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Abstract

Beginning in 1978, the People’s Republic of China embarked on new economic reforms that aimed to modernize the country. It wanted to convey that in sharp contrast to the radical, turbulent, ultra leftist days of the Cultural Revolution, the post-Mao period has been experiencing higher consumption levels, greater material progress, and modern living. An area that has been strongly influenced by this message about China’s shift in policy and direction is clothing. As a case study, two state-run fashion magazines produced in China between the years 1980 to 1986 have been analyzed. This paper argues that the magazines Xiandai Fuzhuang and Shizhuang tutored people about sartorial fashion in a way that communicated the government’s goal of distancing the prereform years from the post-Mao era. An underlying theme is the idea of China acting as a “pedagogical state” that provides proper guidance to its people in an effort to construct a more modern Chinese society.

There are three main sections in this paper. The first part argues for a close relationship between fashion and the Chinese state. It considers the changes in consumption experienced by China before and after the reforms. It also discusses how aesthetics were perceived to shape an individual’s moral refinement, and in turn, the improvement of society. Notably, these messages directly influenced the discourse of the state-run fashion magazines. The second section compares the contrasting attitudes toward clothing during and after the Cultural Revolution. Significant differences in perceptions of the body and gender were conveyed by the magazines’ advice about dress. Through the perspectives of globalization theories, the third section explores the extent to which the magazines recommended their readers to adopt foreign clothing. Rather than demanding their readers to wear designated dress, such as Mao suits as in the previous era, they provided a range of
advice: from embracing Western styles, maintaining pride in native Chinese clothing, to developing a hybrid Sino-Western style.
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Introduction

The People’s Republic of China has experienced a rapid transition from a strict socialist society to a comparatively more liberal one in recent decades. Since 1978, under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, policies that encouraged the controlled opening up of China in the name of modernization were introduced and some marked results, including economic liberalization, rising rates of consumption, and generally higher standards of living among the populace have taken place. Associated with this opening up of China, one material aspect that reflected new social and cultural values was fashion. The shifting popularity of different clothing styles is crucial to the concept of (sartorial) fashion, as it inherently relies on the notion of change. In the case of China after Mao Zedong’s death, clothing was used to comment on the repudiation of radicalism experienced in China’s contemporary past and to represent the different guiding principles undertaken by Chinese society since the Deng reforms were established.

To engage in this discussion, the examination of Chinese fashion magazines published in the early reform years is particularly useful. *Xiandai Fuzhuang* (Modern Dress) and *Shizhuang* (Fashion) were the first two fashion magazines produced in post-Mao China. Like other types of Chinese media, the magazines were state-run and hence, they propagated or, at the very least, communicated the government’s official positions over a large number of socio-political issues. This paper argues that *Xiandai Fuzhuang* and *Shizhuang* tutored people about fashion in a way that reflected the Chinese government’s determination to demarcate the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution years of 1966-1976 from the reform period beginning in 1978. By tutoring, I mean the instructional guidance given to people in an effort to shape their understanding of a defined set of concepts and views. The magazines’ state-sponsored motive is suggested by the fact that these
periodicals aimed to educate urban readers of major Chinese cities about the proper interpretations of, and attitudes toward, dress and certain fashion trends. This is significant because their recommendations frequently embedded positive portrayals of current changes in Chinese society. Supporting evidence can be found in numerous articles produced in these two magazines between the years 1980 to 1986. The content of the magazines' tutoring can be categorized into three notable areas: 1) the symbolic relationship between fashion and the state 2) the embracing of aesthetic, gendered notions of the body 3) the level of acceptance and rejection of Western and/or global fashion. Therefore, the analysis in this case study concentrates on these categories.

The two periodicals were selected for analysis because they were among the very few that were wholly devoted to dress and fashion after 1978. Though they seemed like urban lifestyle magazines (the huge majority of Chinese publications directly addressed political and economic issues), they in fact had politicized agendas. Xiandai Fuzhuang was published by the Light Industry Press beginning in 1981 and it served officially as a comprehensive magazine for the clothing industry. It professed to have three goals: dedicate itself to the research, education, theory, and production of clothing; introduce the latest manufacturing, production and marketing of clothing; and reveal new fashion styles for the purposes of "beautifying people's lifestyles." 1 Shizhuang was published by the Foreign Trade Press beginning in 1980 and its purpose was to: introduce new styles of clothes for export and domestic markets, increase the readers' level of appreciation for textile arts, and suggest ways of using Chinese culture for inspiration in the designing of innovative, modern clothes that are Chinese in nature, yet popular in international markets. 2

My analysis is based on the underlying premise that people were instructed or tutored on government-sponsored values and views for the purposes of building up the
Chinese state. Unlike in previous centuries where imperial Chinese governments indoctrinated largely Confucian values in an effort to maintain social order, the state-sponsored instruction of people in twentieth century China was geared towards modernizing the country. This relationship between the government and its people is linked to the concept of “tutelage,” which was advocated by Sun Yat-sen in the early twentieth century. He believed that if China is to have democracy, thereby establishing a modern government, it has to undergo the three periods of military rule, political tutelage, and constitutional democracy. The interim period of political tutelage is still ruled by a military autocracy, but it is when the state educates people on the principles of democracy and representative government. Influenced by Sun’s ideas, both the Kuomintang government at Nanjing and the Chinese Communist Party saw the need for the state to adopt a guiding, tutelary role in order to have its people educated in modern concepts that are linked to Chinese state-building.

The idea of China as a “pedagogical state” has been a significant theme in Western scholarship in recent decades. As Paul Bailey has discussed, popular education in the late Qing and early Republican periods aimed to instill virtues and morals among the common people, thereby producing disciplined, righteous, and nationalistic citizens. David Apter and Tony Saich argue that after the Long March and before the founding of the People’s Republic of China, Mao and his Communist followers established an instructional discourse community in Yan’an. This community and its discourses were centred upon the goals of attaining social order, realizing higher moral truths and transforming individuals into worthy, patriotic Communists. Apter and Saich also claim that Mao used his power to create “a master narrative of the revolution” that included a “correct” party history which could not be disputed nor challenged. During Mao’s rule, the propaganda state inculcated
Marxist-Leninist and Mao Zedong thought in such a way that served the goals of the authoritarian regime, as revealed by way of Timothy Cheek’s examination of one prominent propagandist’s life. My paper attempts to add to this area of scholarship by showing how China adopted a pedagogical and tutelary role likewise in the early 1980s.

Contemporary Chinese popular magazines typically have not been studied at length. Currently, the academic literature on post-1978 China mostly deals with economic, political, and social issues. Material culture is examined mainly in the context of either the Cultural Revolution or the 1990s. Such literature primarily emphasizes the radicalism and fanaticism of the Cultural Revolution or the established success of the reforms in consumption-driven Chinese cities in recent years. Not as much has been written about the early years of the reform era. This case study, which considers the link between the political, the material, and the cultural, attempts to explore one aspect of the early 1980s, a period when people were just beginning to learn of and adjust to the striking implications of the post-Mao economic reforms.

Some limitations need to be addressed. The 1978 economic reforms introduced under Deng Xiaoping’s leadership are a key factor in this analysis, but admittedly, they began with changes in the agricultural industries of rural areas. Consequently, a discussion on urban Chinese fashion from 1980 to 1986 when the social and cultural impacts of the reforms have not been fully felt in the cities may seem awkward. A preference for discussing elitist urban dress over peasant dress may be a shortcoming (the latter was worn by more Chinese people but it did not comment as effectively on shifting current trends). Nevertheless, as suggested above, the purpose of this research largely is to examine the fashion magazines’ guided notions about dress and how they interpreted the relationship between fashion and social change in China for their target audience: urban readers.
Furthermore, the actual influence of the magazines at the time as well as the extent to which readers adopted or rejected those recommendations can not be studied due to the lack of available information. In an effort to examine the subject and the chosen focus adequately, ideas drawn from different areas (e.g. politics, sociology, culture, philosophy, and history) will be considered rather than using a single core approach. Lastly, the fashion magazine issues have been studied up to 1986, twenty years after the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. The narrow, arbitrary time frame selected reflects the decision to examine a slice of time for the purposes of creating a snapshot of an era of change.

