Constructing Modern Ethnic Myth:

A Cultural Analysis of the Hanfu Movement

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Abstract

This ethnographic study investigates the rising Hanfu movement in China. Hanfu, literally means the clothing of Han ethnicity, but it is a newly coined terminology. The movement takes Hanfu as a symbol and aims to redefine the position of Han ethnicity in Chinese society and extend the influence of Chinese culture in the worldwide. Methods including interviewing, netnography and critical discourse analysis are employed in the research. In this thesis I explore the narratives around Hanfu, the identity and self-image constructed by Hanfu supporters and the paradoxes of the movement. Daniel Miller's concept of stuff, Benedict Anderson's imagined communities and Manuel Castells' idea of contemporary identity are the basis of the theoretical framework. The findings from my fieldwork indicate that the Hanfu movement is a typical nationalist movement, the movement per se faces multiple challenges. Besides, the nation-building process of modern China is still ongoing.

Keywords: Hanfu; nationalism; clothing; China; Han; social movement

摘要

這項民族志研究調查了在中國正冉冉升起的漢服運動。漢服，本意即漢族的服飾。但其是一個新近被創造出來的術語。該運動以漢服為標誌，旨在重新定義漢族在中國社會中的地位，並在世界範圍內擴大中國文化的影響力。該研究採用了訪談，網絡志和批評性話語分析等方法。在本文中，我討論了漢服的敘事，漢服支持者所建構的身份和自我形象以及運動中的悖論。丹尼爾·米勒關於物的概念，本尼迪克特·安德森想像的共同體以及曼努埃爾·卡斯特斯關於當代身份的概念，都是本文理論框架的來源。我田野調查的結果表明，漢服運動是典型的民族主義運動，其運動本身面臨著多重挑戰。此外，近代中國的國族構造仍在進行中。

關鍵詞：漢服；民族主義；服裝；中國；漢；社會運動

Acknowledgments

Table of Content

Introduction

Background

Clothing conveys multiple meanings: where we are from; who we are; what our occupations are; personalities and our tastes. Clothing forms a special physical as well as cultural boundary, and it keeps implying the subtle differences between "we" and "others". Hanfu enthusiasts is a group of Chinese people who reacquired knowledge of traditional attire and struggle to revive the ancient dressing based on some archeological evidences. They share information in online communities and meet offline. The way they are wandering around Chinese public parks, streets, and campuses, quietly reshapes the landscape of cities. Hanfu, which means the clothing of Han ethnicity, is a way they distinct us and them.

The Hanfu revival is a quite new cultural phenomenon. The first Hanfu enthusiastic spotted in street and reported by mass media was no more than 20 years ago. In contrast to Hanfu making has become a dramatically rising industry which values more than 4.5 billion yuan in 2019 (iiMedia Report, 2020), the whole Hanfu circle was just a net-based small community 20 years ago. Currently, the Hanfu fever transnationally attracts an increasing number of people. In a long-term historical perspective, the Hanfu movement is unique in comparison to previous clothing practices in China, as it is not led by Chinese elites (Chew, 2010, p. 11-13). It is a complete grassroot movement originating online. In a wider international context, dressing as a cultural and political symbol plays a part in identifying "we" and "others" (Yangzom, 2016, p. 13). The new intangible and fresh details, displayed in the Hanfu clothing and movement, inspire me to explore the cultural meaning of Hanfu more fully. By observing through ethnographical lens, I will connect the clothing to a larger picture relating to cyberspace, identity, ethnicity, nationalism, urbanization, commercialization and globalization.

Objective and Research Questions

Reviving clothing is only the first aim for pioneers of Hanfu movement who hold a big dream about Han culture. Meanwhile, controversies around Hanfu never stop. A more in depth cultural analysis is therefore fruitful to understand all the discussions spinning around Hanfu and the underlying factors driving advocators to promote this, twenty years ago, almost forgotten attire. Through analyzing the Hanfu culture, using cultural analytical theories on identity on- and off-line and imagined communities, it is possible to answer larger questions about internet-based community as an expression of Chinese identity issue in the new millennium.

The thesis is based on an ethnographic investigation of the Hanfu community which is active both online and offline. The Hanfu community is the starting point to view the whole process of the movement. To address the objective, the following research questions will be answered:

- What aims are expressed by the Hanfu community? Has the pursuit of the movement changed?
- What is the narrative of Hanfu given by the Hanfu community?
- How do Hanfu supporters construct an identity and self-image through Hanfu clothing?
- What is the underlying impetus of Hanfu revival? What does it mean to contemporary China?

"Han" and "Hanfu"

豈曰無衣　*How shall it be said that you have no clothes*
與子同裳　*I will share my long robes with you*
王于興師　*The king is raising his forces*
修我甲兵　*I will prepare my buffcoat and sharp weapons*
與子偕行　*And will march along with you*
　　— *Classic of Poetry • Odes of Qin • Wuyi*[1]

The above quote is an excerpt from *Classic of Poetry* (詩經), the oldest existing collection of ancient Chinese poetry. 2500 years ago, in the period of Warring States, the loyal minister of *Chu* State

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[1] The book of ancient poetry translated in English verse, with essays and notes, by James Legge.

headed for the *Qin* State to ask for emergency military assistance. The king of *Qin* gave no response until the minister kept crying and kneeling in the yard for seven days. Finally, the king was deeply touched by the minister, wrote down the poem and decided to help *Chu* push back their enemy[2]. From then on, soldiers called each other *tongpao* which means sharing the same robe. In the view of Hanfu movement supporters, the situation they are facing now is no easier than a war. The word, *tongpao* (同袍), has been resurrected and become a jargon of Hanfu community to refer to Hanfu proponents. Before starting our exploration, it is necessary to briefly introduce and explain the meaning of "Han" and "Hanfu".

The character "Han" (漢) has multiple meanings in Chinese context. The Chinese language is referred to as Han language (*hanyu* 漢語) and the Chinese script is known as Han characters (*hanzi* 漢字). Besides, the name of the ethnic group of the majority population in China is the Han. It is not a coincidence. All the terms are legacies of the Han dynasty when the empire witnessed great cultural prosperity and established the famous trade network named as the Silk Road. As the result, a sinophone world gradually formed and the Chinese ancestors started to identify themselves as the Han (Xu, 2016, p. 31). In contemporary context, the contemporary conception of Han is partially the result of identifying ethnicity (in Chinese *minzu* 民族) process led by social scientists. The identifying practice is borrowed from the Soviet Union and guided by Soviet theories (Wang, 2010, p. 99-101). Until now, 56 ethnic groups are recognized. The Han makes up 91.6% of the population of the mainland China in 2010.[3]

Hanfu (漢服), a two-character word combines "Han" (漢) and clothing (服). The terminology was rarely used before the emergence of the Hanfu movement. The term caused misunderstanding when it is first become known to the public, who may think/thought it is the clothing of the Han dynasty. In a general sense, Hanfu encompasses various styles of traditional dressing from several dynasties,

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[2] Zuo Qiuming. "BOOK XI. DUKE DING"

[3] PRC http://www.gov.cn/guoqing/2015-03/17/content_2835377.htm

except the *Qing* and *Yuan* dynasty which were founded by minority groups. The definition is quite board and ambiguous. We will see heated controversies surrounding the definition in the following part.

Overview of Structure

The overall structure of the study takes the form of eight chapters. The following theoretical chapter introduces three theories tools closely connected to this topic, Daniel Miller's materiality theory, Benedict Anderson's discussions on the origin of modern nationalism and Manuel Castells' theory of identity issue at the age of globalization. The previous studies of the Hanfu movement, Han-ness and the Han nationalism also provides significant theoretical frames which guide the analysis. The third chapter includes the description of the field sites, employed methods and description of material in my research.

The analysis part is presented in four main chapters. In the fourth chapter, we explore the construction process of Han category and the sharp distinction between modern Han and Han in ancient time. The fifth chapter pictures the fate of clothing related to Chineseness from a historical perspective, which partially explains reasons of clothing selected as a symbol of the nationalist movement. Through the discursive analysis tool, the sixth chapter aims to explore the historical narratives of the Hanfu movement and further discuss it in three different levels. Besides, the Hanfu movement will be analyzed in the aspect of social movement. In the seventh chapter, three aspects of challenges will be examined, including the tension between the official and the grassroots, the collision of traditional ethnic concept and western nationalism as well as the new trends of the movement. In the last chapter, conclusions and suggestions for applicability will be presented.

Theoretical Framework

In 2007, the fifth year of Hanfu movement, a key opinion leader of the movement passed away due

to heart attack. Xishan[4], one of the leading figures, took the responsibility for managing a Han culture website and an online Hanfu forum. Two years later, a Hanfu supporter posted the Collected Works of Xishan which is 593 pages in total. One article title in it is *On the Differences of old-style Clothing and Hanfu*.

> Old-style clothing (guzhuang,古裝) is beautiful and it dressed ancestors. Hanfu is clothing as well. At first sight, there is no distinction. However, old-style clothing stops while Hanfu goes further. Hanfu is not clothing essentially. It is a spirit, a self-awareness, a kind of awareness of ethnicity, culture, history and civilization.

How does the "spirit" enshrine in Hanfu? What kind of spirit it is? In order to answer these questions and conduct analysis, I will present the ideas in Daniel Miller's *Stuff*, Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* and Manuel Castells' *The Power of Identity*.

Stuff shows people tend to underestimate the importance of material things. Clothing as stuff is usually viewed as superficial decoration of everyday life. However, the omission of material things just confirmed the power of unspoken stuff which deeply reshapes human experiences and social interactions (Miller, 2009). In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson points out that painting capitalism and national language were woven together and resulted in the birth of modern nationalism. The emergence of imagined community has evoked strong emotions of its members and changed social life (Anderson, 1983). Similarly, Castells focuses on the reconstruction of nation in his *The Power of Identity*. He argues the nationalism movements present several new features in current information age, which may not be led by elites and could be independent of nation-state (Castells, 2010, p. 32).

Hanfu as Stuff

In the article of Xishan, Hanfu become part of self-consciousness. According to Xishan, people wear

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[4] Wang Hongbo 汪洪波, alias Xishan Qinkuang 溪山琴况

Hanfu since they have self-awareness and the respect for their own culture. In this sense, Hanfu completes the self. The connection of clothing and the self is deeply discussed by Miller. In the first chapter of *Stuff*, Miller thick describes how the Indian sari creates being an Indian woman emotionally and physically. Pallu, "the free and usually more decorated end of the sari, falls over the left shoulder down to the waist" (Miller, 2009, p. 29), has multiple usages. It plays an important role when women deal with household chores, like lifting a hot pot in kitchen. It is also the physical embodiment for mother's love, because it is used as a nursing tool by Indian mothers. However, pallu could also be used as a tool to commit suicide. In some situations, girls cover their mouth with pallu to hide laughter while pallu is considered as erotica in other scenarios (Miller, 2009, p. 33). Women learn how to walk, sit, move, laugh, weep with the sari. Sari creates the special experience and shapes the meaning of being an Indian woman. The process is so natural that people hardly aware how their emotions and movements are shaped by clothing (Miller, 2009, p. 33-37). This taken-for-grantedness proves the power of unspoken stuff. In the case of Hanfu, it is observable how people behave differently while wearing Hanfu rather than casual clothes. Chinese hand fan, as a usual prop with Hanfu, is used flexibly to hide facial expression, show politeness or chase butterflies. In this regard, clothing is not merely a way to represent the self. On the contrary, clothing as an inherently social thing is actually wearing people.

Miller challenges the underlying assumption within western philosophy that an authentic self is located deep inside ourselves, which is called *depth ontology* by Miller (2009, p. 22). The distinction of the interior and the exterior results in the idea that clothing is a semiotic sign and a symbol of ourselves. However, by examining the relation of clothing and the person in different cultures, the clothing comes out not a superficial representation of the self. Instead, we possess an onion-like self (Miller 2009, p. 19). Every single layer is part of the self. If we ignore the natural intimacy between clothing and the self, we deny the true inner self. Based on the new recognition of clothing, it is understandable that Xishan differentiates Hanfu from old-style clothing and embeds it in the cultural spirit.

Imagined Communities

> Today, the western-style wedding is all the rage. The imported white wedding dresses has captured almost all Chinese brides. In fact, the so called western-style wedding is not truly western. The spirit of Christianity is stripped away; the church and the piety of doctrine have been diminished; the original spirit has disappeared. Only the white dress left… In recent years, cheongsam reappears as wedding dress, but its history is less than one hundred years. (Xishan, 2009)

Xishan expressed his big worry that Han people have forgotten all their wedding tradition. In this narrative, the opposite of Hanfu is western clothing and cheongsam (長衫, also known as *qipao* 旗袍, is a type of body-hugging dress of Manchu origin). Western wedding dress is borrowed from the west, thus it has no cultural root in China while cheongsam is not qualified to represent the Han due to its short history. Words like "truly", "original", "spirit" can be found in his article, which shows his pursuit for purity. If western dress is fake and cheongsam is unqualified, what is real? What is important here is not the answer, but the process of seeking for the real ethnical spirit. As current society is not what they expect, pioneers of Hanfu movement launched several revival plans, covering clothing, rituals, festivals and educations. China's "real" spirit is constructed and imagined by Hanfu advocators.

