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An Analysis of the Clothing Culture of Wumesiben Mama, a Manchu Epic

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Abstract

Wumesiben Mama, a Manchu epic book, was released in 2007 and garnered interest from scholarly circles both domestically and internationally. This book should be considered an encyclopedia of North Chinese ethnic minorities due to its scholarly significance in epic, history, religion, mythology, art, folklore, and semiotics. This article investigates Wumesiben Mama's clothing culture. This area is almost entirely unknown, as there are almost no materials available to examine the clothing worn by the Donghai Nuzhen people hundreds of years ago. However, this Donghai epic recorded a wealth of information regarding the clothing and decorative culture of the ancient Donghai Nuzhen people, providing vivid, valuable, and instructive details about the clothing's uses, shapes, materials, manufacture, and colors. The clothing of the ancient Donghai Nuzhen people can collectively express their lifestyle, living standards, ideology, and aesthetic notions and serve as excellent resources for researching their culture.

Keywords: *Clothing culture; Donghai Nuzhen people; Clothing heritage based on Wumesiben Mama; Manchu epic*

1. Introduction

"Wumesiben Mama" is renowned among the Donghai Nuzhen people in Northeast China. Wubuxiben means the utmost wisdom, capability and skills. Mama means grandma in the Manchu language. Donghai Neuzhen: the name of a tribe, one of the three major Neuzhen tribes in Northeast China in Ming Dynasty, is a general name for the Neuzhen people living in the middle reaches of Songhua River, up to the Heilongjiang River valley and east coast, including Sakhalin Island. This epic originated in China during the Jin and Yuan dynasties (1115-1271) and was widely disseminated among the Donghai Jurchen and their descendants in the region of Sichote-Alin. China and Russia signed the "Beijing Treaty" in 1860, pursuant to which Russia gained more than 400,000 square kilometers of Chinese territory east of the Ussuri River to the Sea of Japan. By the end of the twentieth century, Manchu's traditional customs and primitive cultures had rapidly declined, and the Manchu oral ballad (Minjie, 2008) was on the verge of extinction due to the passing of its inheritors. Fortunately, Mr. Fu Yuguang was able to recover Wumesiben Mama, a classic work of Manchu oral ballads that had been completely lost to history, and bring worldwide notice to this wonderful work via decades of hard struggle. Wumesiben Mama is one of the finest Manchu ballads and merits inclusion in an encyclopedia of North China's ethnic minorities due to its academic worth in the areas of epic, history, religion, mythology, art, folklore, and semiotics.

In the historical documents, there are nearly no records about the religion and beliefs of the ancient Manchu from the Sushen People to the Mohe People and even less information on shaman clothing. Sushen is the name of an ethnic group of the pre-Qin period in ancient northeast China, Manchu ancestors. It was the first northeast ancestor to establish tribute relationship with the Central Plains Dynasty. Mohe, the name of the northeast ethnic group in ancient China, whose ethnic origins are Sushen in the pre-Qin dynasty, Hulu in the Han and Jin dynasties and Buji in the Southern and Northern Dynasties. It was called this name in Sui and Tang Dynasties. However, Wumesiben Mama is abundant in the records about clothing culture in Wumesiben Mama, which provides vivid and detailed materials for us to learn the uses, shapes, materials, production, and colors of the clothes of ancient Donghai Nuzhen people. Donghai Nuzhen people's cloths

can collectively reflect their lifestyle, living standards, ideology and aesthetic concepts in that remote age; this book provides precious materials for us to study the culture of ancient Donghai Nuzhen people.

Literature review: According to CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure) data, between 2007 when *Wumesiben Mama* was published and the end of 2022, a total of 76 articles on shaman clothing, including 46 academic journals and 15 master's theses, were published. Among the 76 papers, one paper and one journal are devoted to clothing study in *Wumesiben Mama*. Both pieces were written by Professor Man Yi's pupils at the Luxun Academy of Fine Arts. In addition to receiving detailed directions from Professor Man Yi, the researcher conducted further research based on her research framework.

2. Objectives

The research is carried out to analyze the clothing culture in *Wumesiben Mama* and interpret and systematically study the purposes, shapes, materials, production technologies and colors of the clothes in *Wumesiben Mama* through literature studying, experts interviewing, and field survey so that a comprehensive clothing culture outline of that time will be drawn to form a clear description on the clothes in that time and provide important basis for further learning the living mode, ideology, and aesthetic concept of Donghai Nuzhen people.

The disciplines of ethnology, folklore, shaman costume research, fashion design, film and television production, cultural and creative product design, as well as others, would benefit immensely from the clothing research detailed in *Wumesiben Mama*. To re-present the visuals, the researcher used an interdisciplinary approach to create representations of the images based on the words describing the attire in the epic.

3. Materials and Methods

The researcher collected data and materials through literature studying, experts interviewing, and field survey to study the clothing culture stated in *Wumesiben Mama*, including uses of clothing, styles of clothing, materials of clothing, manufacturing process, and color of clothing.

Interviews with three experts:

Professor Manyi of the Luxun Academy of Fine Arts is the first expert to be interviewed. She is an expert on Manchu dress and has conducted extensive research on *Wumesiben Mama's* clothing. She stated that the clothing culture is rich and colorful and may be evaluated methodically in five fields: functions, styles, materials, technology, and color. This paper was based on these five disciplines.

Professor Guo Shuyun of Dalian Nationalities University is the second individual. She was among the earliest epic scholars, and she authored *Study on Wumesiben Mama*. She believed, as did the academics, that painting the clothing imagery in the epic would make up for the lack of images. In order to replicate the epic's original clothing culture to the greatest extent feasible, she also advised that the design be strictly based on the epic's text. Following this approach, the researchers endeavored to reconstruct the original garment imagery from the epic.

Mr. Wang Honggang, a researcher at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, is the third person. He is also one of the earliest researchers of the epic. In 2000, he and Dr. James traveled to Primorsky Krai, Russia, the source of the epic, to conduct an inquiry. He advised that the scholars examine the shaman attire of the indigenous on display in the Primorsky Krai museum and do comparative research on the appropriate shaman attire. Consequently, the study relied on a significant number of literature about the shaman attire of many tribes, which served as the theoretical foundation for the paper and its production.

