

AN ANALYSIS OF THE VISUAL STRUCTURE AND MEANING

IN THE EVOLUTION OF *QIPAO*

By

YONGCHAO XU

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN APPAREL, MERCHANDISING, DESIGN AND TEXTILES

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY  
Department of Apparel, Merchandising, Design and Textiles

May 2009

To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the thesis of YONGCHAO XU find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

---

Carol Salusso, Ph. D.

---

Patricia Fischer, M.A.

---

Chris Watts, M.F.A.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my most sincere appreciation to those who have contributed to the success of this thesis. First and foremost, my committee chair Dr. Carol Salusso, whose guidance and influence has contributed not only to this thesis but also to my life and education at Washington State University. Additionally I am grateful to the other members of my committee, Patricia Fischer and Chris Watts who provided me with very good advice and suggestions on how to accomplish my research. I would also like to extend appreciation to the rest of the faculty and staff of the Department of Apparel, Merchandising, Design and Textiles for all their support and guidance.

I would like to give the special thanks to the Suzhou Library, who granted me the privilege of using their extensive historical resources, and whose staff assisted me in my research. I would specifically like to thank, Jiang Shaoli from the Suzhou Library and Ms. Yu from the Kunshan Library who contributed so much to help me accomplish my research in China. I would also like to thank the curator of the Suzhou Silk Museum, Mr. Zhang who allowed me to examine the exhibits, and some of his personal collections of *qipao*, as well as providing his personal insights on the origin of *qipao*.

Finally, I would like to thank my family, specifically my sister, Rongqing Dong for her support and care and my husband, Robert who has always been proud of me and never doubted my ability to achieve my goals. His belief and support were critical to having the confidence to finish my study. He not only encouraged me and contributed insightful advice during difficult moments but he also provided support as a talented English editor.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE VISUAL STRUCTURE AND MEANING  
IN THE EVOLUTION OF *QIPAO*

Abstract

by Yongchao Xu, M.A.  
Washington State University  
May 2009

Chairperson: Carol Salusso

This study provides an analysis of the visual structure of the *qipao* from inception and across different time periods as an interpretation of the position of women from in mainland Chinese society. Dress appears as a visible but nonverbal communication symbol created by human beings and symbolizes the changing of gender roles in society (Roach, 1965; Michelman & Eicher, 1995; Kaiser, 1997; Damhorst, Lynn, Miller-Spillman, & Michelman, 2005). In this context, the *qipao* acts as a visual form of social control related to status, gender and ethnic identity. The development of the *qipao* from the 1920s to the present was shown to be linked to political and socioeconomic development within China and the resulting women's movement toward increased social status and independent achievement (Roberts, 1997). As society redefined the symbolic meaning of the *qipao*, Chinese women visually reinforced their ability to elevate fashion sense and self-confidence exhibited through styles of *qipao* that varied from being modesty and sexy.

Styles of the *qipao* were examined using DeLong's Visual Analysis Framework to demonstrate how this dress style changed over time as a reflection of changes in and interacting with women's role in China. Data included historical photographs of portraits, calendar poster pictures and fashion illustrations as primary sources to document the clothing. These photographs, taken between the 1900s and the present were divided into five time periods corresponding to political changes in order to develop rules of dress relating to the social roles and statuses of women. Findings revealed that the *qipao* as a cultural artifact accurately reflects changes in the roles and statuses of women from its inception to the present.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT-----	iii
ABSTRACT-----	iv
LIST OF TABLES-----	viii
LIST OF FIGURES-----	ix
CHAPTER -----	1
1. INTRODUCTION-----	1
2. LITERATURE REVIEW-----	4
3. METHODOLOGY-----	13
Purpose-----	13
Sources-----	13
Framework-----	14
Research Questions-----	16
4. FINDINGS-----	17
4.1.FINDINGS: THE ORIGIN OF <i>QIPAO</i> -----	17
Historical Background-----	17
The Women’s Dress Code in the Qing Dynasty-----	18
The Rise of <i>Qipao</i> Fashion-----	23
DeLong’s Visual Structure Analysis-----	31
Cultural Interpretation and Evaluation-----	34
Conclusion-----	36

4.2. FINDINGS: THE EVOLUTION OF <i>QIPAO</i> -----	38
The Fall of the Qing Dynast (1900-1911)-----	38
Historical Background-----	38
Delong’s Visual Structure Analysis-----	44
Cultural Interpretation and Evaluation-----	44
The Republic of China (1911-1949)-----	46
Historical Background-----	46
Delong’s Visual Structure Analysis-----	57
Cultural Interpretation and Evaluation-----	57
The Communist of China (1949-1976)-----	60
Historical Background-----	60
Delong’s Visual Structure Analysis-----	69
Cultural Interpretation and Evaluation-----	69
Economic Reform (1976-2000)-----	73
Historical Background-----	73
Delong’s Visual Structure Analysis-----	78
Cultural Interpretation and Evaluation-----	78
Capitalist China (2000-Present)-----	80
Historical Background-----	80
Delong’s Visual Structure Analysis-----	85
Cultural Interpretation and Evaluation-----	85
5. CONCLUSION-----	88
Significance-----	91
Limitations-----	92
6. BIBLIOGRAPHY-----	94

## LIST OF TABLES

1. DeLong's visual structure analysis detailed into bi-polar visual concepts-----	15
2. Analysis of visual structure of the Manchu robe and the original style of <i>qipao</i> style-----	33
3. Analysis of visual structure of Manchurian dress during the end of Qing Dynasty (1900-1911)-----	44
4. Analysis of visual structure of <i>qipao</i> during the Republic of China Period (1912-1949)-----	57
5. Analysis of visual structure of <i>qipao</i> during Communist China (1949-1976)-----	69
6. Analysis of visual structure of <i>qipao</i> during Economic Reform Period (1976-2000)-----	78
7. Analysis of visual structure of <i>qipao</i> during Capitalist China (2000 to present)-----	85

## LIST OF FIGURES

1. The relationship between culture and <i>qipao</i> -----	16
2. The elements of Manchu women dress in Qing Dynasty-----	20
3. The elements of Han women dress in Qing Dynasty-----	22
4. Development of <i>qipao</i> through the end of Qing Dynasty to present-----	24
5. Examples of <i>qipao</i> origin-----	28
6. Comparison between Manchu women’s robe and the original <i>qipao</i> style-----	32
7. The Qing Empress Dowager-Cixi with members of her court-----	41
8. Examples of Manchu robes at the end of Qing Dynasty-----	43
9. First lady of China (Mme. Chang) and the First Lady of the United States (Mrs.Roosevelt) Posted for news cameramen on the White House lawn-----	49
10. Sun Yet-sen in 1924-----	50
11. “Clothing Law” prescribed Sun Yat-sen suit as one of the formal dresses for men; <i>qipao</i> as one of the formal dress for women-----	51
12. <i>Qipao</i> style changes at the end of 1920s-----	52
13. <i>Qipao</i> style changes in 1930s-----	53
14. Transition of the Chinese Gown-----	53
15. Classic Style of <i>qipao</i> in 1940s-----	54
16. High heel shoes advertisement-----	54
17. Transparent <i>qipao</i> -----	55
18. Examples of <i>qipao</i> during the Republic of China Period (1911-1949)-----	56
19. Qiu jin wearing men’s long robe and riding jacket-----	59
20. Tian Guiying, the first train driver of China, in 1950s-----	62

21. Wang Guangmei, wife of President Liu Shaoqi, wearing clothes she was forced to put on during her interrogation by Red Guards-----	65
22. Suzie Wang wearing mini- <i>qipao</i> working in the bar-----	67
23. Examples of <i>qipao</i> during Communist China (1949-1976)-----	68
24. The cover page of the first issue of Modern Dress Magazine, in 1981-----	75
25. Examples of <i>qipao</i> during Economic Reform Period (1976-2000)-----	77
26. Chinese Chairman Jiang Zemin and American President Jeorge Bush dressed in <i>tangzhuang</i> in Asia-Pacific Economic Meeting in 2001-----	83
27. Examples of <i>qipao</i> during Capitalist China (2000 to present)-----	84
28. Nicole Kidman and Madonna dressed in <i>qipao</i> -----	86



## 1. INTRODUCTION

“Dress is something that is common to us all and encoded within it is information about the society in which we live” (Roberts, 1997, foreword). The *qipao* is a one piece garment that was developed in 1920s; later it became a well-known national dress that represented the Chinese identity. When looking at the period in which it was developed it is clear that the *qipao* is not old or traditional. It has less than one hundred years of history. How did it become the national dress of China? How did it come to represent Chinese culture and Chinese women? How was it formed?

Some scholars claim the *qipao* incorporates the long style Qing dynasty robe and the Republican women’s garment (Roberts, 1997; Steele & Major, 1999; Clark, 2000; Zhou & Gao, 1987). Roberts (1997) in her article based upon museum research and personal interviews argues that the *qipao* originated with the Manchu people and suggests that it was derived from the long Manchu women’s robe. Similarly Zhou Xun and Gao Chunming (1987) assert that Manchu women wore the *qipao* and it became popular in the early twentieth century. This view is supported by Clark (2000) who claims the *qipao* was a form of traditional Manchu women’s dress. This is the view that tends to be held by western scholars. However, recent research has shown that the *qipao* developed after the formation of the Republic of China in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Bian, 2006; Finnane, 1996). As Zhen Yimei asserts, the Han women of the Qing dynasty originally wore *duanyi* (short jacket), not the *qipao* (1946). Based upon the research of Bian Xiangyang accomplished by viewing historical poster calendars and examining newspaper articles regarding the *qipao*, there was virtually no mention of the *qipao* prior to 1925 (2006).

Because *Qi* is the mandarin word for the Manchu people who ruled China during the Qing dynasty, many scholars presume that the *qipao* originated in Beijing, the Qing Dynasty capital, (Zhou & Gao, 1987; Clark 2000; Roberts 1997). However, others believe that it originated in schools in Shanghai (Bian, 2006). Regardless of which location developed the *qipao* first, it is generally agreed upon that the *qipao* must have had its origin in either Beijing or Shanghai as these were the fashion centers of China (Bian, 2006). The *qipao* fashion became popular at approximately the same time in both locations.

There are many books and articles that discuss Chinese fashion. In the United States, there are two books considered authoritative. Both carry the same title *China Chic – East Meets West*. One was written in 1999 by Valerie Steele & John S Major; the other was written in 2000 by Vivienne Tan & Martha Huang. Other texts generally repeat the assertions of these two books. These books only include one sentence on the subject of *qipao*: “it was combining the elements of Manchu and Han Chinese and Western styles” (Wu & Zuo, 1999, p.38).

Other scholars have agreed with this point of view as well (Wang, 2005; Finnane, 1996; Zhou & Gao, 1987; Clark, 2000). However no one has explored how *qipao* was developed or how it has evolved over time. There has been considerable research done by scholars in the industry regarding the relationship between gender roles and dress, as well as on Chinese fashion.

However, there has been little research into how the *qipao* specifically has inflected evolution in the role of women in Chinese society.

This study was designed to answer questions about the origins of the *qipao* as well as determine how the *qipao* was reflected and/or symbolized changes in women’s status and political and economic changes in China. Answering these questions will provide important

insight into the nature of Chinese culture through analysis of a style of clothing that has become a cultural icon symbolizing Chinese femininity.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Material culture theory is the overall research framework of this thesis and served as a guide through history. It facilitated understanding artifacts within the context of different political periods as well as how they responded to aspects of social change and social control within Chinese history. Analysis of the literature was therefore primarily focused on a material culture analysis of the concepts and relationships among dress, aesthetics, symbolism, gender and social structure.

### *Approaches to Material Culture*

Material culture analysis centers on material artifacts created by a society. When these artifacts are systematically studied accurate information about a society is revealed (Berger, 1992). This is based on the understanding that artifacts represent the beliefs of those who created them. When these artifacts are examined within the cultural context, we learn about the values and aesthetics of the society (Miller, 1987; Prown 1994).

Christopher Tilley (1990) defined material culture as a field “concerned with the relationship between artifacts and social relations irrespective of time and place. It aims to explore systematically the linkage between the constitution of social reality and material culture production and use” (1990, p.vii). Material culture theory is a cross-disciplinary technique. It is based on the understanding that the artifacts made by a society are an expression of how life is experienced by members of that society. Thus, how life is experienced can be understood by an outsider through a careful analysis of the artifacts (Lynch, 1992; Hodder, 1989; Tilley 1990). Lynch (1992) used material culture theory to study and

interpret Hmong dress worn for New Year's celebrations in the United States. She found that the dress had special significance to the Hmong as it demonstrated underlying cultural conflicts and ultimately served to represent what it Hmong in America as a context. In this case the interpretation focused upon the role that dress played in resolving intergenerational conflict and the influence this had upon gender role in the United States (Lynch, 1992).

The general procedure of material culture analysis begins with examination of the historical object. It proceeds to connect an exploration of the cultural context to the object, i.e. the ideas, attitudes, beliefs, and values of a particular society at a given time. This context is used to interpret and evaluate the relationship of the material culture object with culture, norms and values. Assumptions of material culture analysis include:

(a) aesthetic expressions are systematic within a culture; (b) art expresses cultural ideas and values; (c) these ideas and values often are not easily verbally expressed by informants; and (d) a cultural understanding of aesthetic expression is gained through an analysis of component elements" (Lynch, Michelman & Hegland, 1998, p. 146).

DeLong's (1998) Visual Analysis Framework with components of observation, analysis, interpretation and evaluation falls within material culture theory. It is particularly related to dress and has been successfully used by many scholars as a critical process for developing a deep understanding of the fine distinctions and intricacies of an artifact (DeLong & Hegland, 2001). This framework allows the researcher to understand the cultural context of the artifact through means other than direct interviews from members of the culture. This is important due to the limited view of individuals living within a culture. Michelman found material culture to be useful for interpreting meaning within culture, DeLong's interpretation and evaluation steps are an ideal companion to visual analysis of observation and analysis (Lynch,

Michelman & Hegland, 1998).

### *Dress and Aesthetics*

Roach-Higgins and Eicher (1992) developed a classification system for identifying forms of dress. They identified two main categories separating what is put *on* the body from what is done *to* the body. What is done to the body includes body modification, or changes to body parts including but not limited to skin, hair, nails and teeth, and body supplementation which changes by adding things to the body such as enclosures and hand-held accessories (Hegland, 1991). This approach attempts to rise above specific cultural interpretation.

Eaton (1988) defined aesthetic experience as the “experience of intrinsic features of things or events traditionally recognized as worthy of attention and reflections” (p.143). Aesthetic value is obviously linked to aesthetic experience as what is worthy of attention is related to what is considered valuable within a society. Cultural context and an understanding of the meaning and aesthetic value given to an art form by the people who use it are therefore necessary for researchers to note what is considered valuable (Hatcher, 1985).

DeLong (1998) defined aesthetics as an understanding of how we perceive forms of dress, their characteristic features, and our reactions to them. DeLong’s Visual Analysis Framework is a systematic approach to examining the dressed body in order to discern aesthetic structure and cultural messages. It helps readers to transcend their social and cultural biases. She said: “By the time we reach maturity, our habits of sensory selection may have greatly reduced our ability or motivation to experience openly; we have developed tunnel vision” (DeLong, 1987, p. 8). She stressed that in order to see others clearly we need to stand outside of our

established viewing habits. The innate human tendency is to simplify and categorize objects within our own culture. DeLong defines Apparel-Body-Construct as “the visual form presented by the interaction of apparel on the human body; it is a construct or concept of a physical object based upon sensory data” (DeLong, 1987, p. 3) The goal of using this form is to take the viewer out of the automatic response and judgment of *like* and *dislike* (DeLong, 1998).

DeLong’s Visual Analysis Framework has been used successfully to analyze cultural dress by a number of scholars. As mentioned prior, Lynch (1992) used this framework combined with aesthetic evaluations by American Hmong to examine the Hmong New Year’s Dress in the United States. She found that there were two distinct types of dress, one the traditional *treasure box* style and the other a more non-traditional dress which took advantage of American trims. She further found that the less traditional dress was evaluated highly by the Hmong because of its use of color and less confining nature.

Michelman (1987, 1992) similarly used DeLong’s visual framework to address the social construction of gender among the Nigerian Kalabari men and women. Using photographs and videotapes, she found that dress for both men and women was an important part of indicating position in the social hierarchy, though in different ways. Dress was used as an indicator of biological differences. Michelman (1992) noted that DeLong’s visual framework, relied on material cultural analysis to analyze the cultural meaning component of similarities and differences in Men’s and Women’s clothing.

### *Dress, Appearance and Symbolism*

Dress is defined as the intentional modification of appearance by Kaiser (1997) and

Roach-Higgins & Eicher (1992). Thus dress is more than a cloth or other object that wraps around the body to protect our skin; it is behavior. It is the way people purposefully manage and maintain the way they look (Damhorst et. al., 2005; Douglas, 1982). Symbolic interactionists have long argued that society continually renegotiates meaning through the exchange and interpretation of symbols (Roach & Eicher, 1973; Goffman, 1963; Stone, 1962 and Horn, 1975). Dress can be a sign or symbol that refers to and stands for the meaning behind that piece or pieces of protection. Dress is relative to the cultural and historical context. It reflects the status of the time period in which it was developed (Damhorst et. al., 2005; Barnes & Eicher, 1993). While dress is a physical object, its role as social symbol means that its value and meaning are continually reinterpreted and redefined by society. Irving Goffman (1963) argued that dress is part of our identity kit that allows us to communicate to others how we wish to be perceived. Stone (1962) echoes this sentiment:

As the self is dressed, it is simultaneously addressed for, whenever we clothe ourselves, we dress “toward” or address some audience whose validating responses are essential to the establishment of our self. Such responses may, of course, also be challenges, in which case a new program is aroused (p. 230).

