certain style of Hanfu.
[4]a  
**Female Pottery figurine with wind cap**  
*Tang dynasty*  
The terra cotta figure wears a spiral high cylinder wind cap.

[4]b  
**Ru clothing ragments and the restoration of cultural relics**  
*Wuliang and Sixteen Kingdoms Period*  
*Unearthed from Bijiatan Tomb in Huaihai, Gansu*  
The picture shows how the cultural relics are restored.

[4]c  
**Mural paintings from Cave 45 of Mogao Grottoes**  
*Tang dynasty*  
*Mogao Grottoes, Gansu Province*  
*A man is bowing to a woman in the shade.*

[4]d  
**Mural paintings “a maid with hat”**  
*Tang dynasty*  
*Unearthed from Defei Tomb, Dongping Village, Shaanxi Province*
skirts have certainly existed in history, and similar costume models have appeared in several extant artefacts. The Tang Dynasty painting, Court Concert depicting a group of women wearing chest-length skirts, with silt design, enjoying a banquet around the table. This painting proves that a similar style skirt exists in history. With lack of research information and data, a designer chose Hakama\(^1\) as the reference object and proposed a simulation clothing construction of “two-piece style”. The design with the same tailoring structure and tie-up methods with the Japanese Hakama has become popular in the market and has been widely accepted and questioned at the same time. Most conservative Robes accept that “two-piece style chest-length skirt” is an invalid assumption and it cannot be considered as Hanfu clothing. Opponents accept that the two-piece style is Contemporary Hanfu in a broad sense, currently.

For business reasons, many Hanfu Brand still choose to produce the design of the chest-length skirt in the “two-pieces” Form. With the same embroidered design, they will produce two versions, one-piece skirt and two-pieces skirt for customers to choose. There are many similar controversial cases consist in Hanfu culture and cultural movement, such as Xiao Quju\(^2\) etc.

To sum up, with a lack of research materials, Hanfu brands and Hanfu enthusiasts mostly relied on these small amounts of information in designing and making Hanfu, which impact modern aesthetics play a very important role in the development of Contemporary Hanfu.

\[\text{DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CONTEMPORARY HANFU AND ANCIENT HANFU}\]

This chapter mainly presents the biggest difference between Modern and Ancient Hanfu. There are no restrictions on social status in Contemporary Hanfu culture. Clothing was no longer a symbol of wealth and social prestige.

Zhang Xiaolin (2016) claimed in her research that the denotative significance of clothing mainly rests on its role of protecting the human body and meeting the needs of covering it and keeping warm. But with the continuous progress and development of society, the denotative significance of clothing cannot meet people’s needs anymore, and the material and spiritual significance of clothing are constantly growing stronger. In ancient China, clothing is closely related to status, rank and gender. China’s traditional dress code system began in the Xia (about 2070–1600 B.C.) and Shang Dynasties (about 1600–1046 B.C.), was incorporated into the ritual system by the ruling class during the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period (770–221 B.C.). In the costume section of the record books that were compiled by the government

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1 Hakama are a type of traditional Japanese clothing. Trousers were used by the Chinese imperial court in the Sui and Tang dynasties, and this style was adopted by the Japanese in the form of hakama beginning in the sixth century.

2 Quju: a type of diagonal body wrapping clothing.
Court concert
Tang dynasty
The picture depicts a group of women in the palace, including twelve people, enjoying banquets around tables. Two females in the picture are wearing chest-length skirts, with silt design.

Two-piece style Hanfu skirt look from "Costume Recovery Team" 2016
of each dynasty in Chinese history, the costume form, material, color, textile pattern, and the ornaments were strictly divided and clearly stipulated. The dressing system was an inalienable element of the feudal order that enforced people to obey the law. Dong Zhongshu, a Chinese Philosopher of the Han Dynasty records in his book “Fanlu in the Spring and Autumn Periods” that during the Han Dynasty (202 B.C.–A.D. 220), normal citizens could not wear colored clothes. All the commonalty had to wear white clothes, so the phrase “white clothes” came to imply common people without fame. During the period of the Ming (A.D. 1368–1644) and Qing Dynasties (A.D. 1616–1912), yellow and dragon patterns became the special symbols of the emperor and signifies power.

However, in the Contemporary Hanfu industry, yellow and dragon designs are well received by the Robes. They can not only wear the former symbols of Emperor but also can use any color and material and textile pattern on their Hanfu clothing, as long as they want. The gender distinction function of the Hanfu has also been weakened from an aesthetic point of view. Many female Robes choose to wear large-sleeved gowns which are a design based on men’s clothes of the Song Dynasty. Yishang is a style of matching short top and skirt together, such a style proved by Hanfu enthusiast Nanshuo to be a lady’s dress. However, such women’s clothes are one of the male Robes’ favorite Hanfu style. At the same time, some people choose to abandon all the traditional Hanfu rules, mix up the Hanfu clothing belonging to different dynasties or even with modern fashion items to create their own look. Furthermore, they can wear any pattern on their Chinese clothes. In Contemporary Hanfu culture, the boundaries of social rituals no longer exist. The Robe can choose the Hanfu design according to their own preferences, rather than according to certain rules.

The biggest difference between Ancient Hanfu and Contemporary Hanfu is that the content of Contemporary Hanfu design is free from the regulatory limits on the traditional culture. Modern aesthetics and unrestricted design subjects make Contemporary Hanfu design have more new features compared with Ancient Hanfu.
3 DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE OF HANFU CULTURE
photo: winning_leung
CULTURAL DIFFUSION OF MODERN CHINESE SOCIETY

This chapter mainly presents the social history and cultural background of Hanfu culture. Broadly speaking, Culture is a way of life, which generally describes the customs and beliefs of a particular group of people at a particular place and time. Culture has become the key to understanding the world which is composed of many different societies and races that both conflict with as well as influence each other. Similarly, contemporary and modern Chinese society is shaped by both traditional culture and Western culture under the influence of globalization. According to Mo Zhiying (2017) traditional culture can be broadly defined, ranging from the pre-Qin dynasty to the Opium War as, “a set of core values that underlies social interaction among the Chinese people.” Western culture refers to the mainstream culture led by the European and the North American regions, which has had a profound influence on China since the first Opium War in 1840. Western cultures, represent a more advanced culture than Chinese cultures, therefore the modern history of China is, in part, the integration of Western culture values.

Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (1983) observed that under the influence of various cultures, some old (or traditional) cultural values are deleted, new ones are accepted, and existing values can be changed in some way. Because Western culture is regarded as an advanced culture, Chinese traditional culture has no choice but to be gradually transformed according to this advanced cultural influence. Western-style clothing was deemed as a symbol of modern civilization during the Republic of China period. The purpose was, through the promotion of such clothing the government, to accelerate the spread of Western culture and thinking across China. Especially after the Chinese economic reform period, the Chinese lifestyle has been rapidly changing and has become more Westernized. Modern Western architectural style and fashion have become the mainstream style of modern Chinese society and have had a great impact on Chinese modern culture. These dramatic changes of Chinese society since the 1980s has brought about changes in how the younger generation thinks and their lifestyle choices. However, within the context of global homogenization, precious traditions and cultural values are disappearing. Due to these changes the youth are dealing with the resulting cultural clash and identity issues.

To some extent, young Chinese people are showing a greater passion and more positive attitude towards traditional culture and arts, as well as ancient Chinese lifestyle than previous generations. Previous generations were characterized by material struggle, compared with today's youth who are relatively materially rich. As Zhou Xing (2014) states: “With the rapid development of economy and the great satisfaction of material needs, the spiritual and cultural needs ignored by previous generations have emerged.” Due to the social transformation and economic development in recent years, public displays of identification with traditional culture are more and more common in China. The Chinese people have begun to realize the value and effect of the Hanfu and traditional culture, rather than modernity, the traditional values linked to Hanfu style has become a symbol of nationalism to some groups. As mentioned in section 2.1, Hanfu culture is a sub-culture dominated by the well-educated youth in China where 80% Robes are under the age of 25. This current generation is trying to find a strong sense of cultural belonging through Hanfu to deal with identity issues created by the processes of rapid modernization, urbanization, and globalization. Within this content such background, Hanfu culture

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1 The Republic of China (ROC) was a sovereign country that existed between 1912 and 1949 in Mainland China.
2 The Chinese economic reform period refers to the program of economic reforms in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) which reformists within the Communist Party of China started in December 1978.
has been rapidly developing.

The main aim of the early period Hanfu movement is to increase awareness of Chinese traditional culture and national identity. Identity recognition based on national consciousness is the main reason that led people to become Hanfu enthusiasts during the early stage of the Hanfu movement. The goal of the contemporary Hanfu movement is to pursue self-identification, self-expression, and self-esteem from deep historical and cultural roots as a result of rapid modernization and in the new context of globalization. Clothing style is a political language which directly or indirectly reflected the dominant ideology and political climate of the corresponding historical period. (MO 2017) Along these lines, the current Hanfu movement represents the needs of Chinese youth to connect to their past and to each other. It provides a friendly cultural landscape for the rediscovery of traditional cultural expressions while also creating a new way to connect tradition with modern fashion.