To explore how the strong sentiment is evoked, I will use the works of Benedict Anderson. In his creative masterpiece, the nation is the result of cognitive process and it is redefined as an imagined community – "imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (Anderson, 1983, p. 6). But how is the community imagined? Three key elements are proposed by Anderson. It includes the technology of printing, the rise of capitalism and the emergence of national language. Newspapers and novels as commodity appeared on dining tables and were mass-consumed by monoglot masses. Unconnected and independent news and stories were printed on the same page. The only connection between the stories in the newspapers is that they happened on the same day. A new conception of

simultaneity was introduced and produced and the Benjaminian "homogeneous, empty time" started to be shared by people (Anderson, 1983, p.24). As the result, though people had no idea who their fellows were, they came to hold a strong belief that others live in the same world as themselves. This conglomerated the understanding of a nation state and nationalism. Once the template of nationalism is produced, it can be planted in other societies.

Through the "uneven and combined development" (Anderson, 1983, p. 156), nationalism spread quickly across the world. The image of the community has called thousands of people to willingly sacrifice for it over the centuries. According to Anderson, it is because the imagination of "nation" has aroused a brand of new emotions which is based on all the "natural ties" that cannot be chosen by people (Anderson, 1983, p. 143). The sense of fatality along with the idea of purity consist in this special sentiment of nationalism.

However, there is a gap between Anderson's theory and the social facts of the Hanfu movement. First, the theory cannot fully explain the grass roots neonationalism. Based on the discourse of Anderson, China could be regarded as an example of "official nationalism" (Anderson, 1983, p. 150-159). Current political propaganda and education into patriotism are a top-to-bottom national practice of institutionalized nationalism. On the contrary, the Hanfu movement was born at grass roots level and has an ambiguous attitude towards official nationalism – it hopes to be admitted by the official while itself is a challenge of current ethnic policy. The pursuit of setting Hanfu as the national dress of China and the underlying Han supremacism of the movement might be a threat to today's multiculturalism ethnic paradigm. Second, the similar conception of nation or ethnicity might have already existed in China before western nationalism was introduced. In the following analysis, we will see how Hanfu supporters go back and forth between the western notion and the Chinese one and get confused by the two paradoxical concepts.

Identity in the Information Age

Manuel Castells examined nationalism and identity in the context of a fluid network world. As Castells (2010, p. 30) points out, the age of globalization is also the age of the widespread reconstruction of identity on the basis of nationality. Four points are proposed to better analyze the contemporary nationalism (Castells, 2010, p. 32-34). 1) Nations are independent of the state; 2) nations can be irrelevant to the modern nation-state; 3) nationalism is not limited to the elites; 4) contemporary nationalism is more cultural than political. Based on the analysis points and historical materials of Catalunya and the Soviet Union, Castells (2010, p. 54) redefined nations as "cultural communes constructed in people's minds and collective memory by the sharing of history and political projects".

There is no doubt that nations are constructed, but the real issue is "how, from what, by whom, and for what" (Castells, 2010, p. 7). For this question, Anderson and Castells have different answers. Anderson (1983) did not clearly differentiate the state and nations, thus the print capitalism as a key element helps to construct the two tangled entities simultaneously. Castells (2010, p. 32) regards nations as independent of the state and he distinguishes between citizenship and nationality. He argues that the sharing of history and language are the corner stone of identity construction. Nationalism movements reorganize these historical materials and produce a new meaning of identity (Castells, 2010, p. 55). Castells' discussions will guide us to capture the construction details of the movement as well as the ample interaction details between the state and Hanfu movement.

Previous Studies

In order to define my own field of research inquiry, it is important to provide an overview of the previous studies on the Hanfu movement as well as the Han nationalism in China.

Folklorist Zhou Xing is one of the earliest researchers to analyze this cultural phenomenon. From 2008 to 2014, he published total four papers in this field. In his first paper, *New Tang Costume, Han*

Costume and Han Costume movement, Zhou Xing introduces the multiple trends of creating the so called "national costume" in China from 2000. He argues that the Hanfu itself is the result of the contemporary cultural construction and has limited historical evidence. Hanfu supporters intentionally learn the knowledge of clothing and traditional rituals rather than naturally acquire it in social life. Though the ambition to revive traditions is great, promoting Hanfu in practice actually reveals the difficulties to create a national costume (Zhou Xing, 2008, p. 136-138). In his other papers, he examines the four strategies of reconstructing the beauty of Hanfu in practice and illustrates the subculture nature of the movement (Zhou Xing 2012, 2014). It is inspirational to align several clothing practices from the historical perspective and examine their inner connections. Though Zhou Xing's works present a meaningful overview of the movement, the failing of this text is that it conducts few analysis of the statements and narratives of Hanfu proponents per se.

James Leibold's 2010 paper, *More Than a Category: Han Supremacism on the Chinese Internet*, examines how the grassroot urban youth promote their ethnic identification. He particularly focuses on the role of the internet in opening up new spaces for Han identity articulation (Leibold, 2010, p. 546-551). Similarly, the linkage between the grassroots nationalism and new communication technologies is also discussed by Zhang Xian. He suggested without the internet, traditional clothing might get popular, but the rise of Hanfu movement is unimaginable (Zhang, 2009, p. 71). Since these two papers were written ten years ago when was the forum age, their analysis of several Hanist websites cannot perfectly explain the current situation. Today's online communication platform has changed a lot and become decentralized, which has a major impact on the hanfu community.

To have better comprehension of Hanfu and the underlying Han nationalism, it is crucial to put it into the context of China's ethic paradigm. In the thesis, *Clothing and Social Movements: The Politics of Dressing in Colonized Tibet*, Dicky Yangzom conducts an insightful visual analysis of Tibetan dressing and explores how Tibetan clothing is embedded in everyday practice as a silent political resistance (Yangzom, 2016, p. 49-52). Considering other clothing related movement in China like the

Tibetan clothing movement, the multiculturalism policy of CCP is facing tough challenges. In the book, *The Great Han: Race, Nationalism, and Tradition in China Today,* Kevin Carrico (2017) argues Han-ness and Chineseness are combined with a magnificent identity vision which is regarded larger than daily life by proponents. He illustrates conspiracy theory of other ethnicity (especially Manchu) helps to construct the Han identity and perpetuate the exclusiveness part of identity thinking (Carrico, 2017, p. 183-219). Dru C. Gladney points out the essential characteristic of the Han is that it has been presented as normal, un-exotic and modern, while the representation of minority groups is exotic and primitive (Dru, 1994, p. 93). On the subjects of Chineseness and Han-ness, inspiring texts include but are not limited to: *Critical Han Studies: The History, Representation, and Identity of China's Majority* and Gries' *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics, and Diplomacy*. Besides, holding a historical perspective on Han ethnicity helps to understand several paradoxical narratives of Hanfu movement. Thus, historian Cho-yun Hsu's analysis on historical interactions of Chinese ethnic groups, anthropologist Fei Xiaotong's discussion of *The Plurality and Organic Unity of the Chinese Nation* will also be included.

Methods and Materials

Three methods are employed in the research. Interviewing helps me to widen the access to the hidden knowledge of Hanfu community. The movement originated and developed on the Internet, thus netnography provides considerable data. Since language and discourse are significant portions of the movement and they keep shaping the Hanfu community, critical discourse analysis is an efficient tool to examine the underlying political and cultural context.

Interviewing

I have conducted interviews with three people to hear their own narratives of the Hanfu movement. The assumption is that my informants have access to inside knowledge which is previously hidden for me. Davies points out the major difficulty of interviewing faced by researchers is getting knowledge with flaws, that is, answers of respondents may include incorrect information or even

deliberate deception (Davies, 2002, p. 96). Due to the research topic and my identity as a Han, my informants expressed themselves with great passion and enthusiasm. By comparing information collected from my interviewees with other materials, I believe they shared their opinions and knowledge without intentional reservation or distortion. Actually, I have learned several new terms coined by the Hanfu community from my interviewees. One of my informants even put himself in my shoes and deeply worried that those terminologies can hardly be translated into English, which really amused me.

I got to know Tian and Yan in an online Hanfu group. Subjects discussed by those Hanfu proponents include new archaeological evidences of traditional clothing, definition of Hanfu, current Hanfu industry, Hanfu brand, news related to Hanfu (e.g. a couple rejected for using photo wearing Hanfu clothes on marriage licenses) and hot topics which arouse their nationalist sentiment. Tian is in his third year at university. As the president of a campus Hanfu association, he has considerable experience of organizing Hanfu activities. Yan is 19 years old. She was attracted by costume dramas and started to identify herself as a Hanfu enthusiast when she was in high school. My third informant as well as my friend, Wong, is a young artist who lives in Los Angeles. He is not a Hanfu enthusiast due to his cultural background. His father is a Hui (回) while his mother is a Yao (瑤).

All the interviews are conducted through WeChat voice call. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and was composed as semi-structured. For Wong, our topics range from his experience as a minority in China and America as well as his opinions on the relationship of clothing and the identity. Interviews with Yan and Tian mainly focus on their involvements with Hanfu events and their understanding of development of the Hanfu movement. To open the conversations, I chose following questions to recall their memory and start discussions:

- Could you describe your first Hanfu? How did you get to know Hanfu?
- What motivated you to be a Hanfu enthusiast?
- What is your definition of Hanfu?

Since I hope to hear their own narratives, I did not guide the interviews all the time. My informants not only shared with me their experiences regarding to Hanfu, but also send me several photos of their Hanfu and information of recent Hanfu activities. Besides, their WeChat moments (similar to Facebook posts) include more information and details about Hanfu, which help me have access to more empirical data. I have not done more interviews because collecting materials through online forums, groups and video channels comprise more diverse opinions which can hardly be gathered by individual interviews.

Netnography

According to the statistics of The World Bank, from 2000 to 2010, the proportion of individuals using the Internet of population in China experienced a rapidly increasing period[5]. The Hanfu movement has gained in popularity exactly in these ten years due to the emergence of online social networking. To an extreme extent, the Hanfu movement can be viewed as a cultural product of the Internet. When Hanfu was a brand new concept and has not become a commodity, the Internet was the only place that allowed people to acquire the Hanfu knowledge and have heated discussions. Mentioned by Leibold (2010, p. 546) and Zhang Xian (2009, p. 68-70), the website Hanwang (漢網 Han network) was the first and the most impactful website at the early stage of the movement. In fact, the translocality nature of the movement could still be found in today's situation. Though the number of off-line Hanfu organizations is soaring, those off-line groups are still strongly supported by on-line interactions.

Large amounts of data are stored on the Internet and remain open and flexible. Hanfu as stuff could be regarded as a kind of visual culture, and the internet provides an efficient platform to save and publicize images and videos. It partially explains the reasons why the movement heavily depends on online interactions. Besides, the fate of the Hanfu movement is always intricately connected to the

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[5] The World Bank: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS?locations=CN

Internet. The early forums are gradually fading out, while multiple social media is flourishing. Zhang Xian (2009, p. 70) has a description of the strict administration of Hanwang. It said the webmaster intentionally deleted posts against Hanfu or Han ethnicity and established a rigid hierarchy admin structure. Compared to websites or forums which have a managing team, social media tend to be decentralized. The topic of Hanfu presents as a hashtag or interest circle in the new platforms. The change of the Internet per se partially leads to new factions within the Hanfu community and the depoliticized trend of the movement. Based on above characteristics of the Hanfu movement, netnography is a handy tool to explore the subject.

Different form classic ethnographic methods, netnography has two unique features. First, technology itself has impact on human behaviors, thus the effects of the Internet need to be taken into consideration. As previous illustration, the change of online platforms reshapes the social movement. That is not to say the Internet determines human interactions, but technologies and human behaviors are co-determining and co-shaping each other (Kozinets, 2015, p. 42). Second, online data shows high degree of textuality, which eliminates the process of transcription (Davies, 2002, p.154). Since most data is composed of text (even videos are attached with subtitles), it is efficient to do an analysis on the first-hand materials. In the case of Hanfu, early statements of the opinion leaders and heated online discussions are well preserved, which provide a firm basis of conducting discourse analysis.

