

Study Club
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Horvath

Fashion is Born

Egypt, Greece and Rome

Geologists in their study of odd bits of stone and human bones ~~found in caves or excavated from the ground~~ have formed theories of the origin of ~~man~~ ^{They can trace} and his advance thru prehistoric eras up to the point where historians ~~can~~ pick up the story with records left by primitive man, ~~and~~ ^{These records} tell us of the origin and development of art, religion and customs of ancient races. But no one has yet been able to say definitely how ^{or why} clothes originated. Man had already accepted clothes as a natural part of his life by the time he had reached the stage of recording facts, and he didn't realize the importance to historians of those legends that ~~must~~ ^{must} have been told him of his ancestors whose only clothing was coarse hair, and ~~why~~ they first began to cover themselves. So we can only conjecture about the origin of clothes.

Mr. Jensen, in his book, The Long Journey, writes: "More snow fell on the mountains, snow and again snow, and in the valleys it rained unceasingly. The Ice Age was coming on in earnest. One frosty night when Carl, the myth man of the Ice Age lay naked and worn out under an ice-clad rock, he got up half delirious and made for the warm lair of a bear that he had scented near by. He killed the bear, made a hole in its body and crept into it. The next day he cleaned the skin and dragged it with him on his wanderings. Now he could stand the nights fairly well, and it was not long before he learned to wrap himself in his bearskin in the day time too." It seems logical that the first dress was principally and fundamentally intended

as a protection against climatic conditions. But there are those who feel that man may have first donned covering of a sort because of modesty. As is told in the Bible, Adam and Eve made aprons of fig leaves for themselves because they knew they were naked. But the sense of modesty is so different in different tribes, it is difficult to believe it originated dress. It seems more likely that dress, started from the need of protection! in the north from cold, and in the tropics from insects and brambles. Custom then produced garments of various types, the absence of which caused the sense of nakedness and embarrassment. Among marauding nomads of western Sahara, for instance, every man wears a cloth across his face. It was originally worn to protect the face from driving sand and glare of the desert. But so ingrained is the habit that the nomad will not show his face to a member of his own family, regarding it as the height of immodesty to do so.

Or perhaps primitive man bedecked himself in an attempt to beautify. The tatooing and disfiguring done by primitive peoples, tho hideous to us, was their idea of adornment and was in a way clothing or covering.

Whether clothing originated from need of protection, or from a sense of modesty or for love of adornment, in the cold regions man's first clothing was the animal skin, while in the warmer regions it was the loin cloth. And right at that moment fashion began. The hero of the tribe fastened his bear skin on the right shoulder, so others did it too, or in the south, a popular girl with deft fingers and an eye for beauty tied her ^{girdle} ~~loin cloth~~ in a certain manner and others followed suit. And so slowly thru imitation, custom and habit, fashion was born.

In such a hot country as Egypt the custom developed to wear

as little as possible. And in the early years of their history when all Egyptians were equal, the same costume was worn by everyone - a loincloth wrapped around the hips and tied in front, a band around the head to hold the hair out of the eyes, and sandals with a long curved-back toe piece woven of palm leaves. The first loincloth perhaps was woven of grasses from the banks of the Nile, but the Egyptians very soon began to realize the importance of flax in making cloth, and the loincloth was then made of linen.

While Egypt was developing her amazing civilization beginning about 4000 B.C. there was no nation in her environment sufficiently advanced to have any influence upon her. Consequently her customs and fashions were unique, and every element of which she made use was part of her own land and everyday surroundings. The materials that made clothing were from plants in the Nile valley. Colors that decorated her costumes were from her own berries. The Egyptians were skilled as dyers and their materials displayed a profuse intermixture of colors, particularly rich crimsons and yellows. As different levels of society emerged, clothing became a symbol of rank. Men of importance wore loincloths ^{or aprons} of matting or leather to distinguish them from common workmen who wore papyrus or coarse linen.