After the researchers painted and created six costume paintings based on the original epic, three experts (Professor Man Yi from the Lu Xun Academy of Fine Arts, Professor Guo Shuyun from Dalian Nationalities University, and Mr. Wang Honggang from the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences) confirmed the authenticity of the costume paintings. They believed that the shaman attire described in the

epic was no longer visible and only existed in words. The outfits constructed by the scholars are essentially recreations of the descriptions of costumes in the epic, but also alluding to shaman attire of comparable nationalities from around the world. The six produced costumes serve as a point of reference.

3.1 Uses of clothing

Based on my study, the clothing in Wumesiben Mama includes divine costume, funeral outfit, diving suit, tribe chief suit, and daily clothes. I carry out my study based on the above five uses and situations, which can be seen in the use statistics schedule of clothing in Wumesiben Mama.

Table 1: Use Statistics Schedule of Clothing in Wumesiben Mama

I	II	III	IV	V
Divine costumes	Funeral outfits	Diving suit	Daily clothing of Donghai People and the tribes	Tribe chief suit
Wumesiben shaman suit	Funeral coat (soul seeking suit)	Diving suit	Donghai people's clothing	(Huangzhangzi Tribe) Faji Chief Suit
Wumesiben's suit for sea ritual	Wumesiben's funeral outfit		Suits of the sirens island	(Wubusun Tribe) Nanluojin Chief Suit (female)
The suit worn by Wumesiben during fighting sirens	The suit worn by the mourners		Zhuluhan Tribe	(Wubusun Tribe) Gude Chief Suit (male)
The suit worn by Wumesiben during the voyage to search for the sun.			Huangzhangzi Tribe	(Wubusun Tribe) Wumesiben Chief Suit (female)
Suits for the junior shamans			Huihan Tribe	
			Bubusun Tribe	
			Funi Tribe	

3.1.1 Divine costumes

The divine costumes are of the most academic value. The divine costumes, based on my study include shaman suits, suits for sea ritual, dancing suits and war suits, which are related to religious belief.

It can be inferred from the name that divine costumes are used by shamans for ritual activities and are the symbols of gods. Shamans are the media between human beings and supernatural powers and their appearances were different from ordinary people so that their mysterious power of communicating with gods can be protruded. Wumesiben Mama shows the particular divine costumes at that time vividly (Yuguang, 2017)

3.1.1.1 Shaman suits

It's unfortunate that we can no longer view the real divine costumes of that time; all we have are only the records in historical archives. Wumesiben Mama provides vivid and detailed descriptions of the suits Wumesiben wore during shaman rituals: "she hangs the white mouse skins all over her body; she hangs the grey mouse skins all over her body; she hangs the white fox skins all over her body; she hangs the black otter skins all over her body; she makes colorful stones into headdresses; she makes bird bones into headdresses; she makes fish bones into headdress. This description reveals that divine costumes are made from the skins

and bones of animals and plants from the sky, the ground, and the sea, as well as some shells, plants, uncommon birds, beasts, and precious stones. Shamans believed that the objects they wore would allow them to speak with gods and repel evil. As the most distinguished chief shaman, the descriptions may also imply that she possessed remarkable abilities and bravery. The suit can be seen in the figure below.



Figure 1. The Shaman Suit of Wumesiben Mama

Note: the picture is drawn by the researcher based on the contents in page 66 in *Wumesiben Mama* (narrated by Lu Liankun, annotated by Fu Yuguang and published by Jilin People's Press in 2007)

3.1.1.2 Sea divine costume

Sea ritual was a grand ritual of Shamanism held by Donghai Nuzhen people, the ancestors of Manchu, on the sea. Donghai Nuzhen people lived in the coastal area for generations by boating and fishing, so they worshiped the mysterious ocean and made up the fairy tale of Donghai Goddess. The sea ritual was held mainly to pray for a successful and safe voyage and express gratefulness to the blessing from Donghai Goddess. Based on the text of the epic, the sea ritual of the Donghai Nuzhen people includes two main types: expedition rituals and sea burial funerals. Wumesiben launched five voyages to explore the ocean and chase the trace of the sun, for four of which the grand voyage rituals were held before setoff. The ritual for the second voyage, which was led by Wumesiben personally, was the grandest and most formal. The magnificent and grand ritual lasted for more than ten days (Shuyun, 2013). As described in *Wumesiben Mama*, “Wumesiben, the wisest and greatest chief, put on the precious divine costume – sea divine costume which was made of skins of the tiger, leopard, eagle, whale, roe deer, wolf and python, held up the percussion instrument made of one hundred silver bells and the ritual divination bones made of one hundred marine fish teeth and wore the decoration with one hundred embedded whale eyes and the ritual streamers made of the colored feathers from one hundred birds. This is Wumesiben’s messenger.” The sea divine costume on Wumesiben was made of the skins of 8 types of animals and decorated with silver bells, marine fish teeth, whale eyes, and colored bird feathers. The unbelievable luxury of the suit suggests the sincere worship of Donghai Nuzhen people to the sea and the important status of the Great Shaman. The suit is shown in the figure below.



Figure 2. The Sea Devine Suit of Wumesiben Mama

Note: the picture is drawn by the researcher based on the contents in page 106-107 in *Wumesiben Mama* (narrated by Lu Liankun, annotated by Fu Yuguang and published by Jilin People's Press in 2007)

3.1.1.3 Dance costume

According to my research and statistics, there are as many as 35 known dance names in Wumesiben. In section of “Wumesiben’s dance costume was described in “Fight Dance Against Sirens””: “Wumesiben is wearing a shawl made of Oriental pearl, a cloak carved with silver, a long white velvet dress, golden sleeves made of flying squirrel skin, a waist knitted with golden pheasant velvet, and ribbons embroidered with the backs of whales, sharks, bears, leopards, badgers, wolves and snakes. The ribbons are embedded with bone whistles and reflect silver light. The beak beads were accompanied by Wumesiben’s rushing drums and dancing steps, and she wore a hundred braided hats fashioned with the feathers of nine-striped birds.” The dancing costume is comprised of shawls, capes, long skirts, colorful sleeves, waistcoats, ribbons, colorful boots, and braided hats, and is constructed from as many as 22 different types of materials using embroidery, inlay, and weaving techniques. Wumesiben stunned the Sirens with this dance outfit, and she defeated the hostile sirens with her heavenly goddess-like dance. Wumesiben utilizes dance as a weapon instead of battle to combat the Sirens. Islanders were eager to follow her, thus the Donghai people were no longer at peril. This dance costume’s contribution is irreplaceable.