This paper is divided into three main sections. The first section, “Fashion and the Chinese State,” briefly introduces several factors that have shaped the magazines’ prescribed messages about the importance of fashion to the state. These contexts include changes in material consumption, the revived emphasis upon aesthetics in Chinese society, and the role of the state-run media. The second section is entitled “Fashioning the Aesthetic Body.” It looks at how post-Mao dress, as portrayed in the fashion periodicals Shizhuang and Xiandai Fuzhuang, embodied ideas about beauty and the body that were deliberately contrasted with the dress values of the Cultural Revolution years. The third part is “Negotiating Western/Global Influences in Chinese Fashion.” Using concepts drawn from globalization theories as a framework, the analysis explores the attitudes toward the adoption of foreign fashion to Chinese dress.
Fashion and the Chinese State

Understanding the Chinese Context

The Cultural Revolution is commonly regarded as the most radical, fanatically leftist movement in twentieth century China. During this time, the Chinese people were instructed by Mao Zedong to attack the elements of old China (in other words, old customs, habits, culture, and thinking) and anything else that was deemed “counter-revolutionary,” bourgeois, or harmful to the Chinese state. The enforcement of such radical ideas led to, among many things, a severe weakening of the Chinese economy, a barren cultural life, and very poor relations with most foreign countries.

The level of material consumption was low. Yunxiang Yan describes the prereform era as a period characterized by basic subsistence, shortages of goods, and heavy reliance on state subsidies and ration coupons. Furthermore, Yan argues that the state actively discouraged consumption by launching ideological attacks against people engaged in “individual pursuit of luxury goods or comfortable lifestyles, condemning them as manifestations of ‘corrupt bourgeois culture.’” Verity Wilson has written an excellent article that discusses state-approved Chinese clothing during the Cultural Revolution. During this time, many people were coerced into wearing the same drab, plain types of clothes, namely the Mao suits. Those who wore fashionable, “beautiful” clothes were deemed guilty of perpetuating capitalist ideology and were often severely punished by members of the Red Guard. Hence, people could only yearn privately for colourful, lavish clothes, as daring to wear unsanctioned dress often led to violent suppression and chastisement. These rigid fashion practices were no longer mandatory after the death of Chairman Mao in 1976, which ended the Cultural Revolution.
In reaction to the low levels of economic development during the Maoist period, China embarked on the Open Door Policy in 1978. The purpose was to modernize the economy, industrialize the country, improve the poor living conditions of the people, and break China's isolation from the world. The key characteristic of this policy was the introduction of select features of a market-oriented economy for the construction of a "socialist market economy" as a means of furthering economic modernization and growth. Some initiatives included the disintegration of the centralized strategic command system, the creation of a planned economy influenced by market regulations, and export-oriented policies.\textsuperscript{10} The government expected that a revitalized national economy would be accompanied by the consumption of more consumer goods among individuals. One result of this expectation was a shift in emphasis from heavy industries to light industries, thereby giving higher priority to textile and garment sectors. These sectors were encouraged by the state to increase their productivity in order to help develop and stimulate the consumer economy.

The post-Mao reforms brought about significant changes in consumption. For example, they significantly reduced the number of rationed goods and made possible "the development of a free market system which has enhanced consumers' freedom of exchange and hence enabled them to achieve a more efficient consumption pattern."\textsuperscript{11} Consumerism rose in proportion to the unprecedented rapid growth of personal incomes in the early 1980s. With the ability to pay for and to consume more material goods, the slogan \textit{nengzheng huihua} (able to make money and know how to spend it) became popular among the people living in major Chinese cities. This slogan was in direct conflict with the official ideology of Maoist socialism\textsuperscript{12} and it marked a clear departure from the frugal days of extreme leftist ideologies. This consumption mentality rendered one formerly popular saying passé: \textit{xin}
sannian, jiu sannian, fengfeng bubu you sannian. Referring to clothing, it means “new for three years, old for three years, after some mending and patching it will do for another three years.” No longer were standards so low that, according to the slogan, people customarily would wear the same article of clothing for nine years. Expectations for the quality of the goods became higher and the consumption of aesthetic rather than drab material goods, such as clothing, was encouraged as one means of furthering economic development and indulging in the pursuit of personal happiness. Notions of personal happiness and fulfillment are perhaps ambiguous and difficult to define objectively. Nonetheless, in the Chinese context, these abstract notions and the theoretical ideas on consumption are frequently linked with the principles of aesthetics.

**Constructing a Notion of Aesthetics**

Ban Wang loosely describes aesthetics as the “intensified perception of certain cultural forms or settings, certain rhythms or tenors of behaviour, certain textures of living” that encompass our perceptual, sensory, sensuous, emotional, and bodily experiences. Aesthetics, manifested integrally in fashion, is not a trivial subject in the eyes of the Chinese Communist government. Wang claims that “Communist culture aims not just at changing the old society; it also engages in fashioning the right kind of character, constructing revolutionary subjectivity, [and] giving birth to the new man of the future.” To create this kind of revolutionary character, higher levels of individual aesthetic cultivation need to be addressed. Greater aesthetic sensibilities, judgement, and taste are developed as people articulate and differentiate their sense of the agreeable, the beautiful, the sublime, and the ugly. Beauty and the ability to identify it are also linked to notions of material satisfaction.
Working in tandem, these elements have the ability to improve people’s personal qualities. The anticipated results included the refinement of people’s emotions, the perfecting of human nature, and the cleansing of the human spirit. With the human spirit nurtured and cultivated, people will “develop along the path of noble habits and refined tastes, and their desires will be sublimated into higher ethical principles.”

Individuals who have an elevated awareness for aesthetics are expected to help compose a better society. Marx once claimed that “man is a sum total of social relations”; therefore, Wang remarks that “the individual is not an island of everyday activity but incarnates the collective will and goals of a certain social group engaged in a world-transforming practice.” With individuals exposed and learned in the elements that create jingshen wenming or spiritual civilization (namely education, science, cultural knowledge, idealism, morals, and guiding principles), the moral refinement and education of the people as a whole are possible. The prominent late Qing and Republican era Chinese scholar, Cai Yuanpei, similarly remarked that

the aesthetic is part and parcel of what civilized modern life is supposed to be... All this... will serve the noble mission of cultivating and nurturing the new people of a new nation. Refined in taste and edified in morality, the individual will relinquish the egotistic tendency to benefit the self at the expense of others. The individual so refined will be ready to join his or her fellow citizens in a community of noble feeling and morality to form a better society.

How have these ideas been applied or reinterpreted in China over the past few decades? In the case of the Cultural Revolution, people were stimulated to exhibit intense, passionate expressions of extreme leftist ideology in ubiquitous political rallies and propaganda literature, art, and speeches. Items deemed aesthetically repulsive or bourgeois (such as decadent dress, traditional rituals, ancient Chinese art and architecture) were
publicly despised. Those who aggressively eradicated such items demonstrated their proper revolutionary character, radical ethical principles, and their understanding of state-sanctioned definitions of what was aesthetically agreeable and disagreeable. Adhering to ultra leftist ideology was seen as a means of purifying the mind from immoral thoughts and protecting the Communist society from dangerous bourgeois elements.

The large-scale eradication of aesthetic objects ended by the late 1970s. In keeping with the spirit of the reform policies, aesthetics was now professed as a potent force that would promote greater material production and, in turn, enable people to attain higher material satisfaction. The avowed goal was to develop more refined social and living environments according to the principles of aesthetics and the needs of people and society. With rising levels of material production and greater varieties of product appearance, style, colour, lustre, and texture, people’s desires for material goods were no longer limited to functionality. According to the mainland Chinese scholar Cao Gui-sheng, the availability of diverse goods helps to enable the beautification of people, communities, and lives; and encourages people to appreciate renxing mei (beauty of humanism), renqing mei (beauty of humanity), and a more colourful society. The result is the pushing of human society to higher levels of material progress and wuzhi wenming (material civilization) by consumption. In other words, in sharp contrast to the previous era, the appreciation of aesthetic goods was approved because it was perceived as enhancing, not corrupting, the cultivation of a person’s refined spirit and habits.