In 1600 B.C. after 2000 years of isolation, Egypt began trading with neighboring races, sending out merchants and receiving merchants from other countries. These travelers together with the migrations of the Jews brought the customs of other races into Egypt and changes began to occur in dress. The Egyptian girdle developed into a skirt which fell below the knees and the loincloth was narrowed into a fringed girdle. The women wore a tight-

who were ordered to make fringes in the borders of their garments. Num. XV 38 - after the custom of the Israelites

fitting tunic similar to our slips tho much more decolete, and influence of the Semites of the 20th century B.C. and a fringed girdle. Those whose position necessitated elaborate dress wore the sheerest of materials, several layers on top of each other and stiffly pleated like our accordin pleats. The style was to cover the lower parts of the body, leaving the upper part bare or bedecked with jewels. These styles reflected the growth in power and wealth resulting from trade and conquest and were the fashion among the fortunate ruling class. The slaves and workmen wore the original style loin cloth and ~~the~~ dancing girls wore nothing at all.

As Egypt grew in power, the splendor and gaiety of the court at Thebes resembled Arabian nights tales. Banquets, festivals on the water, jubilee celebrations, hunting parties increased in magnificence, and of course more elaborate clothes were needed. Because of the hot climate which developed the fashion of scanty attire there was not much chance for elaboration of costume except to wear sheerer materials, more stiffly pleated than your social rivals, bit there was no limit to what could be done in the matter of jewelry on the head or around the neck and arms. Wigs were worn in this regime and the amount of decoration on them depended upon one's station in society. A queen mother is described as wearing an elaborate wig upon which rested an ornamental crown consisting of a disk, two horns, two tall plumes and two serpents wrought in gold.

In 332 B.C. Alexander the Great conquered Egypt and dress as well as sculpture and art came under the influence of the Greek or Ptolemy rule. After the death of Cleopatra the Romans held

sway in Egypt and later the Arabs overran northern Africa and their picturesque costumes are seen in Egypt today.

Greeks

The Greeks first appear in history in the 8th century B.C. Their ancestors had come over from Phoenecia and so were Oriental in character and their dress may have been the same tight fitting tunic the Semites introduced into Egypt. But the temperate ^{changeable} climate stimulated them to activity so their garments became looser to give greater freedom of motion. Their athletic figures and lithe movements allowed the drapery to fall in graceful folds. Their love of beauty, simplicity and grace was shown in their clothes as well as their art.

Greek costumes are familiar to us from statues and vases. The Apollo Belvedere shows the short tunics worn by the men, with knee length military coats fastened by a clasp on the right shoulder one side being left open to insure greater freedom of movement in athletics. The women wore longer tunics reaching the floor, the upper arm being covered by catching the material together over the shoulders at regular intervals. A girdle held the tunic below the bust, draping the fullness in graceful lines. A peplos or oblong cloth was wrapped around the shoulders and laced sandals protected the feet. Respectable women rarely appeared in public and then always covered by the peplos, a veil of thin material large enough to envelop the entire figure when thrown over the head. These clothes were mostly of wool, from Arabian sheep.

As with the Egyptians so with the Greeks, wealth brought elaborateness in dress. Their tunics became fuller, embroidered with scenes of Greek wars, and the special attention given to

hair-does and complexions reflected the ease and security of success.

This was an era when everyone of any standing at all had at least six slaves, and these slaves were kept busy with curling irons making symmetrical curls or arranging folds of garments in parallel plaits, or applying beauty lotions. Among other beauty secrets the greeks had a special ointment with which they washed their hair. Then they would sit for hours in the sun and their hair gradually became a lovely golden color. The busts of Homer and Sophocles show the curls across the forehead falling in ringlets to the nape of the neck or shoulders. Many of the men had beards carefully curled, but after 336 B.C. when Alexander the Great ruled he commanded the Greeks to shave, fearing that in warfare their beards might be clutched by the enemy.

When the Romans swept down upon Greece they captured some of the beauty doctors who knew the secret of the golden ointment for hair, as well as face washes, skin foods for clear complexions, and dyes for fingernails. These captives and their secrets were carried to Rome, where their arts influenced the Roman fashions. AT the height of their elegance ^{the Romans} ~~they~~ even outdid the Greeks. Their hair was waved and curled in more elaborate and rigid formation, and not only was their hair washed with the golden shampoo, but painted yellow with saffron, or even sprinkled with gold dust.

But tho the Romans availed themselves of Grecian beauty secrets, and the Greek slaves introduced more grace and fullness to the Roman costume, it still remained typically Roman, as it had been from the beinning. No other race of people had worn the toga.

