

The Origin of Partial Decorations in Gowns of the Northern Qi and Tang Dynasties

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Abstract: In Tang Dynasty, people used brocade and other fabrics to decorate the collars, sleeves and fronts of their gowns. The custom can also be found in Sogdian murals of Central Asia, which has been discussed in previous study. This paper observes and compares image materials, and finds out that this kind of gown appeared in China in the Northern Qi Dynasty. These gowns have decorated sleeves, as well as hems decorated with brocade with pearl roundel patterns. In this paper, through observing murals of the Central Asia, stone burial objects for Sogdian people entering China and images carved in gold and silver wares, the author analyzes the style, the position, the popular situation and the eastward spreading of partial decoration of Sogdian gowns. Images related to sleeve decorations are also collected and compared. This kind of decoration originated in Sogdian can also be found in Tubo and Uighur gowns, which are also studied through the method of image comparison.

1. Introduction

The partial decoration of gowns means to decorate the collars, sleeves, front and back parts, as well as the arms of gowns with brocade and other fabrics. The decorative parts and style are different from traditional Han custom; they should be influenced by foreign cultures. Scholars have noticed that decorative brocade in the collars, sleeves and front parts of Tang gowns was originated from Central Asia and could be found in Sogdian murals. With the abundant archaeological materials unearthed, especially the discovery of rich mural images found in the tombs of nobles of the Northern Dynasties, such as Xian-xiu Xu's Tomb in Taiyuan and the tombs of Sogdian people who enter China, new materials can be used to find out when the decoration pattern was introduced into the Han territory, as well as the spreading process of some special decorative parts. In addition, Tubo and Uighur costumes also have partial decoration; the relationship between them and Sogdian costumes is also worth discussing. Through the comparative analysis of image materials, this paper intends to study the origin, the popularity degree and the spreading of partial decoration of gowns.

2. The Partial Decoration of Gowns in Cultural Relics of the Northern Qi and Tang Dynasties



Figure 1. Sleeve Decoration in Xian-xiu Xu's Tomb;



Figure 2. Partial Decoration of Gowns



Figure 3. Sleeve Decoration in Rui Lou's Tomb



Figure 4. The Image of Ji Li



Figure 5. The Tomb of Jing Xue



Figure 6. The Tomb of Prince Zhanghuai

In Xian-xiu Xu's tomb of the Northern Qi Dynasty found in Taiyuan, one of the murals depict the banquet of the couple. Xu's wife wears a red gown with right over-lapping part. The sleeves are decorated with a circle of white fabric with pearl roundel patterns composed of fine dots. It should be a circle of brocade or other fabrics (Figure 1). In the mural of traveling found in the passage of Rui Lou's Tomb of the Northern Qi dynasty in Taiyuan, the sleeves of the round-necked gown of the woman in men's clothes are also decorated with a circle of pearl roundel patterns (Figure 3), so are the sleeves of the three women playing music on the left side in the banquet picture.

This custom of adding a circle of decoration to the sleeve has never been seen in images of the Central Plain of China in the past. Mrs. Xu's collar is decorated with fabrics, which is not special, but the corrugated pattern does not originate from China. Zhi-shui Yang has pointed out that the pattern originated in ancient India. Xian-xiu, the tomb owner, wears a white fur coat which is depicted in fine detail. The History of the Southern History: The Hua Kingdom records that the state of Hua “offered yellow lions, white mink fur, Persian brocade and other objects in the first year of Yutong (520).” Yan Zheng has pointed out that this coat may be the “white mink fur” recorded in literature. It can be seen that the couple’s costumes contain many foreign cultural factors, which also proves that the arm decoration is special.

In addition, in Xu's tomb, there is a portrait of a braided waitress (Figure 2). The lower part and full front of her gown are decorated with Bodhisattva fabric (brocade) with pearl roundel patterns. The author has pointed out that the maid's braided hair style is special and should be influenced by the Sogdians. The decorative part of the gown edge, the decorative area and the design of fabrics are also different from the traditional style of Han people. They should be influenced by other cultures.