Described above are some theoretical assumptions that link concepts of aesthetics to material culture, as well as to the relationship between the refined individual and society. These suppositions strongly influenced the magazines’ interpretation of fashion and the state
and its discourse on clothing. Another key factor that heavily shaped the periodicals’ messages was the nature of the Chinese media system.

The Media in Post-Mao China

Journalists, editors, and publishers in China work within a state-monopolized mass media system whose official purpose is to build up the socialist state. Because the producers of mass media are state entities and are not permitted to operate independently, news reported in China does not necessarily report the latest events timely and accurately, but rather provides information that seeks to support and justify the policies and goals of the government. However, in its attempt to help “open up” the country in the 1980s, the Chinese Communist Party began tolerating some diversity of ideas and alternative views that were not aligned completely with the endorsed Party line. As a result, fashion editors and writers gained some limited freedoms to stray from orthodox state messages and sometimes even tested and pushed the limits of what was allowed. Nevertheless, because the magazines were published by state organs and were answerable to party policy, self-censorship was commonplace and full freedom of the press was not permitted. Chin-Chuan Lee, a Chinese media scholar claims: “China’s official line has been that mass media as part of the ideological superstructure have the responsibility to promote economic modernization on the one hand, and to help secure a ‘stable and unified’ environment in the interest of economic development on the other.”

As products and agents of this system, Xiandai Fuzhuang and Shizhuang both propagated consistently very similar messages about the role of fashion and the state. These messages, which closely followed the theoretical ideas about aesthetics as introduced above, hardly differed between 1980 to 1986. Numerous writers, such as the vice-head of the Light
Industry department and the contributor from the Central Arts and Crafts College, have described fashion in lofty, abstract terms. It is allegedly a solid reflection of the cultural and economic status of a society. Fashion purportedly enriches people's lives aesthetically and symbolizes one's morals, thoughts, education, personality, status, and spirit. Moreover, the writers assert that in socialist material culture, beautifying lives and cities begins with beautifying clothing. These ideas about fashion, mentioned throughout the magazine issues over the six-year period studied, demonstrate the obligatory recognition of the transformative function of an aesthetics education on the people and society. By stressing this point, they likely also quelled leftist critics from staunchly labelling the content of the periodicals as bourgeois and anti-Marxist. According to the articles, aesthetic clothes make a person happy and spirited; it subtly affects one's thought processes and manner, gives an individual the enjoyment of beauty, encourages one to be energetic about labour and life, and helps move the society towards prosperity. Also mentioned is the idea that with proper guidance, people are encouraged to venture down the appropriate path of consumerism and to search for beauty; this is a means of showing confidence in Chinese socialism and expressing hope in life.

This prescribed relationship between dress and society is reinforced by the suggestion that clothing also could convey and represent the level of social and material progress in a given society. For example, according to the fashion writers, the wearing of strange-looking, uncomfortable, or sexually degenerate clothing signals that a society is becoming rotten and corrupt. The fact that people make or buy clothes that are very practical, long-lasting, economical or wear colours that are dark or do not match the season indicate that a country does not have high living standards. On the other hand, having
clothing in many colours and of great variety show that the economy and society are becoming richer and that political thinking is more liberal.\textsuperscript{31}

These interpretations assume that fashion consciousness among the populace illuminates the relations between the individual and society, and signifies the new reforms implemented by the government. This main premise justified the need to teach people about how best to represent the current societal values properly through dress, as the post-Mao reforms were intended to bring about greater consumer life and modern lifestyles. It was deemed necessary to tutor readers about the creation and appreciation of beautiful, stylish, modern dress and to remove the stigma of wearing nice clothes, which had been implanted in people’s consciousness and reinforced by the pain and leftist radicalism of the Cultural Revolution. The suggestion was that having great numbers of well-dressed and fashion-conscious Chinese people demonstrated that times have changed for the better since the Deng reforms were in place and that suppression was replaced by openness.

**Fashioning the Aesthetic Body**

Aesthetics and its social life are related to dress and notions of the body. Clothing acts as the interface between the body and the personality. Deeply rooted in culture, clothing conveys one’s attitude towards the self and body and represents values and lifestyles of a given period. Some Western fashion theorists, including Diana Crane, Fred Davis, and many others, highlight the mediation of dress between private, personal desires and public, social expectations; and the formation of traits, personalities, and identities as communicated by the wearing of certain clothing.\textsuperscript{32} Fashion is often thought of as a divisive force that is inherently associated with change yet at the same time promotes and enforces “social distinctions based on wealth, heritage, and gender.”\textsuperscript{33} Joanne Entwistle claims that
clothing “marks the boundary between self and other, individual and society”\textsuperscript{34} and argues for the distinction between the clothed individual body as an autonomous, self-controlled object versus an assimilated entity in a collective whole. These theoretical assumptions about dress and their supporting evidence may be very valid when referring to Western capitalist societies, but not all of these ideas are easily transferable to the case study of China. During the Maoist years, the welfare of the collective whole was attributed far greater importance than the liberty of individual wills. Therefore, clothing and the body in this context surpassed personal significance and instead had state implications. By the 1980s, the appreciation of the clothed body for individual as well as social and political reasons was deemed acceptable.

**Attitudes Toward Clothing During the Cultural Revolution**

It is not entirely accurate to characterize the Cultural Revolution years as a decade in which everyone in China wore the exact same types of clothing. Regional, ethnic, as well as age differences allowed some leeway for the acceptance of dress variations. However, when considering dress in this period, it is worthwhile to stress the connection between the (clothed) body, the mind, and the state. Mark Elvin examines the depicted relationship between the heart-mind or \textit{xin} and the body in Communist Chinese literature. He argues that the revolutionary, patriotic Communist body is created as a component of a larger collective structure.\textsuperscript{35} Elvin notes the long-held “notion of the transformation of the outer appearance by the inner moral state”\textsuperscript{36} and links this idea with the collectivity of individual bodies that become stronger as a single entity reaching toward state-sponsored goals. This perspective emphasizes the role of the single physical body yet similarly suggests the
betterment of society by the enlightenment of consolidated individuals, as mentioned in the previous section.

The sartorial dullness of the Maoist period, advocated by the Chinese Communist Party, was rooted in its political ideology. The Party took the view that the "link between external looks and inner conviction was fundamental to the narrative of the state...how [one] looked created an observable relationship with the ideology of the time." Tina Chen argues that "the CCP understood clothing and those who wore it in relation to the national revolutionary project." They believed that the clothed body was a manifestation of class struggle and nation-building. Wearing clothing sanctioned by the Chinese state indicated that the wearer favoured revolutionary virtues. A true patriot would speak of complete loyal devotion and service to the Party and, in turn, the nation at the expense of his or her own frivolous material desires. Having the citizens dressed in homogeneous, classless, ideologically proper clothing represented dedication to a collective Party-approved political identity. The colours of the dress were typically limited to "grey, black, white, army green, and navy blue – the colour scheme of Chinese puritan communism." The eminent journalist and writer Dai Qing writes: "We lived simply and modestly, wore patched clothing, cut our hair short and combed it smooth. We believed our intellectual life was rich and pure. Luxury and pleasure were things we despised. After all, we were revolutionaries and how else could you imagine a revolutionary?" (See figures 1 and 2).

