

Talking about the Status of Women in Tang and Song Dynasties with the Change of Dress

Xin Wang

School of Shandong University of Technology, Zibo, China

Abstract: In Tang and Song dynasties, with the social, economic and cultural changes, women's status also changed significantly, which was not only reflected in the evolution of social roles and rights, but also reflected in the change of dress style. The free and unrestrained dress style of Tang Dynasty and the simple and elegant dress characteristics of Song Dynasty showed the changes of women's ideas and status in different periods.

Keywords: Change of Dress, Status of Women, Social Fashion, Tang and Song Dynasties.

1. Introduction

Tang and Song dynasties are two important dynasties in Chinese history. They not only have different outstanding performances in politics, economy, ideology and other aspects, but also show the evolution of women's status in different times, among which the change of women's clothing can be said to be the most obvious reflection. This paper will discuss it from the following two aspects.

2. The Characteristics of Female Clothing in Tang and Song Dynasties



Figure 1. Tang Dunhuang mural Leting gui Lady walking incense painting family part (from Shen Congwen's Research on Ancient Chinese Clothing)

In both the Tang Dynasty and the Song Dynasty, the colors and styles of women's clothing were characteristic of a specific background. The dress style of women in the Tang Dynasty is mainly gorgeous and loose, focusing on the performance of women's curves, the most common are skirts, half arms, shrouds, etc. Women in this period have the confidence to exceed the limitations of The Times, they never hesitate to show their beauty, and the colors are also multi-colored red, green, yellow and other bright colors, and the clothes are also multi-colored gold and silver thread and gems, highlighting the luxurious temperament. At the same time, under the influence of foreign culture, simple and convenient Hu clothing is also loved by women, who leave the previous

bondage to women far behind and pursue freedom and the development of their own personality.

However, due to the change of social atmosphere, the Song Dynasty's clothes became more simple and elegant. Although they still wore the skirts and the half arms, they were different from the wide and flowing skirts and the brightly colored half arms of the Tang Dynasty, the jackets of this period chose straight tufts or slightly hemlines, which were simple and simple in style, and the colors of the half arms were also more simple and elegant. At the same time, the common clothes in this period are beizi, the design pays attention to simple and generous, dignified and elegant. Compared with the flowers, birds and clouds of the Tang Dynasty, the Song Dynasty costumes mostly adopted bamboo leaves and geometric patterns, pursuing a calm and harmonious aesthetic feeling, but at the same time, we can also feel that the constraints on women in the Song Dynasty have gradually solidified.



Figure 2. Northern Song Dynasty Dai Zhong Lou Zi flower crown woman (from the Collection of Famous Paintings of Chinese Dynasties)

3. Changes in Women's Clothing Reflect Changes in Social Fashion.

In the long history of ancient China, the change of women's aesthetic concept has always been influenced by the social thought with male aesthetic as the main body. The inclusive

and open background of the Tang Dynasty shaped a group of noble literati and scholars, who appreciated healthy body and free dress, thus forming a magnificent, healthy and free female beauty. Meanwhile, the turbulent social background of the Song Dynasty and the rigid development of Confucianism also led to men's deformed aesthetic toward women. The formation of the Tang Dynasty completely contrary to the feminine beauty[1].

In the context of the opening era of the Tang Dynasty, it showed extraordinary tolerance and openness in both economy and politics, and these characteristics of politics and economy also promoted the expression of the overall free social fashion. While accepting the development of Confucianism, most of the famous scholars also absorbed Taoism and Buddhism, and the integration of schools of thought and open social policies jointly shaped their aesthetic preference for health and freedom[1]. From the curtains and drapery in the early Tang Dynasty, to the Hu clothing and men's clothing in the high Tang Dynasty, all reflect the Tang women's courage to dress freely and dare to challenge the traditional male society. The rich and fat state is also the characteristics of the image of upper class women in the Tang Dynasty, such as Zhang Xuan and Zhou Fang and other people's paintings of ladies, pay attention to the portrayal of aristocratic women leisurely and graceful, showing the real life of women's lively and healthy beauty[2]. It is based on this free social fashion that far exceeds other dynasties, so that Tang women have much higher confidence in their own clothes and accessories to show the free and beautiful.