THE CHANGING ROLE OF HANFU

Hanfu movement developed as a cultural phenomenon at the beginning of the 21st century (Liu, 2015). Generally speaking, the movement can be summarized in three periods: the revival of traditional culture, the awakening of the national consciousness of the Han nationality group; with rapid development of Hanfu culture on the network, has gradually entered the public; and the commercialization of Contemporary Hanfu. With the development of Hanfu culture, the constant changes of Hanfu cultural significance mainly reflecting the change in the people’s ideology.

In the early period of the Hanfu movement (2003), Hanfu was simply a transmitter of nationalism. And the composition of the Robes was very simple, they were all young people eager to revive traditional culture and restore national identity. Out of a strong sense of duty to the nation, the early collective Hanfu movement activities generally focused on important traditional ceremonies, such as presenting offerings to the gods or to one’s ancestors, and coming-of-age and wedding ceremonies. Since there was no place to buy ready-made Hanfu at that time, the Robe used to hand make Hanfu clothing by themselves.

[10] Robes hold a memorial ceremony in front of Xia Wanchun Tomb 2006

This is the first time that Robes wearing sacrificial Hanfu, to commemorate ancestors together.
The next stage, from 2007, a variety of Hanfu clubs began to spring up and over time Hanfu culture expanded beyond the Internet and become a group with concrete activities in the real world. During the time Hanfu concept began to be constructed systematically, and different opinions began to appear in the Hanfu movement. The greatest feature of this period is that all the Hanfu movement main schools formed their own theoretical system. In this context, a more diverse Hanfu product range emerged.

From 2012 to 2019, saw a continual expansion of Hanfu cultural influence, subsequent to almost ten years of accumulating members and influence in the early period (roughly 2003-2012). Hanfu industry rapidly came into shape, and at the same time, all range of Hanfu products, from low-end to high-end, become commercially available. As most Hanfu businesses are small scale and need to reduce costs, sales are mostly through the Internet. After a significant swing towards Hanfu in the fashion field, a number of brands focused their sales strategies on casual Hanfu wear, instead of official or ceremonial apparel. Only a small number of the larger Hanfu studios sell expensive, formal Hanfu apparel. Hanfu culture has been influenced by other popular cultures in the process of commercialization. Occasionally cultural development can satisfy some people, while disappointing others. The conservative Robes once strongly opposed the commercialization of Hanfu in order to maintain the purity of Hanfu culture, but whether they liked it or not, the commercialization of Hanfu has become an irresistible trend.

According to the results of a multiple-choice question in a survey of the Robes, conducted by the Hanfu Information Platform (2018), the reason for becoming a Robe was based on the following: a preference for traditional culture, 87.14%; a preference for Hanfu fashion, 63.37%; national consciousness, 55.19%. Curiosity and other reasons accounted for 5.7% and 9.33%, respectively. This shows that aesthetics, cultural influence and national consciousness are currently the major factors that attract people to Hanfu. Many new enthusiasts are not attracted by the nationalist character of Hanfu, but by the culture of Hanfu itself. On the other hand, according to the Hanfu Information Platform’s annual surveys from 2014 to 2018, the proportion of people who become Hanfu enthusiasts because of national consciousness is declining year by year. A part of the Robes have positioned themselves as revivers of Hanfu culture and tradition. The ‘revivers’ feel a sense of responsibility to advocate for this in society, but their numbers have declined significantly in recent years. In the 2014 survey, 77.8% of the Robes defined themselves as revivers, but in 2018 only 50.88% of the respondents defined themselves as revivers. The proportion of respondents who regard Hanfu simply as a hobby or fashionable choice has increased significantly. Hanfu itself has expanded beyond its original meaning, and the conservative party no longer completely dominates its culture.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the constitutional attributes and cultural significance of the Hanfu are changing. The symbolic function of the national attributes of Hanfu is gradually weakening, and the image of Hanfu as a fashionable dress is becoming gradually accepted by the public. There are many popular bloggers who are producing material on the topic of Hanfu and what they refer to as the traditional lifestyle, encouraging their followers (usually female) to wear Hanfu clothing. A major figure in this genre is Hanfu research blogger May. May’s team have compiled
an introductory handbook on Hanfu every year, based on the latest archaeological data, to disseminate knowledge regarding the proper way to wear Hanfu. Her mission is to help people with their question and, as she would argue, misconceptions, surrounding the Hanfu. Also in the introductory handbook, there are suggestions and references on collocations of Hanfu and Modern fashion, in order to open up Hanfu as a fashion choice for more people.

Another blogger is GuoGuo, who showcases various Hanfu style looks that are unafraid to be blended with Western fashion (such as a horse-face dress of the Ming Dynasty with Western boots and a round-collar check-print jacket). GuoGuo also frequently arranges Hanfu styles by theme, such as Halloween, Christmas and Chinese Mid-Autumn festival. She has worn Hanfu as a daily dress for many years, and she uses social media and video websites as a platform to argue for using Hanfu as casual wear, and as she wears Hanfu daily, she is well placed to give advice.

The spread of the Internet, magazines and other new platforms have diversified the sources of knowledge about Hanfu for senior Robes as well as newbies. Charismatic figures such as GuoGuo and May have fostered trends and even influenced moral attitudes towards Hanfu, positioning it as both a fashion choice and a lifestyle choice. Normally, people could not point out the reason exactly why they decided to wear Hanfu, but the answer was deceptively simple: they wanted to. More and more Robes integrating the Hanfu into the wardrobe, buying Hanfu in much the same way as one would buy other fashion clothes: looking for something which pleases a personal sense of aesthetic, something that “feels like me,” “feels like a Chinese:” and “Looks cute.” physically and emotionally. Rather than choosing Hanfu just because of nationalism.

The cultural significance of Hanfu is no longer just a part of revival of traditional culture. Hanfu is, however, still a symbol conveying an individual’s attitude towards tradition and national identity, but the significance of Hanfu for the Robes and for non-Hanfu enthusiasts has become more diverse.
3.3 CURRENT LIMITATIONS OF HANFU POPULARIZING IN DAILY LIFE

With the continuous promotion of Hanfu culture and the rapid increase of the number of Hanfu Robes, the general public's attitudes towards Hanfu is slowly changing. Hanfu movement participants Huang said that, when they mention Hanfu in early stage, the public reaction was as surprising as seeing dinosaurs resurrect. Presently, wearing a Hanfu in public will not hook the passerby's attention or caused a controversy anymore. However, the notions regarding the appropriateness of Hanfu to modern society have remained deeply entrenched. Hanfu as a duty, a carrier for traditional culture, it looks quite separate from personal choice or fashion for most non-fans group.

Three conditions lined up to restricted Hanfu clothing connected with people's daily activities. First of all, the main picture of Hanfu to the public is uncomfortable ancient time clothes, especially for people over 40 years old. Many people mentioned that it is very incongruous to see someone in Hanfu wearing modern leather shoes or sneaker instead of traditional style cloth shoes. They felt out of tune when they saw that men or women wearing Hanfu had short haircut instead of tie their hair in an appropriate traditional way. Huang, a Hanfu designer, recalled an example of her experience (Personal communication, November 8, 2018):

Whenever I wear a Hanfu clothing with my glasses, my mother will request me to take off the glasses. It sounds ridiculous, Right? My eyesight is not good, so I need to wear glasses. But people's stereotypes would consider that Hanfu can not be dressed up with any modern products. After all, there was no modern product like glasses in ancient times.

Even though the acceptance of Hanfu in society is gradually increasing, but most non-fans still simply regard Hanfu as ancient clothes only appearing in TV dramas and museum. When Hanfu appears in real life, they still have difficulties in linking clothes with modern life.

Second, the early Hanfu culture was closely linked with nationalism and very radical, which was not as inclusive as the Hanfu culture presently. In the early days of the Hanfu movement, Hanfu is a spirit of national identity rather than being perceived as a fashionable piece of clothing, it was unacceptable to mix Hanfu with other modern fashions. A famous Hanfu figure was attacked by cyber violence because she used her Hermes' fashion bags when wearing Hanfu at the earliest time. Now such highly aggressive tactics have slowly disappeared in the Hanfu movement, with the development of Hanfu culture. However, in a pluralistic culture, it is inevitable that there will be disagreements. Many Robes said that they had been treated with unpleasant language intentionally by other people on the social media, because they have different opinions about Hanfu. “You must be careful what you say about Hanfu in social media, or you will get into trouble.” Hanfu designer Fan said (Personal communication, November 14, 2018).
It taking the time and making the effort to put Hanfu outfits together in strict accordance with the ancient collocation for Hanfu wearer. The way of put on Hanfu clothes is totally different from modern fashion. Moreover, it’s not easy to dress properly just by relying on the knowledge on the Internet. Take the dressing rules of Ming Dynasty womenswear Hanfu as an example. There are five layers in total: The First layer should be under-hanfu and pants; then the underskirt; and then is Hanfu Shan or Ao (top); then the dress; Final layer will be the cloak or vest Jacket. There are multiple types of hairstyle that the wearer chooses according to the Hanfu style they wear, and these hairstyles have disappeared in history for a long time. These hairstyles are too complicated for most people to put up by themselves, that means they had to rely on professional hairdressers to organize their hair. In addition, there are bags and shoes, as well as various hairpin and jewelry. These various items that are necessary for putting together the Hanfu outfit and the Hanfu wardrobe is formidable indeed. Part of the members expressed a critical attitude toward this view and rejected any constraints related to rule.