There were also moral reasons that led to the enforcement of sartorial dullness. Perceived as a form of enslavement, fashion was deemed a hegemonic instrument that served the interests of capitalism and patriarchy and was inconsistent with Marxist-Leninist values. Fancy clothes and decorated physical beauty in general were frowned upon as symbols of moral degeneration and ideological impurity for they could harbour evil,
Figure 1: The Propaganda Poster “Victory is Won By Marching in Step.” This poster, produced during the late 1960s, portray people predominantly wearing Mao suits and attentively listening to Mao’s guidance. This poster depicts the disciplined revolutionary body. From Mao Memorabilia: The Man and the Myth.
Figure 2: **Group Photo of People in Maoist Dress.** As shown in this photo taken in the early 1970s, the people are wearing state-sanctioned clothing. They wear Mao suits (or mild variations of them), put on armbands, and hold their copies of *The Little Red Book.* The woman on the far right is dressed the same as her male comrades. Their looks convey dedication to the Party ideology. From *China Chic: East Meets West.*
bourgeois behaviour. In particular, women who were drawn to luxury sartorial status symbols such as high-heeled shoes, tight dresses, and other fashionable garments and accessories were considered shameless and immoral temptresses whose sexual conduct was somewhat suspect.\textsuperscript{42} Since clothing was considered an outward embodiment of inner character, loose-fitting and frugal clothes were considered the appropriate choice of dress. They were comfortable, simple, and practical. More importantly, the CCP did not consider them to be bourgeois nor aesthetically decadent.

The Red Guards policed the appropriateness of clothing on behalf of the state. They attacked individuals who wore offensive, deviant types of garments. For example, those who strayed from the permitted subdued colours and wore bright colours in the late 1960s, the most extremist years of the Cultural Revolution, were accused of corrupting the disciplined national body by bourgeois desires.\textsuperscript{43} Women whose dresses were too long, or tight, or otherwise fashionable were detained on the spot at pistol-point while their clothing was cut to ribbons\textsuperscript{44} or stripped away from them. A less violent consequence was giving a public reprimand or lecture to shame those who succumbed to human vanities. Though often administered arbitrarily by the Red Guards, the punishments were meant to eliminate expressions of bourgeois tendencies and extreme individualism through personal appearance. The individual body represented the state. Having individuals defy the dress rules established by the state meant undermining the illusion that people uniformly embraced the political ideology embodied in government-approved clothing. To use Elvin's terms, the corrupt "heart-mind" distancing the "revolutionary, patriotic Communist body" from the "larger collective structure" was unacceptable to the Chinese leadership in the 1960s and early 1970s.
Dressing the Body in the Reform Period

By the reform period, the Chinese people were free to recognize that the Cultural Revolution years were marked by crude aesthetic tastes, repetitive and uniform expressions of sensory enjoyment, and feelings of widespread material impoverishment. Displaying China's significant changes in social policy and material life entailed the wearing of aesthetically pleasing clothing that would have been harshly labelled as bourgeois during the Cultural Revolution. In applying the aesthetic to dress, a very important aspect was awareness of the body. This was the key to designing beautiful, fitting clothes that reflected the relationship between the human figure and dress. In other words, in order to understand how fashion could beautify the body, the body needed to be understood and appreciated first.

*Xiandai Fuzhuang* and *Shizhuang* refute the former practice of wearing unflattering clothes to hide and deny distinctions in individual bodies. They openly discuss in detail the diverse body proportions among the Chinese population. For example, several articles outline the differences between male and female physiques and the build of the young and the old. One such article entitled “The Relationship Between Fashion Styles and Bodily Structures” appeared in *Xiandai Fuzhuang* in 1982. It explains: men have broad, square shoulders, a collar bone of larger curvature, an undeveloped breastline, an unsmooth back, and a waist wider than women's. Women have narrow and sloping shoulders, smoother backs, and a collar bone of smaller curvature. Younger ladies have fuller chests while women at or after reaching middle-age have sagging chests. The waist is narrow and the width of it is equivalent to the length of the head. The abdomen is rounded and fairly wide. Elderly people have lowered shoulders, large and sagging abdomens, and rounded backs. Children have flat chests that are smaller than their abdomens. Their shoulder blades are
noticable. Furthermore, the height differences among the general Chinese population were rationalized in accordance to several factors. The writer from the No. 1 Ningbo Garment Factory explains the average person’s height in China:

For men, the average height is 165.5 cm. For women, it is 155 cm. In accordance to ever-changing environments and improving conditions, the height of people increases... Due to the effects of different climates, geography, ethnic practices, food cultures and conditions, people of various regions do not have the same physical height. For example, in Hebei, Shandong, Liaoning provinces, people tend to be taller while in Sichuan, Guangdong provinces, people tend to be shorter. People of medium height reside in the Yangtze river region.

Another article suggests that people with “special physiques” (for example, having a hunchback, a pot belly, or shorter limbs) should have access to garments produced by the clothing industry that would accommodate their unique bodily shapes and curves.

Acknowledgement of one’s individual physique is essential in order to complement and to enhance the contours of the body with clothing design. Readers are taught how to take women’s and men’s body measurements accurately, a crucial step to dressmaking. Attaining body measurements properly is the first step towards customizing one’s own clothes that make a person appear proportionally balanced. Such sensitivities to dress undermine any “one size fits all” mentalities and recognize the distinctiveness of individual bodies and bodily features.

The appreciation of the human physique and the importance of proper body measurement are suggested, for instance, in the 1985 article entitled “From a Physiological Perspective, a Discussion on Low-Rise Pants which are Currently Popular Abroad” (see figure 3). This article, written by a person from the Nanjing Clothing, Hat, Shoe Industrial Company, supports the wearing of low-rise pants (diyao ku). According to this writer, these pants that are worn low on the waist has its advantages. The article explains that the waist is
我国实行对外开放政策以来，国际交往日益增多，对外贸易逐年扩大，再加上旅游事业的不断发展，国内各大、中城市来往的国际友人、归国华侨、港澳同胞接触而至。从世界各地来客的穿着服装看，自然是五彩缤纷，各有特色。但有一点几乎是相同的，那就是他们穿的裤子，都是“低腰裤”，裤带都束在肚脐以下，直裆都比较短。按我国人民的穿着习惯来看，似乎这种款式的裤子有些不太雅观。但若从人体结构和生理角度来看，这种款式的裤子还是很有特点的，与人体的活动功能是一致的。

人体本身是由骨骼、关节、肌肉等构成的。骨骼是人体的支架，而脊椎骨则是一个人全身的支柱。（图1）脊椎运动后，使躯干产生屈伸、侧弯与旋转等动作。人体在屈伸、侧弯、旋转时，活动的部分是腰椎和腹部的腹外斜肌和腹直肌。（图2）人们在一天工作之后，往往会感到有些腰酸，这就是腰椎和腹外斜肌、腹直肌产生疲劳的结果。长时期的激烈活动还会发生腰椎劳损和肌肉疼痛的感觉。

从人的躯干来讲，腰是全身躯干的最细处，而且是软组织活动最多的地区。一般款式裤子的裤腰部分都正好紧束在这个地方，使人在活动时有一种被裤腰部分牵制住的感觉。因此从人体结构的角度和生理卫生的观点来看，普通款式的裤子在造型上是不够理想的。特别是体型比较胖的人，臀围的尺寸有时与腰围的尺寸相差

Figure 3: The Article “From a Physiological Perspective, a Discussion on Low-Rise Pants which are Currently Popular Abroad.” The drawn images of the spine, rib cage, and thighbone signify the need to pay close attention to the human bodily structure when designing and wearing clothing. From Xiandai Fuzhuang, Vol.13, 1985.
the most narrow and flexible part of the trunk of the body. Often, movement of the waist is restricted or is made uncomfortable by regular pants. Wearing low-rise pants that rest slightly yet precisely below one’s waistline would rectify the problem. This suggestion implies the need for careful, detailed body measurements in producing clothes that give greater comfort and a better fit.

Encouraged to have a strong critical awareness of their positive bodily features and of their natural physical flaws, readers were tutored about how best to use clothes to their own advantage. In other words, they were taught how to make use of the illusory effects of clothing in order to compensate for the supposed shortcomings of their body and to maximize their individual corporeal beauty. For example, the magazines suggest that wearing denim jeans accents one’s thighs. A scarf could be used to hide one’s long neck. To convey a sense of balance, a round-faced person should wear V-collared shirts while a long-faced person should wear round-collars.

