
The Inheritance and Development of Han Ethnic Ornaments in Qing Dynasty Costume System from the Perspective of Bu Fu

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Abstract

The Qing Dynasty, as the last feudal ruling dynasty in China, faced the challenge of governing a vast empire with rulers belonging to a minority ethnic group. This paper delves into the cultural strategies employed by the Qing rulers, focusing on their attire choices, particularly the Bu Fu ceremonial attire. Bu Fu served as an important emblem for civil and military officials, symbolizing their official positions. The study aims to explore how the Qing Dynasty strategically incorporated elements of both their own Manchu clothing style and the traditional Han ethnic clothing to navigate ethnic identities and establish cultural superiority. This research applied a systematic analysis by globally summarizing relevant literatures on the evolution of the Bu Fu system during the Ming and Qing dynasties. It utilizes a global integration approach to classify, analyze, and compare crucial components and pattern features of the Bu Fu ceremonial attire. Images and practicality are used as mutual proofs to recover pattern designs and extract symbolic features. The content is primarily presented through induction. The findings reveal that the Qing rulers skillfully balanced their minority ethnic identity with the need to consolidate power over the Han majority. They adopted flexible approaches to incorporate both Manchu and Han ethnic clothing elements, avoiding rigid adherence to past styles. The Bu Fu system inherited from the Ming Dynasty was strategically maintained but also innovatively adapted to reflect distinct Qing characteristics; securing elements of Han ethnic traditional clothing that symbolized their legitimacy. The Qing Dynasty's cultural strategies, as reflected in their clothing choices, showcased their pragmatic efforts to consolidate political power while respecting the diverse cultural heritage within their empire. The nuanced approach to attire demonstrated a delicate balance between their minority ethnic identity and the preservation of the Han cultural legacy. This research provides valuable insights into the intricate navigation of ethnic identities during the Qing Dynasty's rule.

Keywords: Qing Dynasty Costume System, BuFu, Han Ethnicity Patterns, Ethnic Integration

1. Introduction

The "Qing Lei Bei Chao" records: "Bu Fu, commonly known as Bu Zi, is the emblem of civil and military officials." Its characteristic is "attached to the front and back of the Zhangfu (official's robe)," all made of stone-blue silk, satin, gauze, or crepe, on which "Bu Zi" symbols that correspond to their official positions are woven or embroidered (Richard,2015). This is an important ceremonial attire in the Qing Dynasty, serving as the formal dress and public attire for civil and military officials of that era. This academic paper delves into the cultural strategies employed by the Qing Dynasty, the last feudal ruling dynasty in China, whose rulers belonged to a minority ethnic group. As the Qing Dynasty solidified its control over the Central Plains, it prioritized upholding ancestral customs in clothing and headwear nationwide, thereby embracing the traditional Manchu clothing style. Nevertheless, the rulers recognized that reliance solely on military and political advantages would not guarantee long-term governance. To secure a sustainable rule, they sought to establish cultural superiority in various realms (William, 2010).



<https://kknews.cc/zh-tw/history/8lzb2g4.html>

Consequently, The rulers questioned the necessity of strictly adhering to style without considering the essence of designs. Notably, attire for the dynasty's morning rituals, adorned with symbolic elements such as mountains, dragons, algae, and flames, was deeply rooted in ritual classics, epitomizing cultural continuity. As such, the rulers

pondered the significance of "Tongtian" and "Jiangsha" in their attire choices (Arthur,2017). Adopting flexible approaches allowed the Qing rulers to avoid rigidly conforming to past styles. The Dynasty, in regard to patterns and designs, emphasized the essence preservation. While retaining the Ming Dynasty's 'Bu Zi' patterns, they innovatively incorporated their own adaptations. Moreover, the ceremonial clothing for morning rituals maintained the classical Han ceremonial attire's enduring twelve chapters. This strategic amalgamation might reflect the Qing Dynasty ruling class's commitment to the principle of "not lightly altering old customs," safeguarding elements of Han ethnic traditional clothing that symbolized their legitimacy. By thoroughly analyzing these cultural strategies, this paper sheds light on the Qing Dynasty's intricate navigation of ethnic identities. Their nuanced approach to attire showcases the rulers' pragmatic efforts to consolidate power while acknowledging and respecting the rich cultural heritage of both their own ethnic group and the Han majority.