The partial decoration of gowns was more popular in Tang Dynasty. The decorative parts became more varied. In Sui and Tang Dynasties, brocade was often used for decoration, such as indoor screens and curtains of wagon. Tang people also used brocade in upper garments with short sleeves, and in shoes, bags, hats and hems. In the picture drew on the outer coffin of Jing Xue's tomb found in Wanrong, the clothes of a large number of line carved figures (Figure 5) are decorated with brocade. Other examples include the figure of Ji Li of Tang Dynasty (Figure 4) in the Picture of Meritorious Statesman of Lingyan Pavilion, the stone carving of Jiong Wei's Tomb in Xi'an, the stone carving of Prince Zhanghuai's Tomb in Qianxian County (Figure 6), the pottery

figurines of Princess Yongtai's Tomb in Qianxian County, and pottery figurines in the Tomb of the Governor of Jinxiang County in Xi'an. Their gowns are all decorated with fabrics (brocade) in collars, sleeves and the front parts. In above pictures from the Northern Qi Dynasty to the Tang Dynasty, the partial decoration shows a special style, which should be influenced by the costume of Sogdian people entering China.

3. The Origin and Spreading of Partial Decoration



Figure 7. Central Asian Fresco



Figure 8. Central Asian Fresco



Figure 9. Sogdian Tomb of the Northern Qi dynasty Figure 10. Northern Qi Stone Carving



Figure 11. Sogdian Silver Drinking Vessel

The forty-fifth volume of the Old Book of Tang records: "in the fourth year of the reign of Emperor Zhenguan, in November, generals were provided with purple gowns with brocade sleeves. Ji Sun pointed out that the clothes with brocade sleeves could be seen in the figure of Ji Li in the Picture of Meritorious Statesman of Lingyan Pavilion. The collars, cuffs and hems of men's gowns in Jiong Wei's Tomb of Xi'an were also made of brocade. This pattern originated in Central Asia. Sogdian murals in the ancient city of Abu, Aphrasia show this kind of clothing (Figure 7). In this paper, images of the Tang Dynasty are taken as examples to show that the brocade decoration of gown originated from Central Asia. Previously, the murals of Xian-xiu Xu's tomb and Rui Lou's tomb of the Northern Qi Dynasty seem to have this kind of decorative custom. In addition, the view has been confirmed by murals of Panjikent in the Central Asia and images on the stone burial objects for Sogdian people entering China in the Northern Dynasties.

This kind of decoration was also prevalent in murals of Panjikent in Central Asia. In well preserved pictures of feasting, nobles wearing crowns, and warriors carrying people, Sogdian people adorn their sleeves, collars, skirts and bottom of trousers with brocade with pearl roundel patterns. Similar decorations can also be seen at shoulder parts and backs of gowns. Cuffs decorated

with pearl roundel pattern are quite common. In Aphrasib murals, cuffs of the figure with a strap on his head are decorated with pearl roundel brocade (Figure 7). In the banquet picture, two nobles (Figure 8) decorate their necks, shoulders, sleeves and trouser feet with fabrics. The person on the right decorates the gown with pearl roundel brocade. His cuffs are decorated with a circle of pearl roundel brocade. The yak-shooting warrior in Tubo coffin paintings unearthed in Qinghai (Figure 12) has the same cuffs. The cuffs of Ji Li (Figure 4) should be decorated with a circle of pearl roundel brocade, rather than a single pearl roundel at the lower part. Since Ji Li holds up a scepter in his hands on the portrait, we can only see the lower part of his cuffs.

In Northern Dynasties, stone objects buried for Sogdian people in China also included partially decorated robes and gowns. In Anyang, a picture of stone couches was unearthed from the tomb of Sogdian people who entered China in the Northern Qi Dynasty (Figure 9). The painting depicts gowns decorated with side-by-side circles in the arms, fronts and hems, which should be decorative pearl roundel ringing brocades. The picture of stone couch of Sogdian people in Northern Qi Dynasty collected by the Hiho Museum of Japan also shows gowns with pearl roundel ringing brocades on the front; most figures are decorated with a circle of fabric on their arms. In Yidu of Shandong Province, the stone line carving picture of discussion (Figure 10) was found. In the painting, Sogdian businessmen wear sacks around waist, as well as round collar gowns with decorative patterns of two circles, which also represents the pearl roundel brocade. The decoration of gowns carved in stone objects is the same as that of native murals of Sogdian in Central Asia. Among the large number of Hu (barbarian) figurines unearthed from Tang tombs, this kind of decoration is also commonly seen. For example, many Hu figurines unearthed from Mutai Tomb in Qingcheng, Gansu Province of Tang Dynasty also decorate their hems with brocade. Through above analysis, we can see that during the Sui and Tang Dynasties as well as the Northern Dynasties, Sogdian people lived in Central Asia and China used brocade and other fabrics to make partial decoration of gowns.