The notion of beauty is discussed prominently in the fashion magazines, though more often in holistic terms. One key concept emphasized consistently is zhengti mei, loosely translated as whole beauty. The term is used on two levels. Firstly, it refers to everything that contributes to the physical beauty of a person, including hairstyle, shape of face, use of cosmetics, colour of the clothes, buttons, pockets etc. The pleasing look of these elements for decorative, rather than functional or frugal purposes was no longer seen as an ideological error, unlike during the Cultural Revolution. Secondly, and more importantly, whole beauty reflects not only physical beauty, but also personality, disposition, and cultivation. Elvin makes this connection clear, as mentioned previously, and a direct correlation between clothing and the mind is assumed. A fundamental principle of whole beauty is that fashion, or the clothes that one wears, matches the person’s inner
beauty. In other words, outer beauty, which is subject to enhancement by external objects and accessories, purportedly reflects inner self and beauty. This is because elegant, beautiful clothes act as a silent language that allegedly indicates the person “has a pure spirit and a cheerful desire to help others” and gives one much spiritual happiness and pleasure. Dress not only reveals one’s “beautiful spirit, conduct, and appearance,” but also represents economic development in a society and the so-called “civilized spirit of socialism” or “the new face and success of socialism” in the post-Mao period.

What kinds of clothes are commended as suitable indicators of outer/inner beauty and personal cultivation? The articles say that it is not about blindly following fashion trends, but rather, about wearing something that matches one’s age, sex, skin tone, body size, social status, employment, personality, interests, and thinking. For instance, a professor should not wear something too loud and short-legged elderly women would not look appropriate in Western garments. Children’s clothing should be colourful to convey a youthful, energetic look (see figure 4) while dress for middle-aged and elderly people should enhance their sense of mature beauty, zhuangzhong (seriousness), and chenwen (unruffled nature). Such recommendations about wearing clothes that are “harmonious with the individual self” actually encourages people to conform to society’s categorizations and subsequent expectations of certain groups of people.

Gender

Gender is central to discussions on fashion and clothing, as dress associates or even ladens the body with social images and notions of masculinity and femininity. Shilling says that “far from being an expression of natural difference, exclusive gender identities are based on the suppression of bodily similarities and the exaggeration of bodily differences”;
Figure 4: Images of Children's Clothing. These designs convey the youthfulness and vibrancy of children. From Xiandai Fuzhuang, Vol. 13, 1985.
since the “biological logic” cannot sustain gender categories, practices such as the sex-typing of clothes serves to construct a notion of biological differences between girls and boys and women and men.\textsuperscript{60} China has witnessed extreme changes in attitude and policy over gendered dress within a span of a few decades.

The ideal of the socialist androgyne determined the popular sartorial style during the Maoist years. The ideal of the gender-neutral citizen dressed in uniforms that covered bodily differences was meant to free “Chinese women of the skirts and jewels that symbolized their enslavement.”\textsuperscript{61} Shedding individualistic and bourgeois interests as embodied by femininity in dress allowed women to dedicate themselves to proletarian principles, to the revolutionary struggle, and to the collective good as dictated by party ideology (see figure 5). With gender and class differences eradicated, the images of “iron girls” and masculinized women dressed in drab-coloured Mao suits represented the dictum that “whatever men can do, women can do too.”\textsuperscript{62} Men and women became homogenized as equal, disciplined, faithful cohorts of the state. In \textit{Spider Eaters: A Memoir}, Rae Yang recalls: “As Red Guards we could not and would not wear skirts, blouses, T shirts, shorts and sandals. Anything that would make girls look like girls was bourgeois. We covered up our bodies so completely that I almost forgot that we were boys and girls. We were Red Guards, and that was it.”\textsuperscript{63}

In the post-Mao era, the androgynous ideal was freely rejected. Masculinized clothing was no longer imposed on women, nor was it required that such dress obscured their inherent bodily differences. Instead, there was the acceptance of differential images of the genders. The Chinese aesthetics scholar Wang Kai-Feng argues, “The beauty of a woman’s body lines must be separated from a man’s physique. Men will be men, women will be women.”\textsuperscript{64} Ideals of feminine and masculine beauty could be expressed. The
Figure 5: **Image of a Woman in Maoist Attire.** This woman is dressed in clothing that conveys the androgynous ideal. Her Mao pin indicates her loyalty to Mao Zedong. The basket in her arm hints at her dedication to labour. From *China Chic: East Meets West.*
magazines recommend that the shoulders of a Western suit must be done well so that the fullness of a male chest could be emphasized, thus giving the man an air of large-mindedness. On the other hand, a *qipao*, or traditional Chinese style dress, shows off the soft curves of the female comrade, thus displaying the natural beauty of the woman and the artistic beauty of the dress. In essence, clothing frames the body to convey and instill socially accepted characteristics of male and female physical beauty (compare figures 6, 7, and 8). Through this framing of the body, “similarities between their bodies are neglected, differences are fabricated or exaggerated, and the meanings of biological features are changed into new sets of categories and oppositions.” As Harriet Evans has observed, the discussions of gendered dress embedded observations and expectations of emerging, socially constructed male and female gender roles in the reform era.

In discussing fashions, hairstyles, make-up techniques, etc., the writers associate with the female gender the values of beauty, slenderness, and youth. These values challenge the representations of the ideal woman of previous decades: the hardy, robust, female worker who contributes as much labour as the male worker (compare figures 5 and 6). The rejection of unisex ideals shows that China in this period was no longer reinforcing socialist images of gender. Instead, it was more interested in reproducing notions of masculinity and femininity through dress as perpetuated by the vast majority of capitalist societies. This shift conceivably mirrored the introduction of capitalistic elements to China’s socialist economy.
Figure 6: **Examples of Female Dress.** Belted dresses and blouses accentuate the slimness and soft curves of the female body. From *Xiandai Fuzhuang*, Vol. 6, 1983.
Figure 7: Examples of Male Dress. These men's shirts feature angular lines which highlight the broadness of the male models' shoulders. Printed in the upper right-hand side, the adjectives used to describe this kind of wear are: novel, urbane, and tasteful. From Shizhuang, Summer, 1981.
Figure 8: Gendered Uniforms. Displayed are the official national uniforms worn by Chinese athletes at the Ninth Asian Games. Unlike the Maoist "uniform" of the previous era, the differences between the two versions of this uniform label the gender identities of the male and female athletes. From Xiandai Fuzhuang, Vol. 5, 1982.
Negotiating Western/Global Influences in Chinese Fashion

Some of the literature in China studies assumes that this socialist country became increasingly westernized following Mao's death because economic reforms enabled the globalization of the Chinese economy over the past two decades, which resulted in a surge of Western economic, cultural, and political influences. Embedded in this macroscopic perspective is the suggestion, to varying degrees, that China's joining of the global community demonstrates the inevitability of the globalization process. By extension, this sense of "inevitability" is linked to assumptions about passive, inert reception to changes initiated by foreign or global forces. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on, in this case, how China purposely enhanced or limited its cultural interactions with foreign places to her advantage. I favour a perspective that attributes a more active role to China by suggesting her interaction with the global arena was also due to her deliberate reaction against the negative aspects of the Maoist era, specifically the Cultural Revolution. The magazine articles studied here depict not the passive full acceptance of foreign elements and their consequences. Instead, they portray the official state decision to better Chinese society by selectively borrowing and incorporating non-Chinese elements. The goal was to gain greater material prosperity and modernity in the reform era. From this standpoint, China's experience with globalization was unique in that this path was intentionally and discerningly chosen to address the problems and failures rooted in China's contemporary history.