2. Literature review

The Qing Dynasty, as the last feudal ruling dynasty in China with rulers belonging to a minority ethnic group, employed cultural strategies to solidify their control over the Central Plains and establish long-term governance (William, 2010). An important ceremonial attire in the Qing Dynasty was the "Bu Fu," which served as the formal dress and public attire for civil and military officials. Recorded in the "Qing Lei Bei Chao," the Bu Fu was emblematic of the officials' positions and was attached to the front and back of their official robes, made from stone-blue silk, satin, gauze, or crepe (Xu, 1984).

This academic paper explores the cultural strategies of the Qing Dynasty, focusing on their incorporation of both Han ethnic traditional clothing and their own Manchu attire. The rulers recognized the significance of cultural superiority and sought to uphold ancestral customs in clothing and headwear throughout the empire. They pondered the essence of designs and the cultural continuity represented by attire for morning rituals, which featured symbolic elements like mountains, dragons, algae, and flames. The decision-making process regarding the adoption of intrinsic cultural characteristics, particularly patterns and designs, is investigated in this paper.

The Qing rulers skillfully navigated ethnic identities through their attire choices. Adopting flexible approaches, they avoided rigidly conforming to past styles and emphasized preserving the essence of patterns and designs. The Qing Dynasty retained the Ming Dynasty's 'Bu Zi' patterns but incorporated innovative adaptations. Additionally, they maintained the classical Han ceremonial attire's twelve chapters in

their morning ritual clothing, adhering to the principle of "not lightly altering old customs" to safeguard elements of Han ethnic traditional clothing that symbolized their legitimacy (Wang, 1985).

This research explored the cultural strategies through various references including historical materials. Essential insights into the historical context of the Qing Dynasty's rise to power were gathered. It was said that the Emperor KangXi was the one who established the Qing Dynasty and the dynasty prospered as the largest ruler with its prolific achievements in art and culture at the time (Hing, 2017).

In addition, there are valuable perspectives on the intricate connections between attire and social hierarchy in Chinese society about rituals and customs that are still being practiced to date (Beverly & David, 1999). Within this scholarly landscape, harnessing CLO3D technology to meticulously replicate the resplendent dragon robes emblematic of the Qing Dynasty. This technological endeavor unveils the intricate craftsmanship that characterizes Qing attire, bridging the temporal gap to evoke a tactile and visual understanding of the era's sartorial grandeur. Delving further into the realm of cultural hybridity (Elena, 2020) unfurls the nuanced narratives of Manchu storytelling, illuminating the cross-cultural amalgamation that underscored Qing Dynasty cultural tapestries (Wang, 2021). The structural configuration of horseshoe sleeves, coupled with their innovative applications in women's attire, bestows insights into the dynamic evolution of Qing Dynasty fashions (Qian, 2018). Within the realm of Qing robe aesthetics, there is a nuanced analysis of the evolving motifs adorning dragon robes, unraveling the nuanced evolution of emblematic patterns (Zhang & Yuan, 2016). The intricate "cross-shaped" planar structure and heraldic regulations of official attire during the late Qing Dynasty stand emblematic of the amalgamation of aesthetics and social symbolism (Wei, 2015).

A further elucidation of attire's cultural significance is bestowed by "Clothing and Chinese Culture," shedding light on attire as an instrument of cultural expression (Hua, 2001). The work delineates the complex interplay between attire and social rank, charting the trajectory of attire's role within the hierarchical stratifications of Chinese society (Jackson & Hugus, 1999). These works, in conjunction with a plethora of other scholarly contributions, collectively furnish a panoramic tableau, encapsulating the inheritance and development of Han ethnic ornaments within the Qing Dynasty's costume system from the vantage point of Bu Fu.

