

Research on the art and folk meaning of wedding clothes in Shanxi in the Qing Dynasty

Wenjing Chen *, Yufei Li

College of Art and Design, Qilu university of technology, Jinan, Shandong Province, China

* Corresponding Author

Abstract. As a product of the integration of national etiquette and regional culture, Shanxi wedding clothing in the Qing Dynasty has the functions of social education, folklore and emotional expression. To a certain extent, it reflects the change of dynastic politics and the meaning of the prototype of life. Based on the context of time and the relevant historical materials of the physical map and the local chronicles of Shanxi, the article explores the art and folk meaning of wedding dress in Shanxi in the Qing Dynasty around the thrifty Jinbei area, the Jinzhong region and the profound Jinnan region where Jin merchants gathered. It is believed that Shanxi wedding clothes and related etiquette and customs in the Qing Dynasty have gone through the inheritance of the clothing system, etiquette and customs are still thrifty; the integration of Manchu and Han, marriage customs and luxury; the combination of Chinese and Western styles, and the simplified etiquette system. Through its art form, the changes of the times and folk characteristics can be seen, with the characteristics of "space-time".

Keywords: Qing Dynasty; Shanxi; wedding dress; folklore.

1. Introduction

Wedding dress usually refers to the dress worn by the newlyweds in the ceremony of "welcoming" in the "Six Rites" of marriage, which is the most dignified and grand ceremony in the whole wedding process. In the pre-wedding period in Shanxi province in the Qing Dynasty, the man would send the wedding dress worn by the bride to the woman's home for her review, and at the same time, he also expressed a promise. After the wedding dress was accepted, it marked that the two sides reached a consensus on establishing the wedding ceremony, and the content of the follow-up ceremony also kicked off. Therefore, the artistic function of a wedding dress has a special meaning higher than that of daily life and the publicity of connecting society.[1] It is the materialized expression of "isomorphism of home and country". In the Qing Dynasty, Shanxi's wedding dress showed different historical characteristics with the social changes, namely, the inheritance of the dress system in the early Qing Dynasty; In the mid-Qing Dynasty, the wedding dress was integrated and the manners and customs were relaxed; In the late Qing Dynasty, the wedding dress changed and the etiquette declined. This paper selects the northern part of Shanxi Province in the Qing Dynasty, which is dominated by Datong Prefecture and Shuoping Prefecture, Jinzhong Prefecture, which is dominated by Fenzhou Prefecture and Taiyuan Prefecture, Hedong Prefecture, which is dominated by Pingyang Prefecture and Puzhou Prefecture, and southeastern Shanxi Province, which is dominated by Lu 'a Prefecture and Zezhou Prefecture, it discusses the relationship between the artistic form of Shanxi folk women's wedding dress in Qing Dynasty and its historical development and folk culture, to provide a perspective for perfecting the traditional regional clothing system.

2. History in the clothing: deduction of etiquette and custom order

In feudal society, wedding dress was brought into the national etiquette system and social ethics norms, and the material attribute was irradiated by the social attribute, which became a metaphorical symbol of ideas and etiquette. In the Qing Dynasty, Shanxi wedding dress carried out the idea of "attaching importance to the ceremony and giving full play to clothes", linking national politics with regional "micro-politics";[2] making a wedding dress a link between official etiquette and local folk



customs, just like a mirror of social history in the Qing Dynasty, which reflected the connection between the central and local governments;[3] reflecting the pluralistic dynamics of social changes and cultural exchanges. Referring to the law of stages in Zhang Renshan's book *Rites, Laws and Society: Legal Transformation and Social Change in the Qing Dynasty*, this paper divides the Qing Dynasty into three periods for research. That is, the early Qing Dynasty refers to the period from the first year of Shunzhi to the early period of Qianlong (1636-1756), the middle Qing Dynasty refers to the period from the middle period of Qianlong to Xianfeng (1757-1860) and the late Qing Dynasty refers to the period from the first year of Tongzhi to Xuantong (1861-1912).