Employing netnography also faces several challenges. The first concern is deliberate concealment and the reliability of online data (Davies, 2002, p. 96; Kozinets, 2015, p. 240). However, it is not the special difficulty of online researches. It is actually a universe issue when conduct ethnographical investigation. The solution is similar to other anthropological methods, which is establishing long-term relationships with informants and creating shared history (Davies, 2002, p. 155). Through observing my informants' behaviors in the online group as well as their posts in WeChat, I try to examine the consistency of their presentation of self-identity. The second issue regarding to ethics in

the Internet context. As Davies (2002, p. 167) points out, information on the web occupies an ambiguous position in public or private space. It is necessary to classify information sources and evaluate the nature of different sites. Based on Kozinets' classification (2015, p. 250), netnographic data has three forms: archival data, elicit data and produced data. The first kind of data could be treated as public document (Davies, 2002, p. 167). Other two kinds of data are the result of interactions. Since informants may have no intent to show it to the public, it is important to obtain informed consent (Davies, 2002, p.168). When I joined in the online Hanfu group, I clearly identified myself as a college student, explained my research project and kept assuring anonymity, which helps to protect privacy of my informants.

Critical Discourse Analysis

According to Tannen, Hamilton and Schiffrin (2015, p. 2), a discourse can be interpreted as "a broader range of social practice that includes non-linguistic and non-specific instances of language". It includes both the non-language social actions like clothing and the general use of language. Compared to linguistic discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis (CDA) not only focuses on written/oral language and language used in social settings, but also rests emphasis on the systems and people who produce or produced by particular language (Hodges et al., 2008, p.570). On the one hand, discourses are the consequence of particular periods and places, and on the other hand, discourses precede the use of language and shape non-linguistic social actions.

In three dimensions, critical discourse analysis is an effective and appropriate methodological tool to analyze Hanfu. Firstly, since the Hanfu movement is largely dependent upon online platforms, the high degree of textuality of online communication makes it possible to collect enormous data and explore the whole construction process. The Hanfu community and a stronger sense of being a Han are created with the help of language (even the term "Hanfu" is newly coined), thus analyzing the language per se allows the underlying social and political context be seen. Secondly, critical discourse analysis particularly focuses on social issues and political problems which are often across

multiple disciplines (Van Dijk, 2015, p. 355-358). In the following analysis, we will see the Han-ness is a result of long historical process and the clothing contains complicated cultural, political and economic factors. In this sense, CDA helps us gain a comprehensive understanding of the movement. Thirdly, discourse deeply takes part in the legitimation and reproduction of power relations (Van Dijk, 2015, p. 212), that is, language and discourse are significant portions of the movement. In the case of Hanfu, it is exactly the statements written by early opinion leaders that re-narrated the history of hanfu, aroused the passionate nationalist emotions and called for the revival of traditional clothing.

The methodology of CDA will be applied to two sections. The first is a historical turn of Han-ness. Han as a conception emerged in ancient time, but the definitions and inner meaning of Han and "others" changed over time. Texts and articles written in different periods will be compared and analyzed. Additionally, CDA will be employed to understand the identity construction process of the Hanfu movement. The specific discursive strategies as well as paradoxes and inconsistencies in text structures will be illustrated.

Description of Materials

A considerable amount of material was collected through multiple ethnographic methods. Data is summarized as follows:

Interviews	160 minutes audio recordings and corresponding transcriptions
Online Platforms	Online QQ group discussion record (3 months); statements of the movement (*Collected Works of Xishan etc.*); social media posts; videos and vlogs
Historical Material	*Book of Rites*(礼记)；*Rizhi Lu* (日知錄)

Data is retrieved from several social media and both text and videos are taken into consideration. Social media platforms include Sina Weibo (新浪微博, hashtag and circle of Hanfu are the focus) which is the biggest social media platform in China, Douban (豆瓣, especially the Hanfu group) and

WeChat (微信). Comments on Weibo and Douban platforms were collected to analyze the historical narratives of Hanfu supporters. WeChat articles and QQ group provide the latest news about Hanfu. Typical statements of the Hanfu movement are written by early key opinion leaders. Xishan's collected works were selected as the representative of Hanfu community's opinions. Videos were gathered through two websites, YouTube and Bilibili (哔哩哔哩, https://www.bilibili.com/). One video will be thoroughly discussed in a following section. Historical sources are cited to better understand the ethnic identity issue in China from the historical perspective.

Reflections

When introducing Chinese materials in English, I try to explain complicated concepts as much as I can. It needs to be pointed out that the term "ethnicity" or "ethnic group" cannot perfectly fit into "*minzu*" (民族) in Chinese, but it is a much better choice than "nationality" or "nation" which has strong political connotation. The meaning of "ethnicity" or "ethnic group" (族群) is neutral rather than refer to culturally or politically disadvantaged group. Chinese "*minzu*" is closer to "peoples" in English.

Before conducting this research, I have not thoroughly thought about my identity as a Han. Han identity is transparent and invisible unless I have to fill the blank of some registration forms. Although I did not try to wear Hanfu or get involved in a Hanfu association, I acutely understand their strong sentiment aroused by nationalism. In fact, even though I am not a nationalist, the nationalism emotions still emerges. When viewing the comments of Shiyin's video (will be discussed below), I naturally stood by the side of Chinese netizens rather than keeping neutral. Though being value free is definitely impossible, presenting the inner logic of the movement has been my aim. Through collecting materials and listening stories of my informants, I realize nationalism is more like a tool and the ultimate goal is to construct a community to balance the consequences of individualization and globalization with supporting network.

Constructing "Han"

As mentioned before, the Han is the majority ethnicity in China, and it makes up more than 90 percentage of the current population. Through the long history of China, language and culture of Han people is widely shared in the territory. However, what does it mean to be a Han? Is Han an ethnicity or race, or something else? How did ancestors of Han people view their own identity? Is that same as today's? What is the relationship of Han identity and Chinese identity? To understand current Han identity issue exposed by the Hanfu movement, these questions have to be thought and answered. Here the Han identity will be explored in historical contexts - which includes three periods: imperial China, the republican period and modern China. Before starting our exploration, it is important to recognize the meaning of "Han" is not fixed and it must be discussed in particular time period.

Imperial Period: the fluid identity

To historically understand Han, the first step is getting into the traditional discourse upon ethnic groups or cultural groups and forgetting contemporary definitions of "race", "nation" or "ethnicity". For several centuries, China always put itself in the center to imagine the whole world. The English word "China" is a homophonic translation, while in Chinese language China means "the middle state" (中國 *zhongguo*). The abstract imagery of the world is known as "*tianxia*" (天下, means all-under-heaven). On the one hand, *tianxia* is associated with the entire geographical world where mortals live and the Emperor governs. On the other hand, the term denotes the universal principles of ideal order (Xu, 2016, p. 31). Compared to the changeable governance of *guo* (國, means country or state), *tianxia* is an eternal truth which refers to the regime of value. The distinction was elaborated by a Chinese scholar Gu Yanwu (顧炎武, 1613-1682):

> "Change the surname and alter the style" (yi xing gai hao 易姓改號)—this is a description of the destruction of guo. The widespread dominion of benevolence and righteousness (ren 仁 and yi 義) decayed into the rule of

> beast-eat-man, men, leaders, eating each other—this is a description of the
> destruction of tianxia…[6]
>
> — Rizhi Lu (日知錄)

As Gu illustrated, *guo* is a dynamic political unit and might be replaced while *tianxia* is the

unchangable moral values of the civilization and shared by common people. The *tianxia* system

which relates to space and order was created and applied in the field of politics and culture. The
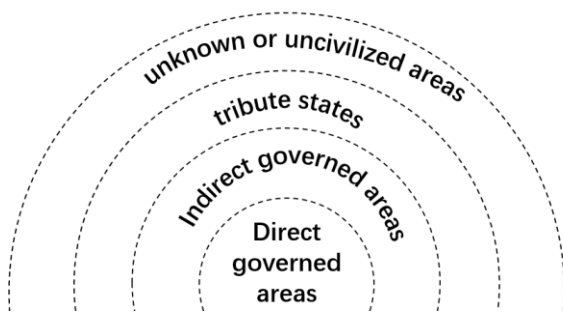

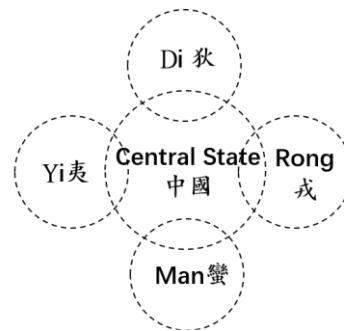Figure.1 the *Tianxia* system (made by author)　　Figure.2 The people of five regions (made by author)

system could be presented as a concentric circles model (Xu, 2016, p. 31-34). The common center is

where the emperor lies. The most inner circle covers lands and people directly ruled by the emperor.

The second inner circle contains areas that are in the administrative system but keep the original

rulers. These rulers or chiefs were militarily subdued and gradually naturalized. The outer circle

refers to tribute states, such as Korea, Japan and Vietnam, which had frequent trading and culture

interactions with China. The expanding circle includes other unknown or uncivilized lands and

people. As the diagram (Figure.1) shows, the *tianxia* system is an inclusive and expansive

conception. Borders of the four circles are unfixed and dynamic, thus I used dotted lines to present.

The non-exclusionary basic world views effected how people define "we" and "others".

The division of ethnic groups has been theorized as early as the pre-Qin period (before 221BC).

According to the *Book of Rites* (禮記), there were five groups who have their several natures and live

in different regions of *tianxia* (illustrated by Figure.2). For instance, the eastern tribe was called Yi

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[6] Translated by Joseph R. Levenson

(夷). They were described as having their hair unbound, tattooing their bodies and sometimes having not well-cooked food. It further explained that "The people of the Middle states, and of those Man, Rong, and Di, all had their dwellings, where they lived at ease; their flavours which they preferred; the clothes suitable for them; their proper implements for use; and their vessels which they prepared in abundance. The languages of the people were not mutually intelligible, and their likings and desires were different." (Fo Guang Shan, 2021). It is obvious that the criteria for dividing these groups are not the race or blood, but the feature of material culture, mode of production and lifestyles. Both the *tianxia* system and the group division are expansive patterns which have a stable core and changing borders. Reflected on geographical space, the core is the Central Plain which is on the lower reaches of the Yellow River, but gradually expanded to the whole country. In the aspect of culture, the core represents effective agricultural production and corresponding political and economic system. The concept of "Han" is a continuation of the above world view. As mentioned, the name of Han comes from the Han Dynasty. People who lived in the territory of Han dynasty and included in the empire political and economic network started to claim they are the Han. They may originally come from one of the five regions but integrated with others as a common community (Li Dalong, 2017, p. 11).

The history reveals that the Han is not a stable ethnic group but the result of the integration of several ethnic groups (Li Dalong, 2017, p. 15). For example, the sinicization process existed in every dynasties established by minority groups. Emperor Xiaowen of Northern Wei (北魏孝文帝) who belonged to a nomadic group named Xianbei (鮮卑), implemented a series of Sinicization policies (Hsu Cho-yun, 2009, p. 61). It included applying Chinese language and clothes, encouraging intermarriage between Xianbei and Han and following the political system of Han people. He even changed his own family surname to a sino one. Of course, the integration process was always two-way. The connotation of Han continued to be re-defined and enriched.

Hua(華)–Yi(夷) distinction, an ancient Chinese term, clearly shows the criteria of defining "we" and

"others". "Hua" could be regarded as another expression of Han. Based on whether employing values and customs of the Central Plain, it differentiated the civilized and uncivilized, Sino and barbarians. Hua or Han's pride and the sense of superiority are not related to race or blood, but a kind of civilized arrogance (Xu, 2016, p. 32). However, as the above instance implies, the boundary of Hua and Yi can be really blurry and unstable. There are no absolute "others". The Yi could become the Hua by adopting Hua's value system while the Hua might convert to Yi. In this sense, Han was not a pure conception of ethnic group or race, but a dynamic community of people who are included in (intentionally or unintentionally) a same political, cultural and economic system with different integration level.