Figure 3. Dance Costume of Wumesiben Mama

Note: the picture is drawn by the researcher based on the contents in page 94-95 in *Wumesiben Mama* (narrated by Lu Liankun, annotated by Fu Yuguang and published by Jilin People's Press in 2007)

3.1.1.4 Voyage rope

After Wumesiben became the Ubusun Chief and Great Shaman, she embarked on a total of five voyages to find the palace of the sun and provide permanent happiness and brilliance to the Donghai Tribe. On the second voyage, she led the fleet herself while wearing a costume described in *Wumesiben* as: “Wumesiben wore her favorite voyage outfit when she embarked on the journey. This garment was painstakingly crafted by the servants and Wubule’en, her favorite apprentice. The suit was exquisite, colorful, and brilliant; it had a cape made of nine hundred and ninety-nine pieces of ground Donghai colored stone, ribbons inlaid with nine hundred and ninety-nine colored shells, bands with a pattern of clouds, waters, and stars woven with nine hundred and ninety-nine whale whiskers, a loincloth made with carefully shaped anemones and water hyacinth leaves” This priceless voyage outfit consists of a cape, colored ribbons, bands, a loincloth, a hat, a pair of boots, and a pouch; the manufacturing methods include grinding, embedding, weaving, cutting, pasting, sewing, painting, soaking, and steaming, among others.



Figure 4. The Voyage Rope of Wumesiben Mama

Note: the picture is drawn by the researcher based on the contents in page 139-140 in *Wumesiben Mama* (narrated by Lu Liankun, annotated by Fu Yuguang and published by Jilin People's Press in 2007)

3.1.2 Funeral outfits

The funeral outfits recorded in *Wumesiben Mama* include the suits worn by Wumesiben for holding the soul-seeking ritual on the funeral and the suit on her in her funeral.

The text indicated that “Fifty pairs of funeral ladies in black bird suits spread their arms like flying birds, while thirty pairs of funeral men in black bear skins wept bitterly with their feet stamping the ground; nineteen pairs of white-haired old men in black fish skins waved and roared to the melancholy sea, and nineteen pairs of old ladies in black sheep skins looked up, shook their bodies, and wept like sheep. Wumesiben sang and danced while wearing a cape made of white swan feathers over her shoulder, a silver saint helmet woven with sea fish bones on her head, a silver shelter woven with whale bone pieces on her body, short and light boots made of carved whale bones, and back martens socks on her feet. The white swans circled the sky and called out in anguish.” It implies that feathers, bear skins, fish skins, and sheep skins are used to create the burial attire used during funeral rituals. In addition, it may be concluded from the text that their manufacturing procedure is extremely straightforward and that the color black is utilized throughout. To hold the soul-seeking ceremony, Wumesiben's funeral consists of a robe, a helmet, a shelter, and a pair of boots. The materials consist of feathers, fish bones, mink cashmere quality white and silver materials. It demonstrates that classes had emerged and suits might indicate a person's social standing.

The aged Wumesiben passed away on her fifth voyage and all the tribes in Donghai came to the coast to greet the coffin of Wumesiben. They “have white flowers, white furs and, white feathers over their shoulders and linens on their bodies”. It can be inferred that the clothing of tribe masses are simple and most of them put cloths over the shoulder and the materials are mostly plants, feathers and furs and the main color

is white, which can show the respects and worship to Wumesiben, the great Shaman and the chief of their tribe.

Sea burial is generated from the concept of Donghai ancestors, who believed that the life comes from and ends in the sea. The sea burial for Wumesiben was especially grand and extravagant.. The funeral outfit of Wumesiben was made of walrus skin, sea python skin, fish eye beads and whale skin. The materials were precious and full of beliefs about shamanism. The original text describes: “The body of Wumesiben was laid on the funeral boat and covered with walrus skin to keep her warm while moving in the sea, with sea python skin to help her move fast in the sea, with one hundred fish eye beads to brighten the dark sea and sea far, with whale skin to guard her from the ghosts and evils in the sea.”

The suit is shown in the figure below.



Figure 5. The Funeral outfit of Wumesiben Mama

Note: the picture is drawn by the researcher based on the contents in page 85 in Wumesiben Mama (narrated by Lu Liankun, annotated by Fu Yuguang and published by Jilin People’s Press in 2007)

3.1.3 Diving Suit

The ocean, a vast and mysterious blue field, has been deeply attracting and inspiring human’s desire for exploration. In order to prevent the possible danger of sailing at sea, human beings have been exploring a kind of clothing for diving. The ancestors of Donghai Nuzhen people lived in the coastal area by generations and they invented one of the earliest diving suits in the world. As described in “Fight Song of Sirens” in Wumesiben Mama: “Ubusun people gathers on the winding coast; the marine soldiers wear the crystal clear scale suits processed by means of oil soaking and webs on the feet; they wear the waterproof air bag made of animal skins on the head and dive into the blue sea and become a part of the sea.” It’s learned from the text that this special diving suit has three parts: coat, web and head air bag. The coat is made of fish skin and soaked in oil to resist water. The webs are bound on the feet. The creation inspiration is from the diving animals. The waterproof air bag is like the oxygen mask we use for diving today. Generally, it’s close to the

modern diving suit. The protective diving suit recorded in the epic can dramatically improve the safety and display the wisdom and impressive creativity of the ancestors of Donghai Nuzhen people. The suit is shown in the figure below.



Figure 6. Diving Suit of Wumesiben Mama

Note: the picture is drawn by the researcher based on the contents in page 85 in *Wumesiben Mama* (narrated by Lu Liankun, annotated by Fu Yuguang and published by Jilin People's Press in 2007)

3.1.4 Chief Suit

It's shown in my statistics that ten of the eleven tribes in *Wumesiben Mama* mentioned chiefs and a total of twenty nine chiefs are mentioned and the suits of four chiefs were described, including *Wumesiben* (a woman), *Gude Chief* (a man), *Ubuxun Nanluojin Chief* (a woman), and *Fajiling Mama* (a woman).

The *Huangzhangzi Tribe's* woman chief wore a shining crown with ringing bells; the crown was adorned with three thousand pearls and colored jades; a pair of silver rings with patterns of whistling birds hung on the ears; her coat was silver colored and adorned with whale eyes, dragon bones, and cloud patterns made of goose down. She was like a fairy lady from heaven to earth. It suggests that the *Faji Chief* wore a crown, earrings, and a coat. The coat was made of whale eyes, dragon bones, and goose down.

