

On the Decoration and Symbolization of Chinese Ancient Official Uniform in Ming and Qing Dynasties

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Abstract—China feudal society has seriously hierarchical characteristic, its clothes distinguish the status and rank from the color to the pattern. The pattern of Ming and Qing official uniform has special function and inheritance. The bird and beast patterns in representative official uniform not only contain the expectation of the emperor to the official but also embody the pursuit of people towards good lives. The official patterns based on the animal essentially add some humanity element into it to make the image of the animal humanization. With the changes of the times, people's ideas are changing, but the symbolization of the ancient patterns will not change. Now, these patterns are no longer belongs to the noble's exclusive products, also no longer to distinguish between identity and status of people, these designs today has become one of the Chinese culture. As one of China's traditional culture, it had a glorious history, also will have a better future.

Keywords - the Ming and Qing Dynasties; Supplement; Pattern; Decoration; Symbolic Significance

China has the history of 5 thousand years, in such a long history, dress patterns catch the national spirit and traditional culture, which is an important part of Chinese numerous precious culture heritage. In every dynasty of China, dress is considered to be one of the criterions to distinguish people's status and their rank. With the development of the society, we also need create the method of using the patterns in our modern life. If we pay attention to the patterns of the Ming and Qing, we can get to know much about them through the official uniforms. The pattern of Official uniform has its unique decoration and symbolization from slave society to the feudal society.

The decoration method of dress is an important part of the dress study. While the pattern abides by the principle of dress aesthetics as a whole, it has its unique truck and individual hand-made technique when it comes to the essential presentation, besides its special technique feature: embroidery, knitting, knotting, fabrics-made again. In order to present the dress aesthetics fully, we

have to know about something on the technique and character of the dress decoration. Furthermore, we make our dress looks beautiful and our lives keep energetic through this study.

Generally speaking, the supplement patterns can be classified into as the following.

The first is dragon stripe; it means the right and the nobility of the Emperor. It also abides by the saying that we are all the offspring of the Emperors Yan and Huang. However, there are some limitations when it comes to the emperor's authority. For example, the people subordinated themselves to the emperor's rule, especially violent rule. (such as Fig .1)



Figure 1. the Dragon Stripe

The second is penoy stripe. As we all know that the penoy is our national follower, it has very high status. It also has the same status like today in ancient time. In ancient times, the machine production is not usual as today; besides, general people cannot afford to buy it. So it was knitted by hands. On the one hand, it symbolizes people's hardworking; on the other hand, it stands for the status of the users. (such as Fig .2)



Figure 2. the Penoy stripe

The last one which has representative stripe in Ming and Qing dynasties is peach, it is also called magic peach or the peach of immortality. It means one can live for a long time. (such as Fig .3)



Figure 3. the Peach of Immortality

Therefore, from the introduction of the above, we can draw the conclusion that different pattern stripe has different meaning. General speaking, the dragon stripe is only suitable for the emperor in the ancient time; part ordinary people can afford to enjoy the penoy and peach stripes. As we have talked in the former, there were not many machine production, they were all made by hand, so we should know the cherish of the embroidery. Embroidery just like supplement as a folk art is widely used in modern life.

In ancient times, the reign of feudal dynasty mainly embodies the official uniform. As we all know, there is a saying that a well-dressed man of beastly temper which comes from the official uniform. Exactly speaking, it comes from the official uniform supplement in Ming and Qing dynasties. The former of the phrase means dress and hat; the latter means the stripe of the birds and beasts. In that times, the patterns to the supplement of civil officer are birds, the patterns to the supplement of military officer are beasts. The folks called the officer a well-dressed man of beastly temper who worn official uniform but didn't sever the civilians. The saying is not proven completely, but it explains the character of the official uniform. We can know the official's status and rank from the patterns of what they were wearing. From the emperor to the ordinary official, the patterns of the dress stand for their rights and position. The emperor's dress contains uniform clothes, royal clothes, informal clothes and secret clothes etc. species. The emperor's imperial robes feature bright yellow, golden yellow or apricot yellow as the main color, while the princess's robe dress is light red.

There are 9 dragons in the emperor's dress; however, we usually can see 8 dragons because one pattern of the dragon is hid into the inside of the dress. Therefore, the emperor's dress has 9 dragons in fact, but we can see 5 dragons from its frontage or the back, which is suitable to the call of the honor of five and nine towards the emperor. There are many veins which were called laciness at the bottom of the emperor's dress. There are many toss waves above the laciness. There are much treasure about the mountain and stone above the waves, which was commonly known as the briny river limit, containing the auspicious meaning of endless and series and was known as the meaning of lead singer.