3. Methodology

This research provides an essential and systematic description and evaluation of the evolution of the BuFu systems during the Ming and Qing dynasties by globally summarizing relevant literature. The formation and evolution of the BuFu system are

examined through a global integration approach, classifying, analyzing, and comparing its crucial components and pattern features. The paper incorporates images practicality as mutual proofs, to recover numerous pattern designs and extracting symbolic features through comparisons and therefore, the content is mainly presented through induction.

4. Themes and findings

According to historical records, the Qing dynasty used dragon patterns and five-clawed dragon motifs on clothing early on, especially drawing inspiration from the Ming dynasty's official attire system, and meeting the requirements for managing civil and military officials after the Qing government came to power. The use of BuFu (Mandarin squares) can be traced back to the period when Nurhaci established the Later Jin regime. During this time, the official hierarchy of Later Jin also wore BuFu to distinguish their ranks, following the Ming dynasty's BuFu system. In the sixth year of Tianming (1621), Nurhaci, in order to perfect the ceremonial system and consolidate rule, decided to adopt the Ming dynasty's BuFu system for ranking officials. The rules were as follows: "Buzi (BuFu) with four-clawed dragon patterns for Beizi, Kirin patterns for Dutang, General, and Deputy General, Lion patterns for Brigadier General and Garrison Commander, and Belted Leopard patterns for Guard and Thousand Commander." This was the precursor to the BuFu system in the Qing dynasty.

After the Qing dynasty established its capital in Beijing, the use of BuFu patterns and decorations was further perfected during the Shunzhi era. In the ninth year of Shunzhi (1652), Emperor Shunzhi set even more stringent and detailed rules for BuFu attire. According to the "Fu Se Jian Yu Yong Li" it was specified that "Dukes, Marquises, Counts are to have Kirin motifs sewn onto their robes and short outerwear. In ministries and other government offices, officials of the first rank should have Crane motifs, officials of the second rank should have Pheasant motifs; if not in ministries or other government offices, officials of the first and second ranks should have Lion motifs, and officials of the third and fourth ranks should have Leopard motifs. The same motifs should apply to local and military officials of the third rank."

Similar strict regulations were established for the use of BuFu by officials' family members: "Dukes, Marquises, Counts, officials of the first rank and below, and officials of Manchu and Han origin with official ranks should have their wives wear attire corresponding to their husbands. Parents should wear attire corresponding to their children. Unmarried daughters should wear attire corresponding to their fathers, but they are not allowed to use BuFu." For officials of the fifth rank and above, both five-clawed and three-clawed dragon motifs, as well as round BuFu patterns, were forbidden. The use of BuFu was granted only to those officials who were allowed to wear them. In addition to specifying the attire for officials of different ranks, the rules

also applied to examinees, graduates, tribute students, and students from the Imperial Academy, who were not allowed to use BuFu. There were clear punishments for violations of the dress code." All prohibited clothing such as five-clawed and three-clawed dragon motifs, as well as round BuFu motifs kept in homes should be confiscated. If officials of the fourth rank or higher wear python silk or decorated silk short outerwear without BuFu motifs, officials of the fifth rank or lower should wear BuFu corresponding to their ranks, determining the appropriate color. If they violate this rule, each case should be dealt with accordingly, and they must follow the regulations strictly."

The "Qin Ding Da Qing Hui Dian Li" also specified the attire requirements for princes and dukes: for princes, crown princes, and dukes, "BuFu should have four five-clawed dragons, and the robes should be decorated with full emerald green five-clawed dragon motifs (silk)." For Beile, Beizi, and princes of the third rank, "BuFu should have two four-clawed dragon motifs, as well as python silk and decorated silk motifs." Zhenguo Duke and Fuguo Duke wore the same as Beile. Zhenguo General wore Kirin motifs; Fuguo General wore Lion motifs; Fengguo General wore Leopard motifs; Fongen General wore Tiger motifs. For Mingong, Hou, Bo, BuFu could have either Kirin or four-clawed python motifs. The clothing regulations in the ninth year of Shunzhi were quite detailed, with different ranks of officials wearing different BuFu patterns and fabrics. The attire of officials' family members varied based on their relationships, and the higher-ranking attire could not be used in place of the lower-ranking attire, or vice versa; any violations would be punished accordingly. These regulations were quite similar to the later established rules for BuFu decorations.