The Republican Period: the invention of "nation" in the Chinese context

Qing (清), the last imperial dynasty of China, was established by a northern ethnicity group named Manchu. It was not the first time that China was ruled by an ethnic minority. Three hundred years earlier, Kublai Khan established the first non-Han dynasty Yuan (元) and China was included in Mongol Empire at that time. But Yuan only lasted 98 years due to fierce resistance of Han people. Though Qing dynasty lasted for more than two centuries, it always faced the same problem as Yuan which is unifying the legitimacy of the dynasty with the Central Plains civilization (Xu, 2016, p. 37). In the period of Qing, multiple religions were unprecedentedly supported by rulers. Meanwhile, the legitimacy of emperors was built differently in several cultural systems. In order to govern Han people, the dynasty partially accepted Han civilization and tried to acquire the political legitimacy through Confucianism. For Tibetan people and Mongolian people who believed in Tibetan Buddhism, the process of identifying reincarnated Dalai Lama, Panchen Lama was confirmed and approved by Qing court. In addition, Qing emperors made emphasis on the so called "Manchu root" in order to keep the balance between completely assimilating into Han culture and continuing Manchu traditions (Kuhn, 2014, p. 84-69). Thus, in the multireligious and multiethnic context, the question of "who we are" had uncertain answers and caused hidden trouble. On the one hand, the long term unequal ethnic policies limited the assimilation and integration process, and on the other

hand, the meaning of Han gradually stabilized and become closer to contemporary concept of Han.

In the nineteenth century, large quantities of opium and modern western industrial products were imported into the domestic market of China. The previous trade surplus was completely reversed (Hsu Cho-yun, 2009, p. 115). Western invasions and corresponding unequal treaties with western powers dragged the entire country into poverty and endless wars for a hundred years. In this situation, "we" and "others" were not limited into the traditional Hua–Yi distinction pattern any more. The west has undoubtedly become "others". At the end of

Figure.3 the flag in the middle is *five-colored flag*, the bottom text is *Long live the republic* (image is from Wikipedia: History of the Republic of China)

Qing dynasty, the principle of "five races under one union" (五族共和) was proposed by supporters of constitutionalism reform and lasted to the republican period. As the five-colored flag shows (Figure.3), the central tenet of the principle is the harmonious co-existence of five major ethnic groups. The flag consists of five colored stripes which represent five different ethnic groups: red (the Han 汉); yellow (the Manchus 满); blue (the Mongols 蒙); white (the Hui 回) and black (the Tibetans 藏). An egalitarian ethnic relationship was imagined for the first time and has paved the way of the emergence of a new nation notion.

A new term, *zhonghua minzu* (中華民族), was coined to refer to the union of all ethnic categories in China. The concept was first put forward by political activist Liang Qichao (梁啟超) in 1902 (Xu, 2016, p. 36). In another article, Liang illustrated, "if a person immediately realize he/she is Chinese when encounters people of other nation, the person is a member of *zhonghua minzu*". He particularly pointed out that "all of the Manchu people are members of *zhonghua minzu*" (Liang, 1922). In this sense, the terminology has become an umbrella concept which includes not only Han Chinese, but all ethnic groups in Chinese territory. It actually invented a new concept of nation-state. The concep was

succeeded and expanded on Sun Yat-sen, the provisional first president of the Republic of China. In a speech delivered in 1920, Sun said:

> Some people say, after the falling of the Qing court, we don't need nationalism anymore. Those words are certainly wrong... At the present we talk about unifying the five ethnic groups. But our country has far more than five ethnic groups! My stand is that we should unite all the peoples of China into one Chinese nation Zhonghua minzu. (For instance, the United States, originally composed of many European nations, is now only one nation which is the most glorious nation in the world) ...and, furthermore, develop Zhonghua minzu into an advanced, civilized nation. Only then will nationalism be finished.

As in the description of Anderson (1983, p. 115), Sun Yat-sen, was a typical spokesman of colonial nationalism, had bilingual capability and thus had access to nationalism models of Americas and Europe in that chaotic period. In Sun's narrative, the ideal nation model of United States could be copied, adapted and planted in Chinese society. Nationalism was a weapon to defeat Japan and western powers and rebuild a new independent state. When Second Sino-Japanese War[7] broke out, the term of *zhonghua minzu* was widely used and Chinese people had started to imagine being in one community. The newborn nationalism paused the civil war and became the solid basis of the cooperation of the Kuomintang and the Communist Party when they fought with Japan (Huang, 2002, p. 51). In this period, "Han" has lost its expansive function and transformed as a firm composed part of the newly imagined nation state.

Modern China: narrowing the concept of "Han"

Today's ethnic paradigm of China combines the previous nation-building practice and Soviet experiences. After the establishment of People's Republic of China, two trends in the field of ethnicity have been obvious. The first trend is the politicization and institutionalization of ethnic

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[7] known as War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression in China 中國抗日戰爭

groups, which presents as the process of identifying ethnic groups. The second is theorizing the conception of *zhonghua minzu*.

Before 1949, leaders of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) intended to build a Soviet-style federal system in which every nationality had the right of self-determination (Naribilige, 2003, p. 46). However, establishing a federal system faced a technical difficulty in dividing the space. Minority peoples could be found living in compact communities in areas inhabited mainly by Han people, while in other cases the situation was the other way round. Thus, regional ethnic autonomy policy was put forward as a solution which covers ethnic groups dwelling areas in different sizes. To implement regional ethnic autonomy policy and send minority representatives to the National People's Congress, it is imperative to distinguish ethnic groups (Fan, 2012, p. 11-15). So "nationalities" (民族 *minzu*) is a political concept firstly. The 1950s and 1960s was a critical period for the identification of nationalities in China. As the result, 54 ethnic groups were recognized in this period. From then unill now, 55 nationalities and the Han majority make up the current multi-ethnic state. Connected to other economic and education policies, nation has become a specific unit of the policy implementation, and the country has regrouped and recast people's identity (Fan, 2012, p. 14).

In addition to political practice, theories of a multi-ethnic paradigm have been developed. The representative theory is "the plurality and organic unity of the *zhonghua minzu* (Chinese nation)" (中華民族多元一體格局) put forward by Fei Xiaotong which has been widely accepted and incorporated into official discourse. Fei (1989, p. 1-16) analyzes the geographical and cultural features of ethnic groups as well as the historical integration process. He points out that though the 56 ethnic groups are different in size, all of them are part of a larger meta-nation, *zhonghua minzu*. The "diversity in unity" system has a cohesion core, Han nationality, which continues to grow in the midst of great fusion and integration process. However, there is a paradox that the Han is viewed as a growing cohesion core as well as being an independent nationality at the same time. Nation or ethnicity are exclusive concepts. If the Han has been institutionalized as an ethnicity with clear

boundary, it is doubtful whether it has the unique capability or right to unite other nationalities and promote the integration level.

Based on above historical analysis, we got three findings of Han or Han-ness. Firstly, the modern meaning of Han differentiates from that of ancient time. Contemporary Han is an institutionalized and politicized concept which refers to the majority group in China. On the contrary, traditional Han denotes a dynamic cultural community of people who were included in the same political, cultural and economic system with different integration level. Thus, the Han transforms from a changeable conception to a fixed one. The contradiction of the two meanings are presented in scholars' theories as well as online discussions of Hanfu supporters (as we shall see). Secondly, the ancient meaning of Han could be viewed as the predecessor of *zhonghua minzu*, since the Han was the cohesion result of various ethnic group in history. As Gu Jiegang (2016, p. 39) points out, "*zhonghua minzu* is an alias for the Han nationality". Thirdly, Han-ness tends to be naturally understood as Chineseness because of Han's dominant cultural status. However, when the government constructing a multi-ethnic discourse, the Han is always put in an awkward position. For propaganda, cultures of minorities tend to be magnified and emphasized while the majority Han is silent. The feature is also reflected on clothing.

Clothing and Society

The earliest Han nationalists chose Hanfu to express their strong sentiment and call for actions. Why was clothing selected as a symbol of the movement? To answer this question, three aspects need to be considered: the cultural meaning of attire in Chinese culture, the modern history of clothing and the fate of other clothing related to Chineseness.

Clothing and Civilization

In the Chinese context, clothing is always used as a metaphor for civilization. For instance, the first large-scale migration of Han people, which is from the Yellow River Basin to the Yangtze River

Basin, is historically named as "the southward crossing of clothing" (衣冠南渡 *yiguan nandu*). Since clothing has multiple cultural and political meaning, the central government always holds the power to prescribe clothing codes and lead the trend. Clothing performs two basic functions in the imperial period: to differentiate Hua-Yi (華夷 civilized and uncivilized) and to support social hierarchies.

Figure.4 cross collar and right *ren* (交領右衽) images from *Chinese Historical Costume Group* https://www.zhuangshufuyuan.com/

One feature of Hanfu stressed by the Hanfu community is the cross collar which extends to the right (交領右衽 *jiaoling youren*). To elaborate, the right *ren* (衽) means that the front of the clothes is tied to the right and the collar finally present as a "y" shape in appearance (Figure.4). On the contrast, people who tie the upper garment to the left are viewed as uncivilized or barbarian. When Confucius praised the political legacy of a previous minister, he said, "If not for Guanzhong, we would all be like unkempt barbarians, wearing our hair over our faces and fastening our clothes on the left (微管仲 吾其被髮左衽矣) ". Fastening one's garment on the left side was regarded as part of the lifestyle of the barbarian tribes on the fringes of China, which implies the pride of Central Plain civilization. As the *tianxia* system illustrates, the inner circle tends to expand further and include more areas. One example is the interactions between China and Korea which is related to clothing. At

Figure.5 ancient Tibetan people who wear in the style of left *ren* (左衽) images from Murals of Dunhuang Caves

the end of Goryeo (高麗 a Korean kingdom) dynasty, Korean envoys visited Ming kingdom[8] several times and asked for bestowing costumes of Ming (Zhang Jia, 2017). Clothing was always an significant issue in international politics of East Asia. As the instance shows, clothing is an important

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[8] Ming dynasty 1368-1644 明 the last dynasty established by Han people

symbol for constructing cultural and political identity between two countries.

In addition, clothing was part of the social hierarchies. Based on the Confucianism, clothing was closely connected to one's social status and occupations. People were highly expected to dress according to their status. The rigid dress codes include details like colors, textures, length, image on clothes and occasions. Dressing above one's social status can be considered as serious offenses (Kuhn, 1990, p. 69). In this sense, the experiences of individual are deeply shaped by different clothing and thus solidifying the existing social structure (cf. Miller, 2009, p. 35-37, p. 46). Functions of differentiation and stratification allows clothing became the backbone of civilization.

A Suppressed History

As Miller illustrated, clothing is not a superficial form of representation or a semiotic sign (Miller 2009, p. 46). Personal experiences and social movements are partially related to differences in clothing. In this section, we will see how clothing, as a significant collective practice reflected and reshaped the China society in the history.

Clothing is extensions of human's bodies. Through the extension part, people put emphasis on self-identity and the distinctions between "we" and "others". The Hanfu movement takes clothing as a tool to construct and renarrate the uniqueness of being a Han. However, the current Hanfu movement is not a brand new thing. The first combination of Han clothing and nationalism can be found in the early 20th century. The 1911 Revolution ended Qing dynasty which was established by Manchu

Figure.6 Yuan Shikai on his coronation ceremony in 1915

people. The goal of revolution is known as "to expel the Tatar barbarians, to revive *Zhonghua* (China), to establish a Republic, and to distribute land equally among the people (驅除韃虜，恢復中

華，創立民國，平均地權)". Tatar particularly referred to Manchu people. In military regions of the revolutionary government, the success of overthrowing Manchu dynasty triggered a wave of Han clothing revival. The army, intellectual elites, and ordinary people abandoned clothes in Manchu styles and wore traditional Han clothes instead (Li, 2014, p. 143-144). At that time, the pursuit of modern democracy and the revival of traditions are not contradictory. The Han-ness and Chineseness behind pieces of clothing solidified the new-born identity of *zhonghua minzu* and motivated people to build a modern country. However, the positive meaning of Han clothing was quickly subverted. When Yuan Shikai (袁世凱) rose to power and became the Emperor after the revolution, he used traditional cultures, especially Han clothing as one of the important source for legitimizing his rule (Li, 2014, p. 144-146). During the reign of Yuan, there were despotism, assassination, monarchy and the lack of procedural justice. From then on, preserving traditions has become antonym of liberty, democracy and modernity. Thus, Han clothing lost the chance back to life. Western clothing entered everyday life and become dominant.

After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, clothing was deeply shaped by a series of political movements. For instance, the military uniforms were the first choice for revolution-minded youth during the Cultural Revolution. The army-style uniforms, red armbands and a book of Mao's quotations constituted the classic image of radical students. There were no fashion clothes between the 1960s to 1970s. Labor wear, army-style uniforms and workplace clothes were everyday wear, which were gender neutral and lacked personal taste (Chew, 2010, p. 2). When China turned to economic reform, the concept of fashion clothes emerged and clothing was no longer a suppressed field. Based on the economic success, dress in traditional style reentered the society. However, the heat debate over the national costume has never stopped.