### *Dress, Gender and Status*

As Barnes and Eicher (1993) pointed out, dress serves as a part of cultural identity. Dress serves as a sign of the wearer’s identity that is linked to a specific social group geographically and historically. It is also an indication of the wearers’ social position, and serves as a symbol of economic position. Gender identification also has a strong influence on the individual’s social position and gender distinctions are an important element in the



construction of dress regardless of whether or not they have been socially or biologically constructed (Barnes & Eicher, 1993; Edwards, 2008; Gilmartin, 1993). Therefore, dress is also related to gender, it is representative of both gender symbols and roles. Feminine and masculine styles of dress are the gender-symbolic or gender-appropriate dress which indicate a person's genital sex, and from social a communication point of view; this is a key message indicating what men and women are supposed to look like (Barnes & Eicher, 1993; Hegland, 1991; Paff & Lakner, 1997; Stone, 1962).

Gender roles are socially defined and reflect the social structures people live in. Each person is bound by a set of role performances which indicates the status of that person, what he or she can and cannot do. Status, defined by Curtis and Scott in 1979, is "a set of shared ideas regarding how people are supposed to respond toward the person, and how the person should behave when in a particular position" (p.33). Each society has a very clear perception of roles regarding how men and women should act toward each other; these are usually based on culture and the dominant ideology. Culture includes written and unwritten traditional rules and moral norms, it regulates the person's behavior in a given society; the dominant ideology is represents dominant political and economic power. The dominant ideology influences the culture and culture regulates the ideology, both of them change over time along with changes of social system (Lock, 1989).

Traditional Chinese society was built upon the philosophy of Confucianism. One of the classical Confucian paradigms was the five relationships (*Wu Lun*) between: parent and child, ruler- subject, husband and wife, elder and younger sibling, and friend and friend (male). The first four relations are hierarchical relations, but the fifth is a relationship between equals

(Leung, 2003; Tan, 2003). Within the Confucian conception of relationships can be seen the hierarchical ordering of familial relations which is completely based upon a patriarchal value system which developed over thousands of years. Women were not really considered people; they were counted only as men's property. Before marriage, they were seen as temporary members of their families. They didn't have any rights to property or inheritance. After marriage, women had to join the husband's household. Their position would be totally dependent upon whether she could give birth to a son (Leung, 2003). When the husband took a concubine, the principal wife not only could not object, but it was expected that she welcome a concubine into the house. The husband could divorce a woman when she was unfaithful, or jealous, or did not serve the family well. If a woman was disgraced by divorce, her family would not want her back, so she had only three choices: prostitution, the nunnery, or suicide (Chang, 1996).

However, gender and gender-roles become complicated as the individual lives through the different stages of life and participates in the various religious, economic and political systems. In the different stages and systems, men and women's dress can be altered to reflect the wearer's power and social rank which determines social position (Barnes & Eicher, 1993; Paff & Lakner, 1997).

In Jack Lock's 1989 case study on gender roles in China, he concluded that social expectations are indicative of the relative status of men and women in Chinese society. In times of political upheaval gender roles and status often change and new roles will emerge that will reflect the new political ideology (p.229).

Due to the centuries of change in China and repeated shifts in power and political ideology,

there have been shifts in culture and social norms, including the role of men and women in Chinese society. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, gender equality was regarded as part of the struggle for an egalitarian society. The Confucian patriarchal structure with its sexual division of labor where “men are primarily outside the home and women are primarily inside the home” (Gilmartin, Hershatter, Rofel, & White, 2005, p. 235) and the traditional norm of the *three obediences* and *four virtues* for Chinese women was considered an obstacle to development by revolutionaries. The *three obediences* included: an unmarried woman should obey her father; after marriage she should obey to her husband; and she should obey her oldest adult son when she became a widow. The *four virtues* included: 1) a woman must be aware of her place in this world and follow the old ethical codes; 2) she must keep quiet and speak as softly as possible; 3) she must dress well to please men and 4) she must be willing to do all the household chores” (Wen, 1974, p.8).

The egalitarian ideology of the new political system called for gender equality and women’s participation in social development from the top level down (Lock, 1989). The role of women underwent dramatic changes in the period from the end of the Qing dynasty to the modern day. These changes were reflected in dress. After the Qing dynasty began, the emperor quickly established a dress code to distinguish government and ruling elites from the rest of the population. He made it clear that dress was an important indicator of ethnicity, identity and power (Roberts, 1997). During Republican China, the *qipao* and Sun Yat-sen suit were the two hybrid garments that represented the new Chinese people. During the Mao era, Mao Zedong refused to wear a western style suit but adopted a modified Sun Yat-shen’s suit, visibly marking the difference between Chinese people and the rest of world (Finnane, 1996).

Scholars have demonstrated the relationship between women's clothing and the position of women in society. The study by Michelman and Eicher (1995) demonstrated how Kalahari women's dress changed as they began to achieve economic equality. Similarly Lennon (1990) performed content analysis on sitcoms between 1954 and 1988 analyzing the dress and demonstrations of masculinity and femininity in American society. She argued that as gender roles became more similar, clothing also became more similar. During the Mao Zhedong era, he was often heard to state that "women are equal to men, women should hold up half the sky". He specifically spoke about women's dress and appearance. During Mao's time, women generally wore the Mao suit just like men, cut their hair short and there was little focus on external beauty (Finnane, 1996; Chen, 2001; Steele & Major, 1999). There can be little doubt about the relationship between gender roles and dress. However, little research has been done specifically regarding the *qipao* and how its development and changes in popularity have been related to changes in the role of women in Chinese society.

Cosbey, Damhorst and Farrell-Beck (2003) also examined the role of gender in fashion in women's daytime clothing styles between 1873 and 1912. They found that as the role of women became increasingly unclear, the types of fashions and fabrics that were used for daily wear became more diverse. It will be interesting to see if these findings can be extended to Chinese women's daily wear.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

- **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to provide an analysis of the visual structure of *qipao* from inception and trace its evolution to present as an interpretation of women's position in mainland China.

This research had two objectives. The first objective was to resolve the disagreement regarding the origin of *qipao*; the second objective was to examine the evolution of *qipao* as a reflection of the changing role of Chinese women in society.

- **Sources**

In order to gain a more accurate historical perspective, archival materials in Chinese academic institutions were accessed to provide primary sources and historical sources were obtained to trace development and evolution of the *qipao*. As noted earlier, there is little agreement on how and when the *qipao* actually developed. In order to settle this dispute, archival primary sources were used to trace fashion concepts in the Qing dynasty as well as Republican, Communist and Capitalist China.

Since this research covers approximately 100 years of history, it was necessary to divide the cultural context into five major political and economic periods in China's cultural evolution: the Fall of the Qing Dynasty (1900-1911); the Republic of China (1911-1949); Communist China (1949-1976); Economic Reform (1976-2000); the Capitalist China (2000 to present). The research in each section will be demonstrated in the following order: 1)

Historical background: political and economic, women's position and dress aesthetics; 2) DeLong's Visual Structure Analysis; 3 Cultural interpretation and evaluation. Existing literature were used to identify key elements of *qipao* style associated with the time periods discussed to ensure that selected images are representative of that time period.

Historical sources containing primary information were used to trace women's status in China based on shifts in politics, economics and the *qipao* style during these five time periods. Media was used to note changes in visual structure as well as cultural meaning of the *qipao* including newspaper clippings, poster calendars, magazines, television and movies. These sources were a combination of written materials and photographic images of women wearing *qipao* during the five identified time periods.

- **Framework**

### **DeLong's Visual Structure Analysis**

DeLong's Visual Analysis Framework within the Material Culture Theory was used to analyze various women's fashions and determine their relationship to the *qipao*. This visual analysis allowed the author to stand outside of personal cultural experiences to visually scrutinize the dressed body within a prescribed methodology.

*Visual Structure Analysis* integrates: 1) *Observation* that involves attending to and describing what is seen. The viewer uses the visual form relative to concepts of closed-open, whole-parts, flat-rounded and determinate-indeterminate noting layout, surface, and shadow, to describe the features that define the form. 2) *Analysis* includes considering the relationships in what is seen. The viewer divides the ABC into visual parts, noting the visual

focal points and their relationships. For example, what is seen first, second, and third? How visually active is it? What encourages simultaneous, successive or separated viewing? These define visual weight, direction of viewing priority, and derive from Gestalt principles of similarity, closure, proximity and continuation (Table 1).

<b>Planar Integration-----Planar Separation</b>
<p><b>Planar Integration:</b> The figure blends into the background; there is no clear dominance.</p> <p><b>Planar Separation:</b> Contrast creates a clear distinction between figure and background.</p>
<b>Closed-----Open</b>
<p><b>Closed Form:</b> Self-contained, hard edged silhouette, visual separates from ground. Form is simpler for viewer to perceive and classify.</p> <p><b>Open Form:</b> Visual form interacts with the ground, boundaries are vague. Silhouette does not have distinct edges but rather blends into the background.</p>
<b>Whole-----Parts</b>
<p><b>Whole:</b> The viewer perceives the apparel-body-construct as a unit.</p> <p><b>Parts:</b> The viewer sees the multiple distinctive parts within a whole unit.</p>
<b>Determinate-----Indeterminate</b>
<p><b>Determinate:</b> Surface appears simple, definite, sharp, regular and clear cut; if shape appears on the surface, it usually has little visual texture and limited shadow and light reflectance.</p> <p><b>Indeterminate:</b> Surface appears complex due to several, irregular shapes, vague and blurred levels; much more light and shadow effects create the thick surface.</p>
<b>Flat-----Rounded</b>
<p><b>Flat:</b> Surface perception creates a flat, two-dimensional shape with smooth and non-reflective surfaces.</p> <p><b>Rounded:</b> Surface creates visually thick, three-dimensional form with curved and reflective surfaces.</p>
<p><b>Table 1.</b> DeLong's visual structure analysis detailed into bi-polar visual concepts.</p>

## Cultural Interpretation and Evaluation

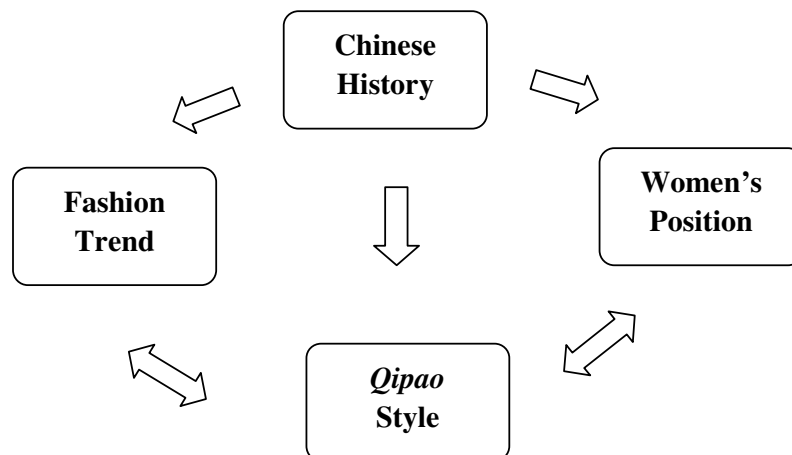
*Cultural Meaning Analysis* integrates: 1) *Interpretation* of relationships within a cultural context. It includes summarizing the visual form and associating it to existing cultural categories of dress appearance and meaning. What associations are made in terms of meaning? 2) *Evaluation* is the determination of value in terms of aesthetic pleasure/displeasure of the visual within a distinct cultural milieu. This includes considering how it presents women's position within the cultural context.

### ● Research Questions

The purpose of this research was to demonstrate how *qipao* style changed over time as a reflection of changes in and interacting with women's role in China (See Figure 1).

Question 1. How did the origin of *qipao* relate to initiation of Chinese women's liberation?

Question 2. How did the evolution of *qipao* reflect changes in Chinese women's position and status in social-economic, political and cultural structures?



**Figure 1.** The relationship between culture and *qipao*.



#### 4. 1. FINDINGS: THE ORIGIN OF *QIPAO*

The purpose of this section was to clarify the origin of *qipao*. Information gleaned from primary records included historical documents, photos, and existing publications used as evidence to trace emergence of the *qipao* fashion. Components of these findings included: 1) Historical background regarding women's dress code during the Qing Dynasty; 2) The rise of *qipao* fashion; 3) DeLong's Visual Analysis and cultural interpretation, evaluation 4) Conclusion.

- **Historical Background**

The Manchu established the Qing Dynasty and ruled China since the early seventeenth century for approximately three hundred years. In the beginning of the Qing Dynasty, the Han people as the majority population in China were wearing Ming Dynasty clothes which consisted of wide robes with broad sleeves. But the Manchu people were wearing robes with cuffed, tight, long sleeves with high front-back vents, and waist length jackets with elbow-length sleeves. The Manchus were concerned that they might eventually lose their cultural identity and martial spirit if they adopted or imitated Han dress (Gerth, 2003; Zhou & Gao, 1987).

In 1645, the Qing Emperor, Qianlong, established a dress code to indicate that he was the new ruler and to identify the social rank of individuals through their dress (Steele & Major, 1999; Yuan, 2000). In the history of the evolution of dress, the dress system of the Qing Dynasty was the most complicated. The government forced all Han people to imitate the

Manchu style of dress and insisted that men shave their foreheads and braid remaining hair into a queue to indicate their allegiance to Qing (Elliott & Mark, 2001; Tam & Huang, 2000; Garrett, 1994). This dress code was successful only after decades of cruel conflicts. A final compromise occurred when Han Chinese men were required to wear Manchu costume when alive but be buried in Ming costume. Women were allowed to keep their traditional ways (Wang, 1957; Garrett, 1994). The style of clothing was the same for nobles and commoners. However, the color, pattern, material and accessories were determined by the rank of the wearers; they symbolized the wearers' identity, power and ethnicity (Bao, 2004a; Garrett, 1987).

- **The Women's Dress Code in the Qing Dynasty**

The women's dress code in the Qing dynasty consisted of two systems: the Banner style robe and the Han style jacket, skirt (Bao, 2004b; Bian, 1997; Bian, 2003). Researchers use different terms to describe different styles in the Qing Dynasty. Since in this research, the context was ethnic culture and dress, Han women's clothes were referred to as Han style and Manchu women's clothes as Manchu style.

### **The Elements of Manchu Style**

The term of Manchu style refers to the way of dressing adopted by Manchu people (Figure 2). This style consisted of a full-length robe called a *kanjian* worn with or without a short or long sleeveless vest called *gualan* over it. Their hair was coiled on the top of the head formed into a flat bun in the *yi-zi-tou* style or *Liang-ba-tou* style, a two-handle headdress version with

hair formed into two parts. A fan-shaped cap was positioned on the top of it for formal wear, silk flowers were inserted into the cap, and one silk ribbon hung down on the side. At the end of Qing Dynasty, the *da-la-chi* style, a big hanging feathers headdress, became vogue under the influence of Empress *Cixi* (Roberts, 1997). Manchu women wore high-heeled shoes with their natural feet which made them look tall, straight, proud as well as making their feet appear smaller. The shoes had wood carved as flower-pot or horse-hoof shape heels in the centre of the instep that were 3 to 6 cm high (Figure 2.d). These were also sometimes even as high as 9 to 12 cm. They were called flower-pot heels or hoof-shaped heels shoes (Roberts, 1997; Yuan, 2000).

The Qing Dynasty formalized and systematized a very complicated dress code: the long robe had three categories: formal court dress (*chaofu*), semi-formal festive dress (*jifu*), and the ordinary dress (*changfu*) (Roberts, 1997; Yuan, 2005; Xun Zhou & Gao, 1987). The formal and semi-formal robes had vents at the front, back and sides of the hem to allow freedom of movement when riding on horseback. The ordinary dress (*changfu*) was the daily casual wear for Manchu women and combined four categories: 1) two styles of robes *chenyi* and *changyi*; *changyi* was more decorative and usually worn outside of *chenyi* (Figure 2.b &c), 2) a full-length sleeveless vest (*gualan*), 3) a riding jacket (*magua*), 4) a short usually padded or lined sleeveless vest (*kanjian*) which was very similar to men's waistcoat, the lapel often tailored in various shapes. The ordinary robe has the same form as the formal dress, but without heavy decoration and accessories. The ordinary dress only had a slit opening in the middle of the lower hem for ease in moving but sometimes there were no slits at all. The term for ordinary dress in Mandarin was: *changpao magua* (Tam & Huang, 2000; Yuan, 2000).



**a.** Empress Dowager Cixi wore ordinary dress in 1903. Source: *Gugong jiu cang renwu zhaopian ji (The Album of old Portrait Collection From the Imperial Palace)*. 1990, p.1.