2.1. The inheritance of the clothing system and the custom of frugality

Shanxi women's wedding dress in the Qing Dynasty inherits the basic characteristics of the Ming Dynasty's wedding dress. It is recorded in the *History of the Ming Dynasty · Public Opinion Records* that when a scholar and a common woman get married, the more she can enjoy the honor of the costume of the phoenix crown and the concubine, that is, the combination of the real red double-barreled large-sleeved shirt, the phoenix crown and the red satin embroidered shoes.[4] This system was also used in the Qing Dynasty, and there are many records of this in Shanxi local chronicles, such as "Xiaowenxi": "The bride wears a phoenix crown on her head and a phoenix robe on her body." [5] In "Kiexiu County": "The bride wears a phoenix crown and wears clothes." [6] Continue the custom of the Ming Dynasty that "the bride must use the phoenix crown to show that she is a wife, not a concubine" to distinguish the status level. As shown in the portrait in Figure 1, the woman is wearing a python robe, covered with a sunset, a phoenix crown, and a red wedding skirt on her lower body, and her feet are not exposed. The Han female python robe is red, round collar and a large collar. The body of the clothes is usually 3 feet and 3 inches. Based on the "cross-shaped" natural structure, it retains the characteristics of straight and wide-sleeved dresses in the Ming Dynasty. It can be seen that from the early to the middle of the Qing Dynasty, Shanxi women's wedding dresses followed the dress style of "top and bottom" in the Ming Dynasty, the matching method of the phoenix crown and the color concept of "Shanghong" in the Ming Dynasty.



Figure 1. Portrait of the Lady of the Qing Dynasty (Collection of Fushan County Museum)

The inheritance of clothing, it is also deeply imprinted with the historical rationality under the policy of "shaving hair and dressing" in the early Qing Dynasty. "Correction, change of clothes" is an important measure to edify all people and stabilize order. Therefore, when the Manchus and Qing

Dynasties entered the customs, the Han Chinese were ordered to wear Manchu costumes and leave Manchu hairstyles, that is, "shave hair and change clothes", as a sign to measure whether the people surrender and establish the authority of rule. This order is seriously cut off from the Han nationality's idea of "the body is skinned, and the parents are affected", and the contradictions between Manchu and Han have intensified, triggering a strong struggle among the Han people across the country. Shanxi, led by Jiang Wei, held high the anti-Qing flag. The Han officials and common people who were dissatisfied with the Qing court's shaved hair and changed clothes responded one after another. They successively occupied 70% of the prefectures and states in Shanxi, causing 20,000 Qing troops to surrender to the Ming Dynasty, and nearly 100 officials at all levels in the Qing court were killed and injured. To stabilize the people's hearts, the Qing government adopted the compromise policy of "ten following and ten not obeying".[7] Among them, "men follow and women do not obey, and officials do not obey marriage" lays the foundation for Shanxi folk wedding ceremonies and women's wedding clothes not to be constrained by Manchu culture.

The anti-Qing Dynasty and the restoration of the Ming Dynasty led to a shortage of living beings and supplies in Shanxi. For example, the wasteland of Datong Prefecture was as high as 7018. Boluo and Mandahai led the Qing army to attack Fenzhou Prefecture, resulting in the massacre of all the men in the city. Against this background, local marriages in Shanxi in the early Qing Dynasty showed the characteristics of Atsumoto Shangthon. The rulers of the Qing Dynasty had strict restrictions on the acceptance of all classes, wedding gifts, etc. The number of wedding gifts is "four taels of fine silk for common people, four things for decoration, and four utensils for food." [8] At the same time, it is stipulated that the soldiers and civilians will have two wedding sheep and five bottles of wine. All pigs are included in the number of sheep, and geese, ducks, and chickens can be used at will. Shanxi wedding ceremonies generally follow the rules. Most of the wedding gifts are jewelry, sheep, wine, and food boxes. The wedding gifts include sheep, wine, coins, silk, jewelry, satin, cloth, etc. The rich do not exceed the regulations, and the poor are given only a red silk. The concept of marriage in northern Jin that "in case of money is discussed, everyone despises it" is deeply rooted in people's hearts. The weddings and funerals in the central Jin Dynasty are all simple and simple. This style has been further confirmed in the Xingxian Records: "Women's families are ashamed of receiving wealth, and there are still ancient ways." [9] Marriage in the Hedong area is more important than the lintel, regardless of the amount of money. In the southeast of the Jin Dynasty, "Nacai, the ceremony is not extravagant". [10] The norms of material life in the early Qing Dynasty were strictly bound by the provisions of the law, which made the marriage etiquette in Shanxi clear and orderly, presenting a thoughtful and rigorous form.

