

# A comparative study of Chinese Ming Dynasty and European Renaissance women's wedding dress

Hong Xu<sup>1</sup>, Xinyi Ma<sup>2</sup>

1. Qingdao University of Technology, Qingdao, Shandong 266000, China

2. Qingdao University of Technology, Qingdao 266000, China

**Abstract:** Wedding dress is an indispensable ceremonial dress in life. Its change and symbolic significance reflect the social development and life style in different periods. This paper firstly combs the development of female wedding dresses in the Ming Dynasty and the Renaissance in Europe, then compares the artistic characteristics of female wedding dresses in the Ming Dynasty and the Renaissance in Europe from the aspects of shape, color and pattern, and finally analyzes the factors affecting the differences between the two from the aspects of politics, culture and aesthetics, so as to better inherit the female dress culture. In order to provide theoretical basis for the exploration of female wedding dresses in China and the West.

**Key words:** Chinese Ming Dynasty; European Renaissance; Women; Wedding dress; Contrast

Since the dawn of etiquette, wedding dresses have been on display as a unique art form. It embodies the aesthetic style and cultural connotation of different nationalities. By comparing the Chinese Ming Dynasty and the European Renaissance women's wedding dress, you can appreciate the artistic characteristics of different nationalities and feel the cultural charm of different art schools, so as to better show the wonderful culture of female wedding dress.

## 1. The evolution of Chinese Ming Dynasty and European Renaissance women's wedding dress

According to the Book of Rites, Hunyi, "Fu Ceremony begins with Guan, is originally in Hunyi, more important than funeral rites, and respects court employment and shooting. The general principle of this ritual is... So the gentleman values it." As the most important part of Chinese marriage, women's wedding dresses in Ming Dynasty played an important role. Based on the Tang and Song dynasties, the Ming Dynasty developed its own unique style of wedding dresses. In the early Ming dynasty, great importance was attached to the perfection and restoration of the ritual system. Despite the continuous wars, Zhu Yuanzhang made great efforts to establish the crown and costume system in the Ming Dynasty, and took it as an important measure to restore and rectify the ritual. In the middle and late Ming Dynasty, with the continuous development of commodity economy, clothing became more and more exquisite, and luxurious clothing was regarded as a symbol of status and status. Finally, a unique style of wedding dress was formed, namely, "Phoenix Crown and Xia Pei". The wedding dress of the Qing Dynasty, drawing on the color of the Ming Dynasty, was also the main tone of bright red, but it was changed in shape and system.

In the development of western wedding dresses, it has gone through a long process from the initial feudalization to the later secularization, and then to the individuation and fashion nowadays. The Renaissance period in Europe in the 16th century was the period of rapid development of ancient Western society. The development of female wedding dresses was influenced by the tight wedding dresses of Curtehate in the 14th century. In the Renaissance period of 16th century Europe, due to the use of new materials such as corset, bustle and fillers, clothing faced horizontal expansion, and the movement of the human body had little impact on the basic clothing, and the static beauty of clothing was further strengthened and improved.

## 2. Comparison of artistic characteristics of female wedding dresses in Ming Dynasty and Renaissance Europe

### 2.1 Comparison of shape and form

In the traditional "rule of rites" in China, the construction of "ritual system" is the guide, that is, "ritual" is the foundation of "guiding the country, determining the country, ordering the people and benefiting the heirs", and the foundation of "ritual system" is often achieved by constructing the clothing system. On the basis of the shape of the wedding dress of Tang and Song dynasties, combined with the unique shape characteristics of Ming Dynasty, the wedding dress shape of "Phoenix crown and Xia Pei" was formed. The specific performance is the big red sleeve shirt form opposite front, collar straight down one foot, collar width of three inches, inside is a multi-fold red long dress, large hem. Its long skirt changes the old system of short top and long skirt, and becomes long on top and short skirt, and the collar also changes into a round collar. The skirt is worn from the neck to the front, and there will be a pendant at the end of the skirt. The shape of the pendant also corresponds to its own grade. To sum up, the overall feeling of Chinese wedding dress in Ming Dynasty is elegant and generous, calm and solemn.