Hanfu culture as a popular subculture is very successful. However, it is impossible for all people wearing Hanfu clothing to uphold the same concept of revival traditional culture, the original purpose of the Hanfu movement has proven difficult to achieve. Even though the popularity of Hanfu is increasing, it still takes courage to wear this ancient clothing frequently in public.

[12] The way of wearing Ming Dynasty Hanfu (female) 2019
4
THE DIVERSITY OF HANFU

Qilufeng, a veteran of the revival movement and leader of the Qingdao city Hanfu club, said:

"Bystanders can hardly imagine the hard work that we put into the early revival of Hanfu. In order to figure out a pattern making question, non-professional people in different cities can stay up all night, chatting online, in order to understand a sentence in an ancient ritual book, to figure out what part of the clothes a given sentence refers to."

[12]b A man wearing Hanfu with his backpack, at Xitang Hanfu Festival. 2017
photo: Yanhuang Xiaoming
The Hanfu culture, with young people as its main participants, has a broad range of occasionally conflicting attributes: inclusiveness and diversity and, at the same time, nationalism. Although Hanfu subculture has made amazing strides in the past 10 years, it has lacked its own professional academic groups and academic integration. In the movement, most studies are regarding the clothing construction of Ancient Hanfu and traditional culture. Moreover, almost no Hanfu researchers are professional scholars. To put it another way, these non-professional researchers began their research because of their love for Hanfu and traditional culture.

Although many amateur researchers have made great contributions to the Hanfu subculture and movement, their lack of academic skills and their inability to systematize a definition of Hanfu are behind the current chaos in the Hanfu movement.

Without a way to standardize the meanings and definitions of Contemporary Hanfu concepts, each research study, analysis, or developmental direction will naturally establish its own semantics. Many subcultures contain still smaller groupings that can provide their members with a sense of identity and social belonging. Hanfu culture as a subculture is no exception. In the process of its development without any shared standards, Hanfu subculture has split into many factional groups that have various understandings of Hanfu. Some people like variety, others do not. Individual have different points of view and definitions of Hanfu, and sometimes they are intolerant of other perspectives. As a predictable consequence, Contemporary Hanfu culture is diverse, jumbled, contradictory and invites inquiry and debate over almost at every detail. The Robes quarrel on the internet about almost everything concerning Hanfu, from the Form research to whether one should wear leather shoes instead of traditional cloth-embroidered shoes.

The controversy in Contemporary Hanfu mainly concerns the degree to which Ancient Hanfu should be preserved or brought up to date. At present, there is no clear line between ancient, traditional Hanfu and Hanfu as a modernized fashion design inspired by traditional elements. The Robes split into several small groups and expressed a variety of views on the standard of preserving the traditional features of Ancient Hanfu.

The conservative group, with its stricter requirements for Hanfu clothing and Hanfu culture, generally believed that
if a “Hanfu design” was created without reference to the extant Hanfu artefacts, it cannot be called “Hanfu”. The conservative group claims that adapting Hanfu design to fit in with the needs of modern society is premature. They believe that research must still be done to fill in gaps in our knowledge of Ancient Hanfu, and only after fully appreciating the historical heritage will it be time to talk about making improvements. They incline to the view that the revival of Hanfu requires a great respect for the history and the traditional culture. Because they think that Contemporary Hanfu has deep cultural connotations and a mission to pass on this legacy, their project involves a re-exploration of Chinese cultural resources. Therefore, the form of Contemporary Hanfu must be rigorous and accurate; it is wrong to use the imagination to re-invent the new Hanfu Form designs.

There are also some among the Robes who affirm that the Hanfu movement is not an activity intended to completely imitate the clothing worn by the ancients. It is unrealistic to pursue a 100% restoration of Ancient Hanfu, as modern Chinese people would not accept a style that does not conform to the requirements of contemporary aesthetics and daily life. They believe Contemporary Hanfu design should start from the visual angle to be in line with the modern aesthetic design language. Rather than make a single copy from a recently discovered artefact, they prefer to simplify, deform and refactor, traditional elements. That means that Ancient Hanfu could be moderately changed, such as by making adjustments to the length of dresses or sleeves, which will then improve the experience of wearing Hanfu and give more garments choices to Hanfu lovers.

A small number of people believe that the Contemporary Hanfu system should be a newly formed modern clothing system. The term “Hanfu” itself was, we must remember, born in modern times, and therefore whether a Contemporary Hanfu proves to be “correct” or not is judged according to Contemporary Hanfu system. This group regards Hanfu as one current fashion product among others. They basically do not care about the national and traditional cultural characteristics of Hanfu: they are more concerned about the preserving the beauty of Hanfu.

Different opinions of Robes divide the Hanfu culture into different and smaller schools. These groups with their alternative opinions have contributed to Hanfu, whether as fashion or as a cultural movement, according to the various standards they recognize. This has made it possible for Robes to dissociate Hanfu from duty and integrate Hanfu into their wardrobes as a fashion item. Hanfu can be a fashion choice, or a tool for self-discovery.
Today, the Hanfu culture is a result of contact with other cultures which have shaped and influenced it in many ways. These significant influence can be seen on Hanfu clothing design. Contemporary Hanfu is a fusion of traditional and new elements. Contemporary Hanfu culture is the use of ancient materials to construct invented traditions of a novel type for quite novel purposes. (Cheng, 2018) On the one hand, Contemporary Hanfu clothing is deeply influenced by traditional culture. At the same time, it also has been influenced by modern fashion, other subcultures (cosplay culture, Lolita costumes, anime, swordsmen films, historical drama, etc.) as well as Japanese Kimono culture.

Helen Spencer-Oatey identifies certain regularities of culture diffusion (2012, p.13). She notes that cultural communication is a selective process. When two cultures come into contact, each culture will selectively accept some cultural aspects from one another. Cultural borrowing brought by globalization trend has been rapidly localized and integrated with original culture. If this localization process did not happen, the cultural differences would have disappeared long ago. The Hanfu culture has been influenced by other popular cultures over time. New ideas, new objects and new technologies have been borrowed are reinterpreted in order to integrate more effectively into the structure of the Hanfu culture.

Whether Contemporary Hanfu or Reform Hanfu, the trace of cultural diffusion can be seen, especially for the Reform Hanfu. Reform Hanfu is described as a modernized variation of Chinese traditional clothing, which brings together both modern fashion and traditional Hanfu characteristics. Most Reform Hanfu design was more modernized in both the garment pattern making and detail design. The reform design becomes shorter and tighter, highlighting the beauty of the body’s lines and curves. For example, shorter skirts and sleeves that make it more comfortable and easier to move in. The traditional collar band features and the classic tailoring method of Hanfu have been retained in most design cases. Although the Reformed Hanfu clothing are not recognized by conservative groups, they are, however, of the interest to those who are new to Hanfu Culture. Conservative groups want to preserve Hanfu culture. Others believe that this question should be decided by the market.

Modern kimono fashion is a good example of the blending of traditional culture and modern aesthetics. The Japanese Kimono is a major reference for designers exploring potential of Hanfu looks. Many Hanfu stylist bloggers have mentioned, for example, that when they create modernized Hanfu looks, Japan street photographs and Kimono magazine “Utsukushii Kimono” are great references. Japanese kimono fashion has excellent examples of combining Western style accessories with traditional kimonos. Moreover, the textile design of the modern Kimono is no longer confined to traditional textile patterns, provide a variety of fashionable Kimonos with modern pattern design.

\[1\] Whether the Reform Hanfu can be classified into Contemporary Hanfu is still controversial.
Tokyo street style kimono look
In Tokyo, there are no rules when it comes to street fashion.
Photo: MESSYNESSY

Tokyo street style kimono look
A Japanese girl wears hakama, kimono together.
Photo: psychodo000

Hanfu product of Guanyu Design
A girl with traditional Children hairstyle wearing a knee-length skirt with lovely lace design.

Hanfu Mix and Match look from Hanfu blogger Shiyin
Shiyin is a famous Hanfu blogger. She often publishes her Hanfu look on social media. In the picture, she wears a Ming Dynasty top and skirt, matched with a Western-style hat and umbrella, and lace accessories.

Kawaii (Cute) culture is also widely used in the Contemporary Hanfu design, which is aimed at young women who are hungry for a cute look. Shuangji hairstyles are the hallmark of a child under 12 years old, however, the current trend is even for adult women will use this hairstyle for a cute Hanfu look. Huanyu design’s photo shows a typical cute Hanfu look, a girl with traditional Children hairstyle wearing a knee-length skirt with lovely lace design. The upper part of the skirt retains the features of the traditional Hanfu design. While, the overall look uses modern computer game character design or anime character design as the reference (fig, 16c).

The products of the Wei and Jin Dynasty style clothing is an example that Contemporary Hanfu design is influenced by modern aesthetics. The Wei and Jin Dynasties style clothing is probably the most controversial form of the Hanfu movement. The clothing is influenced by movies and TV dramas. The swordsman films and historical drama were the new emerging thing of the 20th century, and is a modern branch of Chinese Traditional martial arts. Just as almost every American boy fantasized about being a superhero when he was young, every Chinese child would fantasize about being a swordsman. Swordsman movies and historical drama make the young generation naturally have an affinity for traditional costumes. Ya Nan, a Hanfu photographer, said that the reason why she became a Robe was that when she was a child, she was addicted to swordsman movies, and wearing the swordsman costume was her childhood dream (personal communication, November 14, 2018). This version of “Hanfu” was born in the early stage of the Hanfu movement. There are many studies that show the “Hanfu” with the style of Wei and Jin Dynasty does not exist in history.