**c.** Manchu ordinary dress robe called *chenyi*. Source: Zhou & Gao, 1987, p.180.



**b.** Manchu ordinary dress robe called *changyi*. Source: Zhou & Gao, 1987, p. 180.



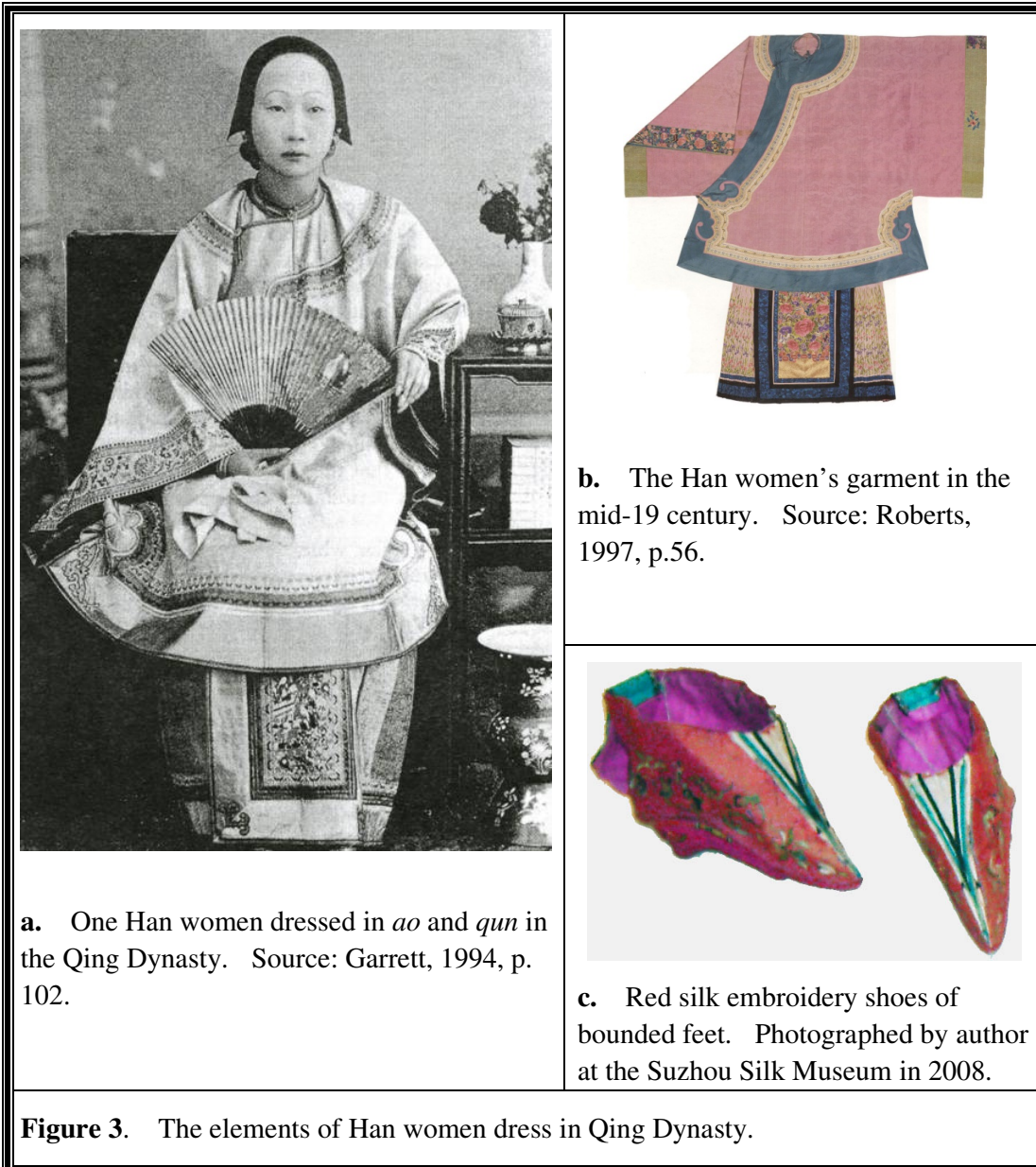
**d.** Manchu women's shoes with concave heels, embroidered with jewels. Source: Garrett, 1994, p. 61.

**Figure 2.** The elements of Manchu women dress in Qing Dynasty.

## **The Elements of Han Style**

The Han style refers to the way of dressing adopted by Han women during the Ming Dynasty which was called “*Ao, Qun, Ku*” (Figure 3) and consisted of a jacket (*ao*) with a long skirt (*qun*) (Figure 3.b) or trousers (*ku*) combination (Bian , 2006; Hua, 1989; Steele & Major, 1999). The hair was pulled up into a flat bun with various ornaments or artificial flowers, depending on the regional style. The feet were bound in tiny but heavily embroidered shoes (Figure 3.c). This style was maintained continuously throughout the Qing Dynasty (Clark, 2000; Finnane, 1996; Garrett, 1994).

Most Han Chinese women were not forced to follow the Manchu dress regulations, unless their fathers or husbands worked for the Qing court. Han women therefore continued to wear their traditional dress from the Ming Dynasty and the layered, complete garment, as Eileen Chang (1987) pointed out, included a great jacket to be worn on the outside. On informal occasions, the great jacket would be removed to reveal the middle jacket. Beneath the middle jacket was a form-fitting little jacket, which would be worn to bed and was usually of some enticing shade like peach or liquid red. Atop this ensemble of three jackets, finally, would be the *Cloud Shoulder Vest Coat* of black silk, with broad edging patterned with stylized coiled clouds (*yun jian*) (p. 54).



During the beginning and middle of the Qing Dynasty, Manchu women were prohibited from dressing in the Han style and from binding their feet. But at the end of the Qing Dynasty, the Manchu and Han style were mixed together (Bao, 2004a). During the 1911 Revolution, there was a short movement of anti-Manchurian violence, along with the collapse of the Qing dynasty and Manchu government. At this time the complex hierarchical system of the official

dress code was abolished. The Manchu women dressed like the Han Chinese in order to avoid political trouble and men cut their queues to symbolize the end of Manchu rule and the beginning of a new era. However, the long robe and riding jacket (*changpao magua*) endured as ordinary semi-formal dress (Gerth, 2003; Roberts, 1997).

- **The Rise of *Qipao* Fashion**

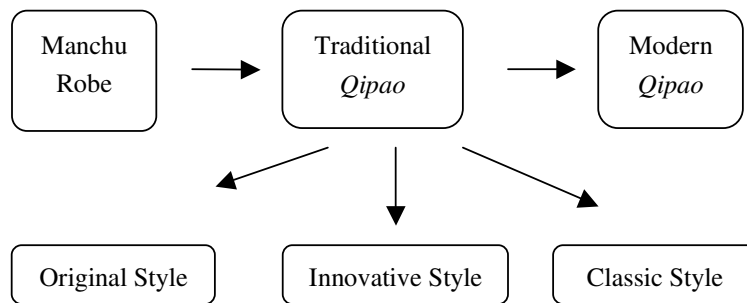
The *qipao* was a garment of no great antiquity, having emerged in the 1920s. The term literally means *banner gown* and was applied to this garment because in its earliest form it resembled a single-piece robe similar to that worn by Manchu women—the women of banners—rather than the two or three piece costume formerly worn by Chinese (Han) women (Garrett, 1994, p. 105).

This author's viewpoint has been largely accepted as fact. Specifically, *qipao* has been considered a good representation of Chinese clothing and has served as the image of Chinese women in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

However, this study provides evidence to advocate for a different viewpoint. The mandarin word *qipao* literally means “banner gown” which indicates that its origin form may be from the Manchu women's dress of the Qing Dynasty (Garrett, 1987; Yuan, 2000). However many scholars have questioned this recently. Historical documents have shown that the *qipao* fashion started not only because it was considered a new fashionable style of the time, but because it was also related to political and economic changes (Bian, 2003; Chang, 1987). Therefore, if *qipao* was only considered to be inherited directly from Banner robe, it would be interpreted without real understanding. From a broader point of view, *qipao* was indeed descended from the Qing Dynasty Manchu robe, the Republican traditional (reformed) *qipao* and the modern *qipao* (Figure 4). From a more narrow point of view and based on the

differences between the *qipao* style in the 1920s and the robe of Manchu style in the Qing dynasty, the term *qipao* could be regarded as a special appellation for the one piece dress after 1925. This style had many or all of the characteristics associated with *qipao* such as the right-opening, standing collar, hoops and toggles made of textiles, side slits, and planar cutting, combined with stockings or socks (Xue, 2006; Bao, 2004a; Bian, 2003).

*Qipao* was also known as changsan in Cantonese which means long robe and in Western countries, *qipao* was translated as Mandarin Dress, Ch'ipao. In this research *qipao* should be understood as a special term to take the place of all other names for this kind of clothing.



**Figure 4.** Development of *qipao* through the end of Qing Dynasty to present.

### **Original Time, Place and First Wearer of *Qipao* Fashion**

Most research has indicated that *qipao* fashion began in the 1920s, but few publications mention an exact year. Han women wore the *ao qun* or as Zhen Yimei points out, the Han women of the Qing dynasty originally wore *duanyi* which means short jacket (Zhen, 1946). Upon examining primary sources in the form of historical newspapers from the early Republic of China, the term *qipao* didn't appear until middle of the 1920s. Eileen Chang and Zhou Xibao both thought that *qipao* prevailed in China after 1921. Chang dates the first appearance



of *qipao* to 1921 (Chang, 1987) while Zhou's research indicates there was a small group of Shanghai women wearing *qipao* in 1923 (Zhou, 1984). This researcher hypothesizes that there was a small group of female revolutionaries who wore the men's long robe to symbolize the struggle for political and social equality influenced by the May Fourth Movement (1919-1921). This period in Chinese history was considered the beginning of women's emancipation (Bao, 2004a; Roberts, 1997; Zhou & Gao, 1987). As the Shanghai *Minli newspaper* reported in 1912, women wore men's clothes, students wore prostitutes' clothes, and the upper class or educated women adopted European dress (Wu, 2008). Thus the seeds of *qipao* fashion were planted by innovative women and later became a popular style when more women were allowed to wear the *qipao* while following cultural standards of dress.

In June of 2008, a search for primary sources was conducted at Suzhou libraries in China. Results showed that there was no information in newspapers or photographs that related to *qipao* fashion before 1925. There was a fashion prospectus issued in the Shanghai *Shen Newspaper (Shengbao)* and *Beiyang Pictorial Magazine (BeiyangHuabao)* in January of 1925 that made no mention of it. However, there was a considerable amount of information and pictures that showed that students, women in the entertainment industry, and wealthy young ladies wore *qipao* in 1926. Meanwhile, as the pictures shown on *Liang you Pictorial Magazine* (1926), the short jacket, long skirt or loose pants were still part of daily wear in Shanghai. Therefore it is reasonable to conclude that *qipao* fashion for the general population started at the end of 1925 and beginning of 1926. This finding has been supported by Chinese scholars such as Bian, Zhen and Yuan, who have done research on *qipao* by viewing historical poster calendars and examining newspaper articles (Bian, 2003; Yuan, 2005; Zhen, 1946).

Regarding the birthplace of *qipao* fashion, Shanghai should be considered. After War II, Shanghai was the only fashion centre in China. It has often been referred to as “the Paris of the East” historically. The city was considered very modern and young people in the city were largely influenced by western style fashions and lifestyle (Bian, 2003; Finnane, 1996; Garrett, 1994). One article from the Shanghai *Liangyou Pictorial Magazine* in 1927, criticized the *weixin* (new revolution) for wearing a suit instead of the long robe; high heeled shoes were uncomfortable but American and English wore them and so they became popular. Young people even began to use the English titles Mr., Mrs. and Miss and using English-Chinese translations to write articles instead of pure Chinese (Yiming, 1926; Wu, 2008).

### **The Origin Stage of *Qipao* Style**

*Qipao* became established fashion by the end of 1925 and the beginning of 1926. It was considered a new type of fashion that combined elements of Manchu dress but was worn in a Western fashion (Bian, 2003). Since Beijing was the capital of the Qing empire and the literal meaning of the term *qipao* is associated with the Manchu, one might consider Beijing rather than Shanghai as the place of origin of *qipao* fashion. However as mentioned earlier, Manchu women’s robes were called *changsan* and *changyi* rather than *qipao* (Wu, 2008). There was a short article *Robe but not Banner* (*pao er bu qi*) published in the *Shanghai Republican of China Daily* (*Minguo Riba*) on February 27, 1926, suggesting that this new kind of fashionable women’s dress should be called a *zhonghua robe* which means Chinese robe, or *Qi Pao* (旗袍) which means good luck with same pronunciation as Banner gown (Wang, 1957). After changing back and forth for some time, it was eventually called a *qipao* (旗袍). Historical

documents also indicate that, regardless of where it originated, *qipao* fashion was first popularized in Shanghai and then spread to other places (Tu, 1948; Xu, 1935). Thus fashion is not noticed until popularly accepted and worn by a many in the culture. Zhou and Gao describe one such example of historical media describing Shanghai style below:

“In 1933, a Shanghai journal published the following rhyme: Everyone thinks the Shanghai style is fun, it’s pretty hard to copy though; before you’re even half way done, the next style’s in – an endless row. This rhyme testifies to the rapidity of changes in fashion and the general craze for novel styles of clothing in Shanghai. A comprehensive view of the numerous photographs from this period enables one to sum up the specific features of women’s fashions at the time: the *qipao*, the one –piece Chinese gown, remained the basic costume, yet its collar and sleeves had been westernized. The collar, for instance, was shaped like a lotus leaf, and the slits were opened in the sleeves. Matches with a cape or with a woolen sweater over it, the new *qipao* was graceful and unique” (Zhou & Gao, 1987, p. 435).

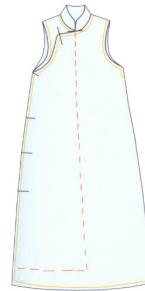
In the early of 1920s, female students educated overseas and at local mission schools were considered New Youth, they were the first women who could walk out of the house and eagerly sought out new experiences, culture and fashions to challenge the feudal system. Historical data indicates that female students in Shanghai were the first wearers of *qipao* fashion (Bao, 2004b; Chang, 1987). As they were considered representatives of educated Chinese women, they became the ideal image of the society at the time and they led the way in popularizing the acceptance of new things (Bian, 2003).



a. Miss Chang Hsian Yuan dressed in *wenxin xin zhuang*. Photographed by author from *Beiyang Pictorial Magazine*, 1926, 10, 7. No. 23, Issue 36 (8) in 2008.



c. *Wenmin xin zhuang* as a new fashion around 1900. Source: Zhou & Gao, 1987, p. 224.



d. Modified *qipao majia* in the early 1920s. Source: Bao, 2004, p. 149.



b. Actress Chang Ngeyuen dressed in *qipao majia*. Photographed by author from *Beiyang Pictorial Magazine* on 1928, 1, 11. No 161 (3). 2004, p. 149.



e. One girl dressed in the origin style of *qipao* in 1926. Source: Bao, 2004a, Appendix II.

**Figure 5.** Examples of *qipao* origin.

As the political climate changed, so did approved styles of dress. As Bian Xiangyang pointed out: “for the popularity of every new style, there is the inevitability one behind the contingency” (Bian, 2003, p.23). *Qipao*, now defined as the quintessential Chinese traditional clothing, had emerged in the 1920s due to political and social events. Since the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, the old conventions, including dress codes and beliefs that attempted to block the development of China (Bian, 2003; Finnane, 1996). After the Xinhai Revolution of 1911 that had an aura of anti-Manchu nationalism, the Qing Dynasty’s etiquette rules and dress code and the non-Manchu custom of foot-binding were abolished along with a strong backlash against anything associated with the Manchu government. After that, the May Fourth Movement in 1919, and the New Culture Movement not only made Chinese people want to have a new civilization but also aroused a brand new desire for beauty and fashion (Bao, 2004a; Bian, 2003; Gerth; 2003).

In the early of 1920s, with the great emancipation and the inspiration of foreign fashion, a new form of dress that was referred to as the *civilized new garment* (*wenming xin zhung*) emerged (Figure 5.a). This garment consisted of a simply adorned or ornamentally trimmed, dress with a tight-waist, modified to fit well with the traditional Chinese short jacket and a foreign, pullover gathered long skirt (the traditional Chinese skirt had been apron-like). The garment had a low standing-collar with buttons down the right. The lower hem of the new style jacket only reached the hip and the trumpet sleeves (the wristband was usually 24cm wide) reach a little below the elbow, this was a remarkable feature for the time (Figure 5.c). The skirt originally extended down to the ankle but later on it became shorter and extended only to the upper calf. The *civilized new garment* was very popular among female teachers

and students. The light blue jacket and black skirt became a uniform for the all-girl schools (Bao, 2004a; Chang, 1987; Finnane, 1996; Garrett, 1987). Considerable research has indicated that the pioneering wearers were female students who had studied in Japan (Bian, 2003; Finnane, 1996). From this point on, we can see that in the early Republic of China, most of the inspiration for women's dress came from the West. Women would more frequently wear clothing displaying the ankle, arms, and neck and clothing showing the body's figure. More importantly women also began to wear skirts without pants underneath (Chang, 1987; Finnane, 1996).

