

The Importance of Dress Etiquette in International Relations

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In international communication, the image of a person in the international perspective is not only representing an individual, but also a country and a nation, so dressing etiquette is especially important in international relations. This paper analyzes the dress code of Peng Liyuan, the First Lady of China, when she visited other countries, and finds that good dress code can not only show the great power and enhance the national cultural confidence, but also convey the Chinese spirit to the world.

Keywords: dress code, culture, international relations

Introduction

Xunzi said: Without rituals, things will not work; without rituals, the country will not be peaceful (Xun, 2002, p. 5). What is ritual? In the Eastern Han Dynasty, Xu Shen's "Shuowen" says: "Rituals are also used to serve the gods and bring blessings. This is to serve the gods and bring blessings" (Duan, 2013, pp. 204-205). That is, the preparation of generous items to hold worship activities, to show respect to the gods. To give blessings is said to be rituals, into the righteousness is said to be rituals. The *Shuowen Jiezi* explains "yi" as: Rule of law. The meaning is related to the person, the pronunciation is related to "yi". The original meaning is the appearance or behavior of a person. Traditional rituals have a clan system and social class color, while modern rituals, abandoning the feudal class color, retaining a positive, civilize etiquette accepted by the public. For example, respect for the old and love for the young, courtesy to others, etc. Etiquette arises and gradually develops with human communication activities, from the initial etiquette of coordinating and reconciling family relations, to the etiquette between societies and expanding to the etiquette between countries. Dress etiquette in international communication has a position that cannot be ignored. Clothing is called the human "second skin", in addition to the role of cold, shame, but also has external aesthetic value. In international communication activities, dress is a silent language to promote communication between people, in line with the etiquette of dress which can not only reflect the gender, identity, occupation, and status of the dresser differences, but also reflect the dresser's cultural level and moral cultivation. In recent years, the dress code of President Xi Jinping and his wife Peng Liyuan when visiting countries and receiving foreign guests not only reflects China's "state of etiquette", but also shows China's cultural confidence.

Dress Code Etiquette in International Communication

Basic Rules of Dress Etiquette

Dress etiquette has the famous "TPO" principle. The first is the principle of time, within a day, according to the change of time to change clothes. Especially when women attend important events, there should be a

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change of clothes during the day. For example, in the daytime business activities, you must wear formal clothes and clothes should be dry and neat; in the afternoon from 5 pm to 7 pm activities, you can add some accessories, with some simple and shiny accessories, or with a silk scarf and clothes in harmony; in the evening formal dinner, it should be changed into an elegant long dress or cheongsam. In addition, it should also fit the climate and temperature changes throughout the year, spring cover and autumn freeze, relaxed. At the same time it also reflects the fashion and should not be excessively conservative and traditional, not to mention too much to catch up with the trend. Men should wear dark suits or Zhongshan suit. The second is the principle of location. In the international interaction activities, you should not wear a hat when entering the room, in addition to some decorative hats for women. The third is the principle of occasion. In the official occasions, the dress code focuses on the solemn and conservative characteristics. Social occasions are in the official activities outside the occasion; in social occasions dress style should be with some fashion elements, but cannot look too casual. The dress code in casual occasions is natural and comfortable.