Hanfu designers and Hanfu enthusiasts designed this “inaccurate” Hanfu on the basis of the “traditional clothes” which appeared in Chinese historical dramas or movies. In fact, most of the “traditional clothes” production of TV dramas or movies do not conform to historical facts, but more from the perspective of incorporating the modern aesthetic taste. To meet the market demand, Hanfu brand have to make the original Wei and Jin Dynasty clothing more like swordsman costume. For example, the materials of the “inaccurate” Hanfu clothing gradually became flimsy; the dress became longer and the sleeves were made wider. These features make the clothing flutter with the wind, and the wearer can feel like an ancient swordsman or a fairy. The Wei and Jin Dynasty Hanfu in history do not have these characteristics. Therefore, the “inaccurate” Hanfu, is more like new modern clothing born on the basis of people's impression and imagination of ancient clothes.

The "accurate" Wei and Jin Dynasties Hanfu in history can be seen in the works of the “Costume Recovery Team”. The “Costume Recovery Team” is an organization that explored the textile technique and art style of ancient Hanfu of each dynasty. Their purpose is to study ancient people's clothing, aesthetic preferences as well as lifestyle in the context of ancient times. Based on historical relics and documents, they restore ancient costume looks from Hanfu style to accessories, hairstyles to cosmetics. Among all these years, the organization has completed more than 200 sets of Ancient Hanfu looks. The materials,
[17] a
Wei and Jing dynasty style clothing
This is one of the typical Wei and Jin style look. A large sleeve shirt with transparent material jacket.

[17] b
The fresco figures of Dingjiazhao tomb
Undearthed from Jiuquan, Gansu province

[17] c
Sixteen Kingdoms period pottery figurines
Undearthed from from Xian City, Shanxi Province

[17] d
Wei and Jing dynasty Hanfu look
This is a Wei and Jin dynasty Hanfu look from the “Costume Recovery Team”
The “Costume Recovery Team” makes traditional tie dyeing 2017

Ancient dye are colorants derived from plants, invertebrates, or minerals. The group studied many kinds of natural dyeing methods, using various plants to color and fixation. It takes two people half a year to finish a Wei-Jin dynasty dress, which is hand-sewn and dyed with grass and leaf.

textile techniques and the way of dyeing and the finishing of the Hanfu are all done by hand in ancient ways based on existing research materials. Researchers often encounter new findings in the middle of garment making and have to start from scratch. The Wei and Jin Dynasty dress (fig. 17d), which was made according to the objects unearthed from the remains of the tomb at Bijiatan No.26 (Gansu Province). On the way to make the trial edition, the fresco figures of Dingjiazhha Tomb in Jiujian (Gansu Province), and the pottery figurines unearthed in the Eastern Jin Dynasty were also taken into account. It takes two people half a year to finish a hand-twisted-dye Wei-Jin dynasty dress, which is hand-sewn and dyed with grass and leaf.

The design case from “Costume Recovery Team” shows that “inaccurate” Wei and Jin style product are totally different from the “accurate” one. Although there is a great deal of controversy about the Wei and Jin Dynasties Hanfu, there are still many of the products in the market, and many consumers are willing purchase the products. In terms of market share, the “inaccurate” Wei and Jin style products are more popular than the “accurate” Wei and Jin Dynasties Hanfu. And many consumers are willing to buy because the “inaccurate” clothing is the product which best describes the public’s understanding and imagination of Hanfu and Ancient life.

As discussed in the section 4.1, Hanfu itself without an approach to standardize the meanings and definitions, each individual development directions have separate supporters. This is an interesting phenomenon. Due to an open socio-cultural environment as well as a sophisticated global information technology network of 21st century, the new born Hanfu culture not only contains the traditional and modern culture, but also absorbs and borrows foreign culture. These cultural cooperation has opened the way of the normalization of Hanfu, make Contemporary Hanfu design more in line with the aesthetic needs of modern society.
This section presents the integration of traditional culture with the influence of foreign culture from the aspect of Hanfu textile pattern design. As mentioned in section 2.4, there are no longer social boundaries related to the dress code in relation to Hanfu textile pattern design; therefore, new design content is unrestricted. Some Hanfu designers began to design unique patterns instead of copying ancient designs for their Contemporary Hanfu products. Although the traditional Hanfu pattern is still the most popular design theme, the number of various styles of non-traditional pattern design in the Hanfu industry is increasing yearly.

In history, meaningless patterns are rarely found on ancient Hanfu, most of the design elements of Chinese traditional patterns have special implied meaning. They amplify good fortune, block evil or form a symbol of identity. The most popular of all kinds of patterns are patterns with auspicious implications rooted in people’s beliefs, folklore, homonyms and metaphors of animals and plants. Grapes are often used as costume patterns because of their rich fruits and seeds, which implies fertility and plenty. Another example is the textile pattern of ancient Bufu\(^1\) is strictly in accordance with the requirements of the wearer’s status level. Government officials used a Bird pattern on their chest, military commanders an animal pattern. More specifically, Cranes represented 1st class government officials, a peacock the 2nd. On the other hand, a Qilin represents 1st class military commanders, the lion and tiger represent 2nd and 3rd class, respectively.

Most of the Robes are strict with Hanfu Form design, but more tolerant towards Hanfu textile design. For example, they accept the bold application of Hanfu textile materials and pattern designs. Only a few Robes believe that the material and pattern of Hanfu textiles should strictly conform the principles or methods used in Ancient Hanfu. In the interview with Guoguo, who is very strict about Hanfu Form design, she said that she could not accept “inaccurate” Hanfu Form. But she could accept an “accurate” Hanfu Form even if it depicts a modern image such as a SpongeBob print pattern (Personal communication, November 5, 2018). In the case, part of Contemporary Hanfu designers began to design from an aesthetic point of view, rather than considering whether the pattern could bring luck to people.

Currently, most Hanfu textile designs tend to be conservative. These textile designs are often slightly altered on the basis of classic traditional patterns or directly copied from the extant Hanfu artefacts. For example, the famous Hanfu Brand, Minghuatang, uses a brocade Python dragon for its womenswear products. This design is composed of classical Ming Dynasty textile pattern elements such as Python dragon, cloud and sea patterns. This pattern design is based on the existing Python dragon pattern collection of the Confucius family mansion. In the Contemporary Hanfu market, there are a large number of “restore” products. These “restored” clothing, including the clothing construction, clothing proportion, as well as the textile pattern design and technic are completely the same as the original cultural artefacts. Among them, most of the reference samples are Ming Dynasty extant Hanfu artefacts, which are in an exceptionally well preserved state. For example, Hanke Silkroad, a famous Hanfu merchant, reconstructed one of the old Confucius family mansion collection blue Qilin pattern Bufu (fig, 19) as their product (fig, 20).

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1. A mandarin square, also known as a rank badge, was a large embroidered badge sewn onto the surcoat of an official in Imperial China, Korea and Vietnam.
There is no copyright issue for ancient art works. For this reason, content from many famous ancient paintings and poems is frequently used in Hanfu textile design. For example, “Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains” painting is the only work handed down by the Song Dynasty painter Wang Ximeng. This painting depicts the beautiful rivers and mountains of the Song Dynasty countryside, which is a national treasure collection in the Forbidden City Museum, and is well known to the public. The picture shows how two different Hanfu merchants used the “Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains” image on their products in the same way. Designers had “copied” the painting as a textile pattern design and directly printed it on their products (fig, 21a) (fig, 21b).

Modern fashion classic patterns are widely used in the non-traditional Hanfu pattern design, such as stripes, lattice, geometric or flower patterns, etc. The influence of Kawaii (cute) culture, mentioned in the previous chapter on Hanfu culture, can also be seen in the textile design. Lovely designs, particularly lovely animal designs such as squirrels, deers and cats are common in the Hanfu market. It’s impossible to see such cute bunny image on an ancient Bufu. There are many ways in which the cute look design can inveigle itself into a Robes’ wardrobe, but the appeal seems to be quite strong, especially for females.

In the survey, it was also found that some Hanfu textile patterns were affected by modern style illustrations or the Japanese anime style, which is not entirely an extension of traditional patterns. These patterns are designed with a strong modern aesthetic style. Yuanshandai Hanfu Studio horse face dress, designed with the Gumiho (Fox with nine tails) image (fig, 21i), reflects a heavy influence from the unique art style of Japanese anime. In the study of Chinese traditional patterns, the Gumiho character has not been found in use historically. These modernized Hanfu Textile designs retain the characteristics of Chinese traditional patterns to a certain extent. At the same time, the designs absorbed the various modern art style features.

The Contemporary Hanfu textile technology is mainly inclined to use jacquard weaving and embroidering, while printing technology is mainly applied to low-end clothes. The fabrics produced by Brocade weave and embroidery were symbols of status in ancient times; only the upper classes could use these precious fabrics. Of course, thanks to the progress of modern technology, these Hanfu fabrics are being manufactured by machines. Only some high-end, formal Hanfu dresses are still embroidered by hand. In terms of materials, most of the Robes are very accepting of new materials. In ancient times, the Hanfu materials were mainly cotton, hemp, silk, and other natural materials, while embroidery yarn was mainly made of various precious metal threads and feather threads. The application of new materials (Polyester, lace, chiffon fabrics, and various viscose fiber fabrics, knitted fabrics, wool fabrics, etc.) reduces the cost of Hanfu and makes Hanfu possible to wear during winter and summer.