The May Thirtieth Movement in 1925 demonstrated an anti-Western sentiment by female students and workers. Chinese women stopped wearing Western clothes; it was then that the *qipao* fashion emerged. A simplified Manchu *gualan* (a long vest) was very popular among of Han women in the late 1910s and early 1920s (Bian, 2003). It was a sleeveless, straight garment with a flat silhouette and a length that extended to the knee. Some people called this *qipao majia* to distinguish it from other vests. Before *qipao* fashion began, some women were wearing *qipao majia* outside of the trumpet sleeves with a short jacket instead of a skirt or pants (Figure 5.b). Eventually it developed into a one piece dress – *qipao* in 1926, the shape was still flat, with a two dimensional cut and baggy (Figure 5.e). It covered a woman's body features similar to the Manchu style robe, but with simple and elegant colors and few decorations, it more or less focused on women's natural beauty (Bian, 2003; Bao, 2004b).

Modernity was one of the features of Shanghai at this time; the whole city was like a big fashion machine pursuing freshness and variety in clothing. Most places were following *qipao* fashion with either Chinese cotton stockings and shoes or pants in the early period of

*qipao* fashion. Modern Shanghai women who were deeply influenced by Western culture adopted foreign transparent silk stockings and high heeled shoes, this style of dress was influenced by *Cha wu zhuang* which was the clothing worn for Western ballroom dancing that was popular during the middle 1910s (Bian, 2003; Gerth; 2003).

Based on historical photographs from the *Beiyang* pictorial and existing research it is clear that the earliest *qipao* style was formed from a mixture of the elements of *qipao majia* and *Wenming Xin Zhu*. In modern and fashionable cities like Shanghai and Beijing, women wore *qipao* as a Western one-piece dress accompanied with transparent stocking and high heeled shoes but in other more conservative places women wore pants and Chinese cotton stockings and Chinese shoes during the early period of *qipao* fashion (Bao, 2004b; Bao, 1973; Bian, 2003).

- **DeLong's Visual Structure Analysis**

The purpose of this visual analysis was to compare and contrast the Qing Dynasty women's daily dress and the original style of the *qipao* during the Republic of China (Table 2). Two historical dressed body images (a) and (c) were chosen for visual examination (Figure 6). In order to capture a better view of the garment and focus only on the garment, the image was taken out of its vague background.



**a.** The last empress of Qing Dynasty Wangrong, dressed in ordinary dress in the early 1920s. Source: Kong & Chen, 2006, p. 78.



**c.** A women wear initial style of *qipao*. Source: Zhou & Gao, 1987, p. 229.



**b.** The ordinary dress robe of Qing Dynasty. Source: Roberts, 1997, p. 39.



**d.** The original style of *qipao*. Source: [www.showchina.org](http://www.showchina.org). February 27, 2009.

**Figure 6.** Comparison between Manchu women's robe and the original *qipao* style.



**Observation**

(a) & (b) provides an example of ordinary wear of Manchu women. Picture (a) shows a young woman wearing one of the full length Manchu robes – *changyi*, the detail illustration can be seen in (b). The robe fastens on right with two side openings; the sleeves are straight and extend to the wrists. The collar stands high on the neck ending just below the chin. The robe extends to the feet. The material appears to be silk and heavily embroidered allover. The lower portion of the robe bells outward so as not to restrict movement.

The dress appears as visually primary in this ABC, the garment is heavily decorated with rich and embroidery. Multiple focal points lead the eye to jump from one to another in a staccato rhythm. The textured surface creates visual thickness. The thin piping line along the front, collar, sleeves and lower hems formed a three dimensional effect. The whole garment appears in an A shape boxy silhouette, which doesn't show any features of the female form. There is a large adornment on the head which balances out the long, heavy, solemn, straight and conservative costume.

(c) & (d). Provides an example of the initial style of *qipao*. Picture (c), shows a young girl wearing full length *qipao*, the detail illustration can be seen in (d). The *qipao* fastens on right side and along to the lower hem, the sleeves bell outward and extend to slightly below the elbow. The *qipao* ends at the ankles. The collar stands up slightly and the material appears to be silk or cotton with elaborate embroidery on the breast and shin. The fit is fairly loose but not flexible, and may restrict movement since there appears to be no slit in the *qipao*.

**Structural Analysis**

**Planar-Integration-----ac----- Planar-Separation**

(a)(c) both are figure ground separated because of the hard edge of the silhouette's robe which contrast contrasts with the background of there is any.

**Close--ac-----Open**

(a)(c) both are closed forms due to single dominant color with simple, clear, and self-contained silhouette.

**Whole-----c-----a-----Parts**

(a) viewed as a whole first due to the simple, boxy, hard edged silhouette form; single dominant color. Then see parts because the garment is heavily decorated with different rich magnificent colorful patterns.

(c) views as a whole because of the simple, clear silhouette with the one dominant color. Simple and unadorned patters are not eye catching.

**Determinate--ac-----Indeterminate**

(a)(c) both determinate because surface has simple, clear shapes, the lack of shadow and light reflectance and little visual texture.

**Flat--ac-----Rounded**

(a)(c) both visually flat, two dimensional surface with limited visual depth

**Table 2.** Analysis of visual structure of the Manchu robe and the original *qipao* style.

- **Cultural Interpretation and Evaluation**

With a focus on the origin of *qipao*, it seems clear that the silhouette of the Manchu ordinary robe and the initial style of *qipao* were very similar. They both were self-contained with a loose, full length covering over the whole body; both reflected the cultural ideal of female appearance at the time.

The early *qipao* style showed very little difference from the robe of the last days of the Qing Dynasty. However, the simple, elegant decoration and lighter color reflected the changes of the aesthetic ideal. The Manchu robe with loose cut, heavy decoration and slender body strongly reflected the aesthetic ideals related to the moral principles in the thousand-year-old feudal society. *Qipao*, had broader sleeves that modestly revealed a women's natural beauty. Even though it was still in a loose and two-dimensional cut, it had a lot more convenience and was easier to wear than the Manchu robe. It was also easier to afford since it saved fabric and tailoring labor. The sloping shoulder, thin and hollow chest were still the traditional Chinese aesthetic ideal for women.

Any new style that becomes fashion is usually due to the circumstances, public aesthetics, benefit and atmosphere at the time (Bian, 2003). There were several reasons that can be drawn upon to explain how *qipao* became standard dress for Chinese women in the later 1920s.

From sociopolitical aspects, the leaders and revolutionaries of the Republic of China were yearning for anything from Western civilization, including clothing, but the anti-Western movement in 1925 stopped Chinese consumption of foreign goods and acting like a *fake foreigner* (Finnane, 1996; Gerth, 2003). *Qipao* was born in these conflict-laden circumstances. It integrated Western dress elements and Chinese dress characteristics. It

was completely suited to the political environment. In 1929, the Republic of China made *qipao* one of the official formal dresses for Chinese women (Wu, 2008, Wong, 2004; Zhou & Gao, 1987).

From the aesthetic perspective, *qipao* has some Western aesthetics that displayed women's physical beauty. It reflected the younger generation's spirit at the time. In the earlier states of *qipao* fashion, *qipao* was still cut and tailored in the traditional way, it covered the whole body but with the elbow length trumpet sleeves it emphasized sloping shoulders and exposed the arms which were thought to be beautiful and sexy in Chinese traditional view (Clark, 2000; Yang, 2007). At the end of the 1920s, *qipao* was cut to follow the woman's form; it made more prominent the women's chest and hips but was not too tight. It not only ignored thin women's flatness, but also the smooth curve of a fine waist and also made plump women look slim. The two slits opened the sides to flatter the legs. This reformed *qipao* style not only displayed Chinese women's graceful figure but also suited women of all ages. There were also records and photographs showing that women were wearing long pants inside of *qipao* in more conservative places (Bian, 2003). This again showed how versatile this style was for the majority of women of all ages and for all occasions.

*Qipao* served as the symbol of Chinese clothing. It blended the Chinese traditional aesthetic features with the advantages of Western clothing. For progressive people, *qipao* symbolized the junction of China and the West. It symbolized an enlightened ethos and exhibited a different aesthetical appreciation and preference for different social groups in China at the time (Bian, 2003; Yang, 2007).

*Qipao* became popular also because it was easy to make. The structure of *qipao* in its

early state was very simple and similar to traditional clothing. It could be made of various textiles, and the cutting and sewing were convenient for different individuals. People could ask a tailor to make it or even make it by themselves. In the 1920s, the social background provided a good opportunity for the majority people to adopt and accept the *qipao*. As one feature of modern women, *qipao* was admitted and commended during the Northern Expedition and the women's liberation movement (Bao, 1973; Bian, 2003).

- **Conclusion**

As Roberts (1997) points out: "dress is intimately connected to social life and to the cultural history of place – to the beliefs, aspirations and the self-expression of the individual and society" (introduction). China has a long history of clearly indentifying people's position within the social hierarchy. The *shuo wen jie ji*, the first book analysis of Chinese characters, explained that the Chinese character *fu* not only means clothing or dress but also means to serve and to obey. Further more, the *fu* verified women's position: it says women are ministers who should be limited to housewifery and serving others (Leung, 2003; Lock, 1989; Roberts, 1997). These meanings and connotations suggests that dress directly related to social standing, functions and duties; the individual and other body are subjugated to particular social needs (Lock, 1989; Roberts, 1997).

According to the numerous historical documents and photographs, it is not incorrect to claim that the *qipao* came from the Manchu robe. However, this is merely a narrow interpretation of the *qipao*'s origins. From an aesthetic point of view, the initial style certainly combined the dominant elements from Manchu dress with the small portion elements from

*wenming xin zhuang*. However, the symbolic meaning and the dominant political ideology at the time suggests that the original *qipao* was in fact a new style that became a new fashion in the 1920s. It symbolized Chinese women pursuing gender equality (Chang, 1987; Clark, 2000; Finnane, 2008). Small groups of female students first adopted men's long robe to fight against the traditional patriarchal system and to request freedom in marriage, education and other basic human rights. These students were the prototype of the new women of China, *qipao* served as a visual weapon that indicated this self-liberation potential and profound social change that occurred in that time period (Steele & Major, 1999). In 1929, the government of the Republic of China prescribed *qipao* as the national dress for Chinese women. Therefore, it is reasonable to claim that *qipao* was a new fashion style in the early twenty century (Clark, 2000; Steele & Major, 1999; Yuan, 2000).

## 4. 2. FINDINGS: THE EVOLUTION OF *QIPAO*

### The Fall of the Qing Dynasty (1900-1911)

- **Historical Background**

#### Political and Economic

The Manchu were originally known as the Jurchen tribes and lived in Manchuria during the Tang dynasty 1400 years ago. Their livelihood was based on hunting. Children started learning archery around the age of six or seven and horseback riding for hunting as they grew older. In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, Nurhachi, a great political and military strategist unified all the Jurchen tribes and set up the Eight Banner System which was a military, political and administrative organization and represented by banners of eight different colors. This became the fundamental social system of the Manchu nationality. Therefore, the Manchu were also called Banner-men (*qiren*). Their garments were called Banner robes or Banner gowns (*qizhuang*) (Wang, 1957; Yuan, 2000). In 1644, Manchu troops ventured inside the Great Wall, conquered Beijing and established the Qing Dynasty that ruled China until the establishment of the Republic of China in 1911 (Garrett, 1987; Wiesbaden, 1995).

The Qing dynasty ended in 1911 with the establishment of the Republic of China. Foreign incursions, bankruptcy and widespread corruption led to the rise of Warlords throughout the Qing Empire. Indemnities from retaliation against western imperial powers and the Japanese had drained the Qing coffers. The dynasty that had once conquered China on horseback was no longer able to maintain political or social stability. By 1912 a new China

had formed based largely around an anti-Manchurian sentiment and a rejection of traditional Chinese values (Roberts, 1999; Schoppa, 2006).

### **Women's Position**

Women during the Qing Dynasty were considered to be the property of men in their family. This hierarchical relationship was considered natural and proper in the treatment of daughters, wives and mothers. In the imperial society based on Confucian values, women had virtually no status. The *three obediences* and *four virtues* were the unquestioned standards for behavior. These written rules governed women's behavior and defined her virtue (Leung, 2003; Lock, 1989). Marriage was usually arranged by the father for the purpose of helping the family to build social relationships. It was common for the bride not to know who the groom was until right before the wedding day. Once married, regardless of circumstances like her husband's appearance, character or the way he treats her, a woman was obligated to obey, serve and please her husband and in-laws. Her status in the family was based upon her ability to give birth to a male child to carry on the husband family name as well as to provide labor. If she failed to fulfill this duty, the husband had the right to divorce her and marry a second wife or get concubines (Chang, 1996; Lock, 1989).

During this time women did not have any legal or property rights and were generally denied education. Women were regarded as unworthy and incapable of being educating. Therefore, financially they were completely dependent upon men. The traditional patriarchal structure and sexual division of labor relegated men to work primarily outside the home and women primarily inside of the home (*nan chu wai; nu zhu nei*) (Gilmartin, Hershatter, Rofel, &

White, 2005). The subjugation of women even took a physical form in the binding of the feet and the wearing of shoes labeled flower-pots. Many women were forbidden from leaving the home. These shoes limited their ability to walk outside and be active in society outside the home. Women were not allowed to have opinions on economics, politics or anything outside world (Leung, 2003). Thus, having no talent was considered virtuous for a woman at this time. A woman's identity outside of the house was based on her husband's family's social status. Inside of the house a woman's identity was based on her unquestioning obedience and deference.

Exceptions always occur in history. Some women resisted tradition and refused to abide by the traditional codes. This was their subtle way to fight for gender equality across the centuries. Some women resisted individually while others did it as part of a group. One example was girls who committed suicide rather than marry a stranger who she did not know and may not find comfortable to live with. A small number of brave women expressing resistance via their clothing could be found across the centuries (Lock, 1989).

### **Dress Aesthetics**

The Qing Dynasty established a very completed dress code with regulations issued in 1652, 1748 and 1759 to legally require all official men to confirm their identity via Manchu costumes which also distinguished the wearer's status (Steele & Major, 1999). Han men had dress constraints placed upon them as well. However, one form of compensation was given regarding dress in the Qing Dynasty to the Han women. They were allowed to continue wearing their traditional dress which consisted of knee-length jackets with wide sleeves

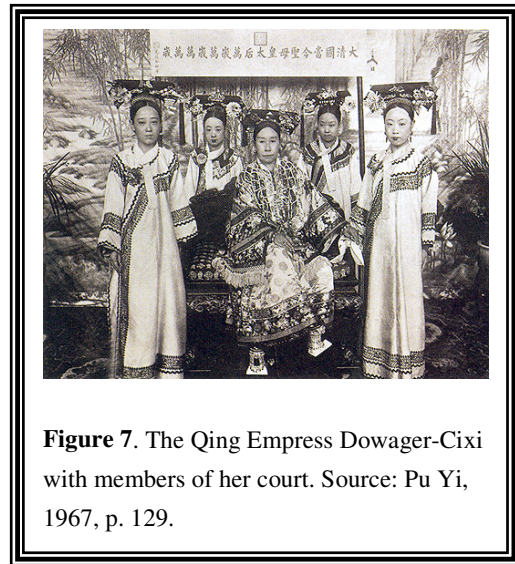


(known as *ao*), fastened either at the side or in front and pleated with either paneled skirts underneath (known as *qun*) or loose trousers (known *ku*) (Roberts, 1997; Tam & Huang, 2000). However on formal occasions women had to dress in conformity with their husbands. The Manchu women were forbidden from adopting the Han style of clothing. They were required to dress according to the rank of their husband or father in a very similar shape and style robes but with differences in decoration (Bao, 2004a; Steele & Major, 1999; Garrett, 1994). But the Chinese traditional aesthetic still gradually influenced the Manchu dress on the collar and crossover, right-hand fastening of the outer garment (Garrett, 1994).

The principle features that characterized the Manchu robes were the A-shaped, straight tailoring in a simple, two-dimensional silhouette. It narrowed in the upper part and widened in the lower (Figure 7). It had a round neckline

with a white long, narrow rectangular scarf, right-side-buttoning front, and sleeves with hoof-shaped cuffs, the whole garment usually made of silk, satin or brocade fabric, looks like a pyramid (Yuan, 2000). During the middle of the Qing Dynasty, the Manchu style robes became simplified, they had a looser style and no longer had the hoof shaped cuffs. The attached collar

replaced the original collarless garment combined with a scarf (Roberts, 1997). The robe narrowed down and was generally made of silk satin. An excessive attention to detailed decoration was one of the primary features of the time. The nobles paid great attention to the



**Figure 7.** The Qing Empress Dowager-Cixi with members of her court. Source: Pu Yi, 1967, p. 129.

decorative adornment on the robe which consisted of rich, bright embroidery and different patterns of piping around the front and lower hems, cuffs and collar, and overlapping with either *three pipings, three bindings*; or *seven pipings, seven bindings*. Sometimes more than eighteen rows of piping, known as *eighteen bindings* (Chang, 1987; Yuan, 2000). At the end of the Qing Dynasty, during the atmosphere of emotional excess, having a highly decorated surface became a thing of the past. Instead a tall, stiff stand-up collar and a thin, delicate single line of *wick binding* decoration around the hemline became vogue (Figure 8). Women in a top-heavy unbalanced robe became a sign of the political and social upheaval of the time (Chang, 1987).



a. A young Manchu woman in ordinary dress. Source: Steele & Major, 1999, p. 22.



b. A Manchu lady's robe called *changyi*. Source: Steele & Major, 1999, p.23.



c. A Manchu lady's robe called *chenyi*. Source: Steele & Major, 1999, p.24.