2.2. Manchu and Han fusion and the style of luxury

In the middle of the Qing Dynasty, the social economy continued to recover, and the social pattern became more and more stable. A large number of families of Manchu banner soldiers stationed in Shanxi moved in, gradually breaking down the barriers of etiquette so that the integration of the two ethnic groups in terms of clothing, customs, and other aspects reached unprecedented depth. The "coat skirt" with the artistic style of the integration of Manchu and Han dresses has become a typical product of the Qing Dynasty national costumes of "seeking similarities and remaining differences". The "coat skirt" was first seen in the wedding ceremony of the Han nationality in Beijing, and then gradually penetrated into the middle and upper classes in Shanxi, becoming a landmark wedding dress that highlights the noble status of the wearer. It is recorded in the Qing Dynasty: "The eight-flag women's dress, in addition to the robe, there are also the so-called eight-groups, which are embroidered or silk, which are decorated on the coat, but only for the bride's ears." [11] The combination is usually a stone-blue short coat with a big red horse-faced skirt. Take Figure 2 as an example, the length of the top is 62cm, and the length of the sleeves is about 121cm. It is an inverted large sleeves, double-lapel, and round-neck jacket, which is nearly half shorter than the length of the traditional female python robe, and the body is also slightly narrowed. The length of the lower skirt is 95cm, and the width of the skirt is 122cm. It is a dried horse-faced skirt. The skirt is different from

the conventional characteristics of the wedding clothes of Shanxi people, which is "red up and down", but it echoes the tradition of an "upper black dress and red skirt", revealing a strong class majesty.



Figure 2. Shanxi Women's Wedding Dress in the Qing Dynasty (Source: "Classics of Traditional Costume Patterns of the Han Nationality")

In the middle of the Qing Dynasty, Shanxi wedding dresses and luxury were another manifestation of the loosening of etiquette and the change of social atmosphere. When the material conditions of the people develop enough to compete with the etiquette system, social life will gradually break free from the shackles of etiquette and show an independent and brand-new style. The Shanxi merchant family, which rose widely around 20 to 30 years of Qianlong, became the first force driving Shanxi's luxurious weddings. In the wedding gifts of wealthy merchants in Shanxi, rare objects such as watches and pocket watches have appeared, including gold, silver, jewelry, emeralds, and jade. Ordinary businessmen and rich people also began to be proud of luxury and compete for beauty. For example, Datong Prefecture went from "vulgar and diligent" in the early period to "its end began with rich merchants, married clothes, and the old affairs period was gorgeous" in the middle of the Qing Dynasty.[12] caused the urban and rural people to compete to follow suit. The bridal jewelry of ordinary people's homes is also mostly inlaid with red gold, jade, gemstones, etc., which is not enough for the number of teeth; the fabric of wedding clothes is satin, lake silk, and brocade, which is beyond the ordinary. As Bourdieu said, the social class does not exist. It exists in a space of social differences, in which the class exists in a potential, dotted state and something to do.[13] Shanxi businessmen and rich households try to ignore or eliminate "social differences" on the surface through the consumption mode of "showing the public" of wedding ceremonies and dressing and also reveal the importance of wedding clothes and their etiquette in building social status from the side.

2.3. The change of wedding dress and the traces of simplification

In the late Qing Dynasty, the situation was wild. With the deepening of the semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, the people generally surged in the mentality of "existing and seeking innovation". The trend of Western learning in the East gradually evolved from the dominant penetration of foreigners to the spontaneous search for knowledge by Chinese people, and the integration of local customs and culture with it, driving the innovation of "clothes and crown edification" and "ritual marriage". Shanxi wedding dress customs have two obvious characteristics of change during this period. One is that under the influence of the west wind and the east, the wedding dress reflects the characteristics of the combination of China and the West; the other is that the wedding customs are simple and clear.

The 1911 Revolution promoted the opening up of social customs, introduced civilized weddings to China, and formed a pattern of annexation of China and the West. Due to the natural barrier of Taihang Mountain in eastern Shanxi, cultural exchanges with advanced provinces are relatively limited, so civilized weddings have a small impact in Shanxi. According to local records, there are relatively few families in Shanxi that carry out civilized weddings, "only one or two out of thousands".[14] And it mainly appears in economically prosperous areas such as Jinzhong and Jinnan. Most of the main subjects are merchants, officials, eunuchs, and intellectuals, while ordinary people often follow the traditional wedding ceremony. It can be seen that the dissemination scope of new-style weddings has a certain imbalance. Under the influence of the women's liberation movement, wedding women wear corollas on their heads and no longer cover their faces with heads. The collar of wedding dresses has a Western-style lapel and a double lapel, but retains the traditional shape of wide sleeves. The body and sleeves tend to be "narrowed", the shape is trumpet-shaped, and the body of the clothes is not the hip, presenting a certain combination of Chinese and Western characteristics. Men still mainly wear traditional robes and short coats with hats, while some advanced elements take off their hats and put on suits and leather shoes (as shown in Figure 3). In addition, the pattern of wedding dress is mainly made of natural flowers, and the "seawater river cliff pattern" with etiquette and prestige is rare. The wedding dress is gradually transformed into a self-personality expression with the function of etiquette as the core.