The level of adoption and rejection of Western dress within the twenty year time span studied has fluctuated widely. Nevertheless, it would be a fallacy to characterize the sartorial garb during the Cultural Revolution years as entirely anti-Western and the clothing during the reform years as Westernized. The interplay between the wearing of national and foreign dress in China was significantly more complicated.
During the Maoist era, by far the most popular style of dress was the Mao suit. This dress, however, was actually a variation of the Sun Yat-sen suit (or zhongshan zhuang) which was originally a hybrid style that combined Eastern elements with Western military uniform prototypes. The Sun Yat-sen suit was adopted in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century among the Chinese students who studied in Japan. The return of these students studying abroad led to the introduction of Western dress and uniforms for the youth and intellectuals in China. The design was similar to Western-style uniforms: narrow-legged pants tailored in the western style and body-fitting coats. The efficient body dressed in streamlined, Western military-style civilian wear was a symbol of rejection of the Chinese feudal order and represented the people's desire for democracy, republicanism, and revolution; it also indicated a full acceptance of the need to move towards the modern, and to encourage the development of China.

Decades later, the Mao suit embodied similar nationalistic messages, though with a communist perspective. This dress differed from the Sun Yat-sen suit because it included “the traditional trousers and tunics of Chinese peasants and the Chinese black cotton shoes” in its ensemble. Ironically, the ideologically correct Mao suit, which bore a significant resemblance to western military uniforms, became the quintessential Chinese dress during the Cultural Revolution, a time in which China had very poor relations with Western countries. This Party-sanctioned wear was not Chinese in origin, but it signaled that the wearer was a “politically correct” citizen who believed in the revolutionary values of a new China. Though the foreign elements of the Mao suit were never questioned, members of the Red Guard themselves dressed in these clothes and punished those who wore offending garments, including Western suits and dresses, which they deemed
unacceptably bourgeois and ideologically inconsistent with Party values. Thus, selective features of Western dress were used to reinforce the ideal image of a Chinese citizen.

**Perspectives from Globalization Theories**

Under the Deng regime, a much larger degree of fashion freedom was allowed. The Open Door Policy fostered greater channels of international diplomacy and trade. As Antonia Finnane accurately notes, “fashion was one of many areas in which the opening of a dialogue between China and the rest of the world occurred in the late 1970s.”73 As China began to establish economic and cultural exchanges with foreign countries, it increasingly and consciously played a participatory role in the global arena.

Discussions about non-Chinese clothing and sartorial elements in *Xiandai Fuzhuang* and *Shizhuang* mirror her newly emerging global awareness. These discussions largely fall under three categories that have been studied at length by globalization theorists: heterogenization, homogenization, and hybridization. Because these constructs match some of the magazine content very well, it is useful and appropriate to consider some approaches in globalization theories when analyzing the attitudes toward Western fashions in the post-Mao period.

What is globalization? Roland Robertson offers a broad definition: “globalization as a concept refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole”; its “main empirical focus... is in line with the increasing acceleration in both concrete global interdependence and consciousness of the global whole in the twentieth century.”74 Many scholars, including Arjun Appadurai, Mike Featherstone, Fredric Jameson, and others have discussed the extent to which globalization
creates cultural homogenization versus cultural heterogenization and the tensions between the two phenomena. Cultural homogenization essentially refers to the incorporation, integration, or unification of diverse cultures into a dominant culture. It also fosters the notion of the world as a “singular domesticated space, a place where everyone becomes assimilated into a common culture.” The conceptualizing of the world as a singular whole comprised of various components allows for the articulation of a global culture, a culture that is not necessarily cohesive in nature, but accommodates a discourse in (near) universal commonalities. Fredric Jameson interprets the cultural aspect of globalization as the “worldwide Americanization or standardization of culture, the destruction of local differences, the massification of all the peoples on the planet,” made possible by the transmission of American values and cultural forms via American-based transnational and multinational corporations.

On the other hand, cultural heterogenization allows for the pluralism of local differences to exist and suggests a “dehegemonizing, dehomogenizing world incapable of a formerly enforced politics of assimilation or cultural hierarchy.” In connection with this concept, Jameson claims there is “a postmodern celebration of difference and differentiation” in which “suddenly all the cultures around the world are placed in tolerant contact with each other in a kind of immense cultural pluralism.” Furthermore, he mentions that there is the “emergence of a whole immense range of groups, races, genders, ethnicities into the speech of the public sphere.”

Aside from these two theoretical positions, another concept considered by globalization theorists is the interpenetration and hybridity of diverse cultures. Jonathan Friedman and Ulf Hannerz uses the term “creolization” to refer to “the meeting and mixing of meanings from disparate sources in a single place”; a “process where meanings and
meaningful forms from different historical sources, originally separated from one another in space, come to mingle extensively.\textsuperscript{80} With creolization and globalization at work, the intense transgression of cultural, ethnic, and national boundaries is labelled a global phenomenon. The hybridization or fusion of cultures encourages not only the proliferation of new cultures, but also the emergence of "an immense global urban intercultural festival without a center or even any longer a dominant cultural mode."\textsuperscript{81}

Admittedly, the Chinese of the early 1980s most likely were not fully aware of globalization theories, which were developed primarily among Western circles in recent years. However, as found in the fashion magazines discussed here, terms such as \textit{guoji tongyong} (meaning in common use globally) was used as early as 1981 and \textit{guoji hua} (globalized) in 1985 to refer to Western fashion.\textsuperscript{82} This awareness of global cultural influences and processes led to a range of recommendations about the appropriate level of adopting foreign dress.

**Adopting Western Clothing**

\textit{Xiandai Fuzhuang} and \textit{Shizhuang} do not shy away from the concept of globalized fashion. Expressed by some fashion writers, one generic interpretation is that globalized fashion is equivalent to Western fashion that has been diffused on a world-wide scale. Writers, such as Wu Yong, postulate that Western clothing styles have spread quickly and have become popular worldwide; fashions in different places have much fewer differences.\textsuperscript{83} Items such as jeans and T-shirts, for example, have become ubiquitous and part of daily life in so many places around the world that such items, in many cases, are no longer perceived to convey a Western identity exclusively. China itself realized the strengths of the West in the field of fashion by the late 1970s and it was determined to reform its own outdated
fashion styles of the past thirty years. In the era of reform, the recognition of several advantages of Western clothing is permitted. They are perceived by the fashion magazines to be practical, versatile, aesthetically appealing, and of good quality. Because of these characteristics, fashion writers largely welcome the influence that foreign trends have had on Chinese dress.

It is noteworthy that many images and ideas about fashionable Western clothing are mediated by the existing trends popular in other modernized East Asian societies, namely Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Japan. Because their adapted versions of Western dress do not widely differ from the clothes in Europe and North America, the magazines assume that these East Asian societies are more advanced in adopting global fashion. Their examples of fashion are worth emulating since they are consistent with international trends, yet are Asian interpretations of modernity and popular culture.

Readers are introduced to and educated about Western fashion. The writer Zhang Zhong-Mei claims that individuals who are interested in fashion trends abroad copy Westerners out of curiosity because the “education of aesthetics” has been lacking for years, especially during the 1960s and 1970s. As a result, many Chinese people are believed to have problems relating to the beauty of clothes and are too unfamiliar with novel dress designs. The magazines respond to this lack of knowledge by professing the need to teach people the features and proper ways of wearing Western clothes. The magazines show women wearing fashionable Western dress and accessories (see figure 9). Men are depicted in tennis, track, biker wear and garments conveying army and space looks (these were popular trends of the early 1980s). Another popular trend is the casual look. As typified by American fashions, this is a convenient, natural, comfortable style achieved by wearing jeans, woolen sweaters, short jackets, overalls, or athletic wear.
Figure 9: **Examples of Western Wear.** The fashion models are wearing Western-style hats, belts, jackets, skirts, and high-heeled boots that were produced in China. From *Shizhuang*, Vol. 2, 1982.
In one Question & Answer column, a particular worker in the Chinese clothing industry speaks of her problems differentiating the types of clothing suitable for various occasions. She identifies this practice as being very common in foreign countries, but less so in China. The columnist's advice is that Western styles have become the standard international fashion and clothes are worn in particular situations and occasions. Formal wear can be divided between day and evening wear and pyjamas can not be worn outside the bedroom. The changing of clothes for different occasions represents a higher level of materialism and consumption. The desire and ability to adopt this supposed Western custom among ordinary Chinese people indicate their awareness of the increasing affluence of Chinese society.