5. Discussions

The BuFu (Mandarin squares) in the Qing dynasty inherited the Ming dynasty's system but also underwent some development and changes. The layout of patterns, types of animals, and embroidery techniques had slight differences from the Ming dynasty, forming distinct characteristics of Qing dynasty official attire. Firstly, Qing dynasty official attire had overlapping front panels, with the front BuFu split into two halves. Each half was separately woven and embroidered before being attached to the BuFu robe. In contrast, the Ming dynasty's front BuFu was a complete piece, either separately woven and then sewn onto the robe or directly woven and embroidered on the fabric before being made into a garment. Secondly, the size and design of the BuFu were different. Ming dynasty BuFu was larger, nearly 40 centimeters in size and square-shaped, while Qing dynasty BuFu was smaller, around 30 centimeters in size and square for officials below Zhenguo Duke, and circular for higher-ranking imperial family members and nobles above Beizi. Lastly, in terms of color and quantity, Ming dynasty

BuFu mostly used red or plain colors as the base with golden embroidery, while Qing dynasty BuFu primarily used deep dark blue (stone blue) as the base with colorful embroidery, creating a vibrant appearance. The edges of square-shaped BuFu were often decorated with floral patterns in the Qing dynasty, while the edges of Ming dynasty BuFu were usually plain. The central patterns on Qing dynasty BuFu depicting birds and animals were all embroidered as individual figures, while Ming dynasty BuFu for civil officials of the fourth rank and below often featured a pair of flying birds.

In addition to strict regulations on color and patterns, the use of BuFu in the Qing dynasty was also strictly governed: "On occasions of court meetings and sacrificial ceremonies, officials wore formal court attire with BuFu. For banquets, welcoming ceremonies, and all joyful events, officials wore python robes with BuFu. On the first day of each lunar month, as well as the fifth, tenth, fifteenth, twentieth, and twenty-fifth days (regular court days), officials wore BuFu. When civil and military officials attended court or sat in their respective positions, unless it was raining and they needed to wear a rain hat, BuFu was worn for greeting and audience ceremonies, and court attire could not be used arbitrarily." Clothing in this context became politicized and moralized, and the regulations on attire were evidently influenced and limited by politics, reflecting the hierarchical system of feudal society with clear distinctions of "rank and status."

6. Conclusion

The Qing dynasty's inheritance and promotion of the BuFu system and the Twelve Chapter Text can be seen as a fusion of Manchu clothing forms with Han ethnic dress patterns. For a nationality that highly values its own customs and clothing traditions, this fusion holds significant political implications. The rulers of the Qing dynasty were not of Han ethnicity, but they sought to "continue the grand unity." Therefore, they could not deny the authority of the "grand unity" because Han culture was vast and profound. To deny Han culture would be to deny the legitimacy of all rulers, including the Qing dynasty. Throughout history, when there were changes of dynasty in China, there would be a "correction of the calendar and a change of clothing colors." However, Chinese attire held a special position and deep connotations in Chinese culture, and rulers were willing to consider themselves as the "continuers of the grand unity." Chinese attire was an integral part of this "grand unity," and determining what could be altered, what could not be changed, what could be partially modified, and what had to be retained required a careful balance of interests and priorities. Therefore, the Qing dynasty inherited entirely the parts of Han traditional attire considered representative of the "grand unity," such as the Ming dynasty's BuFu system and the Han ethnic Twelve Chapter Text, to demonstrate their rightful status as rulers and simultaneously

to placate the governed and consolidate their political power.

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