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## Original Research Article

# Evolution and cultural connotation of Chinese traditional clothing color from Tang Dynasty to Qing Dynasty

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**Abstract:** As an important part of Chinese culture, the evolution process of Chinese traditional costume color not only reflects the aesthetic concept, political system and social and economic situation of different dynasties, but also contains profound cultural connotation and symbolic significance. From the gorgeous and colorful Tang Dynasty to the calm and introverted of the Qing Dynasty, the change of dress color is like a vivid historical picture scroll, showing the brilliance and changes of Chinese civilization. This paper will discuss the evolution of the traditional Chinese dress from the Tang Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty.

**Keywords:** Chinese traditional clothing; Chinese traditional color; Cultural connection; National culture

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## 1. Tang Dynasty: Colorful, showing openness and inclusiveness

### 1.1. Overview of Tang Dynasty clothing colors

The Tang Dynasty was a very prosperous period in Chinese history. Its costumes were famous for its gorgeous and bright colors, reflecting the openness and inclusiveness of the Tang Dynasty society. Scarlet, bright yellow, purple and green were the most popular costume colors in the Tang Dynasty. These colors were not only reflected in the court costumes, but also widely popular among the people.

### 1.2. Cultural implication behind the color

**Scarlet:** As the most popular color in the Tang Dynasty, scarlet often forms a sharp contrast with the green, creating a strong visual impact. This kind of color not only highlights the delicate and warm women, but also set off the prosperous scene of the Tang Dynasty.

**Purple:** purple has been the representative of the noble color since ancient times, and its gorgeous and lively characteristics are pleasing to the eye. In the Tang Dynasty, purple was loved by noble women and was often used in the collocation of clothes.

**Bright yellow:** yellow is famous for its highest brightness in the chromatography. It is a symbol of life, as bright as the sun. In the women's costumes of the Tang Dynasty, yellow often appeared as the main color, which was reconciled with the colors such as bright red, pink and white, dark green, and royal blue, creating a magnificent and colorful beauty.

**Green:** As the popular color of Tang Dynasty clothing collocation, It is often matched with vermilion, white and other colors, forming a bright contrast effect and reflecting each other. Green with its bright and fresh color expression, showing the Vibrant of the Tang Dynasty.

## 2. Song Dynasty: quietly elegant and simple, and the pursuit of inner beauty

### 2.1. Overview of the costume colors of the Song Dynasty

Compared with the Tang Dynasty, the dress color of the Song Dynasty is more elegant and simple,

emphasizing the beauty of its natural colors and tending to the elegant fashion. Light red, pearl white, light blue and light yellow were the best minds of the Song Dynasty. These colors not only reflect the aesthetic pursuit of the Song Dynasty people, but also reflect the cultural atmosphere of the society at that time.

## **2.2. Cultural implication behind the color**

Light red: In the Song Dynasty, even with the most gorgeous red, I preferred the elegant light red. This color not only conforms to the concept of “preserving the justice and destroying human desire”, but also reflects the aesthetic tendency of people in the Song Dynasty to pursue inner beauty.

Pearl white: white pure and warm, just like the spirit of the Song Dynasty. Song people pay attention to “inner saint”, showing ingenuity in subtle places. Song Renzong often wore a white round collar robe on the court, the white is not monotonous, but cleverly uses the silk thread color to weave a variety of patterns, making the white more rich layers and lasting appeal.

Light blue: light blue is very popular in the Song Dynasty, like a modest gentleman, plain clean and warm, but full of rich and light inside. This color not only reflects the aesthetic pursuit of the Song Dynasty people, but also reflects the tranquility and simplicity of the society at that time.

Light yellow: light yellow in the song dynasty help great lady’s dress added a bit of the pride and beauty. When the color such as light yellow, light red, pearl white match each other, appear more harmonious and refined.

## **3. Yuan Dynasty: Rich and colorful, reflecting the prosperity and strength**

### **3.1. Yuan Dynasty clothing color overview**

The clothes of the Yuan Dynasty are more rich and colorful, mainly red, green, blue, yellow and other bright colors. These colors not only reflect the prosperity and strength of the Yuan Dynasty, but also reflect the aesthetic concepts and cultural characteristics of that time.

### **3.2. Cultural implication behind the color**

Red: In the Yuan Dynasty, red was still regarded as a symbol of auspiciousness and happiness. It is not only widely used in the costumes of the palace celebrations and festival celebrations, but also has become the necessary color of the festive occasions such as folk marriage and having children.

