

# A Study of Ancient Japanese Marriage Customs-- Based on Signs of Marriageable Age

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**Abstract:** In the long history of human beings, marriage is an eternal topic. With the continuous changes of The Times, many marriage customs cultures have been formed in marriage, some of which have withstood the test of time and have been continuously inherited. Some marriage customs evolve with the development of society, or are replaced by new customs until they disappear. Since the birth of marriage customs, people need to be restricted and regulated by customs, so as to make human activities more reasonable and orderly, so that people are more self-disciplined to abide by the rules, so that nature and society are more harmonious. Custom is also a symbol of national identity, can play a role in strengthening the national spirit. As a primary part of marriage customs, marriageable sign is also a topic that cannot be ignored in life etiquette and custom. This study focuses on the signs of marriageable age in ancient Japanese marriage customs, expounds the signs of marriageable age, and summarizes the historical origin of the signs and ancient China. So we can understand the marriageable culture of ancient Japan more deeply.

**Keywords:** Marriage customs; Nubile; Married; Ancient Japan; Ancient China

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The course of life is the process from one stage to another, and it is also the process of people's identity, status and role constantly changing. This process is also known as enculturation. [Wang Juan, Ed. Introduction to Folklore [M]. Peking University Press, 2002, pp.180] The formation of these life rites and customs is also a process of culture, so they will also form their own development patterns and some socialization rituals. These customary social rituals mark the passage from one stage to another in a person's life, and marriageable customs mark the passage of a person into adulthood, or mean the age suitable for marriage. Therefore, these customs and rituals not only have the function of restricting and standardizing, but also are the embodiment of a national cultural form and play a huge role in building a stable national tradition. This study explores the marriage culture of ancient Japan and its influencing factors through the socialization ceremony of marriage in ancient Japan.

## 1. Signs of marriageable men in ancient Japan

In the ancient times of Japan, the sign of male marriagability was to hold a ceremony, "yuan" refers to the beginning of the meaning, "clothes" refers to the kimono or crown. The word Yuanfu comes from China. Tang Dynasty historian Yan Shigu explained in the note to the Book of Han · Zhaodi: "Yuan, the first. The crown, the first is written, so it is said that Yuan clothing." . Because the "crown" is the decoration worn by the ancients on the head, so the "crown" is also called "head clothing", the head of the ancients is also called "Yuan" or "head", so the "head clothing" is also called "Yuan clothing" or "first clothing". In Shaiming, an important exegesis monograph of Han Dynasty, "Guan" is the first word in the chapter of the Interpretation of Jewelry, which fully shows its important position in ancient times. Since the Shang and Zhou Dynasties in ancient China, hairstyles and crowns have become important aspects of dress etiquette. According to the records of the Guan Ritual Sutra, it was put into practice since the Zhou Dynasty. In the Zhou system, men at the age of 20 performed the crown ceremony, the scholars wore crowns, and the common people wore turbans. This ceremony is called "mitsuki", and holding a mitsuki is also called holding a motoku, and this mitsuki passed to Japan and was inherited as an adult rite. The official name was adopted after the coronation ceremony in ancient China. "Li Ji Tan Gong" recorded as "juvenile name, prefix". It refers to the "name" of a person at birth, and the "word" is taken after the crown ceremony. The crown ceremony is a rite of passage for men, indicating that the man has bid farewell to his childhood and has become an adult, which is a sign that he can marry and participate in various activities as an adult of the clan from now on.

In ancient Japan, as a sign of adult men, men have to wear Yuan clothing, Yuan clothing is not the same as ordinary clothes, is a special limit of a kind of clothing, only adult men are allowed to wear. After the Yuanfu ceremony, men can participate in the worship ceremony as independent men, and as a member of society, they can obtain many rights and obligations. The men's mitzvah contains two parts: "haircut" and "coronation". The "haircut" is usually performed by the person who splits the hair from the center left and right, ties the bun with a purple string, and cuts the ends with a knife. The styling of the hair in the Yuanfu ceremony is also modeled after that of ancient China. The "plus crown" is the first ceremony in which the specific hat of the "black hat" is worn, and the completion of the two parts of the ceremony signifies that the man has acquired the status of an adult man and is given responsibility and social recognition. The "black hat" ceremony has the same meaning as the Yuanfu ceremony, which is generally held when men are 14 or 15 years old. Before the ceremony was held, men were collectively referred to as "young men". After the ceremony, the men will change their child names. After holding the ceremony, men are recognized by the society as having the qualifications to marry and to participate in the ministry of God, which is of great significance both in family and social aspects. It was an absolute honor for the family to receive the right to sacrifice, so the custom was strictly maintained. As a result, the tone of Japanese social organization has been maintained smoothly. It can be seen that the ceremony is sacred. [Taro Nakayama. "History of Marriage in Japan" [M]. Chunyangdo, 1928 edition, pp.399-403] Moreover, in Japan, following ancient Chinese customs and combining with Japanese tradition, according to the Yin-yang theory of ancient China, the days for holding "Yuanfu" are mostly chosen on auspicious days such as Jiazi and Bingyin, especially the first month.