A second reader wants to know the ethics of wearing bell-bottoms. The editor advises her that as long as a person does not wear clothing that is overly revealing, thus leading to catching a cold, it does not matter what one wears; the instances where ignorant Red Guards violently destroyed one's thin pants during the Cultural Revolution should never be repeated. Again, the magazines not only tutor people about appropriate dress, but they are also quick to reinforce the idea that China has embarked on a new era. Unlike one of the most turbulent periods in modern Chinese history, the post-Mao era does not have apparent shortages of material goods and the violent suppression of bourgeois foreign styles of clothing is acknowledged openly as a mistake. As represented and advocated by these fashion magazines, the adoption of Western dress, loosely perceived as global fashion, gives support to the position that clothing, a vital aspect of culture, can be subject to homogenization on a global scale. The implied effect is the disintegration of boundaries that traditionally have distinguished diverse cultures.
Encouraging Pride in Distinctive Chinese Dress

Despite the welcome and popularity of Western fashion, nationalistic pride in Chinese clothing was officially encouraged. It was emphasized consistently that China had been a strong state with many ethnic minorities and that it had a very long history of fashion. Before the twentieth century, Chinese fashion greatly impacted Western and Japanese clothes\(^89\); chinoiserie was an enduring trend in Europe from the seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries. The writer Bai Chong-Li mentioned in 1986 that Yves St. Laurent was quite impressed with China. The world-renowned French designer allegedly mused about the greatness of China and Chinese civilization, and said he was very thankful for silk.\(^90\)

Raising such points to praise the historic strength and impact of Chinese sartorial traditions, these magazines suggest that Chinese fashions should recognize and defend their distinctive national styles or features (*fengge geyi*) rather than being fully assimilated by Western dress. Chinese people should be proud of their rich fashion history and not undermine their own national characteristics by blindly copying foreign garments.\(^91\) To help instill confidence in their own dress traditions, it was argued that developing a separate, uniquely Chinese fashion culture would be well-received on the international scene. The writers Zhang-Hua Feng and Hua Gu suggested in 1982 that silk garments embroidered with Asian motifs and patterns such as the double phoenix and the peony were popular abroad.\(^92\) There was also a prediction that the *qipao* would become trendy again. Purportedly, this traditional-style dress was regarded as well-suited for women of all ages and occupations, was versatile\(^93\) and best reflected a women’s bodily curves.\(^94\) Readers were also encouraged to wear styles of Chinese clothing as depicted in figure 10. Such rhetoric displays some degree of anxiety and fear over Western assimilation. This reflects the apprehensions the
Figure 10: **Drawn Images of Chinese-style Dress.** Readers were advised to proudly wear these styles of clothes. From *Xiandai Fuzhuang*, Vol. 1, 1985.
state had over losing its ability to shape the meaning of Chinese cultural identity in the name of reform and globalization.

These points dispel the notion that globalization leads to cultural homogenization. In fact, the conscious decision to withstand globalization and to defend national cultures, as revealed in the discourse of the Chinese magazines, strengthens the argument that heterogeneous local, regional, and national cultures do resist transnational or global trends. In this sense, cultural heterogenization is a product of tensions between the universal and the particular. The boundaries between these two elements are not dismantled due to desires to preserve cultural distinctiveness and national pride.

Articulating a Hybrid Style

Detailed above are two opposing attitudes toward Western clothing: the adoption versus the resistance of this form of dress. To relieve the anxieties over assimilation, the idea of zhongxi hebi, or in other words the fusion of the Chinese with the Western, is proposed as the key to the success of Chinese fashion. Rather than simply welcoming or resisting global fashion, this compromise suggests the blending of styles from abroad with Chinese design theories so that the best fashion ideas and techniques within and outside of China can be combined. The magazines advocate the study, use, and observation of fashion styles from other countries and understanding the trends from abroad in order to benefit and improve native Chinese designs. In learning from other countries, only their strengths and not their the flaws would be adopted. This principle is regarded as "politically correct" because the idea is derived from one of Mao's quotes dated 1940:

To nourish its one culture China needs to assimilate a good deal of progressive foreign culture, not enough of which has been done in the past... However, we should not swallow this foreign material uncritically,
but must treat it as we do our own food – first putting it in the mouth and chewing it, then submitting it to the working of the stomach and intestines with their juices and secretions, and separating it into the nutrient to be absorbed and waste matter to be discarded. We must not absorb it uncritically and completely. The so-called proposition of “wholesale westernization” is a mistaken view...

In the context of fashion, this suggested type of learning rejects the mere copying of foreign styles and the neglect of rich cultural dress traditions of China. Rather, it gives support to the idea of proudly creating a new, modern, distinctive sartorial look belonging to China. For example, the designer from the No. 4 Beijing Garment Factory suggests not the copying of ancient fashion designs, but the pairing of ethnic minority motifs and dress characteristics with modern Western designs for a contemporary, updated Chinese look (see figure 11). The article “A Discussion on Ancient and Contemporary Qipaos” provides three drawings of the dress (see figure 12). The image on the left shows the type of qipao that was popular in the 1920s and 1930s. The other two images show updated versions of the dress with non-Chinese elements incorporated. The picture in the middle displays a semi-open collar while the image on the right includes ruffles on the sleeves and along the hem of the dress.

To convince readers of the fashionableness of wearing hybrid Chinese clothing, writers claim that the fusion of Chinese and Western designs is the key to popularizing Chinese fashion on international markets. With an exotic, Sino-Western style expected to become popular world-wide and a component of global fashion, readers are encouraged to take pride in the contribution of Chinese dress. When writers use the term global fashion in the context of blended fashion designs, they are not using it as a synonym for Western dress. Rather, they use the term to refer to a new globally dominant fashion discourse created from the intermingling and fusion of diverse styles, ideas, and meanings that originate from
Figure 11: Updated Versions of Chinese Clothing. The combining of ethnic motifs with Western styles was expected to very popular domestically and internationally. From Xiandai Fuzhuang, Vol. 13, 1985.
Figure 12: Fusing Chinese and Western Elements in Qipaos. The designs in the middle and on the right reinterpret the basic qipao style. From Shizhuang, Vol. 1, 1984.
different parts of the world. The adoption of Chinese clothing elements to global fashion represents not only a respectful acknowledgement of China’s rich sartorial tradition but also demonstrate its increased contribution to the global cultural arena in the post-Mao period.

Using concepts drawn from globalization theories, one could argue that the creolization or hybridization of clothing styles signals the unabashed deconstruction of cultural boundaries. Theoretically, this would challenge the idea of a dominant cultural mode that exists at the expense of less dominant cultures. In China’s case, though, the recommended style of *zhongxi hebi* involves notions of critically assimilating only worthy aspects of “progressive foreign cultures” for the purposes of self-improvement, to use Mao’s terms. Implicated in this view of cultural fusion are subtle suggestions of inadequacy, competitive betterment, and the desire to learn selectively from a dominating cultural mode. This interpretation complicates some theoretical ideals about the hybridization of cultures. It challenges the notion of “an immense global urban intercultural festival” that rejects a primary core for the purposes of accommodating diverse cultures equally in a non-competitive, truly amicable spirit.

**Conclusion**

*Xiaodai Fuzhuang* and *Shizhuang*, published soon after the 1978 economic reforms were introduced, tutored their readers about the wearing of fashionable clothing with the intention of repudiating the radicalism of the Maoist era and affirming the post-Mao reforms. As a “pedagogical state” that adopted a guiding and tutelary role, the People’s Republic of China taught its people particular values and views in hopes of having an enlightened citizenry that would strengthen the state. China assumed that the modernization of the country was directly associated with the education and refinement of individuals. The
state-run magazines in the early 1980s mediated and communicated interactions between the
state and the individual. With growing consumerism, the introduction of more liberal
policies, and other changing conditions associated with the recent modernization of China,
the magazines guided readers how to express the state’s growing material prosperity through
the wearing of aesthetic clothing. Proper individual fashion practices were seen as
contributing to Chinese society.

