

# A Study on the Structural Characteristics of Spencer Jacket in Empire Style(1789~1820)

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## I. Introduction

The theme of design can be easily found in images of various styles that have reflected the history of costume from unique decoration of the primitive times to ancient costume, middle, and modern costume. Among those various styles, Spence jacket of Empire Style(1789~1820), in particular, were selected for this study. Given that the Empire Style, featuring H-line silhouette and a high waist-line, is characterized by an emphasis on natural beauty of human body and more decorative and feminine silhouette compared to modern customs, this style is thought to appeal to taste of modern women. In addition, Spencer jacket is appeared to well embrace the characteristics of Empire Style, thus can be applied to a wide range of the study.

The purpose of the study was to demonstrate how to recreate Spencer jacket of Empire Style in an attempt to apply this historic style to theatrical costumes and other high fashion items in modern times.

## II. Review of Literature

Having been introduced in early 19th century under the reign of Napoleon I (1804~15) where Neoclassicism became predominant, the Empire Style costume was an attempt to recapture classic simplicity and straight lines which show Greek influence. The era of Empire Style continued in fashion until 1820 because the rebirth of real Classicism had begun after French Revolution and radical changes had not been seen from 1789 to 1820. Women's costume in the era of Empire Style, which at this period was inclined to royal court and aristocracy (i.e., exaggerated silhouette and dazzling ornament), was gradually softened into a natural look of human beings that anticipated the Neoclassicism.

The Spencer was a short top jacket worn by both males and females during the era of empire style and it gained increasing popularity among women as a high-waisted overcoat for cold weather. The spencer was a short form of jacket with long sleeves and front opening. It was

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worn as a cardigan of today on a typical empire style of white chemise dress.

### **III. Methods**

#### **1. Classification of Spencer Jacket Design**

Literature, films and other visual information were utilized in order to classify the designs of Spencer jacket.

#### **2 Production of Spencer Jacket using Patterns Shown in Literatures and Those Commercially used**

##### **1) Patterns Shown in Literatures**

In order to characteristics of Spencer jacket design, new Spencer jackets were created using the patterns illustrated in literatures. With reference to three literatures illustrating a pattern shrunken by 1/8, four different designs of Spencer jackets were created Existing pattern in the literatures was reproduced in order to create a new pattern for this study by enlarging one square of calibrations on the pattern to 8 times full size(1 inch× 1 inch; 2.5cm× 2.5cm). Then, based on the new pattern, spencer jackets were tailored with 20Ne muslin.

##### **2) Commercially Used Pattern**

Another type of Spencer jacket was adapted by using patterns that were commercially used. Four Spencer patterns and one ready-made jacket were purchased through an Internet site. The jacket size was selected to fit to a body of size 55 (bust girth= 85cm) and was cut out and sewed with 20Ne muslin.

### **IV. Results and Discussion**

#### **1 The Style of Spencer jackets**

Literature, films and other visual information about Spencer jacket were examined in order to categorize the Spencer jacket designs. The results showed that Spencer jacket can be categorized into following three styles: (1) Jackets having open front without button stands and standing collar. (2) Jackets having double breasted opening and notched collar. (3) Jackets having single breasted opening and flat collar with waist band.

#### **2 Design Characteristics of Spencer Jacket**

The characteristics of Spencer jacket design were as follows: (1) Short jacket length. (2) Armhole line moved inwards. (3) Long fit shaped puff sleeves, whose puff being distributed more heavily over back of the sleeve. (4) Diamond shaped back bodice, which are consisted with

princess lines and shoulder lines moved backwards.

## **V. Conclusion**

The results of the study will help fashion designers and students in designing Spencer jacket of empire style by providing hands-on patterns and specific composition method. In addition, it is encouraged to apply Spencer design and structural characteristics of the jacket which were demonstrated in this study to modern costume design for more creative works.

## **References**

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