Nanluojin Chief (a woman) of the *Ubusun Tribe* wore a dress. *Gude Chief* (a man) of the *Ubusun Tribe* wore a short leather culotte with no more description was provided but the book only mentioned that it's a valuable chief suit. More details were given to the crown. The book said that "his crown has the patterns of five eagles and the sun and the moon and has been passed down by five generations for over two hundred years."

It's inferred that the coats of chiefs were not described in detail but the crowns were highlighted significantly, from which we can learn that the crown enjoys a more important position in the chief suit.

3.1.5 The daily apparels of Donghai Nuzhen people and the tribes around

Guo Shuyun, a famous scholar, supposed that Wumesiben Mama recorded many Donghai Nuzhen people tribes and it claimed “there are seven hundred towns”; however, only nine tribes have specific names, including Ubusun Tribe, Zhuluhan Tribe, Huihan Tribe, Qiemuken Tribe, Kingdom of Women, 13 reefs of the two islands, Funi, and Woerhun. The names of the other two tribes are not provided but only the island names are given, Green Island and Anban Island.

For the clothing of the Donghai Nuzhen people, the text records that “they put straw rain capes with feathers and furs over the shoulders in winter and wear leaves around the waist with the remaining body naked and walk with naked feet. The women weave linens and use small pieces of fur to cover the private parts.” “Donghai Nuzhen people use animal skins as coats and don’t know how to sew;” “Wumesiben takes out three coats: a straw cape, a cape weaved with leather bands and a cape weaved with velvet for the savages.” We can learn that Donghai Nuzhen people put the coat over their shoulders and the materials include plants, feathers and leather. The production processes are simple and mainly include hanging, binding and weaving. What’s the clothing of sirens like? It’s described in the book that “they have tattoos on their bodies and naked feet and wear waist-length hair. They wear sea leaves underarm and fish skin arm coats; the tattoos are painted with the colored muds with nine colors; the sirens use grass and vines to protect their bodies and wear fish coats; they put on vine leaves and vanillas and insert colorful feathers into hair.” The clothing of Zhuluhan Tribe and Huangzhangzi Tribe are made of deer and doesn’t cover the haunch. The women in the Funi Tribe wear feathers and the men tie belts.

In short, the daily apparels of Donghai Nuzhen people and the tribes around are simple and made by process of putting over, tying and weaving and the materials are from the local animals and plants.

3.2 Clothing styles

In the clothing of ancestors of Donghai Nuzhen people, a shaman suit can represent the highest clothing culture and art. The shaman suits are subject to the fixed form and consist of coat and decorations; the coat includes ritual coat, ritual skirt, loincloth, crap and wraps.

3.2.1 Shaman divine costume

Shaman divine costume is also called a magic suit as it is an important part of a shaman, so it’s also directly referred to as “shaman divine costume”. It’s mainly made of fish skins, animal skins, and furs. Many silver bells will be hung on the divine costume and will ring when the shaman dances. The bell sounds will correspond to the ritual drum beats. It’s said that the bell sounds can activate gods and frighten away evils. The suits have ritual stones, bones, and feathers sewed as decoration, standing for the worshiped gods and requesting blessing from the gods. The epic describes a sea divine costume collected by Wumesiben: “The bells are installed as the percussion instruments, many fish teeth are used to sew the divination of the suit, one hundred fur seal furs are used to make soul stones, one hundred whale eyes are made into spikes of the suit, and the colored feathers of one hundred birds are made into ribbons of the suit.” The suit can be seen in the figure below.

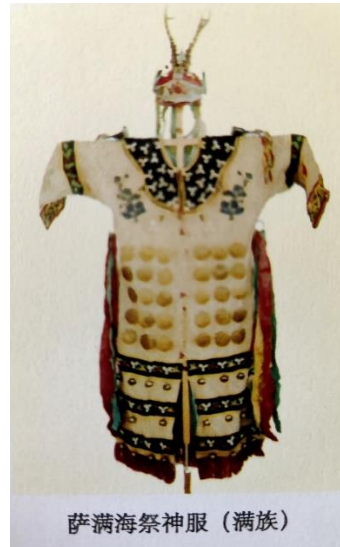


Figure 7. Shaman Clothing- Divine costume
Source: Yuguang, Shaman Art, Xueyuan Press, 2009, p.4

3.2.2 Cloak

The cloak is the most typical form; collar, cap-less, sleeveless, usually with slits at the back, and the whole person is covered in a cage. It's used against freezing weather and cold winds. In the epic, Wumesiben has the cloaks made of various materials by weaving, such as "straw weaved cloak", "leather ribbons weaved cloak" "velvet weaved cloak" and "silver eagle cloak". It suggests that the technologies of cloak making vary based on materials and weaving is used. Grass and other plants are used to make cloths. The materials of clothing expanded. However, the cloak can hardly be found in today's shaman clothing. The figure of a cloak can be seen in the figure below.



Figure 8. A picture of Empress Dowager Cixi in her cloak
Source: <https://www.zhihu.com/question/41812582>



Figure 9. A cloak in the Palace Museum
Source: <https://www.zhihu.com/question/41812582>

3.2.3 Loincloth

Loincloth is the cloth around the belly. The loincloth of shamanism is unpractical. In shaman suits, loincloth is special for hanging percussion instruments, several of dozens of layers of metal instruments. The instruments are the cone shaped tubes rolled by metal and sound by crashing each other during shamans' dancing. Wumesiben has the loincloths made of various materials and some are made directly of a part of the animals. For example, the leopard tail loincloth, bear claw loincloth, or lynx tail loincloth. The loincloth can be seen in the figures below.



Figure 10. A part of shaman clothing – Loincloth
Source: Taken by Yan Xu (the author of the Thesis) in Jilin Manchu Museum on October 31, 2020



Figure 11. Waist Bells

Source: Taken by Yan Xu (the author of the Thesis) in Liaoning Manchu Museum on April 5, 2021

3.2.4 Apron

Aprons were the first thing our forefathers put on their bodies during the wild times. In a long historical period, apron has protected the most important part of people's reproduction from animals and thorns, made great contributions, and had a great impact on national psychology. [3] It is rumored that shaman activities began as early as the matriarchal clan society. At that time, women were engaged in shaman activities, and shaman wearing God's skirt started at this time (Zhang, 2015).

Shaman's ritual dress is the lower part of the divine costume, which represents clouds. Some dresses are connected with divine costumes, so the dress is an important part of Shaman's clothes. In the chapter "Sirens Dance Songs" of Wumesiben Mama, Wumesiben wears a very gorgeous white velvet dress. It must be very light, elegant and eye-catching when dancing.