In fact, the genre of the propitious pattern in ancient time is very abundant. We can get the reduction of the patterns from figure mythology story to flowers and birds and beasts. These patterns are used widely in our today's lives through all kinds of creation, such as opening ceremony and wedding ceremony. In the Ming and Qing dynasties, the supplement had become the main source of the patterns in the official uniforms. There is no doubt that the supplement played an important role in official uniform in Ming and Qing dynasties whose origin can be traced back to the period of Empress Wu Zetian in Tang dynasty. In that time, the queen granted different brocades to all kinds of officials according to their status and relationship, which is called a gift. To the evolution of the Ming dynasty, it became the supplement of the robe, as the feature of the Ming dynasty official uniforms. After the beggar Emperor Zhu Yuanzhang overthrew the Yuan dynasty, he established the Ming Empire; in order to reform, firstly, he banned the clothes which were worn by the Hu tribe, and then the clothes about such as a letter to the shape in the Tang dynasty. The official supplement in Ming dynasty was the most typical token of feudal society rank. The supplement is symmetry, the length of 40 cm square; it is made into silk embroidery through silk fabrics, which was fixed in the chest and the back of the uniform.

The patterns represent special traditional ideas. The Ming dynasty official common uniform has plate collar.

The patterns of civil official supplement are birds, and the patterns of military official supplement are beasts. Besides, the birds or beasts stand for their status and rank according to the different patterns. There are many kinds of animals in nature. Whether it is fierce poultry beast of prey, birds or worms, people endow specific meaning of these animals.

The patterns of birds and beasts in Ming dynasty official uniform added some culture elements besides the traditional meaning to make the image of the animals to close to the humanization. According to the sizes of the rank and the patterns in Ming dynasty official uniform, the supplement can be classified into duke, marquess, emperor's son-in-law, unicorn and bythere (unicorn and bythere are two animals in ancient times according to the myth, but they are not seen nowadays). In Ming dynasty, the supplement is round and robes in the uniform, besides dragon streak, the dragon which has 4 claws; there are flying fish (a dragon with wing and tail) and cattle (a dragon with two curve angles on its head). Uniform is an unreal animal by the ancient people (such as Fig .4).



Figure 4.

This image has begun from the period of western Zhou bronze times. The officials who worn these kinds of clothes are the first and second status in their officials about duke, marquess, emperor's son-in-law, unicorn. Confucius compiled the book "spring and autumn", in which the story of shooting at unicorn was recorded at moorland. Unicorn containing dragon, horses, deer, tigers, fish and other species whose image looks ferocious terrible, but it is fortune, the effect of evil demon back. It is the embodiment of good fortune exorcism. Therefore, the personification of the unicorn's image model is widely used in the court, office, building, sculpture and other fields.

Unicorn as a symbol of hierarchy was embroidered on the noble robes, which shows the status of the official. In the design of unicorn with turbulent waters and five-color clouds, which were served as a foil of nobility and wham. "Bythere" is a god beast in legendary. It was reported in the Xuan yuan recording, the emperor went hunting, arrived in the east sea, climbed to the mountain, got the bythere god beast at the coastal sea. It could say,

expressed the feeling of everything, so the emperor ordered the office official write it to show the world. So the bythere had become one of the most important patterns in Ming dynasty clothes.

The crane symbolized the first place of civilian official. In ancient times, cranes is "a bird under one, above all birds", only after the order of the phoenix.

Therefore, the supplement patterns in Ming and Qing dynasties were "crane". At the same time, the crane is unique for its image and feather, which was called the most excellent bird, it means the first place. The crane rank official laid the first in ancient times among the nine grades below the emperor. Of course, the crane which represents the longevity and nobility in nature is the noblest birds in nature. It is reported that the crane can live for thousands of years. The crane is tall, looking forward to the future; the crane looks eagerly, graceful posture, the color is not very brilliant but charming, elegant and generous. So the style is full of attraction and grace(such as Fig .5).



Figure 5.

The golden pheasant lies the second place in official. It propagates five moral characteristic of human being through the nature of the golden pheasant. One is the decorative pattern of chickens to be said it is culture; The second is that the cock is mighty; the third is that the cock fight fiercely; the fourth is the hen protect the chicken, so it looks very kind; the fifth is that the cock crow is very punctual. These mean the emperor's requirement towards his subjects. The artist's expression is very lively, a golden pheasant with a climb, bending the lotus branches, showed the weight of the golden pheasant. The third is peacock, it is rich and honor, good lucky will always be waiting for you. The fourth is goose; the fifth is lophura nycthemera; the sixth is egret, its color of the feather is bright, the couple lives together. It means the wife and the husband love each other and they will never be separated. The Seventh is mandarin duck, it is a kind of water bird, it looks like a affectionate couple. the eighth is quail, it means peace. It has the meaning of living comfortably and everything is well; besides this symbolization meaning, it was used to represent the rank of the official because all officials are called into the apparels of the emperor's clothes in mountain and sea booking. So all

officials represent the image of the emperor. The ninth is finch, it also be called paradise flycatcher. The ribbon is the apparels of the clothes to he officials and the emperor. It was made into the long colorful form. The color changes according to the rank of the officials. The emperor and the nine rank's ribbons has 4colors, length 2.1inch. the ribbons color of the chancellor is green, general and marquis' ribbon color are purple. The civilian official in ancient times caught jade which has the meaning with the ribbon in Chinese, therefore, the ribbon has become the symbolization of right and nobility.