**Figure 8.** Examples of Manchu robes at the end of Qing Dynasty.

- **DeLong's Visual Structure Analysis**

**Observation**

(a). Shows a young woman wearing a full-length of Manchu robe called *chenyi*. Since this image is not in color, the gold and purple images provided in (b) and (c), to inform the analysis of surface character. Picture (a) shows the *chenyi* fastens on the right; sleeves are straight and extend to the wrists. The collar stands up slightly. The *chenyi* ends at the bottom of the feet. The *chenyi* appears to be made of silk satin and is heavily embroidered on the shoulders, collar, along the hem and along the fastening line. The *chenyi* is relatively loose fitting and would probably not restrict movement.

This *chenyi* appears to come forward rather than recede. The primary focal point on the neckline leads the eyes up and down in a peaceful rhythm and gradually builds a whole silhouette which appears in an H shape forming a tall, solemn, straight and conservative image. The big adornment on the head outweighs the body portion of the image.

**Structural Analysis**

**Planar-Integration----- ✗ --- Planar-Separation**

Clear, simple and hard edge silhouette contrasts with the background.

**Closed--- ✗ -----Open**

Hard edges define a simple, boxy silhouette that visually separates from the background.

**Whole----- ✗ -----Parts**

Strong visual parts direct the eye from top to bottom and create a visual whole.

**Determinate----- ✗ -----Indeterminate**

The main garment has a somewhat indeterminate surface due to reflective surface of satin fabric with small or large motifs as well as highly indeterminate decorative edges.

**Flat----- ✗ -----Rounded**

Decorative edges along the hem create visual depth and a three-dimensional effect while the main garment also has visual depth but to a lesser degree.

**Table 3.** Analysis of visual structure of Manchurian dress during the end of Qing Dynasty (1900-1911).

- **Cultural Interpretation and Evaluation**

*Ignorance is a good virtue* was the one of famous standards by which to judge women's inner virtue. This indicated that women shouldn't have any opinions. With the restricted

dress role, “one neither goes outside of the front gate, nor strides toward the second inner gate” clearly indicating women’s permanent position in the Qing Dynasty (Yang, 2007, p. 444). Confucian ideology was the cornerstone of law and custom in the traditional China, it determined that the dominated social structure was under the hierarchy system which was old dominating the young, and male subjugating the female social structure. The subjugation of women in the Confucian system can be seen clearly in dress. The dress code for women’s customs during the Qing Dynasty indicated women’s position. The Manchu women had to dress according to their father or husband’s social position. Even though Han women were allowed to wear their traditional clothes, the cultural role wasn’t any less strict than the Manchu’s. Not only was foot binding a common practice among women, but garments with tiny pleats were worn by the upper class to demonstrate a woman’s grace and comportment. Ideally a woman would be able to move without disturbing the fabric of her garments in the least. The bridal gowns and garments of the upper class made this exceptionally difficult. In Qing Dynasty, how a woman wore her clothing was considered an outward manifestation of her true character and status (Chang, 1987; Yang 2007).

## THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA (1911-1949)

- **Historical Background**

### **Political and Economic**

Sun Yat-sen led the democratic revolution that overthrew the Qing Dynasty in 1911, the whole country was awash in slogans like “drive away the Qing Monarch” and “Abolish Imperialism”. This was a period of great upheaval in China and the revolutionary movement combined cultural as well as political and economic changes that had a profound effect on Chinese citizens throughout the country.

By the late 1910s to early 1920s a movement that would become known as the May Fourth Movement had combined a rejection of traditional Chinese culture with women’s emancipation and a desire to show the world a new and modern China. This period witnessed a revolution in literature and art as well as defining the cultural environment of the early republican period. This period takes its name from a student demonstration on May Fourth 1919 where students gathered to express their anger over the Japanese possession of Shandong. This movement demonstrated the strong sense of nationalism that would define the Republic of China, as well as the political awareness of the student population.

The May Fourth Movement succeeded in granting women recognition legally, and in reforming the education system. However by the beginning of the 1930s Republican China had begun to look back on Confucian values more sympathetically as the government acknowledged that western solutions to political problems may not be suitable for the Chinese environment. During this time the Kuomintang succeeded with the help of the Chinese

Communist Party in consolidating their power. This brief alliance fell apart after the death of Sun Yat-sen (*Sun Zhongshan*) and Chiang Kai Shek (*Jiang jieshi*) who would soon take control of the Kuomintang harbored deep suspicions regarding the intentions of the communists. After using the communists to assist in quelling the warlord led rebellions around China the Kuomintang quickly turned on them, assassinating many of their leaders and outlawing labor associations.

The mid-1930s were characterized by an attempt by the Kuomintang to completely exterminate all Chinese communists. While largely successful in the urban parts of China, the Chinese communist party was able to gain a foothold with rural peasants. The communists used their military strength and peasant allies to secure the south of China, which they held for a considerable length of time. However, by 1934 Chiang was able to drive the communists out of the south and the red army began the fabled *Long March* which lasted 368 days and covered a distance of 5000 miles. The long march confirmed Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai's position as leaders of the Chinese communist party, and while the communists had lost all of their strong hold's in the south of China, their new base in Yan'an put them in close contact with peasants throughout the area which would aid in spreading the communist ideology and in garnering support for Mao.

The conflict between the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party was interrupted by the outbreak of World War II. The Japanese invasion led to a brief alliance between the Republican government and the Communists, however, Chiang still kept his best trained troops hemming in the communists in case they should try to attack the Kuomintang. Throughout the war Chiang demonstrated an unwillingness to engage the Japanese, and the nationalist forces

proved unable to stem the Japanese army. This ultimately led to the relocation of the capital from Nanjing to Xian. With the defeat of the Japanese, hostilities between the communists and the nationalists resumed and a Chinese civil war began in earnest. Ultimately the military leaders of the Communist party proved superior and with less money and equipment defeated the nationalist forces. The nationalists retreated to Taiwan with the Chinese treasury and historical relics, leaving the communists in control of a unified Chinese mainland as most colonial concessions had been returned to China. In 1949 the People's Republic of China was established, ending the rule of the Kuomintang on the Chinese mainland, and marking the beginning of the Communist period in Chinese history (Schoppa 2006, Roberts 1999).

### **Women's Position**

Women's status was enhanced after the founding of the Republic of China in 1911. Women and some liberal men who, under the influence of western ideology, strove for gender equality, fought against foot-binding, and for free choice of marriage and education achieved some success. Progressive intellectuals also realized that in order to strengthen and develop the nation, educating women to be independent was a prerequisite, since "a better-educated mother would raise a better generation which would build up a stronger nation" (Siu, 1982, p. 21). The May Fourth Movement (1919-1921), was considered the first movement for women's emancipation in Chinese history (Leung, 2003). Revolutionaries educated in the west and familiar with western culture along with western missionaries began to set up schools for women, with the purpose of instilling thoughts of emancipation in the minds of women, and



encouraging them to get out of their houses, get an education and be independent. Rich families also even sent their daughters overseas to study at this time (Bao, 2004a).

All of these findings indicate that the early part of the Republic of China period saw the emergence of women in the public sphere, but this period also marks the beginning of Chinese women of fashion. Song Mei Ling in the late Republican Period became an example to Chinese women everywhere as she served as a political representative of the Nationalist government to the United States during World War II (Figure 9). As the wife of Chiang Kai-shek she was in a privileged position, however she still became a role-model for future generations of Chinese women (Steele & Major, 1999; Thomas, 1943). This period clearly saw accelerated changes in the social position of women (Bao, 2004; Roberts, 1997; Zhou & Gao, 1987).



**Figure 9.** First lady of China (Mme. Chang) and the First lady of the United States (Mrs. Roosevelt) Posted for news cameramen on the White House lawn. Source: Thomas, 1943.

Together with the Revolution of 1911, the emancipation of women and feminist movement also emerged, and while the May Fourth Movement in 1919 encouraged the nationalist government to pass laws protecting women's ability to own property, choose a spouse and receive equal pay for equal work it is important to note that the existing power structure was still patriarchal. Men still owned the majority of property and possessed the lion's share of political power (Siu, 1982).

## Dress Aesthetics

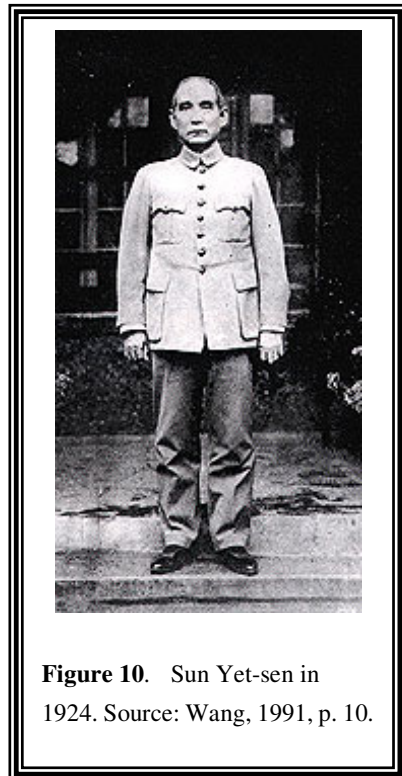
In 1924, the anti-Manchurian movement drove the Emperor Pu-yi out of the Forbidden City, along with Qing costumes and accessories, China underwent a change in custom and costume (Bao, 2004a; Chang, 1987; Steele & Major, 1999).

At the beginning of Republic of China, men's clothing led the way in dress reform. While the long robe (*changpao*) and riding jacket (*magua*) from the Qing Dynasty were still worn by most men, some men following the western wind gradually

moving the east, adopted Western dress. This was especially true for the staff of many foreign companies and young people educated in other countries. They were the first to adopt western fashion but at the same time did not reject the traditional costume. By the 1920s, Chinese nationalists, intellectuals and young students were no longer dressed in Western fashion. The Sun Yat-sen suit (*zhong shan zhuang*) became vogue due to the political climate change. The Sun Yat-sen suit was credited to Dr.

Sun Yat-sen, who was referred to as the Father of the

Republic of China, and educated in Japan (Figure 10). This famous suit was modeled after Japanese male student's military-style uniforms typically worn during the Meiji-period in Japan (1868-1912). This uniform-like style was later revised and adopted as China's national dress by Mao Zedong after about 1949 (Finnane, 1996; Fitzgerald, 1996; Roberts, 1997).



Concurrent with the changes in men's clothing, the May Fourth Movement in 1919 aroused a desire to demonstrate women's beauty throughout the country. During the early period of the Republic of China, what women should wear and what they should look like were the subject of intense debate in intellectual circles revolving around issues of modernization and westernization (Finnane, 1996).

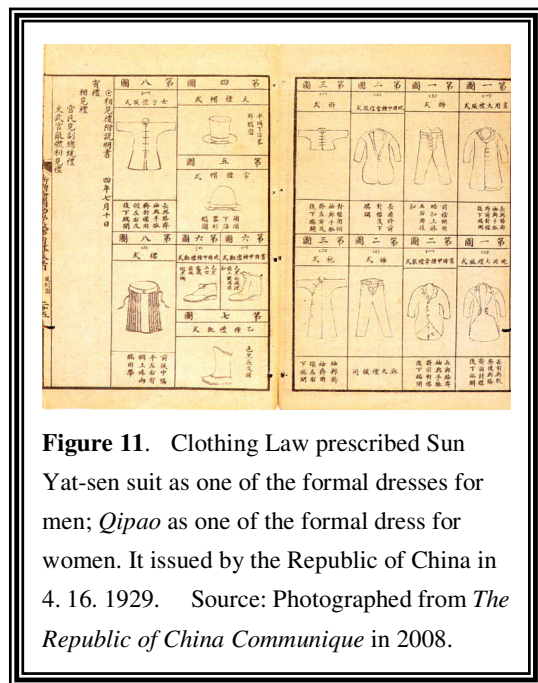
In this chaotic historical environment, the women themselves settled the issue of fashion, just simply by following the current fashion

trends that were considered modern, attractive and appropriate (Steele & Major, 1999).

Therefore, during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, many styles of fashion dress were adopted by women who lived in urban environments. Variations included Chinese traditional clothing, fashionable European and American dresses, and a hybrid style (*wenxing xinzhung*). All of these styles were characterized by freedom of expression (Roberts, 1997).

Based on the new cultural desire driven by western ideas and Chinese patriotism, the *qipao*, as a new, modern woman's dress blended the Manchu long vest and the short jacket of *Wenming xin zhuang* in 1926. This origin was detailed early in findings of this thesis (see p.41)

Within this new cultural and political movement, *qipao* was prescribed by the Nationalist



**Figure 11.** Clothing Law prescribed Sun Yat-sen suit as one of the formal dresses for men; *Qipao* as one of the formal dress for women. It issued by the Republic of China in 4. 16. 1929. Source: Photographed from *The Republic of China Communique* in 2008.

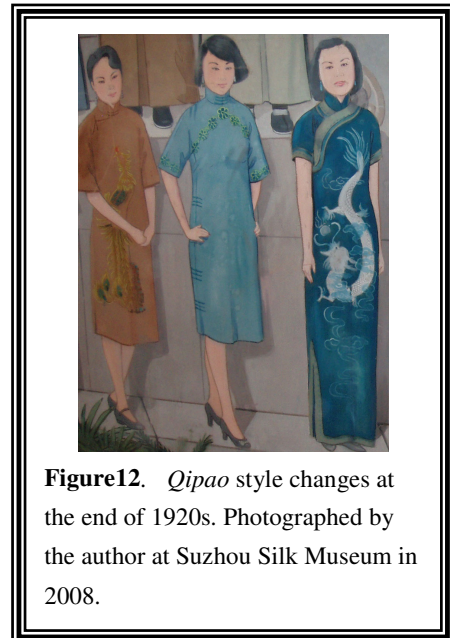
government as formal dress for women in 1929 (Figure 11) (Claire, 1997; Clark, 2000; Finnane, 1996; Garrett, 1987). It was regulated to be a lower calf-length blue robe with a stand collar, six button left-over-right fastening and long or three-quarter-length sleeve; the textile was woven from domestic silk, cotton or wool (Yuan, 2000; Roberts, 1997).

The *qipao* style established in the late 1920s became women's daily dress by the 1940s. The transformation of style related to the dominant cultural change are detailed below.

**Original *qipao* style.** This *qipao* illustrated in Figure 6 on p.43 showed very little difference from the Manchu robe in the late Qing Dynasty. It was loose fitting, wide sleeved, and the length extended to the lower calf. The silk satin textile had very limited fancy patterns and decorations.

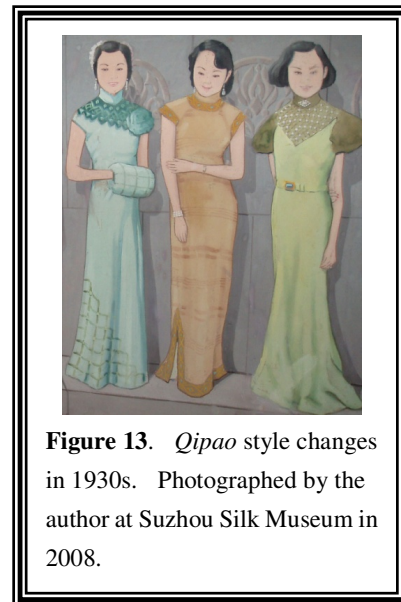
**Transitional *qipao* style.** However, by the end of the 1920s, details of the *qipao* style started to be influenced by Western fashion trends. During 1928 and 1929, while a straight and boyish look was fashionable in the west, the Chinese women started to

adopt short hair, the waistline of the *qipao* waist was tightened and the length shortened to just below the knee (Zhou & Gao, 1987). These modifications are illustrated in Figure12.



**Figure12.** *Qipao* style changes at the end of 1920s. Photographed by the author at Suzhou Silk Museum in 2008.

**Innovative qipao style.** Due to intensive western fashion influence, *qipao* of the 1930's underwent dramatic changes. Various peculiarities of western dress were absorbed and the traditional dress evolved into more innovative styles for the time. As shown in Figure 13, a major change occurred in collar length, sleeves variations and robe length. For example, high collars reaching the ear were considered very fashionable in the mid 1930s, then later fashion dictated that the collar be lower or



**Figure 13.** *Qipao* style changes in 1930s. Photographed by the author at Suzhou Silk Museum in 2008.

non-existent. Sleeve length varied from wrist length to elbow; some were sewn with ruffles, lotus leaves, and some were even sleeveless. The *Liangyou Pictorial Magazine* in 1940 provided a brief style overview of the *qipao* changes in 1930s (Figure 14).