Shaman costumes have a strict hierarchy, and the little shamans wear sacred skirts made of ordinary animal skins and fish skins, such as "sudden willingness in tiger skirts, sudden spring in leopard skirts, and sudden rush in carved skirts and sudden gold in fish skirts". These little shamans are in sharp contrast with the long white velvet dresses of Wumesiben, the great shaman, and their status and rank are very different. The figures below show the apron types.



Figure 12. A part of shaman clothing – apron

Source: Yu Guang, Shamanism Arts, Xueyuan Press, 2009, p.8



Figure 13. A part of shaman clothing – apron

Source: taken by Yan Xu (the author of the Thesis) in Jilin Manchu Museum on October 31, 2020

3.2.5 Shawl

Cloud shoulder is the earliest shape of shawl, and the earliest record of cloud shoulder can be found in *Jin Yu Fu Zhi* (A book about clothing in the Jin Dynasty). The earliest shape of cloud shoulder originated from the western regions, and its origin is related to the west. In Peking Opera costumes, cloud shoulder is mostly used for fairy characters, which just has the ability to communicate with gods together with shaman witches. There is a cloud shoulder made of animal bones and used for shaman activities on display in Jinshangjing Museum in Acheng, Heilongjiang Province. Judging from the animal patterns made of animal bones, it should belong to the early shaman religious dress (Yi, 2013).

Shaman's divine costumes not only have symbols communicating with gods, showing identity and intimidating demons, but also show off the power and wealth of the clan. This is concentrated on the shaman's special and striking shawl. The shawl is just the face of the divine body, and it is a very dazzling part. Therefore, shamans are extremely concerned about the decorations in the front and back parts of the shawl, which can not only deter evil spirits, but also be beautiful and attract the love of the gods. It can also show the extraordinary strength and wealth of the clan. Therefore, shawls are made of the strangest and richest materials. God's clothes are hard to do, and shawls are especially hard to do. These hard-to-find treasures are used in making God's clothes and noodles. Wumesiben Shaman's dance costume is a shawl made of East Pearl. The shawls are shown in the figure below.



Figure 14. A part of shaman clothing – wrap (front view)

Source: Taken by Yan Xu (the author of the Thesis) in Jilin Manchu Museum on October 31, 2020



Figure 15. A part of shaman clothing – wrap (back view)

Source: Taken by Yan Xu (the author of the Thesis) in Jilin Manchu Museum on October 31, 2020

3.2.6 Divine hat

The shaman's divine hat is an important symbol to distinguish between the shaman's divine system, the shaman's level, and divine skill. Hat horns can increase with the shaman's grade; generally there are three to nine corners. The older a shaman is, the more corners there will be on the hat. The hat of Wumesiben in the epic is different from the normal one and is made and provided by the Ubusun people to express the honor and worship of Wumesiben. During dancing against the siren, Wumesiben wore a hat with "bird features and one hundred braids; there are three wood-carved golden birds stretching out wings. Wumesiben was beating the Divine drum. The "feather type divine hat" is a symbol for worshipping the birds, and the odd number of birds will be carved on the hat because the odd number is Yang and stands for the Sun Bird soaring in the universe with freedom and communication between the universe and human beings. It's an important sign of sunbird worship by the Manchu ancestors.

According to the investigation of Japanese scholar Akihabara in 1930s, the ceremonial robes used by Oroqen shamans have many magical and incantative functions, with metal antlers on their caps and a bird shape in the middle. They are considered to be the spiritual bird Guo Gong, and Guo Gong's bird is regarded as a sacred spiritual bird. Its voice can attract good spirits, and it is put on the shoulders only because the good spirits it attracts drill into the body through the ear holes (Shouwu, 1944). It can be seen that the image and cultural connotation of birds used in Wumesiben's dancing hat is extremely rich.

The following figure shows the divine hat.



Figure 16. A part of shaman clothing – divine hat

Source: Jilin Manchu Museum, photographed by the researcher on October 31, 2020

3.2.7 Divine boots

The magic shoes worn by shamans used to be made of fish skin, but later they were made of wild boar skin or cowhide. The style is the same as that of shaman, which is wear-resistant and warm. A bell is tied on the toe, and frogs, snakes and other patterns are sewn on the shoes. The colorful boots of Wumesiben

in the epic are woven from mink wool, and the dragon-rolling boots are used in “The Song of Looking for the Sun God”. The exquisite production process shows that Wumesiben attaches great importance to the material and decoration of her shoes.

The following figures show the divine boots.

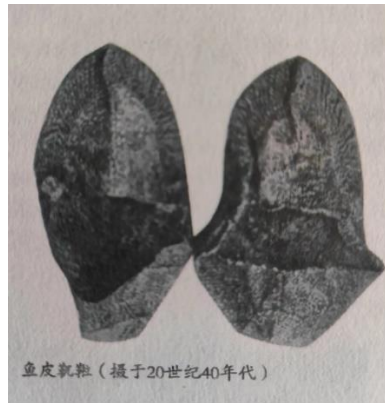


Figure 17. The Fish Skin Boots of Heze People

Source: Xuebin, Xuekun, Heze People’s Fishing and Hunting Life, Heilongjiang Art Press, 2006, p.87



Figure 18. Leather books of Elunchun people

Source: Xuebin, Elunchun People’s Hunting Life, Heilongjiang Art Press, 2003, p.88

3.3 Materials

It’s shown in my study that the materials used in the costumes of the ancestors of the Nuzhen in Donghai in Wumesiben Mama are subject to original characteristics. There are five categories: leather feathers (Figure 19), bone and teeth (Figure 20), shellfish (Figure 21), metal pieces (Figure 22) and plants. The divine costumes used a lot of precious animal and plant materials, which reflected the pious faith and extraordinary creativity of the ancestors of Jurchen in Donghai.



Figure 19. Leather as clothing material

Source: Northeast China Fur Market, photographed by the researcher



Figure 20. Teeth and bones as clothing materials

Source: photographed by the researcher



Figure 21. Cowrie shells

Source: <https://www.ancient-origins.net/history-ancient-traditions/shell-money-0011793>



Figure 22. Metal pieces

Source: <https://www.duitang.com/blog/?id=78741488>

The materials utilized to create shaman outfits are of the highest quality and are dictated by the clan's living location; natural materials are often used. After the leather is selected, it is boiled and dried by a special person. Wumesiben used to be an excellent fur processing woman at young age. Apart from shaman's self-making, after shaman and clan allow and select, God can also entrust some decent, noble-minded and skillful elderly mothers in clan, most of whom have in-laws or friendly ties with shaman. In the chapter "Looking for, Looking for the Song of the Sun God" in Wumesiben Mama, Wumesiben's robe was made by her maids and Ubule'en, one of her favorite apprentices.

