

The Relationship between the Thought of Zen and Lao-tzu and The Costume of the American Beat Generation and Hippie

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Costume is a code of culture. However, it is so rare that a costume culture reflects only the culture of its own society. In most cases, a culture of costume is an outcome of the adoption of and the integration with external cultures. The contemporary world is a global village. People's interests in and understanding of different cultures have risen and ideas of dichotomy - e.g., division between the main stream and the branches or between the First World and the Third World - have been faded away. As a result, the significance of the influence of Eastern culture and thought on Western costume is being recognized in the Western costume history.

America has lively contacted Eastern thought, especially owing to the Second World War, the Korean War, and Asians' immigration to the country. In particular, the ideas of Zen and Lao-tzu, which reject secularism and formality, had great influences on the way of life and the arts of the Beat Generation and the Hippie, the representatives of the American youth culture during the 1950's and the 1960's respectively.

The Beat Generation rejected the contemporary repressive social institutions and artificiality and pursued the life based on the law of nature. Such attitudes of the Beat Generation were embedded in their literature, which emphasized free forms in style and adopted the thought of Zen and Lao-tzu as the theme of their work. That way of life and the arts were designated as the "Beat Movement," and it has been recognized one of the representative cultural movements during the 1950s.

The Hippie was a generation largely influenced by the Beat Generation. The Hippie actively participated in achieving peace and nature-friendly life, denying the typical American systems of industrialism and materialism. This way of life stemmed from their thought, freedom from avarice, which had been significantly influenced by Eastern religions and ideas, including Zen and Lao-tzu thought based on humanism and naturalism.

Considering costume is a code of culture, it seems to be plausible that the thought of Zen and Lao-tzu had influences on the costume culture of the Beat Generation and the Hippie. The idea of this study was to examine what factors of the ideas of Zen and Lao-tzu influenced the costume cultures of the Beat Generation and the Hippie and how the ideas were reflected in their costume. The study might provide a balanced view for the study of Western costume culture, which had a bias of focusing on Western thought and aesthetics, by finding the signified of the thought of Zen and Lao-tzu in the Western costume cultures and expand the knowledge of the costume culture of

the Beat Generation.

The study categorized the characteristics common to the ideas of Zen and Lao-tzu as freedom from avarice, liberalism, co-existence with nature, and oneness. The freedom from avarice refers to the idea of the self-disciplined simple and frugal life which empties the tenacity for worldly desires. The Beat Generation felt joy in such a life and shared material and spiritual properties with each other. They usually wore the simple costume such as leather jacket, T-shirt, blue jeans, sneakers or military shoes. The Hippie wore simple or second-hand clothing as well. However, the latter created a costume culture, which had a variety in terms of signifier in relation to that of the former, by producing the costume in the way of expressing individuality creatively by means of tie-dying, patch work, painting or decoration with cheap beads or silver trinkets.

The liberalism means the idea to achieve the *true* life which distrusts the artificial, breaks away from physical and mental repression - or restraint - and finds one's *true* being. The Beat Generation practiced this thought in their ways of life. They rejected flannel suits and T.P.O., which were standardized signs of the establishment and wore casual and comfortable clothes such as leather jacket, blue jeans or check shirt. The Hippie expressed liberalism in their nudism, bare feet, longhairs, historical costume and the Third World style clothing.

The idea of the co-existence with nature is to commit one's life to the law of nature and to return to primitive life, removing the artificial. The thought of Zen and Lao-tzu has the idea that there are spiritual relationships between nature and human and, therefore, preaches that man adapt his or her life to the law of nature. The Beat Generation adopted the idea and reflected it in their arts. Its signs could be found in the forms of jeans, natural colors and non-synthetic fabrics in their costume. The Hippie, who asserted the living harmonized with nature, wore the costume reflecting the idea, non-synthetic fabrics, second-hand clothes, or clothes patch-worked or tie-dyed. In addition, they striped themselves naked or wore their hair long, hoping closely contact nature.

The oneness refers to the state which realizes the relationships of the same kind in the relationships between all beings, denying any relative concept or taxonomy. The Beat Generation adopted the concepts of oneness and reflected them in the costume. People with the clothes of the Beat Generation, which were thrifty, simple and liberal, could not be classified according to social status or economic capability. The Hippie rejected any factors of costume constituting the worldly standards by wearing the traditional costume or ornaments of Africa, Mexico, India or China.

This study shed lights on the thought of Zen and Lao-tzu reflected in the costume of the beat and the hippie by examining the relation of their costume culture to their philosophy, arts and modes of behavior. The study found the expression of the ideas of Zen and Lao-tzu - freedom from avarice, liberalism, co-existence with nature, and oneness - in the costume of the beat and the hippie and, as a result, could draw a spirit of the age common to the East and the West.