Cultural Differences Between Chinese and Western Dress Etiquette

Traditionally, the dress etiquettes of China and the West have common aspects, such as both have distinct class. But at the same time, due to the different historical and cultural accumulation and values, religious customs, the dress etiquettes of China and the West have different places. First of all, there is the difference in the concept of etiquette. For a long time, influenced by Confucianism, Chinese dress etiquette has the characteristics of non-publicity, modesty, and moderation. On the basis of the patriarchal system, it advocates the value research orientation of social groups and emphasizes the collective concept of “family” and “clan”. Therefore, traditional Chinese dress etiquette focuses on the relationship between human beings and nature. The values of equality and democracy are the basis for the cultural development of Western dress etiquette. In the spirit of humanism and maritime civilization, the traditional Western dress etiquette culture emphasizes the development of the individual as the basis for social development, focusing on the “social etiquette” of human relationships, which is reflected through cultivation. The second is the difference in the concept of the body. Clothes with color, shape, meaning, and etiquette combined then make the body and movement of the dresser complement each other, in line with the etiquette. The ancient Chinese view of the body was influenced by Taoism’s naturalness and inaction and Confucianism’s emphasis on the lighter form and the more divine, and based the beauty of the body on the basic knowledge of Chinese social order and moral codes of conduct, thus constantly pursuing beauty beyond the human form, which originated from the inner heart and character. Therefore, Chinese traditional dress tends to cover the body, so that the body can show the beauty of individual divinity in every movement of a person, and convey the inner beauty of character. The Western view of the body is to advocate the beauty of the human body, to highlight the shape and proportion of the human body with clothing, and to express the culture of etiquette with personal behavior and cultivation. Chinese traditional dress etiquette culture has a long history and still shines after thousands of years. But nowadays, Chinese traditional dress etiquette culture has been greatly impacted, and traditional dress was once buried by the dust of history. With the opening of the country, influenced by the West and revolutionary trends, the traditional Chinese costume gradually faded out of view, or gradually changed from formal and conservative to beautiful, convenient, and commonplace after improvement. In today’s international communication, the dress code of national leaders and foreign staff is mainly Zhongshan and Western-style suits, while some professional suits

and cheongsams with Chinese style are mainly worn by women, reflecting the trend of combining Chinese and Western styles.

Analysis of the Importance of Dress Etiquette in International Relations

According to Zhang Zhaoda, Vice President of the China Fashion Designers Association, the dress of the head of state and the first lady during foreign visits not only shows their outstanding personal image, but also symbolizes the national social image and excellent traditional culture. First of all, the dress code of the head of state needs to be characterized by dignity, elegance, and erudition; secondly, the dress code of the first lady should show a dignified, elegant, and wise image. Eight years ago, Peng Liyuan first followed President Xi Jinping on a foreign visit, appearing as the “First Lady” in the international arena and stunning the world, not only receiving high praise from foreign media, but also starting a trend of first lady dressing in China.

The State of Etiquette, Showing the Great Power

In 2015, Mr. and Mrs. Xi visited the United Kingdom. As China’s “First Lady”, Peng Liyuan’s image as a dignified, generous, and gentle oriental woman is deeply rooted in the international arena. Although it was only a five-day visit, each set of dress of President Xi Jinping and his wife Peng Liyuan fully reflected the deep connotation of a great leader and the diplomatic wisdom of the first lady, highlighting the great power.

At noon on the same day, the Queen held a grand welcome ceremony for Mr. and Mrs. Xi. On this official occasion, “First Lady” Peng Liyuan wore a white split dress, a white clutch in her hand, black high heels on her feet, simple pearl earrings and embroidered brooches, elegant and generous without being monotonous, following the dress code for official occasions.

At around 4 pm, Mr. and Mrs. Xi were warmly received by Speaker of the House of Lords D’Souza and Speaker of the House of Commons Burke, and would give a speech in the Royal Gallery on the second floor of the Parliament building. This hall is only opened for very important occasions and is a very formal place for official business. The first lady in attendance at this important speech occasion changed into a set of color darker gray double-breasted dress, the clothes on the silver print pattern embellished, and the clothes did not look dull and looked dignified and decent, plus a light gray silk scarf and lining echoes, very elegant.

In the evening, Mrs. Peng Liyuan attended the dinner wearing a dark blue floor-length dress for the state banquet held by the Queen and Prince Philip. The blue dress had a stand-up collar and button design reflecting elements of Chinese style, with a white belt and a small clutch bag, full of aura. President Xi Jinping’s black Zhongshan suit, with the characteristics of a western suit, was embellished with a dark blue silk scarf on the chest and echoed the color of his wife Peng Liyuan’s long dress, showing the grandeur of a great power.