The fusion between foreign and indigenous cultures, as well as the application of new materials mentioned above, make Contemporary Hanfu more in line with the aesthetic needs of modern society. The Hanfu textile design has been influenced by other cultures, creating a new Contemporary Hanfu look that different from the original traditional impression.
5 DESIGN RESEARCH
5.1 COOPERATION WIT FANSHAWE CUSTOMIZED HANFU STUDIO

The brand Fanshawe customized Hanfu studio has various customers and a professional embroidery production line, but they lack experience in the manufacturing of woven fabric. By creating an Hanfu textile collection, my purpose was to evolve various ideas and develop them to produce samples as references. Unfortunately, due to a list of limitations including location and the production timeline, I was not able to use the factory machine to produce my experimental sample. So I reached an agreement with the company, in which I used the school Tc2 jacquard machine, for the purpose of the thesis, to complete the sample production. The samples which will be supplied to the brand is a series of woven Hanfu fabrics which will serve them as reference. In the final production, materials and woven structures will be changed according to the companies conditions and requirements (machine, cost, material, etc.). This thesis will not include the final product and final production section.

I was invited to join the online group of Fanshawe Hanfu customers, which is a very good opportunity to observe the Robe group from the inside and to learn Hanfu knowledge from them. Many of them helped me, shared their Hanfu knowledge and answered my questions. At first, I knew nothing about Hanfu and Hanfu culture. As mentioned before, the Hanfu culture is highly controversial. As an outsider, it can be vastly difficult to understand why such arguments revolve around these robes.

Fanshawe studio has a unique business model differing from other similarly small-scale fashion brands. Fanshawe’s customers and designers have a really good relationship. They chat online, discuss Hanfu and traditional culture. One of the designers informed me that during the early stage of the Hanfu movement people who engaged in Hanfu industry were not involved for the aim of profit, but instead for love of the Hanfu and traditional culture. Fanshawe studio gave me full freedom in the design theme, so I decided to draw inspiration from my understanding of Hanfu culture.

5.2 INTERVIEW AND INSPIRATION

Although the initial starting point of Hanfu culture is a carrier of nationalism, the initial Hanfu culture seems to be part of the revival movement of traditional culture. However, with the increase in the number of Robes and the influence of modern cultures, today’s Hanfu culture has become more complex and interesting. What impressed me most about Hanfu culture was its diversity and its controversies.
How can I express the feeling Hanfu culture has impressed upon me, and how can I visualize this abstract personal interpretation? It has been bothering me for a long time. Until I found a picture of Hongya Cave (fig. 23), a landmark building in Chongqing city, the traditional buildings and the modern high-rise buildings in the background made up this picture. I think I have found a method to visualize my personal interpretation. The combination of Chinese traditional culture and foreign culture brought by globalization is the Chinese contemporary culture, which every Chinese is accustomed to. Starbucks appeared in a traditional temple and McDonald's replaced the signature signboard with a traditional Chinese plaque; a couple interesting examples of cultural integration. I realized the reason why I chose Hanfu and Hanfu culture as my research objectives at the beginning. Before I had a chance to deeply understand the Hanfu, I thought the Hanfu culture was a completely traditional thing. But now I understand that the Hanfu culture is a mixture of tradition and modernity which has been shaped in the Internet era. And the lifestyle of the Robes is the same. They enjoy wearing “ancient clothes”, and traditional culture affecting their lifestyle greatly. On the one hand, they live in modern society, and everything in modern society affects them. Such diverse, contradictory, modern and traditional lifestyle fascinated me and inspired me in the future of the design process.

I chose five Robes with various backgrounds as interviewees to get a further understanding of that “sense of feeling”. They come from different places and have completely different understandings of Hanfu and its culture. The five interviewees shared a common similarity of love for the traditional Hanfu culture. The interview is mainly regarding their own understanding of the relationship between traditional culture and modern culture, and their personal views on Hanfu culture and Hanfu movement. I loved learning about people's individual opinions regarding this controversial culture.

Every interview spans more or less one hour to one and a half hours. It is more like a casual chat between friends than an interview. The interview content tends to understand their subjective perception rather than understand the so-called “accurate” view of Hanfu culture. According to the content of the collective interviews, I produced five character-boards. The content of the character boards includes the interviewees' background information, their personal views on the Hanfu and contemporary Cultural Background as well as two or more photos of themselves, the first clad in Hanfu and the second in modern fashion. Such character-boards help me effectively understand how to visualize my abstract feelings. These Boards are inspiration for my final Hanfu textile design. The emotional connection between me and this “sense of feeling” is very strong, as a result, themes and design ideas grew subconsciously and sequentially.

In November 2018, I started collecting the visual materials that supported and materialized my ideas, most of these resources are about traditional textile patterns, classic flower paintings and the photographic arts of modern Chinese society. I began to collage these visual materials freely, then two unique theme boards were produced. The differences between the two themes needed to be noticeable, however, they also needed to be Complimentary as a whole collection. These two themes each represent certain atmospheres, however, it does not mean they are designed completely divided into “Modern Theme” and “Traditional Theme”, there is a mixture of tradition and modern elements in both themes. These two themes both are the emotional expression of the intertwined culture, but they are presented in different angles to visually convey the various elements more clearly and understandably.
[23] Nightscape of Hongya cave, Chongqing

[24] McDonald’s (Dali Old Town)
Yanan Fei was influenced by her best friends, which is how she learned about Hanfu. From an early age, Yanan has been enamored with Chinese traditional style clothing. Her interest emerged from watching a lot of Wuxia (martial arts) dramas and historical dramas. She loves Hanfu, but she does not wear Hanfu as a daily dress. She said that most of the Hanfu design has very long skirts and long sleeves, which is inconvenient for everyday life.

“Traditional costumes have always appeared in museums or movies. We are familiar with them but never have the chance to actually wear them. So when my first time wearing a Hanfu, I had a special feeling, as if I found a different side of me. Now Hanfu is actually a normal dress style for me, except that the clothing construction are different as modern clothes.”

“I like the traditional so-called 100% restored Hanfu, but I also like those reformed Hanfu.”

“I think that traditional things or habits need to be combined with modern culture. The previous culture must be integrated with the current needs to be able to live in the present.”

“Western culture will influence our traditional culture, but on the other hand, Western culture will be localized by the influence of Chinese culture.”
Hao Chenxin used to be a Hanfu enthusiast, however, she gradually turned her interest to Qipao. Hao started out as a kimono textile lover, her interest in beautiful textile slowly transitioned to the kimono, and finally interested in Hanfu. Compared with kimono, she thinks Hanfu is more convenient to wear (You can wear Hanfu by yourself), and that Chinese traditional culture has a natural appeal to her. She has sold most of her Hanfu collections this year. She said that she will not wear Hanfu anymore. Because her experience of wearing Hanfu is not good, and there is too much debate around the Hanfu culture. Aggressive Robes made her feel tired.

“Whether it is a kimono or a Hanfu, it is just a piece of normal clothing for me when I wear it.”

“Although Hanfu is good looking, but it makes me feel uncomfortable. I need to be careful not to step on my own skirt.”

“I feel that many traditional things are preserved, even if those tradition are exist by a modern carrier, but the tradition is still deeply rooted in the Chinese society.”

“For me, Hanfu is a new modern costume produced by the combating modern culture and traditional culture together, that is my view.”

“I want to talk about one of my friends. Every time she sees a stranger wearing a Hanfu in public, she will be super emotional, just like a mother sees her child’s achievements. She has made great efforts in promoting Hanfu culture, and everything is very difficult in the early stage of Hanfu movement. Most Chinese people even can’t tell the difference between Kimono and Hanfu. As a latecomer, I respect their efforts.”

[26] Hao’s pictures
TOP Hao in a Song dynasty pants and jeans jacket.
BOTTOM Hao wears a jeans jacket with with a long skirt.
Huang is a Hanfu designer, her hometown Suzhou is a place known for its traditional crafts, culture, and architecture. The traditional textile technique in Suzhou are well preserved. Every time she releases a new collection, some Robes who had different views will leave a comment on her social media: “This form is no longer Hanfu anymore. Your design is wrong.” She said that even though she designs Hanfu according to the mainstream standards which are widely accepted, she thinks everyone can define Hanfu in their own way before the authoritative standard is established.

“Hanfu will continue to update according to the continuous progress of research. In the early stage of the Hanfu culture development, researcher keeps constantly researching and exploring the Hanfu form base on the status and records of traditional costumes. When my enthusiasm is invested in a certain Hanfu style, suddenly my favorite clothing is proved wrong by other research. This kinds of experience give me a complex feeling about Hanfu.”

“I like to mix up modern clothes and Hanfu together.”

“I think the tradition is not disappearing in our society.”