It is noteworthy that Sogdian people had the custom of using decorative fabrics on the arms of their gowns, and they often used pearl roundel brocades. In addition to above-mentioned stone burial objects, in the picture of banquet carved in Sogdian silver drinking vessel found in the Central Asian (6th-7th century) (Figure 11), the man holding cups wears a gown with lapel; his arms are also decorated with two circles of pearl roundels. In pictures of banquet found in Panjikent murals of Central Asia, both noblemen and waiters holding plates have a circle of fabric on their arms. The aforementioned murals in Xian-xiu Xu's tomb and Rui Lou's tomb show gowns with pearl roundel decoration on the arms. Although they are not pearl roundel ringing brocades, they should be influenced by the customs of Sogdian people. Xu's murals were also influenced by the customs of Sogdian. Most of the stone objects are buried for Sogdian people who entered China during the Northern Qi Dynasty, reflecting the gathering of Sogdians at that time. It should not be coincidental that the Sogdian style gowns and costume decorations first appeared in tomb murals of the Northern Qi Dynasty.

The partial decoration of gowns was even more prevalent in the Tang Dynasty, mainly because of the large number of Sogdian immigrants and settlements in China. The phenomenon was also related to the use of these clothes by musicians and dancers at that time. Music Records, the 29th volume of The Old Tang Book, records that in the Tang Dynasty, musicians and dancers came from of Central Asia usually decorated their collars and cuffs with brocade. It is also a proof of the prevalence of gowns with decorative brocade in Central Asia.

4. The Partial Decoration of Tubo and Uighur Gowns

The Tubo wooden coffin paintings unearthed in Qinghai contain figures in gowns decorated with brocade. There are diversified decorative parts; pearl roundel brocades are commonly used (Figure 12 and Figure 13). Among them, the second coffin is painted on board A with a warrior riding the horse and shooting. His upper arm is decorated with a circle of brocade. Wei Huo has pointed out that this kind of brocade decoration on the arm can only be used by men. "In addition to decorative significance, it may also play a role in identification." Ji-sheng Xie also took Li-ben Yan's Picture

of Walking of the Tang Dynasty and the bronze statue of Zanpu in the Potala Palace as examples, pointing out that “in the Tubo period, the Sogdian pearl roundel pattern and bird pattern brocade were usually used as the hems of Tubo gowns”. The image systems and subjects of Tubo coffin painting have many common features with the image Chinese Sogdians in stone burial tools. The custom of Tubo people decorating arms, sleeves, collars and front parts of gowns with brocades should be directly influenced by the Sogdians. In the Tang Dynasty, the custom was more prevalent in Tubo than in the Central Plains; the Tubo gowns were more similar to the Sogdian decorative style.



Figure 12. Tubo Gowns with Decorated Brocade in the Painting of Coffin Panel



Figure 13. Tubo Gowns in the Painting of Coffin Panel



Figure 14. Uighur People in Grottoes Paintings of Xinjiang



Figure 15. A Sogdian Merchant in Grottoes Paintings of Xinjiang

The 170th volume of Gu Ce Yuan Gui records that, Emperor Taizong of Tang Dynasty awarded

the head of an aboriginal tribe with a “gown with brocade collar and cuffs”. It can be seen that at that time, nomadic tribes like this kind of decoration very much. The head even “worshipped to express his thanks, repeatedly hailing on the ground”. Affected by the Sogdians, Uighurs in the late Tang and Five Dynasties also decorated their robes with decorative fabrics. The images of Jinxiang Uighur aristocrats can be seen in Cave 16 of the Bezeklik Grottoes in Xinjiang (Figure 14). The arm decoration, which was a unique Sogdian decorative feature, was the most prevalent. The Sogdian merchant painted in Cave 33 of the Bezeklik Grottoes came from similar times (Figure 15). In the picture, there are camels and horses lying beside him. The merchant also has a circle of fabric on his arms. It can be seen that this custom of Sogdians lasted for a long time; Uighurs who were closely related to them were also affected by this custom.