Historical Heritage, Enhancing Cultural Confidence

The traditional Chinese dress culture has a long history, and although it has experienced dark times, the Chinese-style dresses that have accumulated the splendid Chinese civilization have gradually been protected and inherited and understood by the world under the call of the era of cultural prosperity. The dresses of President Xi Jinping and his wife during their many visits reflect China’s excellent traditional culture, from the style of dress to the exquisite accessories, all of which well demonstrate the beauty of Chinese fancy dress and give people a sense of China’s long-standing culture. At the same time, Peng’s “Chinese style” dressing is not only well received internationally, but also promotes the spread of Chinese culture to the outside world.

Xi Jinping then paid a state visit to the Netherlands, where he attended a state dinner hosted by Willem-Alexander all in Chinese attire. From the dark Zhongshan suit of President Xi Jinping, the front chest made a dark lapel and the original outwardly visible buttons hidden look calm and atmospheric, while in the left front chest plus the suit pocket, chest exquisite embroidery pattern and the embroidery on the outer lapel of the lady echoes, reflecting the Chinese elements at the same time, but also respect for Western etiquette. “First Lady” Peng Liyuan wore a black mid-length jacket with a lapel and sleeves embroidered with the Chinese national flower, the peony, and a long pink and green skirt, the lapel of the jacket, and the hem of the skirt reflecting the elements of Chinese costume. This set of Peng Liyuan’s dress, in color and President Xi’s Zhongshan suit echoes, looks solemn and elegant, coupled with the light green skirt which gives a fresh and natural feeling, as if a national painting contains the flavor of gold and blue landscape.

Since 2013, President Xi Jinping has embarked on his “diplomatic kick-off tour”, accompanied by the “First Lady” Peng Liyuan, who has been wowed at every appearance. From the simple and elegant stand-up cheongsam, to the white and dignified Chinese painting print, to the blue and gold slim dress, or the delicate and elegant traditional Chinese pattern, all conveyed China’s cultural confidence.

Clothes to Convey the Spirit of China

Every appearance of the “First Lady” Peng Liyuan represents not only the image of the country, but also the spirit of China behind the clothes. Since 2013, Marco and her team have been working with Peng Liyuan on her personal tailoring. For more than 20 years, Marco has been sticking to traditional culture, hoping to express Chinese temperament and bones through the design of her clothes and create a national original brand that spreads the value of Chinese spirit to the world. She has spent more than 10 years searching for traditional craftsmanship in the folklore, trying to retrieve those beautiful traditional rituals and cultures that we once held on to for thousands of years. Marco sums up her design philosophy in one sentence: “luxury of poverty”. In today’s world, only poverty is the most luxurious. In the more than 10 years that Marco and Peng Liyuan have known each other, they share the same opinion on public welfare and environmental protection topics. The spirit of the two people is highly compatible, growing in China’s deep cultural roots, and finally presenting to the world the Chinese spirit of unity in human clothing, return to simplicity, and adherence to heritage. To some extent, this spirit is the innermost truth, goodness, and beauty that all human beings pursue together, which has transcended countries, races, and regions.

Concluding remarks

Etiquette shows the cultural and moral cultivation of a nation, a country, and even a person, and is an important symbol of the progress of human civilization (Zhou, 2016, p. 35). Dress etiquette, as one of the most important external expressions of etiquette, plays a very important role in international relations. Through her personal charm, China’s “First Lady” presents the confident, independent, introverted, and dignified image of Chinese women on the international stage. A dress code that conforms to the etiquette and has characteristics not only enhances the country’s cultural soft power in foreign affairs, but also strengthens the cultural confidence of the masses. At the same time, China’s excellent dress etiquette can be manifested; traditional culture can be carried forward and enhance the pride of the Chinese nation, the sense of belonging and a sense of identity. The Chinese spirit is conveyed to the world, so that the world can understand China more deeply and feel the Chinese spirit.

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