Under the influence of humanism, the European Renaissance paid attention to the beauty of women's shape and curves in dress design. Women's clothing formed a tight upper body, the lower body expansion of the shape system, the concept of wedding dress has become more and more clear, wedding dress use a variety of fillers to create a three-dimensional sense, highlighting the beauty of the curve of the female body. In addition, the wedding dress began to focus on the decoration of various parts of the body, such as necklaces, gloves, belts and other

accessories. To sum up, the European Renaissance wedding dress whether the whole or part of the shape also has a strong sense of luxury, three-dimensional sense.

## 2.2 Color contrast

“Li Ji Yu Zao” cloud: “clothes Zhengshi color, dress color, not to be taken into the public door.” And cloud: “Junzhu, doctor, Shizuwei.” According to the literature, the color of clothing is used to reflect the identity of the wearer and to build the order of social class. Chinese history pays attention to the five elements and five colors, China’s Ming Dynasty for fire De, the emperor Zhu also has the meaning of red, so in the national culture and politics to promote the use of red, such as the vitality of the sun red, red is auspicious, happiness and festive symbol.

Hundreds of years ago, the color of western wedding dress is not consistent, has used gold, red, blue, most of the dress is luxurious gorgeous, it is very grand. By the Middle Ages, the bride’s wedding dress was blue, which at that time also symbolized piety, purity and loyalty. In Jan Van Eck’s painting “The Wedding of Arnolfini”, which depicts the wedding of the Italian nobility in the 15th century, the bride wore a green dress, which looked luxurious and noble. In Queen Margot, the red wedding dress of the 16th century is shown. At that time, red represented dignity among royalty and nobility, so the red dress also became the choice of many brides.

## 2.3 Pattern comparison

### 2.3.1 Comparison of the origin of patterns

China’s Ming Dynasty wedding dress patterns follow the development of “picture must be intentional, meaning must be auspicious”. Chinese Ming Dynasty patterns draw design inspiration from life and nature. Patterns can be divided into plant patterns, geometric patterns, animal patterns, text patterns, etc. The most widely used is animal and plant patterns. For example, the wedding dress of the queen is embroidered with dragon pattern, and the wedding dress of the imperial concubine to the princess is embroidered with phoenix pattern. This kind of exclusive pattern of the supreme ruler was not allowed to be used in ancient times except for the royal family, officials and civilians. Therefore, wedding dress patterns, as one of the representations of power hierarchy, formed a class-clear dress system centered on the royal family.

European Renaissance wedding dress patterns, based on the expression of natural beauty as the premise, the shape and style of the pattern emphasize realism, without cultural thoughts and spiritual connotations. Since the second half of the 15th century, wedding dresses in European courts have mostly been silk fabrics with decorative patterns from China. At that time, under the influence of ancient Oriental culture, animal patterns such as dragon and phoenix as well as plant patterns such as chrysanthemum and peony were widely used in wedding costumes.

### 2.3.2 Comparison of cultural connotations of patterns

China’s Ming Dynasty was in the feudal society, at this time, the dominant force was mainly the imperial power. Therefore, in the choice of patterns, auspicious patterns such as dragon and phoenix were the patterns of royal children, and the wedding clothes of Empress to seven women were mainly animal patterns. The folk wedding clothes are mainly based on flowers, melons and fruits, and most of the patterns are selected from natural scenery. For example, the use of red dates, longan, peanuts and other melon and fruit plant patterns, to pray for offspring reproduction, harvest festival. In the theme and style, it is not so gorgeous as the royal family and the rich family, but in the simplicity, it is also filled with the hope for a better life.