**Figure 14.** Transition of the Chinese gown. Source: Wang, 1957, p.56.

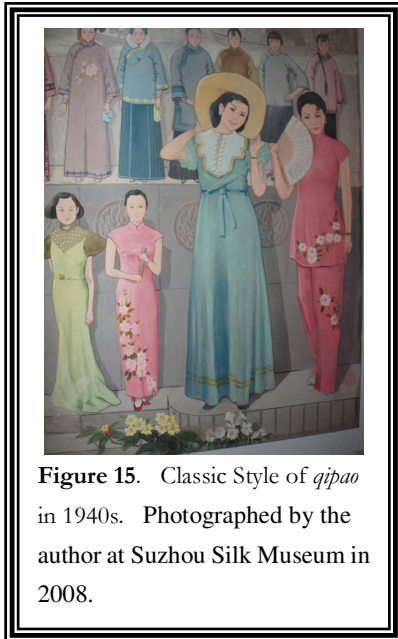
According to this report *Transition of the Chinese Gown* (Zhang, 1940), changes in the length of *qipao* was even greater. The length reached the lower calf in 1931 and then became long enough to reach the ground in 1934, and returned to ankle length in 1936. The left side slits also fluctuated in distance from the knee, beginning mid-thigh, then moving downward and then back up again until it settled at the same spot it began by the end of the 1930s (Yang, 2007).



At this time, because of increased trade, various textiles were available for women to purchase. A domestic brand called *yin dan shi lin* was the most popular for students and middle class women to make *qipao*, which was a Chinese made cotton fabric dyed in blue in a German dyestuff brand called Indanthrene® due to the colorfastness and reasonable price. Women of higher social status and movie stars were more likely to adopt fancy fabrics like prints, plaids, and lace that were either imported or domestically created making the sophisticated modern *qipao* (Clark, 2000).

**Classic *qipao* style.** In the 1940s, *qipao* as shown in Figure 15, became much simpler and tended towards neatness. The sleeves were shortened to just below the shoulder or were made sleeveless and the collar was reduced in height and omitted all kinds of complicated decorations that made the *qipao* lighter as well as showing the woman's figure outline more clearly (Zhou & Gao, 1987; Roberts, 1997). Various synthetic textiles as well as wool and cotton natural fibers were used to make *qipao* instead of *yin dan shi lin*.

Gradually trade between China and other countries flourished and the rise of the film industry made Hollywood movies and Western fashion magazines available to the Chinese.



**Figure 15.** Classic Style of *qipao* in 1940s. Photographed by the author at Suzhou Silk Museum in 2008.



**Figure 16.** High heel shoes advertisement. Source: *Beiyang Pictorial Magazine*, 1926. Photographed by the author in 2008.

Meanwhile the imported silk stockings and high-heeled shoes (Figure 16) became necessary accessories within *qipao* fashion (Steele & Major, 1999).

Sources reinforce the theory that *qipao* became so popular in China largely due to the promotion of the entertainment industry. The calendar poster and commercial advertisement models, movie stars and high class prostitutes were all wearing the most fashionable *qipao* (Figure 17). These styles were brocaded or had lavish embroidery or borders, in order to make themselves look exotic and sexually attractive to rich people and foreign men (Xie, 2004). During 1930s and 1940s, *qipao* was often worn with western accessories like fur coats, purses, scarves, and sweaters as well as stocking and high heels to give a modern look.



**Figure 17.** Transparent *qipao*. Source: Wu, 2008, p. 277.



a. Madam Chiang dressed in *qipao* in 1943. Source: Thomas, 1943



b. *Qipao* style in 1940s. Source: Ba 2004, p.33.



c. *Qipao* style in 1940s. Source: [www.sh.eastday.com](http://www.sh.eastday.com) February, 27, 2009.

**Figure 18.** Examples of *qipao* during the Republic of China Period (1911-1949).



- **DeLong's Visual Structure Analysis**

<p><b><u>Observation</u></b></p> <p>(a) provides an example of a classic style of <i>qipao</i> in the 1940s, the clear silhouette can be seen in (b) and (c). Picture (a) shows a middle-aged woman wearing a full-length <i>qipao</i> that fastens on the right. Sleeves are short and extend just below the shoulder. The collar stands up and the <i>qipao</i> ends at the instep of the foot. The <i>qipao</i> appears to be made of patterned silk. The upper portion of the <i>qipao</i> is relatively tight however the lower portion has a slit that prevents restriction of movement.</p> <p>The design is surface dominated through a bold flower pattern contrasting with the dark primary color of the garment. The silhouette stresses the overall female feature and the texture of the pattern creates a rounded, three dimensional effect. The position of the model demonstrates a modest demeanor.</p>
<p><b><u>Structural Analysis</u></b></p> <p><b>Planar-Integration----- ✗ --- Planar-Separation</b> Simple, clear silhouette separates the clothed form from the background.</p> <p><b>Closed-- ✗ -----Open</b> Self-contained silhouette contrasts with the background, even though there are outstanding patterns on the surface of the dress, its surface is still smooth and simple.</p> <p><b>Whole----- ✗ -----Parts</b> The clothed form appears as whole first, next, the parts are noticeable due to the one dominant dark color. The busy surface pattern on the dress also gets attention as a focal point.</p> <p><b>Determinate----- ✗ ----Indeterminate</b> The surface is highly indeterminate due to strong color contrast, very little blending, and more complicated shapes for motifs.</p> <p><b>Flat----- ✗ -----Rounded</b> The color contrasting between bold flower patterns and the main color of the garment creates considerable visual depth.</p>
<p><b>Table 4.</b> Analysis of visual structure of <i>qipao</i> during the Republic of China Period (1911-1949).</p>

- **Cultural Interpretation and Evaluation**

During the Republican period gender equality and women's dress were part of the agenda in every social movement. As some reformers felt that traditional heavily layered apparel had

stopped China from moving forward, so the clothing should be simplified; others focused on status equality, they advocated unisex clothing. Western educated people argued that it was best to throw away all aspects of traditional culture and adopt western styles. Chen Duxiu (1919) was the editor of *New Youth (Xin Qingnian)* magazine that was considered the most influential intellectual periodical of that era. He advocated for women's suffrage and rights and bemoaned that traditional Confucianism tended to crush a woman's natural spirit. He wrote in 1919 on the manifesto of the *New Youth* "We believe that respect for women's character and rights is already a real need for today's social progress, and moreover hope that all women will be thoroughly awakened to their social responsibility" (Chen, 1919, p. 14). However, in 1927, the famous Chinese writer Lu Xun thought that women should have "long hair, bound breasts and half-bound feet" and said "I have not heard a single word against this type of women" (Lu, 1927, p. 50). In this intensive cultural and political debate over what women should look like, women's fashion went on extremely variable and also change rapidly, it affected by their social and economic status as well as social expectations (Chang, 2003; Bao, 2004; Roberts, 1997). But overall, all of styles of dress were seen as the markers of civilization and simplification while the Western fashion was dominant in the coastal cities. Due to changes in the political environment in 1925, dressing in Western style or using foreign things was seen as a sign of political dissidence. Because of this, European and American dress didn't become dominant clothing for most of the Chinese women (Sun, 1991).

In 1929, the Sun Yat-sen suit and *qipao* was declared national dress for the Republic of China. But both of them were designed in a hybrid style, combining elements of the East and West that was perfectly suited to the political and cultural changes (Steele & Major, 1999). As

mentioned above, these styles of clothing were markers of civilization and simplification.

There began an emphasis on the *New China*. These new garments stripped away the heavy decoration and ornamentation, rediscovered the functionality of garments. Under the Western fashion influence and cutting techniques, dress took on a more form-fitting shape and also became better suited to the political and economic times (Roberts, 1997).

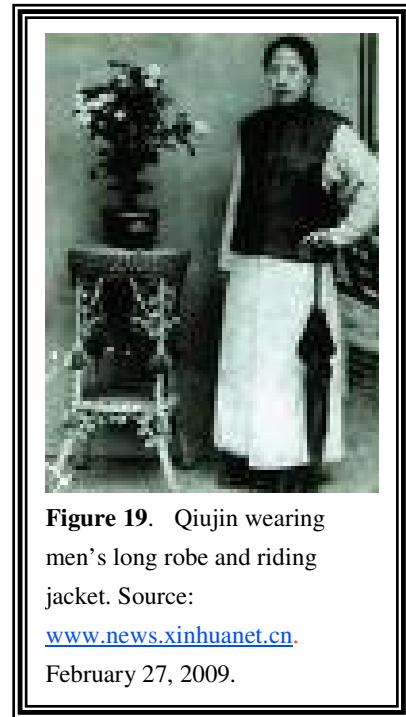
*Qipao* fashion in 1920s could be seen as a representation of the political and social awakening of women (Leung, 2003). Eileen Chang (1987) noted that the *qipao* was modified or copied from men's long robe. During women's liberation in 1911, abandonment of the traditional dress code not only represented the struggle against Confucianism and the role of women in the family but also the struggle for equality

(Bian, 2003). The photo in Figure 19 shows a female scholar and revolutionary named Qiu Jin wearing men's long robe and riding jacket in 1875, and people addressed her as Mr. Qiu Jin (Finnane, 2008). To the revolutionaries, the Chinese character *Qi* in *qipao* could be connected with *qipao majia* as it was one of the foundations of *qipao*.

However, *Pao* indicates the democratic idea of equality of race and gender (Bian, 2003).

The original style of *qipao* with loose fitting silhouette lower calf length and worn with short hair looked very

masculine. This appearance served as a weapon to symbolizing the rebellion against gender inequality (Clark, 2000; Finnane, 1996). In the 1930s, *qipao* transformed into an east-west



**Figure 19.** Qiu Jin wearing men's long robe and riding jacket. Source: [www.news.xinhuanet.cn](http://www.news.xinhuanet.cn). February 27, 2009.

hybrid style, it maintained traditional Chinese elements but incorporated western fashion techniques and ideas that made the female figure more obvious (Chang, 2004). This dress change indicated that women had a different position where they were considered part of the society. This image represented the new culture and new China. In the 1940s, *qipao* was recognized internationally as the symbol of Chinese women's identity as soft, euphemistic, elegant, and refined. This message was attributed to Madame Chiang (Steele & Major, 1999; Yang, 2007).

## COMMUNIST CHINA (1949-1976)

- **Historical Background**

### **Political and Economic**

The People's Republic of China was formally established in 1949 by Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) that was made up of 90% peasants at the time. On October 1, Mao declared "the Chinese people have stood up" it was a victory on behalf of "the workers, the peasants and soldiers". This declaration indicated the new dominant political ideology was the "people's democratic dictatorship" (Schoppa, 2006).

Chinese Communism led to a great deal of social upheaval during the early 1950s. As traditional understandings of property rights and social relationships, including marriage, were replaced by Marxist egalitarian ideology. While this period saw official changes in the status of women, as did the Republican period before it, including the outlawing of polygamy and concubinage, the passage of such laws did not at first change the customs of the people (Leung,

2003).

The fifties were a time of consolidation and challenge for the CCP. The performance of China in the Korean War was considered a source of national pride and strengthened the resolve of the Communist regime. However, financial difficulties caused by the removal of the treasury by the nationalists demanded that the government take swift action to develop the economy. This period saw a number of *five year* plans that established technological and economic goals for the republic and means by which to measure them. Generally these plans did not succeed and in 1958 the implementation of the *Great Leap Forward* ultimately resulted in the death of millions of Chinese by starvation. The commune policy that was enforced at this time had removed individual property rights and when the government shifted its focus to industrialization corrupt officials trying to gain face in the eyes of the government vastly overstated their production capacity. This led to a tremendous agricultural shortfall, as farmers were encouraged to produce iron (which turned out to be useless due to quality inconsistencies) rather than tend the fields.

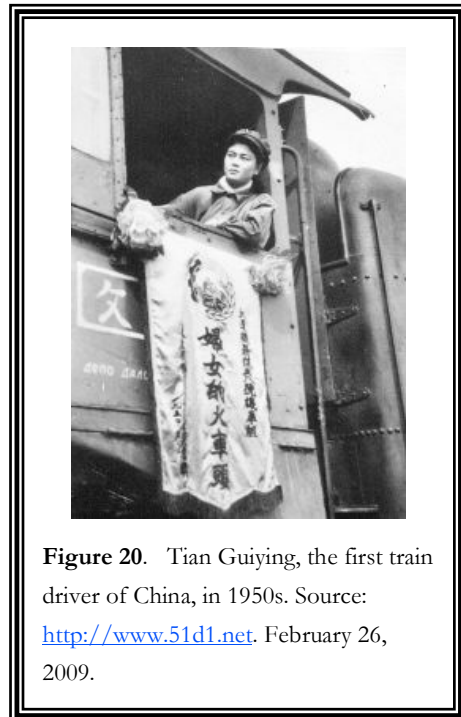
With the failure of the *Great Leap Forward* China languished developmentally and a split began to form in the Communist party. Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping felt that Mao's approach to development directly undermined China's ability to industrialize. People who publicly espoused this view or criticized Mao were branded as Counter-revolutionary and were regarded with deep suspicion.

Despite the catastrophic failure of Mao's development policies he remained a cultural hero. In 1966 suspicion regarding counter-revolutionaries developed into violence. The Red Guards - a group of students in Beijing began to violently pursue individuals questioning the

CCP. This behavior was encouraged by many people in positions of power, including Mao's wife. By the time it ended in 1969 an estimated 300-400,000 Chinese people were killed or imprisoned and countless cultural relics had been destroyed. After this period of social upheaval China again struggled economically. With the deaths of Mao and Zhou in 1976, China was forced to seek a new way forward. Hua Guofeng was named party leader at this time and Mao had earlier welcomed Deng Xiaoping back to the government despite his capitalist leanings. It would not be long before Deng Xiaoping came to power and a new era of development began for China (Schoppa 2006).

### **Women's Position**

“The Chinese communist policies regarding the gender relationship was based on the classical Marxist assumption that society is a struggle for power and dominance these struggle occurred among the social classes competing for control over the means of production and distribution of resources” (Leung, 2003, p. 363). This means that if the economy grows would everyone so that ideally there will be no struggling, people would be more motivated to work together instead of pursuing their individual interests.



**Figure 20.** Tian Guiying, the first train driver of China, in 1950s. Source: <http://www.51d1.net>. February 26, 2009.

In terms of labor resources and gender contributions to the economic activities, Mao's favorite saying was “Women hold up half the sky” (Jiang, 2001, p. 142). Women were to be an

integral part of society and politics. Mao emphasized the importance of women joining the workforce outside their homes (Figure 20). This change helped women to reinvent their status in the new political ideology. He believed that women would be liberated from feudal society through participation in paid work as well as the process of new marriage laws and land reforms (Leung, 2003, Lock, 1989).

In 1950, the new Marriage Law was passed. It was the first time in Chinese history that women gained rights regarding marriage, divorce, child custody and ownership of property. The possession of concubines, prostitution and female infanticide were prohibited. Later on, in the same year, the Land Reform Law also went into effect, the land was redistributed to peasants regardless of sex. The Chinese Constitution stated “The state protects the rights and interests of women and applies the principle of equal pay for equal work to men and women alike, cadres were chosen from both genders as well” (Beijing Review, March 4, 1985). “Women should participate with men, in political, economic, cultural and social activities, domestic and international alike. This is a woman’s legal right (1985, Article 48).

The government provided various opportunities for women to participate in social activities. As Tavis (1974) notes about 90% of women have been employed in various industries since the 1950s. Gender no longer determined income and status; even the full-time housewives were considered productive social labor in the home.

These new legislations and the new dominant ideologies led to a dramatic change in women’s position in the family and society. They were no longer subjugated to men. Women’s Committee Organizations were set up in government and various urban and rural area to encourage women to participate in economic, social and political activities as well as to

protect women (Bingham & Gross, 1980; Leung, 2003; Lock, 1989).

### **Dress Aesthetic**

Politics affected clothing in China under communist rule (Roberts, 1997; Steele & Major, 1999). On October the first 1949, Mao was wearing the reformed Sun yat-sen suit (Mao's suit) at the grand ceremony; he claimed that China should have its own national style of apparel. And that claim was reinforced by the way the government encouraged people to dress. The uniform of the People's Liberation Army was made of green cotton cloth. Government workers wore a grey administrative uniform while workers and peasants were clad in dark blue tunics and trousers (Steele & Major, 1999).

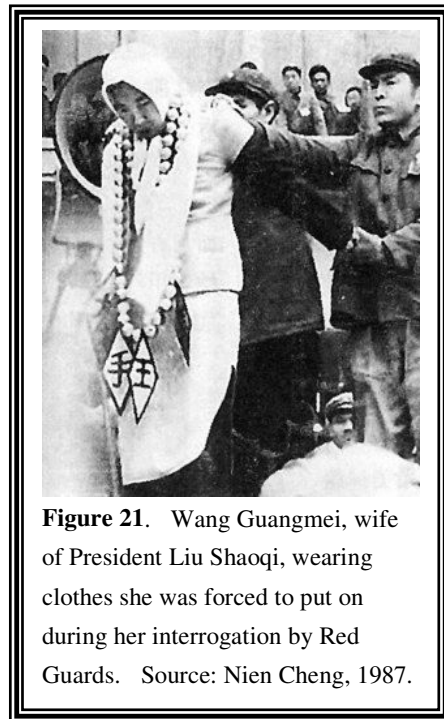
In the early part of the communist period, the fashion trend was towards simple and plain forms of dress. Following the trend set by Mao Zedong, the reformed Sun Yat-sen suit was adopted by the men and women, it was a sartorial symbol of Communist ideology. This style was popular in blue and grey (Clark, 2000; Roberts, 1997). When Soviet fashion was popular in China in mid 1950s some women were wearing *bulaji* ("dress" in Russian), an all-in-one dress, (Roberts, 1997). It demonstrated the ideology of socialism and anti-capitalism at the time. During the middle part of the 1960s, the grass green colored military uniform was very popular among Chinese people, no matter whether male or female, this symbolized force, violence and revolution during the Cultural Revolution (Chen, 2001).