(a) A wedding photo of Shanxi



(b) A wedding photos of Jinshang in Lingshi County

Figure 3. Old photos of Shanxi weddings at the end of the Qing Dynasty and the beginning of the People's Republic of the People's Republic(Taken in Qi County Folklore Museum)

At the same time as the reform of Shanxi wedding dress in the late Qing Dynasty, it also showed obvious traces of avoiding complexity and simplifying relevant etiquette and customs. Shanxi weddings are generally divided into three stages from wedding to personal welcome. In the first stage, the two rituals of acceptance and asking for the name in the six ceremonies are combined into one, which is called marriage. The marriage proposal between the two families is first exchanged after the matchmaker, and then the financial gift is discussed and sent. The second stage is Nazheng, which merges Naji and Nazheng, that is, the man chooses an auspicious day to send jewelry, crowns, and other things to the woman's home in advance. The third stage is the welcome ceremony, which is the most concise. For example, Fenzhou Prefecture has abolished customs such as geese, royal wheel, and Heqi when welcoming in person; only nine percent of the people in Puzhou Prefecture greet each

other, and most of them change the greeting ceremony to "wait for the ceremony". With the evolution of customs, some families choose to complete the wedding in one day to effectively save money and manpower. Don't knot a color, don't hang a lamp, and do everything in the dining house in the city." [15] can briefly see the preliminary outline of contemporary weddings. Although there are significant differences in the procedures of weddings in various regions of Shanxi and the rich and poor, the trend of avoiding complexity and simplifying in the whole scope is obvious.

3. Summary

Shanxi wedding dress in the Qing Dynasty is the manifestation of national etiquette function and regional folk culture, with the characteristics of "integration of etiquette and customs". Wedding clothes are related to ritual matters outside the ontology and social trends, which can give a glimpse of the subtle interaction between national politics and regional customs. With the establishment and prosperity of the Manchu and Qing Dynasties, to decline and destruction, the wedding dress customs presented the characteristics of courtesy and thrift, integration and luxury, change, and simplification, which became a micro perspective to witness the changes in social history. The article focuses on the social history of Shanxi wedding dress in the Qing Dynasty, to provide a certain reference for the continuation of wedding dress art and the inheritance of regional culture.

References

- [1] Hu Xinsheng, The Characteristics of Ritual System and the Mark of Ritual in Chinese Culture, *J. Literature, History, and Philosophy*, 2014, (03):66-78+166. DOI: 10.16346/j.cnki.37-1101/c.2014.03.007.
- [2] ZHANG shishan, Custom Interaction and Research on Chinese Societ, *J. Folklore Studies*, 2016, (06):14-24+157. DOI: 10.13370/j.cnki.fs.2016.06.003.
- [3] LI Yufei, A Study of the Evolution of the Costumes and Personal Adornments in the Ming and Qing Dynasties from the Perspective of the Interaction between Rituals and Customs, *J. Journal of Yunnan Normal University (Humanities and Social Sciences Edition)*, 2024,56(04):118-128.
- [4] BIAN Xiangyang, LI Mengke, Artistic Features and Influencing Factors of Wedding Costumes in Ming Dynasty, *J. Journal of Clothing Research*, 2019,4(06):531-537.
- [5] DING Shiliang, *Compilation of Folklore Materials of Chinese Local History in North China Volume*, Beijing Library Publishing House, 1989.
- [6] Compiled by Wenxi County Chronicle Compilation Committee, *Wenxi County Chronicle*, China Map Publishing House, 1993.
- [7] Cui Rongrong, Niu Li, Han Ethnic Costumes Transformation and Social Changes of Qing Dynasty (1616~1840), *J. Art & Design Research*, 2015, (01):49-53.
- [8] Zhang Shudong, *The transformation of marriage and family in China*, Zhejiang People's Publishing House, 1990, p.128.
- [9] Qianlong, *XingXian Records*, Volume.7, P.3.
- [10] YongZheng, *Qinyuanxian Records*, Volume.4, P.38.
- [11] XuKe, *Qing Bai Lei Chao*, The Commercial Press, 1928, P.7773-7774.
- [12] Daoguang, *Datongxian Records*, Volume.8, P.3.
- [13] Pierre Bourdieu, *Practical Reason: About Behavior Theory*, Translated by Tan Lide, Life Reading Xinzhi Sanlian Publishing House, 2007, P.15.
- [14] Republic of China, *Taiguxian Records*, Volume.4, P.2.
- [15] Republic of China, *Linfenxian Records*, Volume.2, P.8.