European Renaissance female wedding dress patterns are mainly natural organic forms, such as animal patterns, geometric patterns and plant patterns, there are parallel, symmetrical, continuous, a large number of flowers, plants, insects as decorative motives, the style is delicate, decorative, strong. Eventually formed two continuous or four continuous pattern organization, the performance of the unified and balanced aesthetic concept at that time. In particular, pomegranate patterns, hyoscyamine leaves and vase patterns were the main pattern organizations, generally in a vertical wavy shape, with petals covering the bottom, symbolizing imitation of nature and breaking away from the ideological shackles at that time.

## 3. Comparison of influencing factors of female wedding dress in Ming Dynasty and Renaissance Europe

### 3.1 Comparison of political system

The political system plays a decisive role in the development of clothing. When the wedding dress system was formulated in the early Ming Dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang strictly classified the wedding dress system according to the dress system set up by the Han monarchs in the Central Plains. After the middle of Ming Dynasty, as the rulers’ restrictions on local power gradually weakened, the urban economy developed rapidly, and there appeared a fashion of overstepping the rites, being extravagant and pursuing new and different clothes. For example, the phoenix crown and Xia Pei, originally belonging to the royal family and official women, can also be used for the marriage of civilian women. Bright red was originally the color of official dress, but also used as the color of civilian wedding dress, breaking through the strict feudal hierarchical concept. During the European Renaissance, Italy experienced more than a thousand years of feudal rule, and the first embryonic form of capitalism was born in the 14th century. They advocated the free development of personality, advocated science and culture, and opposed superstition. This influence spread to all European countries and brought about a great change in human civilization. In the female wedding dress, the plant pattern in the wedding dress does not have spiritual and cultural connotations, but is only used as decoration. Its shape and decorative techniques, more in line with the emerging bourgeois aesthetic, such as in the “Wedding in Ghana” a

painting, the bride wearing dazzling necklace and pearl bracelet, wearing a wedding dress inset with large gems, it is luxurious and grand.

### 3.2 Comparison of ideology and culture

Whether in the Ming Dynasty of China or the Renaissance of Europe, wedding dress was influenced by ideological and cultural dominance to a certain extent. The Chinese Ming Dynasty attached great importance to Confucianism in ideology and used the rites and music of Confucianism to reorganize the social order. "The rule of clothes" played an important role in these activities. For example, in the early Ming Dynasty of China, there were strict regulations on the grade of wedding clothing for all women to strengthen class differences and class consciousness. In the Renaissance period in Europe, the Enlightenment movement opposed the feudal autocratic rule, pursued rationality and freedom, propagated humanistic ideas, and demanded democracy and equality, which was not only reflected in politics and economy, but also reflected in clothing. For example, the plant pattern design on women's wedding dress was interspersed in a free way, reflecting the natural state of different forms and showing the longing for freedom.

### 3.3 Comparison of aesthetic concepts

Aesthetic feeling is the experience of the existence of the beauty of things. This experience involves all the perceptions, feelings, sensations, feelings and feelings of our senses and minds. Therefore, aesthetic feeling is intrinsically directed to the feeling of our life and the experience of our mind. In China's Ming Dynasty, the ancients adhered to the philosophy of "harmony between nature and man", expressed the communication between man and nature, and built the most valuable aesthetic characteristics of traditional Chinese clothing culture, that is, the female wedding dress style that can express etiquette and modesty. In the Renaissance period of Europe, people pursued the liberation of human personality and opposed the bondage of the ruling class. Therefore, the display of beauty has also been defined, the decoration has become more complicated, the fabric has a tendency to become increasingly gorgeous, and the design of the body shape and curve is more bold, the wedding dress is an A-shaped lower body and a V-shaped upper body, so as to better highlight the curvy and physical beauty of women.

## 4. Epilogue

By comparing the female wedding dresses of Ming Dynasty China and Renaissance Europe, it can be seen that the design of wedding dresses is people's yearning for a better love and life. The design of female wedding dresses in the Ming Dynasty and the Renaissance greatly satisfied the needs of women's life and aesthetic orientation, grasped the balance point between the tradition of The Times and the fashion, and had an important reference value for the future design of female wedding dresses.

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