Green: Green also occupies an important position in the Yuan Dynasty clothing. It symbolizes vitality, and echoes the vast grassland and rich natural resources of the Yuan Dynasty. Green clothing is widely worn in the Yuan Dynasty aristocrats and folk people, especially in the spring and summer season, It has become one of the people’s favorite colors. The popularity of green clothes not only shows the reverence and yearning for nature of the people in the Yuan Dynasty, but also reflects the life concept of advocating nature and pursuing harmonious coexistence.

Blue: Blue is often associated with the sky and the ocean in the Yuan Dynasty costume, symbolizing the breadth and far-reaching. The blue dress of yuan dynasty uses deep gem blue or quiet sky blue more, these colors appear noble and elegant not only, still reveal the temperament of a kind of mysterious and unpredictable.

Yellow: In the Yuan Dynasty, although yellow was no longer the exclusive color of emperors, it still occupied an important position in clothing. The popularity of yellow clothing is not only because of its bright and eye-catching, but also because it symbolizes wealth and power. The yellow clothes of the Yuan Dynasty mostly

used bright colors such as bright yellow or light yellow, and these colors shine brightly in the sun, showing a unique brilliance and charm.

## **4. Ming Dynasty: Elegant and solemn, return to tradition and order**

### **4.1. Overview of Ming Dynasty clothing colors**

Compared with the Yuan Dynasty, the dress color of the Ming Dynasty is more elegant and solemn, paying attention to the harmony and unity of color. In the Ming Dynasty, the choice of dress color was often subject to strict etiquette norms, and different levels of dress color on different occasions had a clear distinction.

### **4.2. Cultural implication behind the color**

Red: In the Ming Dynasty, red was still regarded as a symbol of auspiciousness and happiness. However, in the use of dress color, the Ming Dynasty paid more attention to the purity and solemnity of red. Red clothing is mostly used for palace celebrations, festival celebrations, weddings and other festive occasions.

Yellow: In the Ming Dynasty, yellow became the exclusive color of the royal family. The clothes of the emperor and the members of the royal family are mainly yellow, symbolizing the supremacy of the imperial power. At the same time, yellow was also regarded as a symbol of wealth in the Ming Dynasty, but ordinary people should strictly abide by the etiquette norms and should not overdress.

Blue and green: In the Ming Dynasty costumes, blue and green were mostly used in official costumes and scholar costumes. These colors not only appear fresh and free from vulgarity, but also symbolize the quality of integrity.

Other colors: in addition to red, yellow, blue, green and other main colors, the Ming Dynasty costumes often use white, black, purple and other colors for collocation and ornament. These colors play an important role and keep balance in the dress, making the overall color more harmonious and unified, rich and colorful.

## **5. The Qing Dynasty: Calm and introverted, showing the rank and dignity**

### **5.1. Overview of Qing Dynasty clothing colors**

Compared with the previous dynasties, the dress color of the Qing Dynasty is more composed and introverted, paying attention to the sedate and harmony of the color. In the Qing Dynasty, the choice of dress color was not only strictly restricted by the ritual system norms, but also deeply influenced by the Manchu traditional culture. Therefore, the costume color of the Qing Dynasty presents a unique national style and hierarchical characteristics.

### **5.2. Cultural implication behind the color**

Yellow: In the Qing Dynasty, yellow was still the exclusive color of the royal family. The clothes of the emperor and members of the royal family are mainly bright yellow, symbolizing the supremacy of the imperial power.

Red: Red still occupies an important position in the clothing of the Qing Dynasty, but its use pays more attention to the distinction of occasion and identity. In court celebrations, festivals and weddings, red dress is still popular, while in formal occasions, red is mostly used in the clothes of officials and scholars to show their status.

Blue and black: In the Qing Dynasty, blue and black gradually became the common colors in official clothing and formal occasions. These colors not only appear calm and solemn, but also imply rigor and order.

Blue is often used in the dress of civil officials, symbolizing integrity, while black is often used in the dress of military officials, representing majesty and power.

Gold and silver: As decorative colors, gold and silver played an important role in the Qing Dynasty costumes. They are often used to embroider patterns, inlay ornaments, or outline lines to increase the magnificence and dignity of the dress. Gold symbolizes wealth and power, while silver represents purity and elegance.

Other colors: In addition to the above main colors, purple, green, white and other colors are often used in Qing Dynasty costumes. Purple is regarded as one of the symbols of dignity in the Qing Dynasty, often used in the clothes of senior officials; green is used in folk clothing and daily clothes, showing a fresh and natural atmosphere; white is used in mourning and sacrificial occasions, symbolizing purity and mourning.