“Hanfu culture has gradually become more diversified, some Conservative robes cannot accept the Hanfu commercialisation. But I think commercialisation is good for Hanfu Culture. Hanfu culture needs to go out of the original small bubble.”
Fanfan as a Hanfu designer, who runs an independent Hanfu studio, is very serious about the pattern making of her products. When I asked why she didn’t modify and made Hanfu easier to wear, she said, if someone decides to wear a Hanfu clothing, he or she has to accept those inconvenient aspects of Hanfu. Because the design of ancient costumes is actually a kind of constraint on human body. If the designer changes the original clothing construction, such a design no longer conforms to the meaning of the traditional Chinese culture.

She likes to collect different Hanfu designs, but she rarely wears Hanfu clothing because it is inconvenient to wear Hanfu. Hanfu is more like a beautiful collection for her.

“I believe that Hanfu merchants and designers should take the responsibility of educating people who are new to Hanfu. Because some inaccurate design will mislead the public.”

“If traditional culture can’t be commercialized, there is no way to survive in this society.”

“Hanfu culture is constantly improving, the society’s perception of this new culture is constantly improving too. However, because the environment of Hanfu culture has a lot of controversies and a lot of questioning. If the designer is not careful enough, it is easy to be questioned by others and get into trouble.”

“I think that the cultural value of Hanfu is as important as its aesthetic value. If your Hanfu clothing construction is doubtful, this design can’t be called Hanfu. It is a fashion design inspired by traditional elements.”

[28] Fanfan’s pictures
TOP  Fanfan is wearing a embroidered Hanfu of her own brand.
BOTTOM  FanFan wears a winter coat, floral embroidered pattern.
Guo Guo is a Internet celebrity who has more than 140,000 followers on the bilibili video website. Her video content is mainly about Hanfu and traditional culture. Every video from shooting to editing is done by herself.

"Why I don’t accept the ‘wrong’ Hanfu designs. Because only after fully appreciating the Ancient Hanfu knowledge will it be time to talk about making improvements. We must learn to walk before we can run."

"There are a lot of good-looking fashion items in the world. I choose to wear Hanfu instead of other clothes, because I have cultural and identity connection with Hanfu."
“Wearing a Hanfu is a ritualistic experience for me. When I wear Hanfu during traditional festivals, I will have great empathy with the festive atmosphere at that time.”

[29]a Guoguo shopping at a fabric shop in Japan. She will use these fabric to make new Hanfu.

[29]b Guoguo wearing a Western style dress.

[29]c Guoguo in her office, with white shirt.

[29]d Guo guo is wearing Charismas theme Ming style Hanfu.

[29]e Guo guo in a Ming Dynasty style short top and a Mamian Skirt.

[29]f Guo guo in her living room wearing a Song Dynasty style dress and Song dynasty Beizi (Long robe).
Theme 1

Fluidity

The First theme arose from my fascination of the ink art. The random texture of ink painting inspired me. The “fluidity” is influenced from unique art style of modern Illustration, and traditional ink painting techniques. This theme involves the texture of ink painting, water, mountain, bird, flower pattern that are mostly classical traditional Hanfu textile design elements. However, I wanted to use a modern artistic method to reinterpret the classics to bring new possibilities for the design of Hanfu fabrics.

Traditional Hanfu pattern design consists mostly of placement pattern, but the textile design of this theme is mostly repetitive pattern. Repetitive design can help reduce waste of fabric. On the other side, I thought it would be interesting to create something new to the Hanfu market and add the value of uniqueness and individuality to the final Hanfu product. Elegance, simplicity and texture describe the theme well. I used the simple sophisticated way in which I am capable of expressing the traditional Hanfu design elements, resulting in an appealing final product.

Since texture was one of the defining aspects of the category, material and surface designs were decidedly highlighted. Compared with another theme, most of the designs are woven together with various weft yarns to show the design. In this theme, I used a relatively simple Technique, by using only one weft to get the texture and pattern I desired. Lightness and draping property of fabric were also something that I was pursuing when working with this Theme. So I chose the fine viscose yarn, linen and cotton yarn as material.
Theme 2
Red Wall

The temple in my hometown influenced me to create the second theme “Red Wall”. This temple is a famous ancient building that is more like a park or a tourist attraction rather than a religious site. Traditional buildings, red walls, decorative traditional patterns, relaxed tourists, and puppies in temples inspired me. Keywords for “Red Wall” are decorative, fulfilling, colorful, and classic. The visual material that caters to this theme is different kinds of traditional patterns and photographic art.

Most of the designs from this theme are ornamental patterns which have more than 2 colors, correspondingly, the weaving methods used in this theme are mainly multi-weft system weave. In multi-weft brocade system, the interwoven structure of the fabric requires a large material consumption when the floating weft yarns will be accumulated on the backside of the fabric. For this reason, more affordable yarn qualities would be a better choice and could avoid high prices in the final production of such fabrics. Since the materials embody a big part of the general aesthetics, I choose the glittering golden metal yarn and glossy viscose yarn first, and I selected the natural materials cotton and linen yarn in order to show the contrast.

Since I enjoy simple designs, I struggled to get out of my design comfort zone, however, I managed to create a few traditional looking, placement pattern designs.
6

DESIGN PROCESS
6.1 CHALLENGES

In December 2018, my design process began by developing sketching, experimental materials and weaving structure. During the sketching and pattern design process, I allowed myself to trust the intuition, rather than follow specific design rules. Because I understand that it is very difficult to design something that combines tradition with modernity. I have never done any design with Chinese traditional elements. Chinese traditional culture has always been something familiar but strange to me, even though it is my culture. And in daily life, I have a negative view of most of the fusion design. The concept of this collection is challenging for me, and I need to force myself to be outside of my design comfort zone.

During the sketching process, I did not consider what the final design results would look like, I just drew completely based on my personal interpretation and moodboard. Subsequent to a number of complications, I gradually found what I wanted and started to enjoy the process of painting decorative patterns.

In the material testing and sampling process I tried the various materials and structures while hand weaving on the loom. During the design process, I was restricted to the limited warp selection available at Aalto University. Since the main purpose of the Hanfu textile collection is to demonstrate the texture, color and pattern design of the final textile, most of the warp yarns I could use is white Nm65/2 cotton threads. Such cotton threads are too thick for the typically fine patterns of Hanfu textile production. In the Hanfu market, the warp used for Hanfu fabrics are very fine, that intricate picture can be successfully produced. I thought that these warp choices were very restricting but it forced me to try and find solutions and opportunities to have something different from the current market product.

The following pages present the research of each design of this collection which has been a vital source of this study and provided the possibility of Contemporary Hanfu textile design development.
SKETCHING, PROTOTYPING AND FORMING THE COLLECTION

6.2

[32] Experimental woven samples
Ink Sketch
I explored how to use woven structure to present a gradient effect design. Because I wanted to be able to express the similar texture of ink painting with a single layer woven fabric. At the beginning, I used different colors to layer the gradient effects, and then used various satin structures to process sequential pattern. In the first version, I used 12 ends satin structure on the darkest area, and then used 8 ends satin, 6 ends satin, 5ends satin, 4ends satin to express the gradient effect. However, these structures are quite different, the gradation effect is severely layered, and the color is excessively unnatural. Instead, I started trying to use 8 ends shaded satin to show the gradient effect. Color lamination is slightly in a better situation, but the excess between colors is still unnatural. Eventually, I chose the no binding mode gradual twill structure, and finally achieved the desired effect, with different colors of warp and weft yarns to present an ink texture picture.

Design inspiration comes from the mist-shrouded mountains. In traditional Chinese painting, such overlapping mountains are classic painting elements.
Theme 1
Fluidity

Moutain
Warp: 100 % CO Nm 65/2
Set (density of warp): 30 ends/cm
Wefts:
1st weft: 100% Viscose
Sequence: 1
Density of wefts: 15 picks/cm

[35]a Jaquard file for weaving
[35]b Jaquard file for weaving detail
[35]c Part from the woven cloth detail
[35]d The face side of fabric
[35]f The reverse side of fabric
Old Building

Applies the Chinese classical architecture window lattice design on the modern design is very common, but in “Old Building”, the inspiration comes from the hollow corridor design of six-story apartment in China in the 80s to 90s. Such a building is in my childhood memories, and today’s high-rise buildings continue to replace these old-style buildings, such hollow corridor design has a special emotional connection with me. Geometric graphic pattern and hollow structure design features link the design with Chinese traditional Luo fabrics.

Luo (leno weave), a semi-manual and semi-automatic produced traditional fabrics, has been favorably received in recent year. The transparent structure makes it possible for Robes to wear Hanfu during summer.

Leno weave’s technical feature is to twist the warp, and then use the knot formed by the warps to fix the weft yarn. This technology requires a special machine and is not yet fully automated. I chose to replace Leno weave with mock leno structure which looks similar to Leno weave. I experienced the variety of mock leno structure tests as well as examined impact of materials on the textile look. Correspondingly, the most transparent and stable structures, the 5ends satin and 6ends mock leno are chosen as the structure of the final product. (fig. 37b) Finally, I chose a glossy viscose yarn as weft yarn, which was woven with the cotton material warp, so the fabric would behave differently with various observation angle. The transparent structure formed by the Mock leno structure contrasts with the shiny satin structure cloth surface. The end use of this design will be as a material for the summer season Hanfu.