Historical photographs showed that *qipao* was still worn as a part of daily dress in the city, during the early 1950s with a floral pattern and side slits were cut to the lower calf and sometimes these *qipao* were modified by pleats. However the *qipao* gradually disappeared



from every day life. By the 1960s, *qipao* was only used by the wives of government officials, when they accompanied their husbands travelling overseas or hosting visitors from foreign lands (Finnane, 1996). For example, Song Qingling, the widow of Sun Yat-sen demonstrated the transition of the dress code in communist China. She was still wearing *qipao* during the early 1950s, but due to the political environment, she adopted pants and jackets for daily wear in China. *Qipao* was only for formal occasion such as when she visited Sri Lanka in 1964 (1981, *Song Qingling Jinian Ji*, a collection in commemoration of Song Qingling). The visual analysis picture shows that Wang Guangmei, the sixth and final wife of President Liushaoqi, wore a *qipao* when she accompanied her husband on a trip to Indonesia in 1963 (Wang, 2006). However three years later she was imprisoned for many years during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). During that time, *qipao* was viewed as a feudal product, and a symbol of capitalism and the bourgeoisie (Finnane, 1996).

Dress became an acute symbol during the Cultural Revolution; attention to personal appearance was regarded as an expression and sign of bourgeois tendencies. Any traditional dress, Western suits, tie as well as other accessories were all be seen as the evidence of wearers' bourgeois past (Roberts, 1997). *Qipao* as traditional clothing, was categorized as one of the *Four Olds*: old ideas, old culture, old customs and old habits. As shown in Figure 21, Wang



**Figure 21.** Wang Guangmei, wife of President Liu Shaoqi, wearing clothes she was forced to put on during her interrogation by Red Guards. Source: Nien Cheng, 1987.

Guangmei was forced to dress up in her *qipao* with a ping-pong ball necklace with high-heeled

shoes, stand in front of a crowd and be interrogated by the Red Guard at Qinhua University (Finnane, 1996; Wang, 2006; Cheng, 1987).

After the Revolution, people of both genders, in all areas, and in all different kinds of professions began wearing variations of the Mao suit on a daily basis. The Mao suit became a symbol of proletarian unity, and was regularly worn by party cadres (Chen, 2001). *Qipao* no longer represented the Chinese nationality (Steele & Major, 1999). Instead it was a symbol of the banished bourgeoisie.

### **Qipao in Hong Kong**

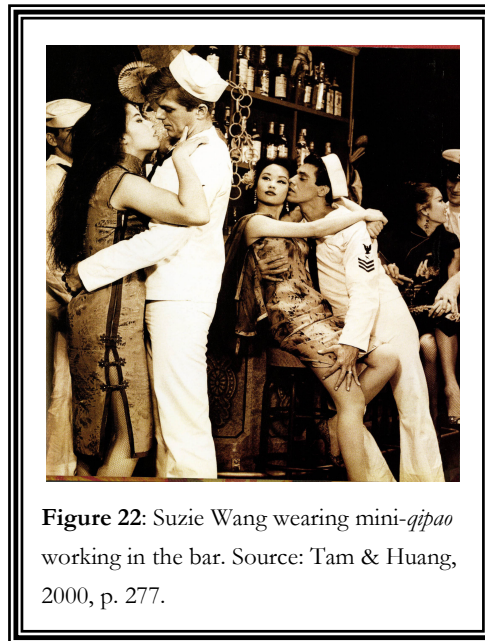
While *qipao* completely disappeared from China, it survived and developed in Hong Kong. During the Nationalist – Communist Civil War (1927-1949), many families and tailors moved to Hong Kong. At that time, Hong Kong was a British Colony (1841-1997) (Welsh, 1993), *qipao* was continually worn as daily dress. As Clark (2000) reported, the *qipao* gained the greatest popularity in 1950s. Under the influence of European fashion, the style of *qipao* evolved from loose fitting to tight fitting and took on a three-dimensional cut, creating a high waistline by adding darts at the back, front of the bust and waist areas. The side slits were lengthened with the Western zipper at the right side for easy wear and movement. All of the sartorial changes to the *qipao* were adopted by fashionable urban women in Hong Kong along with high-heeled shoes, white gloves and French leather clutch bags (Clark, 2000).

In the 1950s and 1960s, *qipao* was consciously promoted by the Hong Kong government as the preferred form of national dress and a signifier of Hong Kong's cultural identity. It was used in various beauty contests and adopted as female hostess' uniform for formal

ceremonies (Clark, 2000).

In the 1960s, when mini skirts were a fashion trend in the West, the mini-*qipao* appeared in Hong Kong. However, it was not accepted by the majority of people. It was considered to be revealing too much of women's body and skin. In doing so, it highlighted their sexuality but not the *qipao's* elegant qualities. In the beginning of the 1970s, the mini-*qipao* was rejected

by *respectable* women. But it became popular in the entertainment industry. The *bar girls* adopted it as their professional uniform largely due to influence from the film industry. For example, the movie called *The World of Suzie Wang* (1961), tells a love story about an American artist who falls in love with a prostitute Suzie in Hong Kong (Figure 22).



Suzie throughout the film wears a tightly fitting

*qipao* with high side slits and the hemlines ending just below the knee (Clark, 2000; Yang 2007). As Finnane (1996) pointed out, this movie created the link between *qipao* and sexiness. By the end of 1960s, *qipao* in Hong Kong was gradually going out of fashion.

Meanwhile, mass-produced and ready-to-wear Western style garments were becoming more and more popular for the younger generation and were available for purchase at relatively cheap prices. Hand-made *qipao* became expensive and inconvenient for active women as daily wear (Clark, 2000).



a. Zhou Enlai and Wang Guangmei visiting Burma in 1966. Source: Wang, 2006, p.139.



b. Qipao style in 1950s–1960s. Source: Zhao & Gao, 1987, p.235.



c. Liu Shaoqi and his wife visiting Baoyuyuan in 1950s. Source: Wang, 2006, p.94.

**Figure 23.** Examples of *qipao* during Communist China (1949 - 1976).

- **DeLong's Visual Structure Analysis**

**Observation**

(a) Provides an example of *qipao* style during the Communist China, the silhouette can be seen in (b). (c) Presents the dominant dress code of the time. The picture (a) shows a middle-aged woman wearing a full length *qipao*. *Qipao* fastens on right, sleeves are short and extend to the elbow. The collar stands up slightly and the *qipao* ends mid-way up the calf. The *qipao* is somewhat tight but not restrictive; there are slits in the skirt portion so that movement is not restricted. The material may be silk and if it is embroidered, the embroidery is roughly the same color and texture of the *qipao*

The dress appears visually primary in the related environment due to its bright color. The clothed is viewed as a whole due to the dominant bright color of the dress, purse and shoes, all contrasting with the background.

**Structure Analysis**

**Planar-Integration----- ✗ -- Planar-Separation**

Hard edged silhouette and clear simple surface separates the clothed body from the background.

**Closed-- ✗ -----Open**

Flat white color with smooth, simple, clear silhouette lines.

**Whole--- ✗ -----Parts**

Simple, dominant color allows the clothed body to be viewed as a whole where the skin and hair are the only other focal points.

**Determinate----- ✗ -----Indeterminate**

The clothed body stands out completely from the background due to the contrasting color of the dress. There is no visual texture and limited light or shadow reflection.

**Flat---- ✗ -----Rounded**

Simple and smooth surface and small, simple edge effects creates a two-dimensional effect.

**Table 5.** Analysis of visual structure of *qipao* during Communist China (1949 - 1976).

- **Cultural Interpretation and Evaluation**

The *qipao* garment was very outstanding when positioned next to the earth-colored Mao suit; however the dressed body itself almost blended together. There were no focal points due

to the simple, clear silhouette and solid color. The simple and settled *qipao* in picture (a) and (b) doesn't particularly show any of the body's figures. Figure 23.c showed Wang Guang-mei wearing the Mao suit standing next to her husband, Liu Shaoqi; the dress was simple, androgynous and unfeminine, it represents a mainstreaming of fashion at that time: in communist China, men and women were all dressed to demonstrate their likeness as workers rather than their sexual and emotional unlikeness as human beings. Women were expected to work as men to diligently and thriftily build the nation (Yang, 2007; Croll, 1977a).

Mao Zedong as the founder of Communist China gave his perspective on gender differentiation in dress in 1919 well before *qipao* fashion emerged. He said:

“If a woman's head and a man's head are actually the same, and there is no real difference between a woman's waist and a man's, why must women have their hair piled up in those ostentatious and awkward buns? Why must they wear those messy skirts cinched tightly at the waist? I think women are regarded as criminals to start with, and tall buns and long skirts are the instruments of torture applied to them by men. There is also their facial makeup, which is the brand of a criminal; the jewelry on their hands, which constitutes shackles; and their pierced ears and bound feet, which represent corporal punishment. Schools and families are their prisons. They dare not voice their pain, nor step out from behind closed doors. If we ask, how can they escape this suffering, my answer is, only by raising a women's revolutionary army” (Scharm, 1992, p. 353).

His ideology indicated that Communist China inaugurated in 1949 was not only a social and political revolution but also a sartorial revolution. Mao wore a reformed Sun Yat-sen suit with trousers that came subsequently to be known in the West as the Mao Suit (Li, 1994) in the grand ceremony declaring a difference from the rest of the world. He claimed that China should have its own national dress. The transformation of the Chinese dress code in the following few years soon matched political events. The purpose of the Cultural Revolution was to clean out anything and educate anyone that didn't belong to the communist ideology.

During that time, the dominant dress, a grass green gender neutral military uniform indicated the most important political information. This message was that the dress of people within a political system can convey the right of the wearer to make decisions on behalf of people within a particular governmental unit. Further, the most important aspect of this dress, particularly for police and military personnel, was that it commands instant recognition of the right of the wearer not only to make decisions but to use force to maintain social order or wage war (Barnes & Eicher, 1993).

Fashionable items from the West were considered to be bizarre, and marked the wearer as a capitalist. *Qipao*, on the other hand, was an old product, marking the wearer as belonging to feudalism. As Finnane (1996) pointed out “It was marked by an aloofness from China that reflected and was informed by the political climate. Caught between fears of the imminent demise of traditional Chinese culture on the one hand and of the world succumbing to communism on the other, sinologists divided their attention between Tang poetry, the Western impact, and political science-to exaggerate the situation only slightly” (p. 100).

Women’s movements in the past certainly made some progress regarding women’s social status, and customs like foot-binding were abolished. Women were given more opportunities for education. But these opportunities were limited to certain urban areas and did not become widespread or well accepted. Because male supremacy was embedded in the hierarchical social structure and the dominant ideology, this change barely touched the traditional hierarchical system in which women were still subjugated to men (Lock, 1989). As Mao (1956) put it: “A man in China is usually subjected to three systems of authority (political authority, clan authority, and religious authority). As for women, in addition to being

dominated by these three authorities, the men (the authority of the husband) also dominate them “(p. 44). Mao called for new ethics to replace Confucian ideology, for women’s emancipation and for a more liberal order. His ideology about *gender equality* was that whatever male comrades can achieve, female comrades can do too (Lock, 1989; Bingham & Gross, 1980). The Constitution of the People’s Republic of China states that “Women in the People’s Republic of China enjoy equal rights with men in all spheres of life, political, economic, cultural and social, including family life” (Article 48).

Under Mao’s leadership, along with the women’s economic and education level increasing, women no longer identified themselves as subordinate to men. The relationship between men and women changed from vertical to horizontal. However, under Mao’s *gender equality* women’s position as labor producers as well as political activists was given credibility. However, his gender ideology not only neglected gender differences but also emphasized desexualization. Women were not only expected to work as hard as men but were also expected to look men. They wore shapeless clothes with short hair, walked and behaved in a very masculine fashion. This kind of *iron woman* was the stereotypical model of the liberation (Leung, 2003).



## ECONOMIC REFORM (1976-2000)

- **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### Political and Economic

In 1978, two years after Mao's death, Hua Guofeng was replaced by Deng Xiaoping as the Chinese Head of State. Hua's policy of continuing the Maoist economic plan was rejected by most of the party leaders who felt that Deng's vision offered a better chance for industrial development.

Deng Xiaoping began to reform the economic system in China beginning with the rural reforms of 1978 that permitted farmers to lease land from the government and to keep the profits earned from the products they sold. As a direct result of this, the per capita income for farmers between 1978 and 1984 doubled. This led to increases in demand for consumer products that then led to industrialization.

Deng also encouraged the development of special industrialization zones where individual municipalities would be able to manage investment and infrastructure by being granted the ability to pass provincial level legislation. By 1979 the world recognized the People's Republic of China as the true China. With increased diplomatic contact China was able to encourage foreign investment.

The 1980s saw a dramatic growth in economic and infrastructural development. However political rights still hung back. Increased contact with democratic states had led to awareness of foreign conceptions of civil rights among students in the developed cities. In the Spring of 1989, this led to the Tiananmen square protests at which for the first time Chinese

military forces were used to suppress the Chinese citizenry. It remains unclear how many students were killed or injured during the protests, however the message from the Chinese government was clear domestically and internationally. Economic liberalization in China does not lead to political liberalization.

Despite the political fallout from the events of 1989, trade with China continued to increase throughout the 1990s. Chosen by Deng Xiaoping to wield political power, Jiang Zeming and Zhu Rongji were strong reformers and centrists from the Shanghai area who were known as the Shanghai Cadre. The development policies of gradual reform and industrialization advocated by Deng were continued under Jiang and Zhu after his death in 1997. The Shanghai Cadres' hold on power remained firm for more than a decade and witnessed the rise of China as a political and industrial power (Schoppa, 2006).

### **Women's Position**

The economic reforms were particularly beneficial for Chinese women. It not only provided employment and improved Chinese working conditions for the labor force, but also increased women's economic status in society as well as in the family. Highly educated women working in managerial positions grew to 6.1% in 2000 from 2.9% in 1990. Women employed in professional or technical jobs rose to 22.8% from 17.4% according to the National Bureau of Statistics of China (Wang, 2005, p. 36). While their financial power increased in society, Chinese women not only earned higher social status but also had the ability to redefine beauty and create new self-images. The *iron women* wearing men's clothes and working like men disappeared with Communist China (Wang, 2005).

Despite the rise in women's position in Chinese society, overwhelmingly men did not support women's increased independence and financial power. At this point men felt that the rise of women into the middle class posed a threat to the traditional patriarchal society. This was somewhat mitigated by women's inability to be educated in politics and to take an active role in government (Leung 2003).

### Dress Aesthetics

Along with the Deng Xiao-ping's Open Up and Reform policy in 1978, a new dress culture became one part of the dialogue between China and the rest of the world. With the national economy

developing rapidly, the Chinese people learned to wear different dress to suit various occasions, match color and textiles as well as design (Figure 24). Their dress and make-up gradually became exquisite (Yang, 2007). From the late 1980s, jeans, decent suits, short skirts, and elegantly styled dresses were available for Chinese women.

*Qipao* was regulated as the Chinese national dress in the Republic of China, also regained national status due to the influence of the government. In 1985 the Chinese government for the first time sent a model to participate in a fashion show in France who presented a *qipao* style based design collection. This resulted in establishing *qipao* as Chinese identity internationally (Finnane, 1996; Zhang, 2002). Along with the new policy of reform and open,



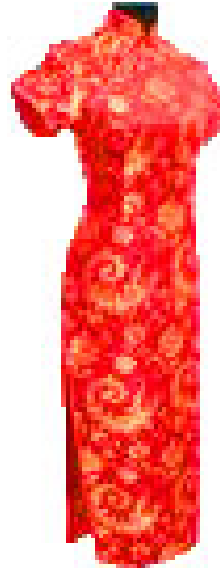
**Figure 24.** The cover page of the first issue of *Modern Dress Magazine*, in 1981. Source: Finnane, 2008, p. 268.

the Chinese tourist industry became more and more prosperous. The service industry borrowed the national identity character of *qipao* and used it as a uniform for waitresses, and hostesses in restaurants as well as hotel staff to attract foreign tourists. This trend was largely influenced by Hong Kong (Clark, 2000). Later on they were restyled into mini-*qipao* or long *qipao* with slits cut very high at the thigh. These styles appeared in various bars and night clubs where sexiness was popular. All of this led to *qipao* not regaining the status as women's daily wear.