In ancient times, the some strange prototype ornaments were used on the divine costumes, which were processed by shamans. Later, simple carved ornaments were gradually added as worshippers. With the progress of society, the influence of shaman's theocracy had elevated and the form of divine clothes became growingly exquisite. The stranger and more difficult materials and rare treasures were used to make suits; the production time, working procedure, taboo and process were also extremely difficult. The figures below were two shaman costumes with a history of 200 to 300 years donated by Mr. Fu Yuguang in Jilin Manchu Museum. They were well-made and dazzling. (Figure 23 and Figure 24)



Figure 23 The overall image of divine costumes

Source: Northeast China Fur Market, photographed by the researcher



Figure 24 The overall image of divine costumes

Source: Northeast China Fur Market, photographed by the researcher

Lots of clothing materials are recorded in Wumesiben Mama. My analysis is carried out according to the types, uses and material categories of clothing. The clothing materials analysis tables (1) and (2) in the epic Wumesiben Mama show the detailed contents of my study.

Table 2. Analysis of the Types and Uses of Clothing Materials in Manchu Epic Wumesiben Mama (1)

No.	Suit type	Purpose	Materials
1	Divine costumes	Shaman suit of Wumesiben	Furs, stones, bones, teeth, tails, claws
2		Sea ritual suit of Wumesiben	Skin, silver bell, teeth, fish eyes and hair
3		Dancing suit of Wumesiben	Oriental pearl, velvet, skin, bone, fish scale, snail, feather, wood
4		Sea voyage rope of Wumesiben	Pear, seashell, whale beard, anemone, water hyacinth leaf, turtle board, deciduous green branches of spruce.
5	Funeral outfit	Funeral outfit (soul seeking suit)	Feather, skin, bone, down,
6		Wumesiben's funeral outfit	Skin, fish eye beads,
7		Funeral outfit in the tribe people's funeral	White flowers, bark, feather and hemp
8	Diving suit	Diving suit	Fish scales and skins
9	Donghai people's daily apparel	Donghai people's suit	Maomao, feather, bark, branches and leaves, silk hemp
10	Clothing of people around	Sirens suit	Sea leaf, bark, grass, vine, fragrant flowers and feathers

Table 3. Analysis of the Types and Uses of Clothing Materials in Manchu Epic Wumesiben Mama (2)

No.	Material type	Detailed materials
1	Skin Class	White mouse skin, chinchilla skin, silver fox skin, black otter skin, tiger skin, leopard skin, eagle skin, whale skin, roe skin, wolf skin, python skin, sea bear skin, flying squirrel skin, shark skin, bear skin, badger skin, fox skin, raccoon's back skin, fish scale skin, etc.
2	Bone Class	Bird bone, fish bone, sea fish bone, whale bone,
3	Stone Class	Colored stone, Donghai colored stone,
4	Shellfish	Snails, seashells,
5	Tooth Class	Teeth, sea fish teeth
6	Feather Class	Colorful feather, silver carved feather, white velvet, golden pheasant feather, nine-striped bird feather, swan feather.
7	Plant Class	Trees, anemones, sea anemones, deciduous green branches of spruce, white flowers, mangroves, branches and leaves, silk hemp, sea hyacinth leaves, grass vines and fragrant flowers.
8	Animal Tail	Leopard tail
9	Animal Claw	Bear claws
10	Baleen	Whale moustache
11	Metal	silver bell
12	Fish Eyes	Whale eyes, fish eye beads,

According to the statistics of the percentage of materials used in clothing, leather and feathers account for the most, reaching 53.3%. Other materials, such as bone and teeth, shellfish, metals and plants, accounted for 46.7%, among which plants accounted for the most, reaching 18.3%. Dental materials account for the same proportion as other materials, accounting for 10%; Stones and shellfish account for 6.7%; Metal material is the least, accounting for only 1.7%. The statistics can be seen in Figure 21 below.

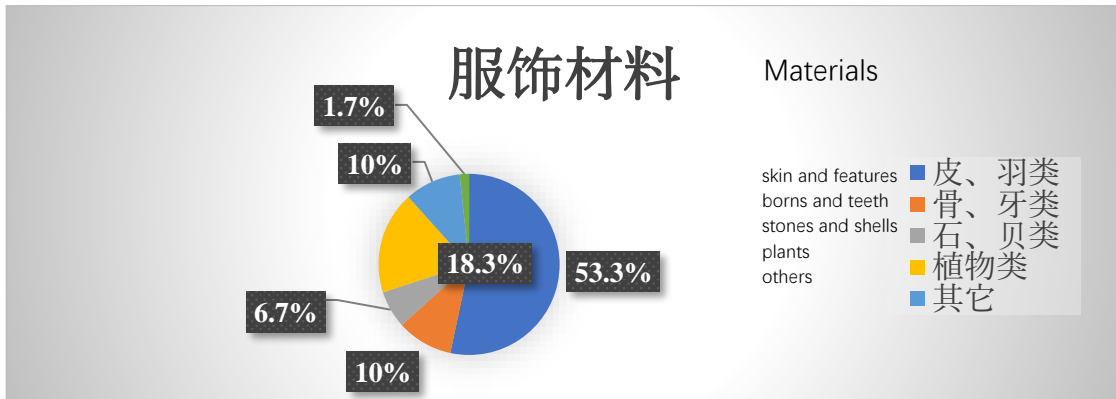


Figure 25 Material statistics in the epic
 Source: Compiled and processed by the researchers

3.4 Manufacturing process

Through the study of the costumes and utensils mentioned in the epic Wumesiben Mama, I summarized seven representative processes: dyeing, sewing, polishing, inlaying, weaving, embroidery and shearing.