5. Why the Partial Decoration First Appear in Xian-xiu Xu's Tomb of the Northern Qi Dynasty

In the murals of Xian-xiu Xu's Tomb of the Northern Qi Dynasty, the partial decoration of gowns originated from Sogdian in Central Asia appeared for the first time; the braided hair style commonly used by Sogdians also appeared in this tomb for the first time. It should have special reasons. Mutually corroborating is that in murals of Xian-xiu Xu's tomb, there are many other foreign cultural factors, like the holding of foreign objects, dress patterns, as well as brocade decoration parts. For example, the braided waitresses depicted on the east wall adorn the margin of clothes with pearl roundel brocade; two waitresses on the north wall wear pearl roundel skirts. The main patterns in the pearl roundel circle are beasts and Bodhisattva. These patterns came from Central Asia or Western Asia. In murals, pearl roundel fabrics are used to decorate the edges of saddles, which are common seen in Central Asian murals. The Hu people with short hair and beard, deep eyes and high nose should be the image of the Central Asian people. The gold rings with gemstone and ornamental pearl pattern unearthed in the tomb are also related to the Sogdians.

Xian-xiu Xu was a prominent minister of the Northern Qi Dynasty; he was once appointed as the supreme government official in charge of military affairs. During this period, Hu style prevailed in the Northern Qi Dynasty. The 14th volume of The Book of Sui, Music Record, as well as the 92nd volume of the History of Northern Dynasties, The Story of En Xing, contain detailed information about the acceptance of Hu culture in music and dance through emperors of the late Northern Qi Dynasty. The Cao and An Kingdoms produced the greatest influence. Yin-ke Chen pointed out in his Brief Comment on the Origin of Sui and Tang Institutions that “the court of the Northern Qi Dynasty, especially in its last years, was deeply influenced by Hu culture of the Western regions”. Xin-jiang Rong pointed out that after the Emperor Gaowei of the Northern Qi Dynasty (565-576 in power) should be the most active absorber of Hu culture at the end of the Northern Qi Dynasty. The 7th volume of The Book of Sui, Ritual Record contains the information. During the Northern Qi Dynasty, “in the late years of his reign, the emperor danced by himself to sacrifice Hutian; the influence continues to today. “ “Hutian” should be the god believed by Sogdian people. It shows that Hu culture was flourishing in the late Northern Qi Dynasty.

Xian-xiu Xu was buried in Taiyuan, namely Bingzhou at that time. It was an important city of the Northern Qi Dynasty. It should also be influenced by the Hu culture. Swaying leaf costumes originated from Persia and Central Asia are also first found in pottery figurines unearthed from the tomb of Rui Lou (570) of the Northern Qi Dynasty. Zhai Suo Mo Ke was appointed as the Saba of Bingzhou around 576; Hong Yu was appointed as the Saba of Bingzhou Prefecture around 580. Xian-xiu Xu's tomb dates back to 571. It can be inferred that there were many Sogdian Hu people lived in Bingzhou area when he was buried. Therefore, many Western cultural factors appeared in this tomb. Under this special background, the partial decoration gowns and braided hair originated from Sogdian first appeared in the murals of Xu's tomb.

6. Conclusion

Based on above analysis, it can be concluded that the partial decoration of gowns has appeared in

Bingzhou in the Northern Qi Dynasty. It was found in the murals of Xian-xiu Xu's tomb and Lou Rui's tomb. The decorative parts were arms, fronts and backs; the pearl roundel fabric (brocade) was used to decorate the hems. By the Tang Dynasty, it became more popular; more diversified decoration parts appeared. This custom was influenced by Sogdian people who entered China. In Sogdian murals and images of people depicted in stone burial objects, it can be seen that Sogdians decorated their gowns with pearl roundel brocade and other fabrics. Among them, the arm decoration was special and prevalent, which had spread to China during the Northern Qi Dynasty. The decorative parts and styles of Tubo and Uighur gowns were close to those of the Sogdian people and should be directly affected by them.

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