Erudite books have been written on the Roman toga. Students of the subject, from a careful study of statues can estimate the

size and shape, and can drape a modern figure in the accepted Roman fashion, but no Roman thought to record the origin of the Toga.

To go back to primitive man again, the need for clothing inspired the art of weaving and ~~xxxxxxx~~ and rectangular pieces of cloth were woven like our Indian blankets and draped around the body. The Etruscans, those ancient people who occupied the part of the Italian peninsula now known as Tuscany and whose civilization flourished some centuries before the city of Rome was built in 752 B.C. wrapped themselves in rectangular mantles. From the Etruscans the Romans derived the art of weaving and the purple border so significant on Roman costumes ~~for~~ those of high rank, but somewhere along the line, the rectangular shawl must have had its corners cut off for some reason, and the Roman toga emerged, still woven in one piece, but shaped like half a circle.

The toga, so called because it envelope the body and covers and conceals, is probably the earliest distinctively racial garment, the earliest garment which was both a necessary article in the wardrobe and also a badge of citizenship or membership in a political organization. The privilege of wearing it, its color and decoration were prescribed by law - as well as by custom. One end of the toga was thrown over the left shoulder and ~~allowed~~ ^{back} to hang down in front. The remainder was drawn around the ~~body~~, ^{across the front} under the right shoulder and passed over the left shoulder. This worn over a tunic, or undershirt was the recognized attire for men and boys for centuries. Women wore simply a tunic, sometimes one over the other. The only women to wear the toga over their tunic were freed slaves and prostitutes.

The toga was a very inconvenient garment and tho all citizens of Rome were privileged to wear it, the only people who used it as an every day garment were those of the leisure patrician class whose occupation was attending to public affairs. For more active occupations such as hunting, traveling etc, a circular cloak was worn. The poorer Roman citizens as well as the slaves, wore only a tunic when at work, and even the patricians donned the toga only when in public. Their house attire being the tunic, similar to that worn by the women.

But tunics of various kinds were worn by other races at this time. It was the Toga which belonged only to the Romans.

~~As we have seen with the Egyptians and Greeks the~~

In the early days of Roman history, the third century B.C. the toga was a simple white wool garment worn without a tunic and came just to the knees. In the Republican period, it had become the fashion to wear a tunic under the toga and the toga inself was longer, almost to the floor in front. A few daring patricians would scoff at fashion and disposed of the tunic during the oppressive heat of summer. Cato excited comment and criticism because he used to enter the forum, and give judgment during his praetorship without his tunic, wearing only a leather apron under his toga.

In the 2nd century B.C. under the influence of Greece the toga became larger and longer, the front end trailing on the ground, Folds were looser and softer and curves were more graceful. Also the woven wool was of a finer texture. The upper edge of the toga in the back was eased or lengthened and gradually these folds were drawn up over the head as a protection in bad weather, or during religious ceremonies.

For three centuries until the first century A.D. the toga expanded in size and magnificence of drapery, until in the Imperial days the toga measured five yards of material. Several different styles had developed. Short togas for every day wear and elaborate flowing ones draped to trail on the ground for special occasions. The decorations and color of togas signified different uses; one, the toga praetexta, was of a solid color, all white or all a dark color, ^{for the ordinary citizen} the toga trabea was party-colored with a purple border, signifying a person of distinction or royalty.

The great increase in length and width made the toga so cumbersome that changes ^{began to} occurred in form. Upper corners were cut off allowing more convenient disposal of the mass of fabric, and more varied and elaborate styles of draping were the fashion. The draping was a very serious matter. The material couldn't be caught up and slung over the shoulder any old fashion. Slaves worked a long while to bring about perfection of folds. Macrobius wrote of a fastidious person that once when he had arranged his toga with great care he brought charges against his colleague, who brushed against him in a narrow passage and destroyed the arrangement.

The togas were so carefully woven and lasted so long that changes were slow, but gradually more people felt as Tertullian did who said, What is your idea about the toga, is it a garment or a burden, did one have a garment or a pack? So the toga began to lose prestige, it was brought out only on special occasions. New ones were made shorter and scantier.