

A Study on the Artificial Flowers as a Hair Ornament in China

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For centuries, Chinese women, especially, used flowers, whether natural or artificial ones, for their hair decoration. Because the Chinese people have created so many colorful and artistic styles of hair ornament, People call China, as "the kingdom of Headgear. The materials used for hair ornaments are various, such as pearls, brass, jewelry and natural or artificial flowers. This research is focused on artificial flowers, sometimes called silk flower, as an important part of the Chinese hair ornament. Chinese paintings and other historical relics, such as ceramics, pottery, and figurines are analyzed for this research.

In this paper, it is described the short history of artificial flowers, the symbolism of the flowers in China which were used for hair ornaments, and how flowers are used as hair ornaments or on hat-their placement, quantity, and special kinds on the nineteenth century. Also, the role of silk flowers in China and Europe is compared, finding both difference and similarity.

Artificial flowers were introduced into the fashion world between 1800 and 1810 by the Italians and French. These flowers were worn in hair as well as on the hat. From 1873 an artificial flower held an honored place as a decoration for feminine headgear. Today, artificial flowers continue to play their pretty part in the world of modes.

Chinese use flowers for ornament and decoration. Most Chinese women wore natural or artificial flowers in their hair or on their headdress. In China, flowers mean beautiful women, the symbol of feminine virtues. Each flower has its appropriate meaning, and represents a special symbol. The plum, peony, lotus and chrysanthemum represent the four seasons in China.

Chinese women have the straight black hair, which gives every opportunity for elaborate styling. Women comb it up very nicely, burdened with pins or braids and ornamented with flowers or jewelry. Flowers, especially, were a very important hair ornament during the Q'ing dynasty. Natural or artificial flowers are generally added to the ornament according to the wearer's personal taste.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Chinese women tied their hair with decorative bindings and pinned on artificial flowers. The placement and kind of the flower in

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the hair is different between married and unmarried woman. Also, the interesting thing is that they were decorated the artificial flower not in their hair, but on the hat.

Many times, a court woman wears different flowers on each side. The headdress worn by Chinese women for unofficial occasions was very elaborately ornamented. The bun became higher and higher toward the end of the dynasty, until it was an ornament of fixed shape in the form of an "archway". It was capable of being put on the head at will after putting a few flowers into it, hence the name "big wings". Large artificial, or fresh flowers, were placed at each side of the false hair, or big wings. This hair style is similar to the European one during the early nineteenth century. Usually, Chinese women wore a simple center-parted hair style decorated on each side with flowers, and other hair ornaments on the end.

Until the end of the dynasty, Chinese women preferred artificial flowers to natural flowers for their hair ornaments. Artificial flowers have continually been used for an important woman's hair ornament. The modern Chinese form beautiful flowers of rice paper as well as a fabric.

European women, especially the French, like to wear the natural or artificial flowers for their important dress and hair decoration. During the mid-nineteenth century, Europeans wore their hair in a chignon. Chignons and smooth catogans of hair, made wreaths and garlands of fashionable flower for evening wear. The placement of flowers in the hair is very different from the Chinese. The European placed flowers on top of her head. Chinese, on the other hand, would put their flower ornament, not at the center of hair, but at the each side, or at the back. Chinese never used artificial flower at the center of hair. Europeans made wreaths and garlands of small flowers for their hair decoration with artificial flowers, but the Chinese used only one, or a few flowers, for their hair decoration, not wreaths.

Different kinds of flowers were used. The Chinese used plum, orchid, peony, lotus, chrysanthemum for hair ornament, whereas the main flower for a European hair decoration was rose. Roses are classic and popular hat ornaments and can be made from many different materials to any size required. According to Scott, "In old China, rose is a symbol of eternal youth" In spite of having roses, the Chinese never use them as hair ornaments. A European hat, natural straw, with a garland of roses around the underside of the brim.

The supplementary material for floral hat decoration was different. A Chinese hat or hair ornament is decorated with flowers and various kinds of jewels such as the pearl or glass, but the artificial flowers on the hat or hair ornament of Europe is usually a decoration made of ribbons not jewelry.

Chinese and European both use artificial flowers for their hair decorations, however, the application of these flowers is very different.

Chinese women use silk flowers of peony, lotus, plum, or chrysanthemum as important materials for hair ornaments. The placement, kinds, amount of these artificial flowers show the woman's taste or rank. Also, to compare the artificial flower as a hair ornament in Europe was very interesting. Although Europeans prefer different kinds of flowers, such as roses, both Chinese women and European ones like to wear artificial flowers as a hair decoration. In

addition, when artificial flowers are used as ornaments decorated with other materials in both China and Europe.

Today, many women create a fashion trend with artificial flowers. The variety in style and size of artificial flowers is so broad, that women can choose according to her taste. It is not dictated by tradition, and the result will complete and complement perfectly any fashion from jeans to an elegant evening dress. Artificial flowers can also be used to create realistic or fantasy mood. They have been excellent materials for a woman's hair ornament in the world.

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