[36] Patterns designed in Photoshop
Old Building
Warp: 100% CO Nm 65/2
Set (density of warp): 30 ends/cm
Wefts:
1st weft: 100% Viscose
Sequence: 1
Density of wefts: 15 picks/cm

[37]a Part from the woven cloth detail
[37]b Base unit 12*12 Mock leno weave.
[37]c Base unit 5*5 Sends satin
Sea

The design “Sea” also applied no binding method, inspiration comes from the ripple texture of Sea weave. Seawater decoration is a traditional pattern in China, commonly known as “Mountain and Sea” pattern, which are auspicious decorations often decorated in ancient dragon robes and government official uniforms. Design “Sea” is different from the traditional seawater figure, the sketch was the one I created by ink and water with a realistic expression art style. I hoped to reinterpret the traditional classical sea patterns in a modern way.

In the initial experiment I chose Nm 65/2 white cotton yarn as warp yarn, but the result was not exceptional because the density of warp yarn was not enough. When the pattern design performance achieves the ideal states, the weft float and warp float were too long which resulted in loose fabric structure. So I used finer warp yarn with a higher warp density machine. I finally chose grey linen as weft yarn for the design, because the unequal thickness weft yarn created a more interesting surface texture.

[38] Pattern designed in Photoshop
Theme 1
Fluidity

Sea (No-binding)
Warp: CO, White, Nm 75/2
Set (density of warp): 40 ends/cm
Wefts:
1st weft: Grey Linen
Sequence: 1
Density of wefts: 17 picks/cm

[39]a Part from the woven cloth detail
[39]b Jaquard file for weaving
[39]c Jaquard file for weaving detail
Bird and Flower

Bird-flower theme painting was popular in the eighth century; it is a classic theme of traditional Chinese painting. I draw lessons from the artistic style of modern decorative paintings, to create this repeated pattern design. I applied the traditional Duan (Satin) structure on this tone to tone bird and herbaceous peony decoration design.

In this weaving method, the fabric pattern is shown in a variety of shades and tones of the same color. Tone on tone fabrics often appear to be solid colors when viewed from a distance, but when inspected more closely the hidden image can be seen by changing the angle of view. In the beginning, the same warp and weft yarn were chosen, but the test results were not exceptional, the graphics were invisible. Finally, I chose the beige color cotton weft which is slightly different from the white color cotton warp. I tested a various combination of different satin structures (for example the combination of 8 ends satin and 4 ends satin, and the combination of 5 ends satin and plain weave, etc.), 6 ends satin and 6 ends warp face shaded satin are selected.

The appearance of the final fabric was fascinating and conveyed well my original source of inspiration, the texture of traditional Chinese rice paper.
Theme 1
Fluidity
Theme 1
Fluidity

Bird and flower
Warp: 100 % CO Nm 65/2
Set (density of warp): 30 ends/cm
Wefts:
1st weft: Beige cotton
Sequence: 1
Density of wefts: 16 picks/cm

[41]a Base unit 8 ends statin
[41]b Base unit 8 ends shaded statin
[42]c Part from the woven cloth detail
Theme 1
Fluidity
**Theme 1**

*Fluidity*

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**Block**

The design was inspired by the texture of flower petals. I focused more on texture than pattern design. Ultimately, I chose to use a simple mock Leno weave structure to create open gauze effects. The perforated fabric design is produced by white cotton material warp yarn and yellow linen weft yarn. The white and yellow materials create interesting visual effects.

Warp: White CO 100%,
Density or warp: 12 Yarns/cm
Weft:
1st weft: Linen, yellow
Sequence: 1
Density of wefts: 13 picks/cm

[42]a Base unit Mock leno weave.
[42]b Part from the woven cloth detail
Theme 2
Red Wall
Theme 2
Red Wall

[43] Top Experimental woven samples

[44] Bottom Experimental Brocade woven sample
Garland

The design is inspired by the garland. I wanted to create decorative placement patterns design for the Song Dynasty pants, Ming Dynasty top jackets or the sleeves and hems of Hanfu designs. The picture consists of two parts, the upper part is a flower pattern of two colors and the lower part is a garland ornament of four colors.

For the lower part, I explored how to create a 4 weft system traditional Jin (Brocade) look fabric and made two contrasting versions to examine each structure and its impact on the look. Brocade structure presents a distinctive appearance on the back of the fabric where the supplementary weft or floating threads hang in loose groups. After the test, I tried to cut the extra fabric floats under the fabric by hand after finishing. However, because the satin structure is not strong enough, after cutting the back floating yarns, the fabric immediately fell apart. I applied a fifth fine supplementary weft yarn, using plain weave structure to ensure the stability of the fabric (fig, 44). The plain weave binding ensures that the weft does not move after clipping. But since the density of the warp is 30 ends/cm, the decoration presentation is not so good. This method should be suitable to use with yarn which is finer and denser, as a warp material. However, based on my limited conditions at present, I had to give up the idea of clipping the floating yarn behind to ensure the stability of the fabric.

The upper part of 2 colors flower design is double weave structure to avoid floating yarns behind.

I chose three dissimilar materials as weft yarns for this design. Linen yarns as background and viscose yarns combine together to create contrast texture, and small area golden metallic shades yarns added shiny lurex as an accent.
Theme 2
Red Wall

Garland Brocade part
Warp: 100% CO Nm 65/2
Set (density of warp): 30 ends/cm
Wefts: 1st weft: orange 100% Linen
2nd weft: white 100% Viscose
3rd weft: green 100% Viscose
4th weft: golden metallic shades yarns
Sequence: 1, 2, 3, 4,
Density of wefts: 72 picks/cm

[45]a The face side of fabric
[45]b The reverse side of fabric
floating yarns
[45]c Basic unit 4 weft system Brocade
[45]d 4 wefts Brocade
**Theme 2**

*Red Wall*

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Garland double weave part
- **Warp:** 100% CO Nm 65/2
- **Set (density of warp):** 30 ends/cm
- **Wefts:**
  - 1st weft: 100% Viscose
  - 2nd weft: orange 100% Linen
- **Sequence:** 1, 2
- **Density of wefts:** 35 picks/cm

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[46]a  Part from the woven cloth detail

[46]b  Pattern designed in Photoshop

[46]c  Base unit
  - 8*8 Double weave.

[46]d  Base unit
  - 8*8 Double weave structure with binding
Brid and Flower Bufu Pattern

This placement design refers to the design of the formal uniform of the Ming Dynasty government which are mostly used for officials and nobles. The square decoration design on the chest shows the wearer’s identity level. As mentioned above, the content of patterns has lost its relevance to class status on Contemporary Hanfu design, I freely chose birds and flowers as inspiration. This square decoration is symmetrical on both sides. The upper part of the design is the bird and cloud pattern, and the lower part is the flowers and rockeries design.

Brocade weave design for the production was quite challenging and time-consuming. Under the condition of manual sampling, this brocade design sampling process and final production will be completed by the factory in the future, not to be included in this thesis.
Peony

Chinese traditional ink flower painting is the inspiration for this design “Peony”. Traditional painting style flower in is very common in Hanfu textile design, which is mostly embroidered placement design. I want to bring some fresh ideas to the current Hanfu industry, so I designed a repeated flower pattern woven textile design.

Because three different weft yarns are used on this double-faced fabric, I chose to focus on the three layers’ cloth construction and started playing with the variety in scale and material. The construction three layers’ cloth is a time-consuming structure, industry loom is used during the whole sampling and final production process. The maximum density I could use is 50 picks/cm, the binding trace is highly visible on the fabric in the first test. After constant adjustment and testing, the binding trace on the front of the cloth has disappeared, but the backside trace is still visible. However, this is the best result of the experimental, if the weft density is higher than 50 picks/cm, the thickness and weight of the fabric were no longer suitable for Hanfu designs.

The front of the fabric shows the flower design of three colors, while the back of the fabric shows the simplified graphics of two colors. On the positive pattern, except for the background, the parts of the flowers and leaves need to have gradient shade in color. So I used the structure of 6 ends shaded satin (for flower part) and 5 ends shaded Satin (for leaf part) for the front part of the pattern. The parts of flowers and leaves part contrast with the background to create a three-dimensional texture. On the contrary, 5 ends satin and 5 ends shaded satin are used to create a more graphic design look pattern.

Brocade weave design for the production was quite challenging and time-consuming. Under the condition of manual sampling, this brocade design’s sampling process and final production will be completed by the factory in the future, not be included in this thesis.

[48] Left  Part from the woven cloth detail leaf part

[49] Right  Part from the woven cloth detail flower part
**Peony**
Warp: CO, White, Nm 75/2
Set (density of warp): 40 ends/cm
Wefts: 1st weft: orange 100% Linen
2nd weft: white 100% Viscose
3rd weft: blue 100% Viscose
Sequence: 1, 2, 3,
Density of wefts: 50 picks/cm

Theme 2
Red Wall

![Pattern designed in Photoshop]

[50]a Base unit 3 layers 6 ends satin structure
[50]b Base unit 3 layers 6 ends shaded satin structure
[50]c Base unit 3 layers 6 ends satin structure
[50]d Base unit 3 layers 5 ends satin structure
[50]e Base unit 3 layers 5 ends shaded satin structure
[50]f Base unit 3 layers 5 ends shaded satin structure
[50]g Base unit 3 layers 6 ends shaded satin structure
Eaves

This design was inspired by roofs tile of traditional Chinese architecture. The pattern consists of the hexagonal geometric frame and the flower. In the first experiment, I used a double weave structure to present patterns with two kinds of similar color weft yarns. After reviewing the whole fabric series, I thought my collection needed some simple designs as well. I returned back to the basics with more simple constructions of the cloth. I chose the same weft material as the warp, use weaving structure to express graphics only. The design shows a texture contrast with the mock leno structure, weft face satin and warp face satin.