The Problem of Representation

Compared to other Asian countries like Japan, Korea, Thailand and India, China leaves the national costume blank. Though every minority group has their own ethnic clothing, there is no such clothing being considered to represent *zhonghua minzu* or Chinese nation. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, China has entered a century-long period of decay, invasion, civil war and revolution. At the same time, the social lifestyle of the Chinese people, including clothing, has become westernized (Zhou, 2008, p. 127). Besides, due to several radical political movements which aim to abandon traditions, no clothing style is widely accepted as national dress by the public or the official. However, two clothing styles is connected to Chineseness or Chinese nation more or less.

Figure.7 Ruan Lingyu (a famous Chinese silent film actress) in Qipao

The first one is *qipao* (旗袍, also known as cheongsam 長衫) which is wore by women. The word literally means Manchu (旗) gown (袍). The modern qipao was invented in the early of 20th century. It is a fusion of Machu women's clothing style and western tailoring technique. From the 1920s to 1940s, qipao was worn by women of various social class, including Manchu nobles, female students, movie stars and ordinary housewives. When the Cultural Revolution completely denied and suppressed the existence of qipao, it still preserved in areas like Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore (Chew, 2010, p. 12). After economic reform, *qipao* has gone popular again in mainland China. Though qipao might be the most representative Chinese clothing, Hanfu supporters questioned its legitimacy based on its Manchu root.

Compared to *qipao* which promoted by fashion and cultural elites, the emergence of New Tang-style dress (新唐裝 *xin tangzhuang*) is intentionally designed for political occasions. New Tang-style clothes debuted in APEC meeting 2001 in Shanghai and played the role of national dress. The images of political leaders in New Tang-style jackets were given considerable media coverage

(Chew, 2010, p. 13) From top to down, the newly invented traditionalistic clothing was all the rage during the spring festival of 2002 (Zhou, 2008, p. 128). It shows China society has prepared and started to accept the revival of traditional style dress. However, the possible trend of developing New Tang-style dress as national costume unexpectedly encountered challenges from the newborn Hanfu movement. Early Hanfu supporters pursue the goal of promoting Hanfu as national dress to substitute for *qipao* or New Tang-style clothes.

Figure.8 political leaders wearing New Tang-style clothing in APEC 2001

In conclusion, it is not a coincidence that Hanfu is selected as the symbol of the movement. Clothing was historically attached to the functions of differentiating cultural communities and supporting social hierarchies. In the republican period, the restoration of Yuan Shikai made traditional culture become the obstacles of building a modern China. From 1950s, private life (including the field of clothing) was ruthlessly suppressed by large-scale political campaigns and movements which are under the banner of socialism and communism. For a long time, there is no widely accepted national dress in the Chinese context. When China turned to economic reform, the revival of *qipao* and the emergence of New Tang-style dress imply the society try to find inspiration in cultural heritage and construct clothing correspond to their identity. The Hanfu movement was born in such societal background.

Hanfu and Han Nationalism

Hanfu as a newly coined term, literally means historical clothing worn by Han ethnicity. It encompasses various styles of traditional dress from several dynasties, except the *Qing* and *Yuan* dynasty (since these two dynasties were established by minority people). In the ancient time, people only had the conception of dynasty (Xu, 2016, p. 36), rather than the knowing of the continuous ethnic history. The terminology combining Han ethnicity and all of its historical clothing styles is

purely a modern creation. As a collective concept, the meaning of Hanfu can be quite blurry and unclear. Though Hanfu supporters believes Hanfu can be traced back to four thousand years ago when was the reign of Yellow Emperor (黃帝 *huangdi*)[9], it is doubtful that all clothing styles in the four thousand years could be viewed as a whole. In fact, many scholars point out that modern Hanfu per se is "purportedly ancient" but recently imagined and coined style of clothing (Zhang, 2009, p. 69; Zhou, 2014, p. 130-131; Carrico, 2017, p. 63-66). To explore the construction process of Hanfu and the self-image of Hanfu enthusiasts, it is significant to analyze their own narratives of Hanfu.

In the following section, narratives of Hanfu proponents will be analyzed with the help of critical discourse-analytical tools. Following discursive questions will navigate our way through the considerable amount of materials (Wodak, 2001, p. 10):

How is Hanfu described and referred to linguistically?

What traits, characteristics and features are attributed to the narrative?

How Hanfu community justify and legitimize the superior status of Hanfu?

From what perspective or point of view are these arguments expressed?

What strategies or genres are used to construct their arguments?

The analysis consists of four parts: the narrative of Hanfu history, Hanfu in different contexts, the nationalism nature of the Hanfu movement and the new trend of the movement.

Narrating the History of Han Clothing

The recently invented term, Hanfu, provides a new way to reorganize historical materials and constitute knowledge. It is important to observe how independent or irrelevant historical events are arranged in chronological order to compose the narrative of Hanfu proponents. To quote two excerpts:

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[9] A mytho-historical figure who is considered as one of the ancestors of Han people

Figure.9 a screenshot of Yang's video, the

It [Hanfu] was invented 4000 years ago by the Yellow Emperor's wife, Leizu, who used silk to make clothes. Later the Shang Dynasty developed the basic forms of Hanfu. It is characterized by its complete and finest set of apparel including clothing accessories, jewelry, etc. Through thousands of years of development, Hanfu has formed a variety of gorgeous and formal styles under the big category… Each dynasty had changed the styles a little bit or developed another style of wearing… In the year of 1644, Manchus invaded China and seized power of the Han Chinese regime. Then they build a new regime - Qing dynasty. Once firmly empowered, the leader commanded all men in the areas he had conquered to adopt Manchu hairstyle and clothing. From then on, only a small part of Hanfu culture was inherited by the ethnic group. (Yang, 2016: 0:36-1:55)

Similarly, a key opinion leader of the movement, Xishan, takes emphasis on the falling of Hanfu during Qing dynasty in his article.

> After the Qing army entered the Central Plain, the Chinese culture suffered unprecedented severe damage. In the early Qing Dynasty, the force of cutting hair and altering clothes directly destroyed the cultural root of Chinese dress and etiquette. The style of clothing and hair was ruined, which became the deepest national humiliation and pain… After Ming dynasty, there is no real *huaxia*[10](華夏) in China. It is the death of *tianxia* and civilization. (Xishan, 2009)

Four traits of these narratives need to be noticed. First, there is a clear originator who invented Hanfu. In Yang's narrative, Hanfu has its origin in the period of Yellow Emperor. Here is obviously a mixture of myths and historical facts. Yellow Emperor is a legendary figure who is portrayed as a deity in Chinese folk religion. He and his wives are believed to invent many items are critical to Chinese people, including clothing, musical instruments, chopsticks, Chinese calendar, sericulture, mirror, etc. Thus, Hanfu "history" is a supplement to Han ethnic myth while ethnic myth

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[10]   refers to Chinese nation and civilization, especially related to the civilization created by Han Chinese. The predecessor of Han Chinese also be known as the *huaxia* tribal confederation.

simultaneously provides blueprint to the newly "discovered" history of Hanfu. Second, almost all versions of Hanfu history unfolds in a clear chronological order which covers a series of successive dynasties. As the word "changed a little bit" shows, the whole process is portrayed as a linear, continuous and stable pattern of development in the pre-Qing period. Third, all historical narratives around Hanfu lay great stress on the severe "damage" caused by Qing dynasty. The narrative suggests the linear historical process was cruelly interrupted by uncivilized northern minority. Manchu people are presented as violent villain in sharp contrast to the innocent Han people. Meanwhile, when Yang stressed on "Manchus invaded China", what she wanted to express is the Central Plain civilization rather than the whole country. The narrative clearly contains Han-centrism. Fourth, above narratives create a pure and uncontaminated image of Han clothing culture. It largely ignored the frequent interactions between Han Chinese and other ethnic groups as well as multiple times of mutual assimilation. The pursuit for purity and real Chineseness appears throughout the narrative of Hanfu history.

The discursive construction of innocent and civilized "we" and barbarian "others" is central to discourses of nationalism and identity. Through reorganizing historical materials and inventing the story of Han clothing, narrators are allowed to achieve their particular social goal. Specific topics, objectives and linguistic tools are illustrated as follows.

Topics	Objectives	Tools	Instances
Myth and legend	Highlighting the uniqueness	Mixing facts with ethnic myth	"March 3rd (Chinese calendar) is the birthday of the Yellow Emperor. Setting Hanfu Day on this day will be a salute to our ancestors"
Histories	Gaining legitimacy	Presenting the Hanfu history as a linear process Ignoring interethnic interactions	"From the Yellow Emperor period to the middle of the 17th century, Hanfu was the embodiment of " country of attire (衣冠上国)", "state of etiquette(礼仪之邦)", "Splendid China(锦绣中华)", and the Empire of Serica"

Civilized and barbarian	Constructing boundary	Despising nomadic culture of Manchu ancestors	"Both Mongolian and Manchus are barbaric peoples who don't know how to cook."
	Showing supremacy		"You savage people only suck the blood of our Han people. A border wall and barbed wire fence should be built in ancient time to completely separate the Han people from the Mongolian, Khitan, Jurchen, and Manchu savages"
Invasion and resistance	Arousing nationalist sentiments	Taking emphasis on brutality and violence of Manchus	"The massacre committed by Qing army is more brutal than the Japanese. In Yangzhou [a city], more than 800,000 people died. This is blatant genocide!"
	Forming a tragic narrative		"the Chinese culture suffered unprecedented severe damage"
Purity and pollution	Constructing in-groups and out-groups	Presenting Hanfu as a stable existence	"For thousands of years, the Han Chinese people have not changed the basic characteristics of their costumes"
	Gaining legitimacy	Denying cultural integration Viewing Manchu culture as a danger	"When Manchus rose to power, they forced Han people shaved head and change clothing. It is the most tragic castration of the Central Plains civilization."
			"Only a small part of Hanfu culture was inherited by the ethnic group from Qing"

Table.1 Topics involved in Hanfu

The five topics are not independent of each other. On the contrast, they are intentionally woven together to form a complete history. What needs to be noticed is that there is an underlying contradiction in the story. If the civilization of the Han is much more powerful and "higher" than others', how could Hanfu be abandoned and forgotten? To explain the paradox, topics like "civilized and barbarian" and "invasion and resistance" get involved in. In this story, Han people lost the war just because they are the opposite of savagery and barbarism, and their culture are still much superior

to Manchus. The loser is labelled as innocent and noble while the winner is brutal and despicable. These topics allows the whole narrative logically self-consistent. In addition, historical events are carefully selected in the timeline of Hanfu history. This montage involved a combination of splendid scenes at the early stage and grieving parts in modern history. Compared to the briefly mentioned pre-Qing period, the brutality of Qing rulers is the focus point of every narrator. By effectively using the rhetorical device of antithesis, the whole narrative is full of nationalist sentiments.

Histories play a crucial part in above narrative. On the one hand, it provides clippings, portions of texts to form the collage of Hanfu history which disrupts the ordered general history of world. On the other hand, it is the basis of stating the natural legitimacy and higher status of Hanfu. It is interesting that the newly coined history per se borrows ideas from ethnic myth of the Han. Narratives around Hanfu actually create another Han ethnic myth in modern times. The historical materials are intentionally picked to form the imagination of Han. As Anderson (1983, p. 143) points out, the brand new nationalistic sentiment is based on the "natural ties" that cannot be chosen by people. In the case of Hanfu, the sense of fatality generates from the unchangeable ethnic identity and ethnic history.

My informant, Tian, is the president of a campus Hanfu association. A series of lectures on Hanfu history are provided for new members every semester. Tian told me, "every time when we introduce the history of Hanfu during Qing dynasty, some new members always get overwhelmed with anger. The extreme example can be some people start to have an ethnic hatred of all Manchus." Two facts are showed by Tian's description. First, the history montage could effectively arise people's emotions in reality. Second, history of Hanfu is not an internalized or naturally gained knowledge, but a process of new acquisition for new Hanfu supporters. It needs to be noticed that the word "Hanfu" per se includes a complete knowledge system and a particular way of thinking. The term is just the consequence of these discourses.

Hanfu in Different Contexts

Han and Western (at worldwide level)

Han and Korean (in East Asia)

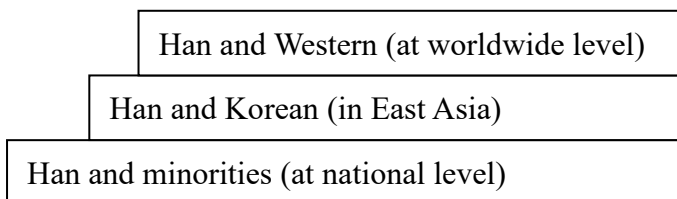Han and minorities (at national level)

Figure.10 Hanfu in three different contexts

The recently coined Hanfu history paves the way for gaining legitimacy and building wide support. Based on it, Hanfu gets involved in broader contexts and more complicated interactions in reality. In this section, we will explore the role of Hanfu in three different contexts (Figure.10) and the underlying social goals of these discourses.