## **6. The resonance of clothing color and human civilization**

From the Tang Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty, the preference of color in each dynasty was deeply influenced by multiple factors such as nationality, religion and culture.

During the Tang Dynasty, it had strong national strength, vast territory, and active exchanges with Central Asia and West Asia. This open foreign policy promoted the integration of Chinese and foreign cultures. The pursuit of color in the Tang people is unprecedented high, which is not only reflected in the practical utensils, but also penetrated into the funeral utensils. In the choice of color, yellow becomes the highest color, exclusive to the emperor, which reflects the supremacy of the imperial power. Purple and scarlet are also revered for their rarity and complexity. At the same time, the prosperity of silk in the Tang Dynasty, especially the colorful silk products such as “gold-wedged brocade”, highlights the ultimate pursuit of color in the Tang people. In addition, the development of Tang Dynasty porcelain also reached a new height, such as the Trio-colored glazed pottery of the Tang Dynasty, represented by its rich colors and unique craftsmanship.

In the Northern Song Dynasty, purple and olive green were highly respected. These two colors not only represent the symbol of social status, but also reflect the social background and cultural aesthetics at that time. Because of the complexity and high cost of its production process, purple became a symbol of power and wealth, and only the emperor and senior officials could wear purple official clothes. Olive green porcelain is regarded as a precious work of art because of its elegant color, fresh and refined customs, representing the aesthetic concept and cultural tradition at that time.

In the Yuan Dynasty, the beauty of nature was more advocated because of the background of the color selection of the northern grassland. Gold, Mongolian blue, gray brown and emerald green colors occupied an important position in the Yuan Dynasty costumes. The golden dress shows the wealth and status of the officials and nobles, while the blue dress symbolizes eternity, firmness and loyalty, and is the representative color of the Mongolian culture. In addition, a large number of animal fur was used in Yuan Dynasty clothing, making its color mostly composed of grayish brown system.

The Ming Dynasty advocated the Confucian moral ideology of “propriety, music, benevolence, and righteousness”, which combined the five colors with “benevolence, virtue and goodness”, and defined it as the positive color, becoming a symbol of honor, inferiority and rank. Bright red, sapphire blue, grape purple, grass green and other colors are the most popular in the Ming Dynasty costumes. Red as a regular color has a lofty status, a symbol of life, warm, and noble, and green is loved by the common people for its fresh and bright appearance. The Ming Dynasty costumes pay attention to elegance and modesty, and have a strong sense of color

hierarchy, which reflects the aesthetic concept and cultural connotation of the society at that time.

In the Qing Dynasty, the Manchu people's choice of color was influenced by multiple factors, such as the living environment, traditional culture, and the integration of Manchu and Mongolia. They prefer simple dark colors, such as yellow represents the supreme authority of the emperor's special color; while cyan and green are favored for their close connection with prairie life. At the same time, the edge cheongsam in the Manchu costumes also reflects its unique aesthetic taste and cultural deposits.

In terms of religion, the color preference of each dynasties was also influenced by some extent. For example, the prevalence of Buddhism in the Tang Dynasty made golden colors widely used in religious art, while the pursuit of natural beauty by Taoism may have to some extent influenced the Yuan Dynasty's reverence for natural colors.

## **7. Summary**

From the Tang Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty, the evolution of Chinese traditional clothing colors is not only a vivid historical picture scroll, but also the epitome of the changes of Chinese culture. The costume colors of different dynasties have their own characteristics, reflecting the political, economic and cultural factors of the society at that time. The splendor of the Tang Dynasty reflects its open and inclusive cultural atmosphere, the simplicity of the Song Dynasty pursues the inner beauty and peace of mind, the richness of the Yuan Dynasty shows its prosperous and strong society, the elegance of the Ming Dynasty returns to tradition and order, and the calm restraint of the Qing Dynasty shows hierarchy and dignity. These changes of dress color not only beautify people's lives, but also more profoundly affect people's ideas and cultural identity.

In today's society, with the deepening development of globalization and the continuous strengthening of cultural exchanges, the color of Chinese traditional clothing still has important practical significance and cultural value. They are not only the treasures and symbols of Chinese traditional culture, but also the embodiment of the unique aesthetic concepts and cultural confidence of the Chinese nation. Therefore, we should cherish and inherit these precious cultural heritage, so that they can glow more brightly under the background of the new era.

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