[51] Pattern designed in Photoshop
**Theme 2**

*Red Wall*

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**Eaves**

Warp: 100 % CO Nm 65/2  
Set (density of warp): 30 ends/cm  
Wefts:  
1st weft: 100% CO  
Sequence: 1,  
Density of wefts: 16 picks/cm

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**[52]a Base unit**  
8*8 Mock leno weave.

**[52]b Base unit**  
6*6 6ends warp face satin

**[52]c Base unit**  
6*6 6ends weft face satin

**[52]d Part from the woven cloth detail**
Dogs and Balls

I designed “Dogs and Balls” according to the classic traditional decoration “Lions playing balls”. I changed the traditional lions look by integrated the characteristics of a lion and a Pekingese dog in order to get a cute and interesting design. The main dog figure refers to the art style of traditional paper-cut, and cloud and seawater patterns have been used as support patterns. “Dogs and Balls” is a placement decoration designed for the Ming Dynasty jacket and horse face skirt.

I explored the traditional Zhijin weave look cloth. Zhijin is brocade weaving craft technic which weave metal-containing threads yarn with other yarn together to create certain pattern. The double weave technology was chosen to avoid the backside cloth floating weft yarns.

I played with the combination of different metallic glossy material and viscose yarns. After comparing the experimental samples, I combined the lustrous white viscose materials with the shiny golden metallic yarn, to bring out the sumptuous sparkling of the fabric.
Dogs and Balls double weave part
Warp: 100% CO Nm 65/2
Set (density of warp): 30 ends/cm
Wefts:
1st weft: white 100% Viscose
2nd weft: golden metallic shades yarns
Sequence: 1, 2,
Density of wefts: 38 picks/cm

Pattern designed in Photoshop

Woven cloth detail

Woven cloth detail (The reverse side of fabric)

Base unit
10*10 double weave Sends satin structure with binding.

Base unit
10*10 double weave Sends satin structure with binding.
Dogs and Balls cloud pattern part
Warp: 100% CO Nm 65/2
Set (density of warp): 30 ends/cm
Wefts:
1st weft: white 100% Viscose
Sequence: 1,
Density of wefts: 15 picks/cm

[54]a Patterns designed in Photoshop
[54]b Base unit
8*8 8 ends satin structure.
[54]c Base unit
8*8 8 ends shaded satin structure.
This section described the collection inspiration, how the development work proceeded, and how the final decision is chosen according to the experimental results. The outcome of the collection in this chapter is considered as a research result of my thesis. After all, the scope of research on the cultural phenomenon of Hanfu is very large, and it is impossible to cover everything in this thesis. I can only visualize my personal interpretation in a very personal way. I ended up designing 2 themes, which consisted of 10 Hanfu textile designs.

The greatest challenges I confronted during the process were keeping to the schedule. In the agreement with Fanshawe Hanfu Studio, I needed to communicate design details and production issues with the brand in Shanghai at the end of March 2019. So my schedule forced me to finish most of the designs and samples by March 20. The design process required more time than I had estimated, and both of the themes were more challenging than I had imagined in the beginning. In particular, “Fluidity” was the style that I thought I am good at, but in fact, I spent a long time on experimental materials and woven structure. Chinese traditional style design is something I have never tried before, and I am very satisfied with the results of the “Red wall” theme. My artistic expression and knowledge in the weaving have been improved during this project.

The designed and produced fabrics are prototypes or idea samples, not ready products. When talking with Fanshawe Hanfu studio, they were very satisfied with this series. At the meeting in March, we exchanged views in depth on a series of applications of these fabrics. The feedback from the brand was very valuable. In their opinion, my designs were interesting, sellable and commercial, different from other Hanfu textile design in the current market, although some of the designs could still be improved. They are willing to add something unique to their Hanfu products. The design of this series will continue to improve after the end of the thesis project, according to the needs of the brand.

The compositions of these ten Hanfu textile design were not only designed as the carrier for the stories of Hanfu that I want to share with audiences, but also in order to reveal the unique beauty of cultural integration. I hope to bring some different and bold design to the Hanfu industry. I am also very satisfied with this collection, but this collection is limited by the selection of warp yarns. I hope there will be an opportunity to use finer yarns to design the Hanfu textile in the future.
CONCLUSION

Summing up, my master’s thesis studies Hanfu and Hanfu culture, also put forward my view of Hanfu culture in areas such as culture transplantation and integration. Chapter two briefly introduces the Hanfu movement as well as the difference between Ancient and Contemporary Hanfu. At the same time describes the current limitations of Hanfu research. Chapter Three briefly explores the reasons why Hanfu were initially associated with nationalism at the early period of Hanfu movement. With the development and diversification of Hanfu function, nationalist functions status of Hanfu virtually weakened. Difference of opinion broke up the Robe group into fractions. This change has enabled the rise of the Hanfu as fashion by stimulating the industry to change and adapt to a growing demand for fashionable Hanfu. Chapter four shares the diversity of Hanfu culture, and a variety of Hanfu products associated with cultural integration. The fifth and sixth chapters described my cooperation with the company, the establishment of the design concept, and the detailed design process.

I believe I was able to answer my research question by creating a visual interpretation of Hanfu culture. The collection shows influences of Chinese traditional culture that are mixed together with the modern youth culture. I hope readers will have a clue about how I used textile as a tool to build the stories around the concept “cultural integration” after reviewing this thesis. By interviewing and participant observation, I am able to visualize the Robe group more clearly, understand who they are as individuals, but more importantly, understand what kinds of thing attract them. I am grateful to everyone who has helped me and answered my questions in China and in Finland.

To those who know very little about the ancient Chinese clothing, I hope this thesis may help to understand the process of Hanfu movement and to see Hanfu culture from a new perspective. In the era of globalization, I think many people from different countries are dealing with the resulting cultural clash and identity issues. Especially for someone like me, who has studied in another country. I hope they can be inspired by my collection and discover the interesting aspects of their own culture.

I found the whole project very interesting for myself, and I am glad that I was able to develop it throughout the process. Hanfu is such a big topic. At the beginning of my research, the greatest challenge I confronted was narrowing the scope of my research. I changed my research direction and research methods a few times during the process before I found the right one. I also encountered many problems in the process of searching the relevant literature, keeping to the timetable and designing concepts as well as writing the thesis in English. It feels uncomfortable and it feels stressful, but as usual, when you are outside your comfort zone, that is when you learn the most. I would continue my learning process by exploring Hanfu culture and traditional Hanfu textile technique. I hope my textile collection can help Fanshawe studio create a new contemporary hanfu look that differs from the original traditional impression of Hanfu and bring some fresh ideas to the Hanfu industry.
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Exploring Hanfu
Interweaving tradition and youth culture
Idea Portfolio

Master of Arts Thesis
Fashion, Clothing and Textile Design
Aalto University
School of Arts, Design and Architecture

Jiaxuan Xu
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Jiaxuan Xu
2019
Abstract

Hanfu used to be the everyday dress for the ethnic Han Chinese group before the late sixteenth century. Due to historical reasons, the clothing disappeared. However, at the beginning of the 21st century, Chinese costumes reappeared in modern society. Nowadays, the Hanfu or Hanfu movement study is mostly based on traditional culture and clothing construction. However, very little research has associated Hanfu culture with modern youth culture, undergoing a change.

This thesis studies a new emerged youth culture, known as Hanfu culture. The main focus of the thesis is to analyze Hanfu culture from the sociocultural perspective, while simultaneously introducing one possible interpretation of Hanfu culture through textile design.

The objective of the study is to point out that Hanfu is no longer confined to the practical or aesthetic function in the traditional sense. In other words, the role of Hanfu has gradually changed from being a national symbol, to a fashionable item that both men and women choose for themselves. This project aims to reveal the diversity of Hanfu culture and introduce it in a textile collection. This thesis is divided into two parts: the theoretical part and the design process part, including an interview analysis and the collection of textile designs.

The theoretical part of the thesis is focused on the socio-cultural concept of Hanfu. These topics are researched through a literature review. The first portion briefly introduces and outlines the differences between Ancient Hanfu and Modern Hanfu. It also examines the current limitations of Hanfu research. The second portion of the theoretical part is focused on the cultural aspect, discussing the developing process of Hanfu culture. Additionally, it describes the changes in the role and significance of Hanfu clothing in the process of the Hanfu movement. This change has enabled the rise of the Hanfu as a fashion choice. The last theoretical part concludes with the influence of other foreign cultures on the Hanfu culture. It maps out a variety of Hanfu products in the market, which reflects the cultural impact.

The concept of the collection is created based on cultural integration and the results of the interview survey. A character board is used as a tool to conceptualize the collection. My aim was to capture the essence of the traditional Chinese culture, as well as elements of the modern youth culture in the textile collection. From a textile designer perspective, the current industrial Hanfu textiles mainly focus on the traditional pattern. I hope that this collection shows the path to a new way to design Hanfu textiles.

Keywords Hanfu, Youth culture, Fashion, Traditional culture, Textile collection,