Han and Minorities

> There are always some propaganda pictures in textbook which present 56 ethnicities in China. Children of 55 ethnicities wear their own ethnic costumes respectively, while the child of Han ethnicity wears short-sleeved shirts and shorts. It is not suitable. (Tian, 2021)

When I discussed the emergence of modern Hanfu with Tian, he shared me the above detail. In this narrative, the Han is a residual ethnicity without cultural marker. In fact, if we search the image of 56 ethnicities in China on the Internet and focus on the Han people, there will be two possible outcomes. First, Han people might be presented as anyone we might come across on the streets, being in modern dress without ethnic characteristic. Second, the image might directly omit the Han. Here comes the dilemma of expression. Han is the majority ethnic group but has lost their voice in public space relating to ethnicity. The category of Han has long time been recognized as "empty", "meaningless" and "invisible" (Leibold, 2010, p. 542).

Why is the Han intentionally ignored in this field? Does that mean Han people face political suppression? The reason of omission is in three dimensions. First, clothing is an intuitive embodiment of ethnic identity, but the Han has not preserved clothing that correspond to their identity. After several political campaigns and movements, there is no widely accepted ethnic dress

41

for Han people. As we explained in last chapter, neither *qipao* nor New Tang-style dress has gained the status of ethnic clothing, while a close relationship between "the concept of the self" (the Chinese identity) and Hanfu is built by the Hanfu community (Miller, 2009, p. 45). Second, compared to ethnic identity, Han people who are distributed in every corner of the territory have a stronger sense of identity of province rather than ethnicity. Clothing of the Han are various in different areas, which could be called as "regional costume" (Zhou, 2008, p. 126). Thus, there is no certain style of clothing that can perfectly represent all of the Han people. Third, similar to the concept of "whiteness" in America (Leibold, 2010, p. 542) and the status of Russia in Soviet federalism (Castells, 2010, p. 38), the Han are silent precisely because they are dominant. In most scenarios, the Han is equal to Chinese. Thus, Han culture is the silent norm while the cultural of minority groups are viewed as deviance (Dru 1994, p. 99-108). Newly built ethnic museums and ethnic minority tourism has become popular in recent decades (Yangzom, 2016, p. 30-37), which tend to present ethnic minorities as exotic and novel. As Anderson (1983, p. 178-185) suggested, museums are systems of representation which delineate who can be considered as part of the imagined community. The loss of the special field of Han proved Han is natural and normal in Chinese context. Considering the complex interactions between communist China and USSR, it needs to be pointed out that the paradoxical structure might deeply influenced by the Soviet Union. In the process of constructing Soviet national identity, Russian history and cultures is the primary target of cultural repression (Castells, 2010, p. 38). The current repressed Han identity is the consequence of imitating Soviet paradigm to some extent.

Though Han Chinese has already dominated almost all fields, the institutionalized and politicized ethnic categories of modern China result in a stronger sense of identity of being a Han. The current ethnic classification system is observed and felt by citizens through the practice of state power. In the field of education, preferential treatment policies allow minority students receive bonus points on the university entrance examination. In the term of family planning, minorities were the exceptions of one-child policy. These policies investments have marked the gap between Han majority and

minorities and provided further impetus for the emergence of Han supremacism. Hanfu as an effective signifier is used to create new discourses of Han and minority relationship. To quote three excerpts from Xishan (2009):

> In contemporary China, in the view of some people, Han culture should not be used to represent China, even the Han culture itself is better to be represented by other cultures… The supporters of Hanfu are not the troublemakers of ethnic relations, but the most steadfast defenders of national unity.
>
> We are Han people, the majority of Chinese civilization. Our ancestors led China to create a glorious past. We have the obligation to lead China to create the promising future. Facing the China rejuvenation, if the Han does not take the primary responsibility, can it be passed on to minorities? If the rejuvenation is not based on the Han civilization, what else can it be based on?
>
> The Hanfu movement is the awakening of national consciousness. The more you are afraid of the word "Han", the more we want you to see it and let you know that it is not a peril.

The stress on "primary responsibility" and eliminating Han-phobia shows the basic pursuit of the Hanfu revival and letting the leading position of the Han be widely admitted. It is the direct response to the blurry role of the Han category in ethnic discourses of CCP. Meanwhile, Hanfu is always beyond the ethnicity topic and connects to the lager patriotic discourse (cf. Wodak, 2001, p.22). Words like "national unity" and "rejuvenation" are used as tools to legitimize the revival. It also implies Hanfu supporters tend to mix the historical meaning of Han (which is an expansive concept) with the modern ethnic category (which has clear boundary). In addition, Hanfu supporters always face the awkward Han-minority relations. Though Xishan takes emphasis on the Han is the problem solver of ethnic relations rather than troublemakers, his articles never clearly elaborate how to relieve ethnic tensions in practice.

Hanfu in East Asia

Due to the long time interactions among Asian countries in the history, traditional clothes of these countries share many similarities. Comparison with the well preserved ethnic clothing of neighbor countries gave impetus to the Hanfu movement at early stages (Zhou, 2008, p. 128; Xishan, 2009). However, the historical similarities have caused troubles in contemporary time. Since 2020, there has been a highly controversial topic on twitter which named as the #korean hanbok[11] challenge#. Chinese and Korean net users both claim that their own ethnic clothing is copied by the other country. In fact, these kind of controversies have never stopped from new millennium. Language

Figure.11 a YouTube video: *Hanfu is not Hanbok: Please Respect the History!*

barriers and platform limitations make both parties have access to incomplete information which is exaggerated by media. In this section, our aim is not discovering the historical facts, but focusing on the collision of two nationalist discourses through an Internet feud.

A youtuber, Shiyin, shot a video to response the above twitter topic. Her video has gained over 80 thousand comments, over 42 thousand thumbs up and 29 thousand thumbs down. It shows Hanfu is a quite controversial topic and it faces a serious obstacle once it tries to go beyond home and extend international influence. Typical utterances in the comment section are selected as follows[12].

Chinese netizens	Korean netizens
Why it's so hard for some people to face the true history? Hanfu is not hanbok.	It's very stupid for China to say hanbok and kimchi are Chinese 🤣 Maybe they got jealous cuz of K culture and K Pop being famous🤣🤣🤣
Korean history is recorded in Chinese characters. 😕 😕 It's really shameful to say that a father inherited his son's genes.	Maybe the Chinese government should try to recover their burnt and lost history caused by their own nation instead of claiming and trying to steal other Asian nation's culture
Ancient imitation of China, modern copy of Europe and the United States, this may be your South Korean tradition	and history.... This is cultural appropriation at its peak LOL.

[11] the traditional Korean clothes

[12] The original comments are mostly in Korean, Chinese and English

It is really shameless to say that Hanbok has not been affected by Hanfu at all, and that it was developed by myself.	With this brain, every culture is from africa since thats where human evolved

It needs to be clarified that there are still some rational comments which remain calm. But most of comments like above excerpts are full of strong nationalist sentiment. Though it is online interaction, nationalities and identities are clearly suggested through YouTube usernames, languages they used or even the grammar they chose. Four kinds of participants get involved in this internet feud: Chinese nationalists, Korean nationalists, Chinese and Korean who jump out of nationalist discourse and people from other countries.

Adjectives used by nationalists to describe emotions include, "shameless", "shameful", "embarrassed" and "jealous". Words like "plagiarize", "steal", "copy" and "distort" are applied to depict the action of the other side. Meanwhile, history is an important genre in this discourse and it is always the focus of the feud. Words like "true history", "respect the history", "history book", "historical evidence" and "original" repeatedly used by two sides. Can clothing really be stolen by other nations? What means to be "stolen"? Why history matters? The underlying presupposition of these words is that the ownership of a cultural item is clear and cannot be deprived. First, the ownership is considered as natural. The identity of a nation is composed of a great number of cultural items related to their everyday life and practices around these things (Miller, 2009, p. 36, p.46-47). It is interesting and natural that other material cultures are repeatedly mentioned in this argument, including kimchi, K-pop, Chinese characters, Chinese cuisine, etc. Thus, others' denial of the ownership is being regarded as the threat of national identity. Second, their narratives claim the ownership is clear, which means a cultural item cannot be shared. In other words, the cultural heritage of a nation should be pure and people have the responsibility to protect the originality and purity of their ethnic cultures from polluting. Like people's imagination of territory, the cultural

items affiliated to an independent state have clear boundary and cannot be infringed. Based on above two points, history matters. History provides the "raw material" for people to argue, to organize their narratives, to improve the status of their nations and cultures and to prove the seemingly natural legitimacy of ethnic items. As Casterlls points points out, immagined communities are "produced through the labors of shared history, and then spoken in the images of communal languages whose first word is we, the second is us, and, unfortunately, the third is them" (Castells, 2010, p. 131).

It is interesting that nationalists from both sides actually follow the same logic, which allows the argument ends in a tie and no one actually wins. The weakness of nationalist discourse is explicitly showed when another character popped up. Some Japanese people got involved in this feud and made comments. It needs to be known that people of East Asian countries are quite familiar to each other's writing system. A Japanese commented that "I love Chinese Han costume (original text:中国の漢服装が大好きです)" and got 78 feedbacks, much more than other comments. Both Chinese people and Korean people actively replied this message. Chinese nationalists responded like "thank you! Japanese kimono is also beautiful" or "That's why I respect your people much better than peninsula guys", while Korean netizens showed more historical evidences and try to persuade audience. Both sides put effort into gaining their neighbor's fidelity, as Japan is an ideal judge who is somehow familiar to the tangled history of these two countries and somehow is independent of the dispute over the ownership. However, the need of a judge makes that the "natural bond" becomes questioned and stresses the weakness and limits of their nationalist narratives.

The above examples illustrate that once Hanfu goes beyond Chinese context and is shown on the world stage, it will actively attach to the concept of Chineseness rather than Han-ness. Hanfu unavoidably plays the role of a cultural marker to identify a political state-nation rather than a cultural ethnicity. In the context of East Asia, the word "Han" and the identity as a Han disappear between lines, while the identity as Chinese looms up. It is clear that the underlying imagined commuty shifts from han-ness to Chinese. When communicate with Korean people, "the idea of

purity" (Anderson, 1983, p. 144) come into effect again, the inner differences of Chinese people is intentionly ignored. The aim of the Hanfu movement has become creating the natural bond of Hanfu and Chinese identity. The objective is urgent to be achieved in comparison with neighbor countries like Korea and Japan who own their influential and well-known nation costumes for a long time. However, there is the risk that Hanfu, the clothing of Han ethnicity, will end up represent all ethnic groups of China. When Hanfu crossed country border, the hidden Han supremacy burst its banks and flowed into the sea of nationalism and patriotic discourse, then met other versions of nationalism which follow the same logic and aim to show their national pride.

Han and Western

When associated with a broader context, Hanfu still aims to continue its role as a culture marker of Chinese identity. The specific objective is to substitute New Tang-style dress and *qipao* (which are the previously widely accepted as iconic Chinese dress worldwide) for Hanfu. The reason why Hanfu supporters reject New Tang-style dress and *qipao* is not only these styles have Manchu roots, but also these clothes employ western tailoring techniques. Both "barbaric" Manchu origin and "exotic" western crafts are regarded as harming the purity of Han identity. Thus, compared to the context of East Asia, a new discourse, post colonialism discourse, gets involved in. In fact, the image of the west has already hidden in the internet feud. A Chinese netizen commented that "ancient imitation of China, modern copy of Europe and the United States, this may be your South Korean tradition". Of course, these words are irrational and lack of evidences, but it contains two levels of meaning. First, both China and Korea were completely or partially colonized by several imperialism powers in the early 20th century, which deeply shaped the contemporary societies of the two countries. Thus, these two countries have mutual understanding of each other. Second, the netizen tries to express that although China has similar history to Korea, China refuses to become a "copy" of western countries. The contrast between Han and western is always a significant clue in the discourse of Hanfu. To quote two excerpts from Xishan:

> We are a global-level cultural power. Our real opponent is western civilization who dominates the world with cultural hegemony, rather than countries like Japan and South Korea. We need to deconstruct cultural hegemony of the west, establish a new standard to express and explain ourselves, rather than follow the criteria made by western countries…

> The future of China will base on the traceability and innovation of the Chinese civilization, rather than rely on ethnic minority culture or the western civilization. (Xishan, 2009)

In above narrative, Xishan also points out three different contexts, Han and minority, Han and its East Asian neighbors, the Han and the west. Similar to the previously mentioned internet feud, Han mixes with the concept of Chinese once it goes beyond national boundary. Xishan especially stresses the importance of getting rid of western cultural hegemony and avoiding use the western criteria to carry out self-evaluation. The sharp contrast to the western rooted from colonial history of China. As mentioned before, in order to build a modern country and save the country from the restoration of the monarchy, political elites in republican period advocated westernization in all aspects. However, modern nationalism results in the process of rediscovering historical monuments or items (Anderson, 1983, p. 163-185) and links it to the pride of independent nationhood. The national identity which must be based on national history and culture have to face the dominance of western culture in reality. Thus, it leads to the schizophrenia of contemporary Chinese society.