In Qing dynasty, the influence of the dress culture is from the Ming dynasty. However, in Qing dynasty, the prince as second only to the emperor's senior aristocratic, whose robes of general is also a dragon robe, and Baylor is boa robe. About python, it is different from the dragon. There are no definite answers towards their difference. General speaking, the five claws are dragons and the four claws are bores. Of course there are tiny differences about the supplement between the civilian and military officials. One is the sharp of the supplement, the other is the pattern. During the Qing dynasty, official uniforms are made through Jiangnan weaving bureau", ordinary tailors cannot make official uniforms.

When it comes to the military officials, the first is called unicorn, the auspicious beast is it's another name; this animal appeared only in the peace time, it is the symbolization of the benevolence and kindness. There was another saying that the unicorn would send a son for people, containing the meaning that the sons brought by the unicorn must be the virtuous subject. The second is called the lion, another name is Sunli, it means brave. Two lions mean that everything is well. A big and a small lion mean the old and the young master, containing the meaning of high status and heavy right. The third is called the tiger. The tiger lies the first place in all beasts, containing the meaning of wise and the manner of benevolence, wisdom and truth. So the tiger is called the auspicious god beast. It is honesty, it can drive evil influence, it can bring luck and fortune. The tiger sign is the power of the emperor in ancient time. The tiger were drew on the doors between the emperor and the dukes, so it is called the door of the tiger. The tiger was admired by the general and the commander because of their might and brave. In Qing dynasty, the list put up a successful candidate in the highest imperial examinations is tiger list, so it is called the tiger door. It implies the might and brave and shows the force. The fourth is called the leopard according to its valor and vigor. The fifth is called the bear according to the meaning of manly. The sixth and the seventh are the animals like the tiger; it has the meaning according to their devilry towards the enemy. The eighth is called rhinoceros; the skin of the rhinoceros can be made into the armor according to the sharpness of the weapons. The ninth is called the hippocampus. It symbolizes the inferior military official in one country. In ancient times, the emperor had strict standards towards the inferior military, they could command both mainland war of the infantry and the war of navy. In addition, censors and imperial censors are called haetae. There were the patterns the water of the sea and the stone of the mountain in the supplement besides flying beasts and running animals.

China feudal society has seriously hierarchical characteristic, and the pattern of Ming and Qing official uniform has special function and inheritance.

A. Identification functions. The Ming dynasty official uniforms custom-made went through 30 years with improvement, revision and perfection, and it ended in the year 1391 which was called the year of Hongwu. As the beginning of the Ming dynasty, the supplement was thought of as a symbol of rank. The pattern of the supplement's texture is clear and well-made. Through its peculiar function, we can quickly identify the official rank, status and identity. At the occasion of official office, the supplement distinguished the status of the official by their distinctive characteristic, reflecting the traditional manner of feudal society of hierarchy between father and son and between subject and object. The supplement is not only the symbol of hierarchy, and metaphor the hope of the emperor, it contains the officials should be loyal to the emperor of the Ming dynasty, and hope that the officials must be conscientious, diligent in people, benefiting their people when they are in their seats. It has been a long history that china put the birds and beasts as the symbol of auspicious sign. As early as the period of Shang and Zhou dynasty, pottery, jade, and bronze are all widely used in design of birds and animals. With the development of the civilization history, the culture tradition is increasingly perfect. In Ming dynasty, the auspicious patterns which were concentrated into the supplement were brought into the political arena, on behalf of the government and the authority of the nobles.

B. Cultural inheritance function. After China was in the control of Manqing, the government completely abolished the hanfu and advocated their clothes. a change in Manchu clothing. They did so to bring a pair of mental slavery for people and make them completely obey the new rulers. After the clothing change, the Qing dynasty only retained the supplement with distinctive Chinese culture. Therefore, we could get the significances of political elements and the glamour of the art. The supplement's size in the Qing dynasty are slightly smaller than the Ming dynasty, this is because the Manzu is nomads, in order to ride easily, the front of the dress is divided, and the back is completely closed, so the size of the supplement is narrow. The supplement in Qing dynasty is symmetrical between the front and the back, but there are some slight changes in the patterns. Therefore, we can know the official's status from the supplement of what they worn. In my future work, I'd like to combine the practice with the theory, making the supplement patterns become a fashionable art.

With the development of society and the progress of the civilization, consumer's ideas and perspectives are changing greatly. However, the ancient patterns which were mentioned in the above are basic elements for the designers to create, because these patterns contain abundant meaning: happiness, longevity, health, prosperity and so on. The feeling which is embodied in the ancient patterns can also be used widely in today's design, for they all express the idea of pursuing wellbeing.

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