From the above records, it can be seen that there are similarities between the adult styles of men in China and Japan, whether it is the ceremony of adding the crown or the formal real name used after the ceremony. Japanese rite of passage originated from the ancient rite of passage, greatly influenced by the Chinese "crown ceremony", and with the changes of The Times, the original ceremony of the Yuan costume is also evolving, according to the different status, the public, the military, the civilian rite of passage will be slightly different. Japan absorbed and developed the Chinese Confucian thought of "governing the country by virtue" and "taking rites as the foundation", and on the basis of China's "Guan rites", formed Japan's unique "Yuan Fu rites", which have been passed down. It can be seen that many cultural traditions of China and Japan are of the same origin.

## 2. Signs of marriageable women in ancient Japan

The previous section describes the man's coming-of-age ceremony. What are the characteristics of the Japanese woman's coming-of-age ceremony? In the Ainu people of Japan, when a woman has her first period, the mother will put on underwear for the woman, and the woman's skin is generally not exposed, unless it is a future husband. The rite of passage for women, known as a "dress," is similar to the Ainu rite of passage for women. The ritual of "dressing" refers to putting on the hem, tying the waist part of the hem to the belt, "dressing" in the process will also carry out the "hair" ceremony. The lower part of the waist is tied with a belt called "waist knot", which is equivalent to the role of the man's Yuan costume plus crown, and is regarded as the most important part of the entire women's coming-of-age ceremony. In addition, an adult woman's mouth edge ink is also a popular female coming-of-age ceremony in ancient Japan. And in mainland Japan, women hold a gnashing ceremony when they come of age. Nirvana is the blackening of teeth with iron paste. The nibbana ceremony is used to show that a woman has acquired the right to be a wife or mother. [Taro Nakayama. History of Marriage in Japan [M]. Chunyangdo, 1928 edition, pp.404-412] The origin of the Niodonta ceremony can be seen in the account of the "Country of Black Teeth" in the Japanese biography of Wei Zhi. The Chinese classic book "The Book of Mountains and Seas" also has a record of the black-toothed country, which is as follows.

"A country with black teeth. Emperor Junsheng black teeth, Jiang surname, corn food, make four birds" [Fang Tao's comments. The Book of Mountains and Seas [M]. Zhonghua Book Company, 2009 edition, pp.230]

"The country of black teeth in its north, people black, eat rice snakes, a red and a green, next to it. One day in the north of Vertical Hai, people black head, eat rice snakes, one snake red." [M]. Zhonghua Book Company, 2009 edition, pp.201]

These two records appear in the "Great Wilderness East Classic" and "Overseas East Classic" respectively. As to whether the black-toothed country in the "Mountains and Seas Classic" is related to Japan, there are not enough historical materials to prove it. From the traces of black teeth seen on human bones of the Kofun period, it can be assumed that this custom was fixed from the Yayoi period to the Kofun period. By the Edo period, black teeth had become a makeup style reserved for married women. The color "black" is unchanged, so the metaphor of "black teeth" customs means that "women have no second husband" loyalty. In some parts of Japan, women put ink on the backs of both hands to declare their qualifications as wives. Although there is no mention of women in the "men are not small or small, they are all tattooed by whales" in the "Biography of Wei Zhiwei", it can be inferred from this record that this custom should exist.

In some minority women's coming-of-age ceremonies in Yunnan Province, China, there are also similar customs to the above-mentioned Japanese women's coming-of-age ceremonies. For example, the Naxi women in Yunnan also have the custom of wearing a belt around the waist. Dai, Blang and other components of the rite of passage also have lacquer teeth, also called dyed teeth. Before dyeing the teeth, you need to eat some acidic fruit, or rub the teeth with acid juice, then light a bunch of pine, drop turpentine on tiles and wood chips, and then smoke the teeth with black smoke for a few days until the white teeth are dyed black. Dyed teeth are a sign that they can participate in social activities, and those who do not dye their teeth cannot participate in social activities openly. The Dulong female adult style also has a custom similar to putting ink on the edge of the mouth. Tattooed surface refers to the sharpening of the wooden stick on the woman's face, with a hammer to keep hitting the stick, until the woman's face tattooed lines, will be in advance and good ginseng powder plus carbon ash black powder sprinkled on the face of adult women, bleeding and reducing inflammation at the same time, the woman's face was tattooed black.

### **Concluding remarks:**

To sum up, the ancient Japanese men's "Yuanfu ceremony" was formed on the basis of the ancient Chinese "Guan ceremony" and has been passed down. The ancient Japanese women's coming-of-age ceremony also has homology with the Yunnan minority coming-of-age ceremony, which shows that many cultural traditions of China and Japan are of the same root and homology, and understanding the ancient Chinese culture is helpful to better understand the context of the development of Japanese culture.

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