The magazines gave their approval of gendered dress that revealed or enhanced
one’s bodily differences and rejected Maoist unisex clothing that hid these distinctions. This
was a significant transition. The former ideals of a disciplined, revolutionary body that
embodied anti-bourgeois values were replaced by notions about appreciating the body for its
unique characteristics and beauty. Despite the rejection of Maoist dress ideals and the
urging of individualistic dress, however, the assumed relationship between the clothed body
and the mind (and likewise, the state) still remained. The construction of a body garbed in
clothing that represented the latest in Chinese and international styles signalled the
abandonment of ultra leftist ideology, and was also intended to convey the level of material
progress achieved since the reforms.

The adoption of Western dress was not new to China. The design of the Mao suit
was based (indirectly) on Western-style military uniforms of the late nineteenth and early
twentieth centuries. Nonetheless, this garb became quintessential Chinese wear during the
Cultural Revolution years. It was deemed ideologically correct and it identified the wearer
to the causes of the Chinese Communist Party. But after 1978, the departure from Maoist
dress coincided with China’s relative fashion liberalism, increased interactions with foreign
countries, and a greater awareness of global influences. It was in this context that the
fashion magazines advocated the wearing of foreign, specifically Western, dress. However,
to avoid fashion assimilation, it also suggested the retaining of traditional Chinese styles. The fusion of Chinese and Western sartorial elements was recommended as a means of accommodating the best of both traditions. The goal was to modernize and update Chinese dress and to have it become a component of global fashion. Despite these slightly conflicting recommendations, the basic assumption was that wearing near monotonous clothing (as had been the case in the Maoist period) was no longer adequate. As portrayed by the fashion writers, the pursuit for fashionable clothing, whether the style originated from within or outside China, was not only acceptable, but it signaled a significant step toward attaining modern living.

This paper has focused on the analysis of official discourse. To build on this research, some related questions should be explored in future scholarship. To what extent did people actually rely or depend on these state-sponsored magazines for examples of “aesthetic” and “beautiful” clothing? How closely did readers follow the prescribed recommendations of state-run popular magazines in the post-Mao period? Documented case studies of people’s actual practices of and attitudes toward consuming fashion in the early 1980s need to be made. The questions of whether or not the Chinese identified with “global culture” and how they actually responded to the fusion of East Asian styles with Western designs (a popular fashion trend among numerous world-class designers in recent years) remain unanswered.

Some broader issues also should be examined closely. It would be interesting to gauge the people’s reactions to the media’s justification of activities once ruthlessly labelled as bourgeois, immoral, and counter-revolutionary. How the fashion writers themselves reasoned their duties to the state versus their responsibilities to the reading public should be
addressed. Finally, more details of how economic changes in China have helped transform people’s suppressed cultural and material lives should be revealed in future studies.
Endnotes

1 Li Long (李龙), “Fakan Ci” 发刊词 (Foreword), Xiandai Fuzhuang, Vol. 1, 1981, 3. The term “beautifying people’s lifestyles” is used liberally by the magazine writers yet it is not often clearly defined in concrete, quantifiable terms.


7 Orville Schell has written numerous books about China in the early years of reform, including To Get Rich is Glorious: China in the 80s (New York : New American Library, 1986) and “Watch Out for the Foreign Guests!” China Encounters the West (New York : Pantheon Books, 1980).


12 Yan, 164.

13 Yan, 185.

14 Ban Wang, The Sublime Figure of History: Aesthetics and Politics in Twentieth-Century China (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 6-7.

15 Ban Wang, 123.


17 Ban Wang, 23.

18 Ban Wang, 166.


20 As quoted in Ban Wang 23.


Chin-Chuan Lee, “Mass Media: Of China, about China,” in Voices of China: The Interplay of Politics and Journalism, ed. Chin-Chuan Lee (New York, London: Guildford Press, 1990), 12. For more on the nature of media, journalism, propaganda, and thought work in China, see Judy Polumbaum’s “The Tribulations of China’s Journalists After a Decade of Reform,” in Voices of China: The Interplay of Politics and Journalism, Daniel Lynch’s After the Propaganda State: Media, Politics, and “Thought Work” in Reformed China (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), and Robert L. Bishop’s Qi Lai! Mobilizing One Billion Chinese: The Chinese Communication System (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1989). David E. Apter, and Tony Saich’s Revolutionary Discourse in Mao’s Republic (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1994) explores the political and social discourse that was derived from the experiences, ideals, and goals of the Communist Yan’an community in the 1930s and 1940s and the ways in which these (definitive) discourses were used to bind individuals together to form a cohesive collective. Michael Schoenhals’s Doing Things with Words in Chinese Politics: Five Studies (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1992) discusses how the restrictive, formalized speech acts and language of politics have helped constitute the structure of power within China’s political system during the Maoist period.

“Yuan <Shizhuang> yuandi baihua jingyan,” 14.

“Fakan Ci,” 3.


Feng Wei-guo (冯卫国), “Fuwu renmin meihua shenghuo” 服务 人民 美化 生活 (Serving the people, beautifying lifestyles), Xiandai Fuzhuang, Vol. 4, 1985, 3.


“Yuan <Shizhuang> yuandi baihua jingyan,” 14.

“Meihua shenghuo, cujin sihua,” 15.


Elvin, 317.

Wilson, 176.


Chen, 146.

As quoted in Wilson, 171.


Chen, 159.


47 “Fuzhuang zaoxing yu renti jiegou de guanxi,” 5.

48 Zhang Ren-xiu (张仁修), “Cong shengli jiaodu tantan muqian guowai liuxing de diyaoku” (From a Physiological Perspective, a Discussion on Low-Rise Pants which are Currently Popular Abroad), *Xiandai Fuzhuang*, Vol. 13, 1985, 23.


52 Zhang Li-li (张丽丽), “Qianxi fuzhuang de zhengtimei” (A general analysis on the whole beauty of clothing), *Xiandai Fuzhuang*, Vol. 6, 1985, 10.

53 Jie Zi-jing (解子敬), “Mei shi zenyang chuangzao chulai de?” (How is beauty created?), *Xiandai Fuzhuang*, Vol. 6, 1985, 10.


55 He, 228.

56 “Dakai xinling de shichang,” 8.

57 “Dakai xinling de shichang,” 8.

58 Yue Wa (月华), “Chuanzhe heshi jiu shi mei” (Wearing the appropriate is beautiful), *Shizhuang*, Summer, 1981, 45.


62 Chen, 151.


66 “Dakai xinling de shichang,” 8.

67 Shilling, 109.

68 Evans, *Women and Sexuality in China*.


71 An Yu-ying (安毓英) and Jin Geng-rong (金庆荣), *Zhongguo Xiandai Fuzhuang Shi* [中国现代服装史] (Beijing: China Light Industry Press, 1999), 28.

72 Steele and Major, 57.


Glossary of Chinese Terms

chenwen 沉稳
fengge geyi 风格格异
guoji hua 国际化
guoji tongyong 国际通用
jingshen wenming 精神文明
nengzheng huihua 能挣会花
qipao 旗袍
renqing mei 人情美
renxing mei 人性美
Shizhuang 时装
wuzhi wenming 物质文明
Xiandai Fuzhuang 现代服装
xin 心
xin sannian, jiu sannian, fengfeng bubu you sannian 新三年，旧三年，缝缝补补又三年
zhengti mei 整体美
zhongshan zhuang 中山装
zhongxi hebi 中西合璧
zhuangzhong 庄重
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Yue Wa (月华). “Chuanzhe heshi jiu shi mei” 穿著合适就是美 (Wearing the appropriate is beautiful). *Shizhuang* Summer 1981: 45.


Zhang Ren-xiu (张仁修). “Cong shengli jiaodu tantan muqian guowai liuxing de diyaoku” 从生理角度谈谈目前国外流行的低腰裤 (From a Physiological Perspective, a Discussion on Low-Rise Pants which are Currently Popular Abroad). Xiandai Fuzhuang Vol. 13, 1985: 23.


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