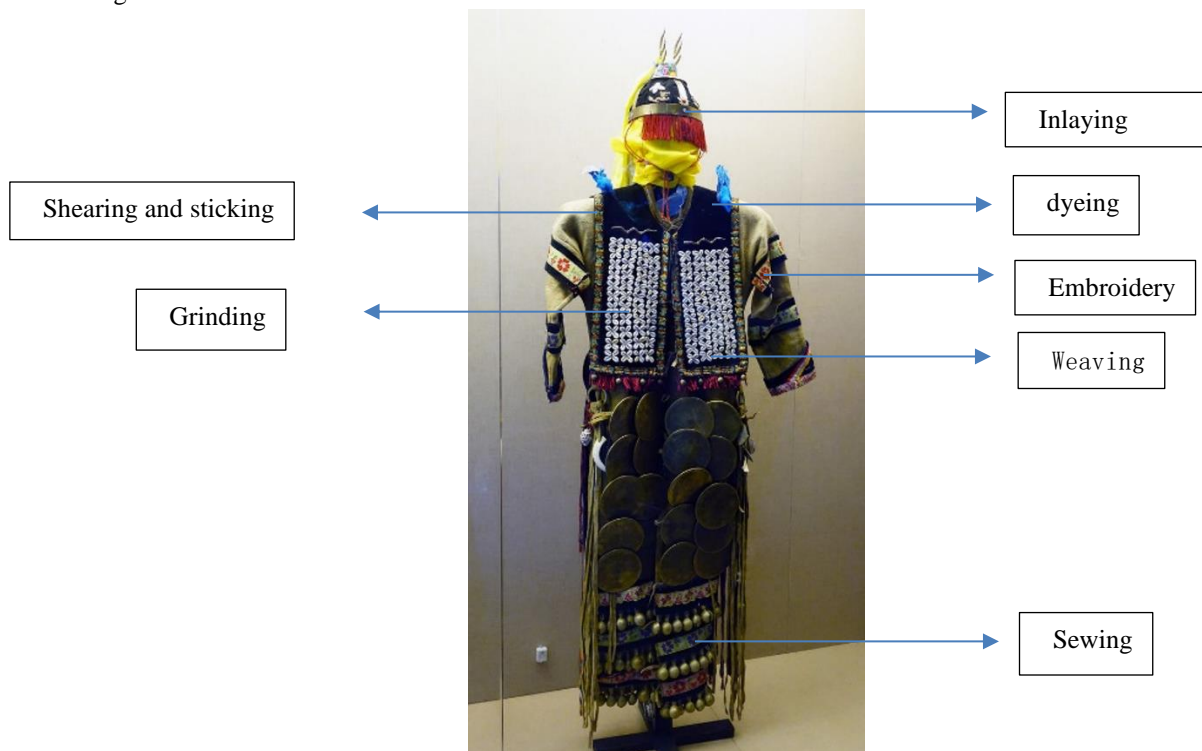


Figure 26. Shaman costume of Oroqen people
 Source: https://sucai.redocn.com/yishuwenhua_7028555.html

3.4.1 Dyeing

The dyeing procedures described in the epic are essentially plant dyeing; that is, natural plant dyes are employed to smear and color textiles, and the roots, stems, leaves, and skins of plant blooms and fruits

can be boiled to extract the dyeing liquid for dipping and smearing.’ The sacred boots that Wumesiben Mama wears with her robe are dragon-rolling boots painted with spruce leaves and twigs. Sadly, this dyeing practice has been lost in China, however it is reported that certain Nanai people in Russia still employ it.

3.4.2 Sewing

When people in the Donghai dive into the sea, they wear water-proof air bags hand-sewn with animal skins; A golden eagle sun hat with wings sewn from the skin of a sea turtle for ten thousand years; Shaman drums sewn on both sides with animal skins, such as whale skin drum, fish skin duck egg drum, bear skin oval drum, etc. All these indicate that sewing technology has emerged, revealing the sewing technology and materials of that era from one side.

3.4.3 Grinding

In Wumesiben Mama, it is stated that Wumesiben's trip robe is composed of "nine hundred ninety-nine ground Donghai color stones." It is created by grinding rough-surfaced Donghai color stones into spherical beads, which were linked to make bead spikes and hung from the robe. The entire robe appeared vivid, brilliant, and expensive. This document may reflect the Donghai people's sophisticated grinding technology.

3.4.4 Inlaying

The application of inlaying technology makes it possible to integrate various materials to add the visual feeling of matching different materials and achieve the decorative effect and symbolic meaning of clothing more colorful. For example, Wumesiben's sea-worshipping God's clothes are inlaid with hundreds of whale eyes. Wumesiben's dance dress is inlaid with bone whistle at the tip; Wu Xi ran out of the sea to search for the sun's robe and used 999 colorful sashes inlaid with nine colored seashells; Faji women in Huangzhangzi department wear dazzling crowns, ring tones, and 3,000 sea beads inlaid with nine-color Dragon Baoyu. These costumes and crowns are made of mosaic technology, and the materials used are whale eyes, bone whistles, seashells, Haizhu and other rare treasures to decorate the costumes, symbolizing the supreme status of shamans and rare kings.

3.4.5 Weaving

Weaving is one of the oldest handicrafts of mankind. About before the invention of the original textile technology, there was a stage of making clothes by hand knitting. Weaving techniques are widely used in Wumesiben Mama. For example, in the chapter "Siren Fight Dance", Wumesiben's dancing dress is knitted with golden pheasant velvet, her colorful boots are knitted with mink velvet, and her hundred braided hats are knitted with nine-striped bird down. It can be seen that people at that time have mastered the superb technology of knitting with animal down. Wumesiben's sea voyage rope used 999 sea whalebone to weave the cloud, water and starlight stripes. The silver helmet worn in mourning clothes (soul-searching clothes) is made of sea fish bones, and the silver armor worn is made of whale bones. From the above three pieces of clothing, we can see that the waistcoat, boots, hats and armor are all knitted, and the materials are precious materials such as fluff, fishbone and whalebone.

3.4.6 Embroidery is a general term for all kinds of decorative patterns embroidered on fabrics by needlework. Embroidery is one of the traditional Chinese folk crafts, with a history of at least two or three thousand years in China. The embroidery materials described in Wumesiben Mama are mostly animal skins and tendons. For example, Wumesiben's mop skirt ribbon is embroidered with the backs of whales, sharks, tigers, bears, leopards, badgers, wolves, pigs, foxes, pythons and raccoons.