The emergence of the Hanfu movement is a way to bridge the gap and heal the schizophrenia. It is also noticeable that the boom of the Hanfu movement synchronize with China's Economic Rise. The remarkable economic achievement of China is the best fuel for heating a nationalist movement and it is further woven into the modern ethnic myth. "Establish a new standard" is not the original creation of Xishan, it already existed in political ideology of CCP leaders. Similar to the term, "Chinese dream", which put forward by Xi Jinping and widely used in local propaganda, both of them aim to call for China's rising international influence. However, the stark contrast presented on purpose and the clear boundary made intentionally between China and the west bring risk to the movement. It

leads to the tendency to conservatism and denial of cultural integration. One example is the Chinese style of academic dress designed by Xishan. He provided the design of full academical dress and suggested to wear leather shoes, but he particularly emphasized that leather shoes is a borrowed western element (Xishan, 2009). It really impressed me as western leather shoes have been widely accepted by Chinese society at least over one hundred years and nowadays people rarely regard it as an exotic or novel thing. A comparsion is historical necrological census conducted by western people on colonies, monuments are restored and plotted on maps to show "orientalist fashions" (Anderson, 1983, p. 180). The imagined identity is built on enormous cultural things, the different meanings embedded in things are exaggerated. The stiff categories of the east and the west gives rise to more radical nationalist ideas and more conservative cultural views.

In above three contexts, Hanfu supporters carry on dialogues with different groups: minorities, East Asian neighbors and western culture, imagining the community in slightly different ways (cf. Andersson, 1983). Within China, Hanfu is the direct response to the blurry role of the Han category in ethnic discourses of CCP. Hanfu proponents hope to rebuild the leading position of Han in the field of ethnic cultures. In the level of East Asia, the movement aims to create the natural bond of Hanfu and Chinese identity and be influential again in the Sinosphere. At the worldwide level, Hanfu is used as a symbol to reject western culture and gain national self-confidence. Besides, Hanfu is always beyond the ethnicity topic and connects to a lager patriotic and political discourse.

A Nationalist Movement

> The Hanfu Movement aims for the rejuvenation movement of Huaxia civilization. It covers at least the following topics:
> 1. Rebuilding the unique Huaxia civilization featured with both the greatness of etiquette and the beauty of clothing.
> 2. Chinese ethnics cope with the crisis of Cultural lifeblood cutting-off under the impact of cultural globalization.
> 3. Rebuilding the national spirit of unremitting self-improvement, and enhancing the incomparable and unparalleled creativity of Huaxia China.
> 4. Re-establishing the criteria for interpretating civilization.

5. The growth of non-governmental power and the awakening of folk wisdom.
6. Allow Chinese people to transform suppressing ethnicity and deliberately avoiding ethnicity into treating ethnicity correctly.
7. Utilizing the light of Han culture to illuminate Han ethnicity which has sunk in gloom for hundreds of years.
8. The Hanfu Movement is a great movement in the true sense of Ethnic Reconciliation.
9. Devoutly inheriting the heritage of Huaxia culture and creating the bright future of Huaxia civilization.

(Xishan, 2009)

As Castells (2010, p. 73) points out, "social movements must be understood in their own terms: namely, they are what they say they are". The understanding of the Hanfu movement should come from the practices of Hanfu proponents and their own narratives. The above excerpt is from the first article of Xishan's collected works. It was written in July 2006 and the title is *The Hanfu movement in my mind*. This article has been regarded as the principles or even the "textbook" of the movement and been widely spread among supporters. The third, the fourth, the sixth and the eighth topics put forward by Xishan correspond to the three contexts of Hanfu we discussed before. The first, seventh and the ninth items take emphasis on utilizing the ethnic and historical resources to rejuvenate Chinese civilization. Besides, Xishan particularly mentioned "the impact of globalization" and "the non-governmental and folk wisdom", which exactly reveals the underlying impetus of the movement. The sweeping changes brought by globalization and modernity dissolves the traditional community and organizations people lived and worked, communication systems people relied on (cf. Castells, 2010, p. 69) and moral values people believed in. Meanwhile, the individualization process of contemporary society increases a risk of identity crisis and causes the instability of time, space and relationship (Castells, 2010, p. 69).

The Hanfu movement is a reaction to above two challenges. Social actors need meaning to live or to experience, and the identity is source of meaning (Castells, 2010, p. 6-7). Castells (2010, p. 7-8) illustrated three ideal types of origins of identity building: legitimizing identity, resistance identity and project identity. The Hanfu movement presents as the mixture of the last two forms. At the

national level, the Hanfu movement originates from the long time suppressed self-expression of Han category in the field of ethnicity, thus it could be viewed as the resistance identity. The movement stresses on the boundary between Han and other ethnicities and build a new community to achieve self-affirmation. It is a rebellion and denial against current ethnical paradigm. When goes beyond the domestic scope, the movement seeks to redefine the position of China in international society and aims to extend the influence of Chinese culture. In Castells' (2010, p. 10) words, project identity emerges in this process. These two kinds of identity are actively built by social actors who collect cultural materials and rearrange them in a meaningful way (Castells, 2010, p. xxvi).

Period	Development	Platforms
2003-2007	Emergence and early studies	Internet forums and websites (e.g. Han network, TianHan network, Han Weiyang)
2007-2013	Practice and accumulation	Social media and offline Hanfu associations (e.g. Weibo, WeChat, QQ group, Douban)
2013 till now	Boom and commercialization	Social media and e-commerce (e.g. Bilibili, Taobao)

Table.2 Three stages of the Hanfu

Three key stages of the Hanfu movement can be recognized, and of course, the movement is still ongoing. It is interesting that the movement always tangles with the development of technology and the Internet. In fact, the internet is the cradle of the Hanfu community, it not only provides the historical resource to form Hanfu culture, but also establishes connections among people in the community. In 2003, the photos of an Australian Chinese young man who wore his handmade Hanfu as well as a Hanfu enthusiastic who dressed Hanfu in street quickly spread through the Internet, which is viewed as the start of the movement. In the first stage, most Hanfu supporters can only communicate online since it is known little by the masses. The legacy of this stage is the basic historical narrative of Hanfu and multiple revival plans which put forward by early Hanfu proponents. In Xishan's book, three chapters are used to elaborate the rejuvenation proposals of traditional clothing, ceremonies and festivals (Xishan, 2009). In 2007, Xishan, the leading figure of the movement passed away due to heart attack. Meanwhile, new Internet platforms were rising. Hanfu associations were started in universities and main cities, and the earlier revival plans were put

into practice. From 2013, the growing e-commerce industry and the formation of a stable Hanfu group lead to the commercialization of Hanfu. As the commercialization process involves all actors in a market context, the role of Hanfu supporters has begun to overlap with the role of Hanfu consumers. Currently, the Hanfu movement face many challenges, which will be illustrated in the next chapter. Based on Castells' (2010, p. 74) definition principles of a social movement, the Hanfu movement can be defined as: a social and cultural movement whose actors identify themselves as Han ethnicity. They take the long-time suppressed ethnic expression within China, the western-centrism discourses as their adversaries, thus aims to redefine the position of Han ethnicity in Chinese society and extend the influence of Chinese culture in the worldwide.

Paradoxes in the Movement

Though I gave a clear definition of the movement above, the reality is that the Hanfu movement is still developing. Several challenges it has to react to is reshaping the adversary and aims of the movement. In this chapter, three aspects of challenges will be examined, including the interactions between the official and the grassroots, the collision of traditional ethnic concept and western nationalism as well as the new trends of the movement.

The Official and the Grassroots

> I notice that many netizens always pin their hopes on the government and elites. Here, we need to clarify: Hanfu is not "should" be revived, but "must" be revived, because this is an unstoppable public opinion… if the elite support, we will revive; if the elite do not support it, we will revive as well… We should not pin the hope on fantasy or the elite. Grassroots discourse is rising and becoming the strong mainstream. (Xishan, 2009)

Castells (2010, p. 33) illustrates that today's nationalism is not necessarily an elite phenomenon, and the Hanfu movement is an example of this. As Xishan's description shows, the early Hanfu movement started from a grassroot online community and is not associated with the top-bottom decision making process. Although Xishan believes the collective action has profound effects and it is unnecessary to

be aligned with government or elite groups, the interactions between the Hanfu community and the government are much more complex than his imagination. On the side of Hanfu community, the erased and invisible Han category is the results of current ethnic policies and relating propaganda, that is to say the intentional ignorance from the official constitutes the source of their resistance identity (cf. Castells, 2010, p. 33). However, Hanfu activists hope to receive help from the government and gain legitimacy through approval of the official in practice. In the online QQ group which I observed for 3 months, Hanfu enthusiasts get excited every time when the government shows positive attitude towards Hanfu. For example, when Hanfu is introduced by the state-owned media or Hanfu activities are supported by the government. Hanfu proponents tend to view it as the reward and take pride in it. Thus, they express contradictory sentiments to the official.

On the side of the official, it takes an ambivalent and blurry attitude towards the movement, and has throughout the decade. On the one hand, the government firmly reject the discourse of Han nationalism. In all political contexts, multiculturalism is stressed by the officials. For example, China is officially described as "a united multi-ethnic state founded jointly by the people of all its ethnic groups" (State Council of PRC, 1999). Publicly supporting the Hanfu movement could be a threat to the current ethnic paradigm and government legitimacy. On the other hand, nationalism is exactly the source of the government legitimacy, especially in the Chinese context where the majority of people mix the concept of "country", "state" with "government" and "the party" due to the education system. The Hanfu movement confirms the principle of self-determination and hopes to build its own narrative which is free from the western civilization system. From the perspective of the official, Han nationalism could directly be used as a resource to promote unity or solidarity of the public. In fact, the contradictory attitudes of the government is reflected on a series of official action.

Though Xishan argues that it is unnecessary to pin the hope on the government or elites, Hanfu supporters always look forward to the response of the official. The party has never given the Hanfu community a straight answer. However, it utilizes the Hanfu resource in a clever and obscure way. In

the name of Communist Youth League of China (CYLC), an event called as "Chinese National Costume Day" was established in 2018. CYLC is run by the Chinese Communist Party and organized as the same pattern to CCP. Though it is a particular political organization, it actually be embedded in the education system of China and becomes a mundane thing for Chinese students. Students in middle school tend to view it as a glory to be a member of CYLC since it connected with things like good grade, praise from teachers or special achievements. Thus, Chinese young people are quite familiar with CYLC. The official accounts of CYLC actively promote the event. However, the official takes an ambiguous attitude towards the Hanfu movement in many aspects. First, the name of the event has multiple meanings. In Chinese, the "national costume" is Huafu (華服) rather than Hanfu (漢服). "Hua" (華) could be explained as the Hua of *zhonghua minzu* (中華民族) or the Hua of *huaxia* (華夏) which refers to the Han Chinese. Meanwhile, Hua could be understood as an adjective instead of a noun. In this sense, Hua means gorgeous, beautiful and glorious. Thus, the name smartly avoid the tricky ethnic problem. However, CYLC somehow shows its support for the Hanfu movement in other aspects. The event is decided to be held March 3rd. In the traditional Chinese calendar, that day is known as the birthday of the Yellow Emperor and the day of ancient Shangsi Festival (上巳節). Besides, the logo of the event (figure.12) borrows the idea of Hanfu which takes the *youren* as a key feature. As the picture (Figure.12) shows, the logo highlights the "y" shape cross collar of Han clothing.

Figure.12 the logo of "Chinese National Costume Day"

Overall, both the government and the grassroots hold paradoxical attitudes to each other. Hanfu supporters who believe they are representatives of the majority Han are less satisfied with current ethnic discourses and tend to be more influential in public space, but they have to receive help from the official to realize their aims. The government never publicly affirm the claims of the movement, but partially cooperate with Hanfu activists in a secret way.