Figure 3. Tang Dynasty Zhang Xuan Zhou Fang "Hair-wearing ladies picture" part

The Song Dynasty went to the opposite extreme from the Tang. In the two Song Dynasties, the social unrest led to the development of Confucianism into a more rigid neo-Confucianism, which placed more emphasis on the three virtues and four virtues of women. Correspondingly, women's clothing in the two Song Dynasties was mostly cross-collar robes, and the dress design was more dignified and appropriate, with relatively narrow skirts, emphasizing women's introversion and limiting the development of women's nature. The beauty of masculinity in the heyday of the Tang Dynasty gave way to the emaciated beauty sought after by the intellectuals of the Song Dynasty. From preaching on the importance of chastity, to restricting women's travel, to foot-binding at the expense of themselves, all reflect the extreme change in social fashion and the bondage of women[3].

4. The Change of Social Fashion Leads to the Change of Women's Status.

The overall free and open social fashion of the Tang Dynasty also constructed a higher female status, and women wore luxurious clothes to attend various social occasions. It shows their more active social status in social life. Living in an open society, women in the Tang Dynasty, especially aristocratic women, gained a wide range of freedom, and even had political rights that were difficult to achieve in other dynasties at a specific time, such as Shangguan Wan 'er, Taiping Princess, Wu Zetian, etc., which shaped the open and strong character of aristocratic women in the Tang Dynasty and dared to challenge traditional morality. At the same time, the Tang Dynasty's female chastity, marriage, travel, etc. were affected by the social fashion of the time to varying degrees, showing the rise of women's status.

However, the two Song Dynasties were completely different. Due to the development of neo-Confucianism, a complete chain of constraints was formed for women from dress to behavior. The constraints of feudal ethics, especially the concept of chastity, were unprecedentedly strengthened[4]. In terms of social concepts, women are required to be obedient and have four virtues, "the cause of starvation is small, but the cause of misrule is big", and there are even foot-binding behaviors that harm themselves and please men. The loss of women's rights and the generation of domestic violence are even more obvious. The traditional oppressive feudal concept of women has been unprecedentedly strengthened with the development of neo-Confucianism, which requires women to be obedient, take care of their husbands and children, and make no distinction between right and wrong. The independence of the Tang Dynasty was completely lost, and it was from this moment on that the social status of women went into a sharp decline.

5. Conclusion

The prosperous social economy, enlightened political system and eclectic culture of the Tang Dynasty gave rise to a splendid dress culture. From the restrained and simple in the early Tang Dynasty to the rich and gorgeous in the prosperous Tang Dynasty, the middle and late Tang Dynasty returned to the elegant, reflecting the changes in ideological culture and social aesthetic psychology, which was closely related to the overall economic and political development of the early Tang Dynasty, the prosperous Tang Dynasty and the middle and late Tang Dynasty. The beauty of women's clothing in the Song Dynasty was characterized by slender and elegant style, which was closely related to the emergence and development of neo-Confucianism's doctrine of the mean, so that women's clothing in the Song Dynasty was comfortable, practical and elegant. This aesthetic orientation under "cultural governance" had a deep influence on the color and overall style of women's clothing in the Song Dynasty. It also needs to reflect and explore the social content it embodies.

Looking at the changes of women's clothing in the Tang and Song dynasties, it is not difficult to see that because women were in a relatively inferior position in the whole feudal dynasty, their clothing was more likely to be affected by cultural policies and could better reflect the changes of women's social status. Dress culture is a reflection of social concepts in a period. From the wide robes and large sleeves in the Tang Dynasty to the simple and elegant long skirts in the Song Dynasty, women's personal development from

freedom to social constraints, and women's status from high to low, reflecting the change of women's status and social role in the Tang and Song dynasties.

References

- [1] LI Xiaocui. Changes of women's clothing and evolution of women's Views in Tang and Song Dynasties [J]. Journal of Yangtze University (Social Sciences Edition),2011,34(03): 176-177.
- [2] Zhou Ping. A Comparative Study on Women's Clothing in Tang and Song Dynasties [D]. Soochow University,2008.
- [3] Fang Jingya. The Change of women's Status in Love and Marriage Ethics from Tang, Song and Ming Popular Literature [J]. Cultural Journal,2020,(11):244-246.
- [4] LUO Yikun. A Study on the color of Women's Dress in Tang and Song Dynasties [D]. Hunan University of Technology, 2016.