3.4.7 Shearing and sticking

Clipping technology has been around for a very long time. Some scholars think that it can be traced back to the Neolithic Age, when it was used as a sacrifice and a totem. We can guess what it is by looking at primitive sites, rock paintings, and painted pottery. From this, we can figure out that the beginnings of clipping technology were tied to primitive religious activities. Before the Han Dynasty, when “paper” was invented, people had been using similar methods for a long time to cut silk, felt, gold foil, silver foil, and copper foil, as well as leaf, bark, animal skin, fish skin, and other sheet materials found in nature. For example, Records of the Historian tells the story of Zhou Wuwang cutting and sealing his brother. Wumesiben’s robe for her sea voyage to look for the sun is decorated at the waist by cutting and pasting pieces. The original text says, “Cut out thousands of flowers from anemone and sea hyacinth leaves and glue them into a Batulu embroidered belt with a waist circumference.”

Table 4 The handcraft processes used for clothing in Wumesiben Mama:

No.	Suit type	Purpose	Processes
1	Divine costume	Shaman suit of Wumesiben	
2		Sea ritual suit of Wumesiben	Sewing and inlaying
3		Dancing suit of Wumesiben	Weaving, embroidery, inlaying,
4		Sea voyage rope of Wumesiben	Grinding, inlaying, knitting, shearing and gluing, sewing and dyeing.
5	Funeral outfit	Funeral outfit (soul seeking suit)	Weaving and engraving
6		Wumesiben’s funeral outfit	
7		Funeral outfit in the tribe people’s funeral	
8	Diving suit	Diving suit	Sewing
9	Donghai people’s daily apparel	Donghai people’s suit	
10	Clothing of people around	Sirens suit	

3.5 Color of clothing

Manchu people have a white tradition. In the Manchu concept, white is the most sacred color. It is a symbol of light, happiness, peace and innocence. Shamanism believes that white is the color of the sun, and sunlight is the source of life, so white is the color of life and auspicious (Honggang, 2011). There are many descriptions of white sacred clothes and rare clothes in Wumesiben Mama. Sacred white clothes are the symbol of holiness and magic. Shaman’s upper body is dazzling with white light. It is whether feather clothes woven from feathers or light clothes woven with East Pearl strings. They represent the light, and flying depends on the sun’s rays, and the sky is full of colors.

Except white, the dress colors in Wumesiben Mama are colorful. Because the dress materials come from nature, the inherent colors of these natural materials exude unique charm, such as stone, shellfish, feathers, metal, fish eyes and other materials are good at reflecting light, while leather, plants and other materials are good at absorbing light. Rich natural precious materials are matched with each other and set off against each other, which shows the worship and ideas of Donghai Nuzhen people on color.

I have studied the color of various clothing types in Wumesiben Mama. See the following table for details.

Table 5 Colors of various clothing types

No.	Suit type	Purpose	Color
1	Divine costume	Shaman suit of Wumesiben	White, gray, silver, black, colored stone, natural animal fur (leopard’s tail, owl’s tail) and tan.

No.	Suit type	Purpose	Color
2		Sea ritual suit of Wumesiben	Silver, white, colorful, natural animal fur color (tiger, leopard, eagle, whale, roe deer, wolf, python, sea bear skin, colorful swallow hair)
3		Dancing suit of Wumesiben	Natural fur color (golden pheasant, whale, shark, tiger, bear, leopard, badger, wolf, snake, fox, python, raccoon's back skin, silver carving, flying squirrel, snail) color, silver, gold and white.
4		Sea voyage rope of Wumesiben	Whale beard, anemone, sea hyacinth leaf, turtle skin, gold, green, blue, color,
5	Funeral outfit	Funeral outfit (soul seeking suit)	Black, white
6		Wumesiben's funeral outfit	Natural colors (marine skin, fish eye beads) are similar to black and white.
7		Funeral outfit in the tribe people's funeral	White
8	Diving suit	Diving suit	Blue
9	Donghai people's daily apparel	Donghai people's suit	Brown, natural color (skin, feathers) color, green
10	Clothing of people around	Sirens suit	Color, natural color (skin, feathers) color,

In conclusion, most Donghai Nuzhen people wear clothes that are white, black, silver, gray, gold, green, blue, brown, and other colors. Color also reveals a person's social class. For example, Wumesiben and Faji women in the Huangzhangzi department wear mostly white clothes, while ordinary maids and Donghai people wear mostly black and colors that come from animals and plants.



Figure 27. Common colors used in the clothing of Manchu epic Wumesiben Mama

Source: Compiled and processed by the researchers

4. Results

Through the research and interpretation of five aspects: clothing use, clothing style, production materials, production technology, and clothing color in Manchu epic Wumesiben Mama. We can draw a comprehensive outline of the costumes of that era. Although the overall level of the costumes of the Donghai Nuzhen people is still in the primitive stage of costumes, the costumes of God are particularly prominent, representing the highest level of costumes in that era, and are quite mature. The materials used in costumes are extremely rich. Apart from using local natural materials, they also travel far and wide to obtain precious materials. These materials are more used in the clothing of God and the clothing of rare people, which shows that the class and the polarization between rich and poor have already appeared at that time, and ordinary people could not just use any precious materials that they wanted. The costume making technology of the Donghai Nuzhen people is diverse and mature. In the long-term social practice, people have formed the concept of color. Apart from advocating white, they also like rich colors, and make use of the characteristics of precious materials to reflect and absorb light to create a dazzling costume. All these reflect the wisdom and belief of the ancestors of Donghai Nuzhen people.

5. Discussion

The origin, growth, and evolution of costumes are profoundly influenced by numerous variables, such as culture and society, but they are also strongly tied to the natural environment in which humans live. The creation, development, and evolution of costumes are significantly influenced by a range of factors, such as society and culture, but they are also closely related to the natural environment in which humans exist.

According to my research, the diving suit referenced in the text indicates that the Donghai Nuzhen people did research at least 200 years before Europeans. In China, the historic clothing-dyeing technique has been lost, however it is thought that certain Nanai people in Russia still use it. During the Qing Dynasty, this cloak was made. Prior to the Qing Dynasty, no cultural relics, relevant documents, or conclusive photographs were discovered. Future research must study in further detail how to add shawls and apply them to God's clothes, etc.

6. Conclusion

Extremely rich in connotation, the costume culture of Wumesiben Mama forms a costume culture with distinctive regional traits. It beautifully illustrates the various costume traits of their era and restores this obscure costume history. Among them, the divine costume is not only the carrier of the cultural beliefs of the Donghai Nuzhen people, but also an important source for the succeeding generations' growth of the Donghai Nuzhen people's costume, which displays the historic and inherited qualities of costumes. It fills in the gaps of unknown historical and cultural records of the Donghai from previous dynasties and provides essential reference materials for our in-depth research of this historical and cultural period.

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