Eastern Ethnic Concept in The Wave of Western Nationalism

Figure.13 Han nationalism in a dilemma

The Hanfu community is a sensitive and always over-reacting group. On the one hand, it cannot deal with the contradictions between historical sources and its own historical narratives. On the other hand, it denies the current ethnic pattern and is dismissed by the mainstream. The Hanfu movement is in an awkward position. The awkwardness roots in the nature of the movement, which is the unavoidable conflicts between the traditional ethnic ideology and the contemporary nationalism. As mentioned before, today's concept of the Han category is the result of a modern nation-building practice. Han is the ethnicity information printed on ID cards; Han corresponds to a different path to enter university; Han means accepting different family planning policies in the past. Han category is a politicalized identity firstly and then a cultural one in modern Chinese society. The identity of the Hanfu community is based on the modern concept of Han, thus problems occur when they aim to revive or rejuvenate. As figure.13 shows, when looking backward, Han ethnicity need to prove they are the continuation of historical Han people (process A); when looking forward, Hanfu supporters have to explain the relationship of Han ethnicity and *zhonghua minzu* (process B).

The process A is decided by the nature of nationalism. Kosaku Yoshino (2015) points out that cultural nationalists regenerate their community through "creating, preserving, or strengthening" cultural identity and they view their nation as a result of its "unique history and culture" and "a collective solidarity endowed with unique attributes". History is the primary material of constructing national identity, and the history has to be unique enough. In the section of narrating the history of Han clothing, we explored how independent or irrelevant historical events are arranged in chronological order to compose the narrative. Stressing the long-existing, continuous history and the

brutality of Qing-dynasty allow the "rediscovered" history to gain a tragic and touching power. However, once going deeper to the history, both the definition of Han ethnicity and Hanfu are challenged. There was no Han ethnicity (漢族) but the Han people (漢人) in the history. Based on the expansive and changeable *tianxia* system, there was no solid boundary between "we" and "others". Han was not a fixed category, but a fluid cultural identity. Thus, when Hanfu supporters claim the purity and uniqueness of the Han lineage, they must get lost in the great number of paradoxical historical and archeological evidences. An interesting phenomena is that a group of Han nationalist trying to use the studies of molecular anthropology to prove the purity of Han, and actively doing genomic test to find consistency of genetic results and ethnicity identity. Here we can see the power of nationalism, it utilizes all the scientific and historical materials to affirm the existence of the imagined community. Meanwhile, the concept of Hanfu is questionable. When it claims that Hanfu has fixed features (e.g. the right *ren*, wide sleeves, using belt rather than button), the diversity and richness of traditional clothing are largely ignored. The diversity is reflected on the clothing of different social classes, occupations and regions, rather than on ethnicity. The current Hanfu promoted by the Hanfu community is a imitation of ancient upper classes, which shows the movement is more creating a fantasy rather than a sincere revival; imagining a community or using cultural materials to construct identity (Castells, 2010, p. xxvi).

The process B implies the Hanfu community is not able to precisely locate itself in contemporary society. When we discuss Hanfu in different contexts, it clearly shows Hanfu supporters equate the Han identity to the Chinese identity. In the domestic context, Hanfu proponents believes they are "realer" Chinese than other minorities. In the international context, they omit the existence of multi-ethnic cultures and take themselves as the representative of Chinese people. The strong sentiment of responsibility and the faith to fight for the pride of the nation community is exactly what Anderson (1983, p. 141-154) described as the nationalism emotions. However, if we view China as a nation-state, the corresponding nation is not Han ethnicity, but *zhonghua minzu*, a newly imagined community, which rose in the early 20th century rather than the Yellow Emperor period. The second

sentence in the preamble of constitution is "The people of all of China's nationalities have jointly created a culture of grandeur and have a glorious revolutionary tradition" and it also mentioned "it is necessary to combat big-nation chauvinism, mainly Han chauvinism, and to combat local national chauvinism" (Constitution of the PRC, 2004). Unfortunately, Han nationalism has no space in today's political mapping. It also shows the nation-building process of modern China is still ongoing.

Overall, the Hanfu movement fail to prove it has natural bond with historical heritage or Han traditions, while it is rejected by the current political institution. Thus, the Hanfu movement, which is under the guise of reviving traditions but tries to gain the legitimacy of modern nationalism, ends to be an orphan in the universe.

The New Trends

As capital flows into the field, Hanfu has become a dramatically rising industry which values more than 4.5 billion yuan in 2019 (iiMedia Report, 2020). The commercialization process is continuingly reshaping the movement. iiMedia
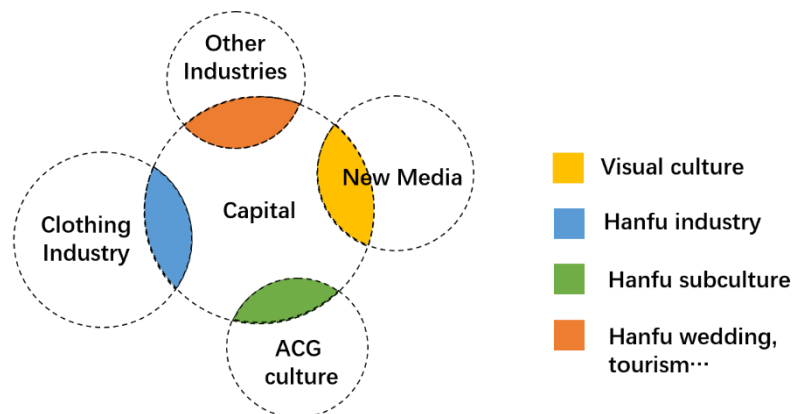

Figure.14 Capital and Hanfu

Research (2020) shows that in 2019, Chinese Hanfu enthusiasts reached 3.561 million, a year-on-year increase of 74.4%. From 2016 to 2019, the number of Chinese Hanfu enthusiasts has maintained a high growth rate of more than 70% for four consecutive years. Does that mean the Hanfu movement has received broader support in recent years? My informant Yan, who is 19 years old now, told me "not every Hanfu enthusiast wearing Hanfu out of the love of Han culture… I am into it just because it looks beautiful." Compared to early Hanfu supporters, young generation has more reasons to get involved in the Hanfu circle. The growing attractiveness and influence is the result of commercialization which largely lower the threshold for being a Hanfu enthusiast. Fifteen years ago, becoming a Hanfu supporter meant to handmake a clothing and have a good command of Hanfu

narratives, while being a member today just means to be a Hanfu consumer.

As the figure.14 illustrates, the Hanfu industry is not only limited to the clothing making. The enormous amounts of videos, coverages and events are the result of the combination of capital and new media platforms. In this sense, Hanfu has become a newly visual culture, and the "spirit" level (Xishan, 2009) of the clothing is peeled off. What left is the useless beauty and the ancient fantasy aroused by the clothing. Another trend is that Hanfu has been gradually included in the ACG culture[13] which is a typical subculture. Many anime conventions start to set up booths for Hanfu. Besides, Hanfu weddings, Hanfu elements in traveling, Coming of Age rite in Hanfu, etc. emerged. It need to be pointed out these fields mutually interact with each other (For instance, the Hanfu youtuber might be sponsored by Hanfu companies) and woven into a larger network. There are two consequences of the commercialization process. First, the Hanfu community is being depoliticized. The nationalism aspect of the movement might be dissolved by the all-pervasive capital power and turns to be a mild visual culture. Second, the Hanfu group tends to be self-enclosed due to it has become a Bourdieusian "taste" to distinct class (Bourdieu, 2010). In fact, more discussions in social media focus on "which brand has more authentic Hanfu" or "which brand is the best" rather than the movement per se. The grassroots nature of the movement is fading away.

Conclusion: constructing modern ethnic myth

To respond to previous research questions, the word, Hanfu, is accompanied by a set of complete narrative once it was born. It contains a particular perspective to view the history of Han ethnicity and the position of Han in contemporary Chinese society. Above analysis shows there is an unbridgeable gap between historical "Han" and today's "Han category", Han is neither a race nor a nation. In the imperial period, Han was a fluid identity which referred to a dynamic community of people who were included in (intentionally or unintentionally) a mutual cultural, political and economic system with

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[13] The abbreviation of Animation, Comics and Games. It is a typical subculture in Asian area and it is rooted from Japan

different integration level. In the republican period, "Han" lost its expansive function and transformed as a firm composed part of the newly imagined state-nation. A new conception, *zhonghua minzu*, was put forward in the nation-building process to name the new nation community and still be applied in contemporary political context. Nowadays, Han has been institutionalized as an ethnicity with clear boundary. Thus, when Hanfu supporters try to gather materials from history, there must be many not self-consistent narratives. Hanfu supporters construct their identity and self-image by completing a set of historical narrative and combined it with ethnic myth. The newly Hanfu knowledge sysytem is intentionally learned by new members rather than naturally acquired in social life.

Through reconstructing historical narrative, the pursuit and aim of the Hanfu movement is reflected in three levels. Within China, the movement is the direct response to the blurry role of the Han category in current ethnic paradigm, thus Hanfu proponents hope to rebuild the leading position of Han. On the level of East Asia, the movement aims to create the natural bond of Hanfu and Chinese identity and be influential again in the Sinosphere. At the worldwide level, Hanfu is used as a symbol to reject globalization and modernity in order to gain cultural self-confidence. However, the Hanfu ethnic myth has been challenged by its inner paradoxes and outer capital power. The Hanfu movement implies there is considerable room for progress in the aspect of nation-building of modern China, though it has been over one hundred years. The concept of nation-state is not perfectly coordinated with Chinese society and the ancient ethnic ideas are still deeply effecting people's ideas. Besides, today's nationalism has deviated from the classic discussion of Anderson (1983), the Hanfu movement shows contemporary nationalism is deeply tangled with technology and it is not necessarily led by the elite. China's Economic Rise, new Internet technology, the wave of globalization as well as the individualization process of contemporary society shape the Hanfu movement. The movement suggests the nation-building process of modern China is still ongoing.

I advocate for a continuation of the research from an intersectionality perspective. As the section of the new trend illustrated, more forces are mobilized to reshape the movement. Whether those forces

would alter the nationalism and grassroots nature of the movement as well as the influences of the movement over Chinese society need to be further studied. Besides, further reflections upon nationalism could be brought into this topic. The ongoing Israeli Palestinian conflict suggests how passionate, powerful and destructive nationalism sentiment can be and how many violence and wars are in the name of nationalism.

This study provides an example of how social movement can originate and develop on online platforms and how people reconstuct their ethnic narratives and identities online. It shows the new form of social movement (especially nationalist movemnt) at this information age. On another level, the study could be directly applied by the Hanfu community to promote the movement. As illustrated in the paradoxes chapter, the Hanfu movement has to face challenges from the government, commericialization process and the inner contradictions of its own narratives. It is important for the movement to redefine itself, reclaim its stand and clarify its aim on different levels. Moderate revival might be more powerful than radical nationlism.

Index of Images and Tables

Glossary

Book of Rites (禮記)	A collection of texts describing the social norms, administration, and ceremonial rites of ancient China
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
cheongsam (長衫)	Also known as qipao(旗袍), is a type of body-hugging dress of Manchu origin, literally means Manchu (旗) and gown (袍)
Classic of Poetry (詩經 shijing)	The oldest existing collection of ancient Chinese poetry
CYLC	Communist Youth League of China
five races in one union(五族共和)	A political concept brought up in republican time, meaning the harmonious co-existence of five major ethnic groups
Goryeo (高麗)	An ancient Korean kingdom
guzhuang (古裝)	Old-style clothing which always be criticized by Hanfu supporters
Han network (漢網)	The first and the most impactful Hanfu website in 2000s
hanbok (韓服)	The traditional Korean clothes (two different characters both pronounce as "han" in "hanfu" and "hanbok")
Hanfu (漢服)	Traditional clothing of Han ethnicity constructed by Hanfu community
hanyu (漢語)	Chinese language, literally means Han language
hanzi (漢字)	Chinese characters
Hua (華)	In the *tianxia* system, it refers to people live in central states
huaxia (華夏)	Refers to Chinese nation and civilization, especially related to the civilization created by Han Chinese.
Hui (回)	A minority group in China, mainly in the northwestern provinces
jiaoling (交領)	Cross collar
minzu (民族)	Official term used to refer to ethnicity in China
New Tang-style dress (新唐裝)	A newly invented traditionalistic clothing
Qing (清)	The last imperial dynasty of China
Rizhi Lu (日知錄)	A collection of short essays written by Gu Yanwu, a scholar in Qing dynasty
tianxia (天下)	Literally means all-under-heaven
tongpao (同袍)	A jargon of Hanfu community to refer to Hanfu proponents
Yao (瑤)	A minority group, mainly in the southwest and south of China
Yellow Emperor (黃帝)	A mytho-historical figure who is considered as one of the ancestors of the Han
Yi (夷)	The name of the eastern tribe in ancient China
youren (右衽)	Means the front of the clothes is tied to the right and the collar finally present as a "y" shape in appearance
Yuan (元)	A dynasty when China was included in Mongol Empire at that time
zhongguo (中國)	Literally means "the middle state", means "China" in Chinese context
zhonghua minzu (中華民族)	Refers to the nation of China which consist of all ethnic categories

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