However, in 1998, there was a fad for wearing *qipao* as a part of daily wear in China (Yang, 2007). Due to some Hong Kong designers' collections of *qipao*-inspired dresses, they were worn at formal parties in 1997. This was the year that Hong Kong was returned to China. Along with the Hong Kong movie called *In the Mood for Love* released in 1998 in China, *qipao*, as well as other traditional dress became popular, adopted by a majority of young women in coastal cities (Chew, 2007). Also, according to Yuan (2000) and Zhang (2002) as well as other Western scholars, a lot of Western designers adopted *qipao* style elements as their new design inspiration. This indicated that Chinese national style was valued by Westerners at that time.



**a.** Two women wear restaurant *qipao* uniform.  
Source: [www.bbsimg.cnnb.com.cn](http://www.bbsimg.cnnb.com.cn). February 27, 2009.



**b.** Illustration of *qipao* uniform in restaurants.  
Source: [www.showchina.org](http://www.showchina.org).  
February 27, 2009.



**c.** *Qipao* used as a hostess' uniform. Source: Hu, 2007, p.92.

**Figure 25.** Examples of *qipao* during Economic Reform Period (1976-2000).

- **DeLong's Visual Analysis**

<p><b><u>Observation</u></b></p> <p>(a) Provides an example of <i>qipao</i> used as a uniform in restaurants in 1990s, the silhouette can be seen in (b). (c) Provides an example of <i>qipao</i> used as a uniform of hostess in 1980s. The picture (a) shows two women wearing full-length <i>qipaos</i>. Both <i>qipao</i> fasten on the right, and have short sleeves that end just below the shoulder. The collar stands up slightly and the <i>qipao</i> ends at mid calf. The <i>qipao</i> is tight fitting with slits on either side of the lower portion. This prevents the <i>qipao</i> from restricting movement and also makes the legs more visible. The material appears to be patterned satin, there is no embroidery on this <i>qipao</i>. Folds and creases in this <i>qipao</i> imply that the material is low quality.</p> <p>This <i>qipao</i> is surface and shadow dominant through the metallic colorful pattern woven into the textile. The textured surface creates contrast and visual depth. The silhouette stresses an overall rounded, three-dimensional female form. The eyes tend to focus on the upper torso due to the multiple colors and textures.</p>
<p><b><u>Analysis</u></b></p> <p><b>Planar-Integration-----X -- Planar-Separation</b>          Strong color contrast clearly distinguishes the clothed body from the background.</p> <p><b>Closed---X -----Open</b>          Hard edges and the dominant color create a smooth, simple and self-contained silhouette that contrasts with the background.</p> <p><b>Whole-----X -----Parts</b>          Metallic colored patterns on the surface create multiple focal points but the clothed body is still seen as a whole due to the dominant red color.</p> <p><b>Determinate-----X -----Indeterminate</b>          Dominant color strongly contrasts against its background so that there is little blending within the surface.</p> <p><b>Flat-----X -----Round</b>          Light reflection and highly contrasting colors creates visual depth and three-dimensional effect.</p>
<p><b>Table 6.</b> Analysis of visual structure of <i>qipao</i> during Economic Reform Period (1976-2000).</p>

- **Cultural Interpretation and Evaluation**

Regardless of what women wore in China, their presence was considered relatively subdued among symbols of China. *Qipao* during the Economic Reform Period presents a cultural problem (Yang, 2007; Finnane, 2008; Finnane & McLaren, 1999). Women tend to be

considered as keepers of a culture (Kaiser, 1997). Thus revival of old customs and rites such as reestablishing *qipao* as national dress seems reasonable. However the rise and fall of women's status and political power as well as the national preference and then abhorrence of the *qipao* contributes to a history of Chinese women being pawns in political evolution and revolution.

When comparing the history of Chinese women with their Japanese counterpart, the integrity of Japanese women's identity is consistently tied to the Kimono. That Chinese women's allowed dress is markedly different in some periods than others contributes to the instability of their political and social status and the tendency for Chinese women to be powerless (Roberts, 1997; Croll, 1977b).

The *qipao* stood as a national costume in the 1990s but was neither commonly worn nor very highly regarded. In 1992, there was one note regarding the *qipao* in the Beijing magazine *Shizhuang* (1992, Fashion).

The *qipao* was very widespread. After Liberation it became a formal dress for state banquets and external activities. When [Deng Xiaoping's] reforms were implemented and the country opened up, things changed enormously. The *qipao* was no longer worn by wives at state functions and was very rarely seen on the streets. It has become just a uniform for hotel staff. Our right and proper national dress had for some reason or other in the end been reduced to this (Nie, 1992, p. 11).

*Qipao* was not only considered an inconvenient form of dress in modern life but also inappropriate for virtuous women to wear since they hadn't been struggling and fought hard for their social position (Finnane, 2000; Yang, 2007). These poorly made uniform *qipao*, with minimal fashion-aesthetic motivation, were considered to have tarnished the classic and elegant perception of the *qipao* and further discouraged regular use of it. However it certainly

attracted the male's gaze. With Chinese conservative beauty ideas suddenly crushed by Western cultural invasion, a majority of men in China tended to appreciate it. However these same men were limited to looking at other women not their own wives. It created a famous saying about a perfect wife at the time: outdoors she looks like a lady; indoors she looks like housewife; in bed she looks like a slut.

There was one post on *Zhongguo Fushi Bao* (Chinese Clothing Newspaper) regarding the representation of Chinese women abroad by Deng Xiaping, China's foremost female conductor. According to the interview for a fashion broadsheet in May 1995, Deng's reaction to the *qipao* was to associate it with prostitutes after she saw a Hong Kong movie called *Women of the East* in the 1960s.

## CAPITALIST CHINA (2000-PRESENT)

- **Historical Background**

### **Political and Economic**

The Economic Reforms begun by Chairman Deng succeeded in getting China on the road to political and economic security. By the year 2000, China had the fastest growing economy in the world. Jiang Zeming continued the reform policies of his predecessor and in 2001 China joined the World Trade Organization, casting off the last vestiges of the communism.

In 2003 Hu Jintao succeeded Jiang as chairman, and by 2005 Jiang had completely retired from politics. During Jiang's tenure corruption in China flourished under the aforementioned Shanghai cadre. Once Hu firmly held the reigns of power he made a point of pursuing



corruption. The new Chinese administration began prosecuting officials under existing anti-corruption laws regardless of their position in the government. This combined with a new interest in the protection of property rights attracted increasing amounts of foreign investment to China.

Recently China has had to deal with issues over production quality and tainted food. With the current recession the Chinese government is increasing government expenditures on infrastructure in order to relieve some of the unemployment problems. In 2008 China became the world's third largest economy, and the largest production based economy in the world. This has led to a dramatic increase in the standard of living over the past two decades, and a growth gap between the rich and the poor. China has tried to limit this gap with progressive social security and tax legislation that benefits rural workers. This has made Hu Jintao and his Premiere Wen Jiabao very popular among the Chinese citizenry.

### **Women's Position**

In the post reform period women were once again subjugated under a patriarchal system. Currently models of good Chinese women are portrayed as housewives or in more flexible interpretations as career women that are still able to provide for their families. Women in the popular media are portrayed as weak and needing the protection of men because of the limitations of their biology (Leung 2003). Women's labor has also been devalued during this period. Women are paid less than men for the same labor and so a woman's income is considered less valuable to the family. In fact some officials even went so far as to argue that women should return home so that there would be more career opportunities for men (Leung

2003).

The traditional Confucian values that centered on the family as the lynch pin of society were reaffirmed in the contemporary period. In this way contemporary China has again relegated women to a subordinate role in society (Leung 2003). However, women currently are becoming aware of their increased financial power and better able to resist patriarchy (Chow, Zhang, & Wang, 2004).

### **Dress Aesthetic**

There is no fashion distance between China and the rest of world since 2000. Chinese people follow the latest fashion trends when they shop for their clothing. They want clothes that not only cover their bodies but also express their personality, mood, outlook and sometimes nationality just like those that live abroad.

Since the end of the 1990s, Chinese traditional dress has been endorsed by the Chinese government as well as the global fashion industry. In 1994, in order to get Chinese women to recognize and reaccept *qipao* as the national dress, the *Fashion Times* for the first time published a forum on *qipao* to raise awareness of the *qipao* (Chew, 2007). In 2001, the Chinese government promoted male national dress the *tangzhuang* for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting as well as BOAO Forum for the Asia meeting in 2002. *Tangzhuang*, which literally means Chinese clothing refers to the Chinese jacket that originated from Qing Dynasty's riding jacket (Zhang, 2002; Chew, 2007). When people saw the image of President Bush and the Premier Jiang in *tangzhuang* jackets (Figure 26), the Chinese traditional style of clothes as *China Today News* reported "subsequently flooded the

market, and appeared overnight in shopping malls, boutiques and clothing wholesale markets. Many small tailor shops also sprang up to join in this trend, purveying custom-made traditional clothes (Zhang, 2002).

*Qipao* during the 1980s and early 1990s in China was mainly used in the service industry. However along with global



**Figure 26.** Chinese Chairman Jiang Zemin and American President George Bush dressed in tangzhuang in Asia-Pacific Economic Meeting in 2001. Source: <http://www.chinatoday.com.cn>. February 27, 2009.

fashion, media as well as Chinese government affected its status. *Qipao* in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century regained the respect and favor of Chinese women. There were three groups of consumers using *qipao* in contemporary China. The first was wealthy, high educated and fashion-conscious elite women in the largest Chinese metropolises who wore expensive haute couture or exquisitely tailored *qipao* made by either famous designers or local tailors as formal dresses for attending high status social parties. The second group was young stylish people who used mass produced, but affordable, trendy *qipao* as fashion-wear. The third group was women who were employed in the service industry like restaurants, bars, and night clubs and used *qipao* as a sexual dress that highlighted the figure and bodily features (Yang, 2007).

*Qipao* was also purchased by foreign tourists as an exotic cultural souvenir. Chinese people who lived and studied abroad used *qipao* as formal wear on ceremonial and diplomatic occasions (Chew, 2007).



a. The author dressed in *qipao* in her wedding ceremony in 2002. Personal photograph.



b. Illustration of traditional *qipao* in contemporary China. Personal photograph.



c. The author dressed in *qipao*. Personal photograph.

**Figure 27.** Examples of *qipao* during Capitalist China (2000 to present).

- **DeLong's Visual Analysis**

**Observation**

(a) Provides an example of traditional *qipao* used as a wedding dress at contemporary era, the detail shape and silhouette can be seen in (b) and (c). The picture (a) shows a woman wearing a full-length *qipao*. The *qipao* fastens on the right and is sleeveless. Around the armholes is a green trim, the same color as the fasteners. The collar is high and stands up. The *qipao* extends to the ankle. The *qipao* is neither loose nor tight and slits on both sides of the *qipao* allow for freedom of movement. The material appears to be red textured silk with a thin green hem.

This clothed body is integrated with layout, surface and shadow. The combination of green and red color throughout the whole garment creates a clean, clear and simple silhouette as well as a viewing path transition. The multiple focal points, like flowers on the head, neckline, shawl and shoes also lead the eyes to jump from one to the other.

**Structure Analysis**

**Planar-Integration-----X-- Planar-Separation**

The dominant color visually separates the clothed body from the background.

**Closed--X-----Open**

The green color binding on the edge of the garment creates a clear, simple silhouette. The eye-catching colors strongly stand out in the picture and clearly forms a closed form.

**Whole-----X-----Parts**

Multiple focal points progressively build the whole.

**Determinate-----X-----Indeterminate**

The highly reflective surface of the main garment is rather indeterminate but the high contrast trim is more determinate since simple.

**Flat-----X-----Round**

Color contrast on the garment and shawl with its accompanying shadow and light reflection create rounded and three-dimensional effects.

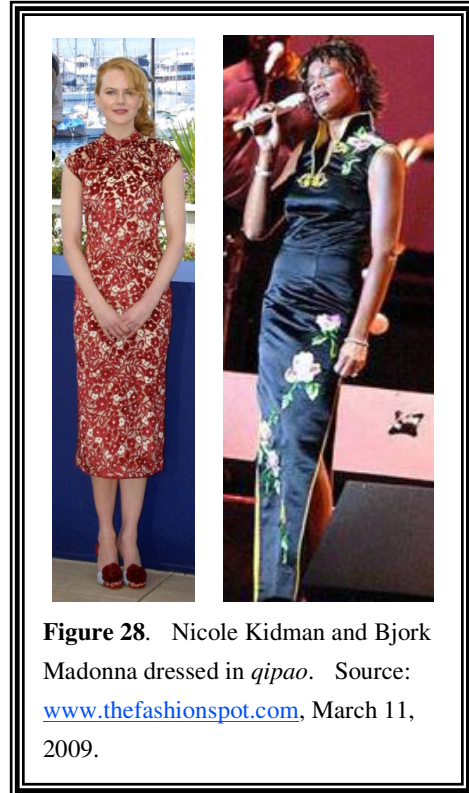
**Table 7.** Analysis of visual structure of *qipao* during Capitalist China (2000 to present).

- **Cultural Interpretation and Evaluation**

Within the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Chinese economy became more and more powerful internationally. During this time, the Chinese government was enthusiastic about reconstructing *qipao* as the symbol of national dress (Chew, 2007). *Qipao* fashion re-emerged

in contemporary China in connection with nationalism. It became very common to see female performers or hostesses dressed in *qipao* in various international and domestic official and semi-official ceremonies (Clark, 2000; Yuan, 2000).

Western designers meanwhile incorporated *qipao*-like dresses in their collections on the run way since the 1990s. This created a global trend towards *orientalism*. Some Chinese designers also promoted *going ethnic* or a *self-orientalizing gaze*. This kind of global fashion was also promoted by global celebrities and superstars who wore *qipao* to attend formal occasions at the end of the 1990s and the early part of this century. Famous people like the Spice Girls who wore *qipao* in 1997 made *qipao* in vogue



**Figure 28.** Nicole Kidman and Bjork Madonna dressed in *qipao*. Source: [www.thefashionspot.com](http://www.thefashionspot.com), March 11, 2009.

among superstars. In 2002 and 2003, Nicole Kidman and Madonna (Figure 28), Jennifer Lopez and Japanese fashion icon Ayumi Hamasaki were all seen in *qipao*. Chinese celebrities like Zhang Ziyi and Gong Li also wore *qipao* regularly on domestic occasions as well as internationally (the [fashionspot.com](http://www.thefashionspot.com), 2009). This kind of Chinese wind of *qipao* fashion exaggerated the popularity of representing the national cultural symbol of *oriental femininity and beauty* (Chew, 2007).

Due to the influence of the Hong Kong film industry, sexiness was gradually becoming one of *qipao*'s symbolic meanings, it started as early as the 1970s while *qipao* was used as a work uniform in the service industry to cater to tourists. *The World of Suzie Wang* and *In the*

*Mood for Love* movies were the most representative examples of this. The characters in these films were dressed in extremely tight *qipao* with high cut slits. However, with the media and commercial advertisements portrayed that “Sex sells”, “being sexy is not wrong”.

(brandautopsy.typepad.com, 2005). In recent years, computer games were developed with powerful women dressed in sexy oriental looking dresses. This meaning has been particularly seen among global celebrities (Chew, 1997).

## 5. CONCLUSION

The role of clothing was considered a very important matter in ancient China; this implies that dress was a powerful symbol of national spirit. The style, color, pattern, and material were designed in a way that corresponded to the Chinese political philosophy, and sense of humanity (Wang, 1957). In the Confucian view, clothes acted as an instrument of the emperor's power through which he ruled the world; clothes served to distinguish between the civilized and barbaric, they were symbols of gender, age and position in the social hierarchy. Strict rules regulating dress were implemented during imperial times, there were laws regulating the cut, color and decoration of costumes. Clothing in traditional China has always acted as a marker of cultural identity (Steele & Major, 1999) and as such was related to politics, ideology, economics and the arts (Zhou & Gao, 1987)

This study has demonstrated that the origin of *qipao* was indicative of Chinese women's liberation. It was originally created and adopted by Shanghai college students in the 1926; it was the symbol of women's emancipation. It freed women from the layers of traditional dress and the constraints of Confucianism; therefore, the study explained the first research question.

This study also clearly shows that the changes in *qipao* style through the five time periods were directly related to Chinese women's position in socioeconomic and political development. Cultural change had the strongest impact as it genuinely determined the position of women in Chinese society.

At the end of Qing Dynasty, women were considered the property of men and there were strict rules governing their behavior. During this time women were required to wear clothes that were restrictive and the types of adornments they could wear were based upon the status of



their family in the Qing hierarchy. Women were covered in layers of clothes and were not permitted to show any body parts, their inner virtue was conveyed by their movements and this was considered more important than external beauty.

The *qipao* fashion emerged in 1926 during the Republic of China, due to the combination of the emancipation of women to pursue education, employment and free choice in marriage during the 1910s and the Anti-Western Movement in the 1920s. *Qipao* at this time represented women's emancipation as it partially evolved from the long robes worn by men at this time. It also allowed more freedom of movement and showed more of the woman's body than the clothing of the Qing dynasty. Due to the changes in culture women's clothes were largely influenced by Western fashion during the Republican period. *Qipao* during this period varied from loose to tight fitting depending upon the relative conservatism of the time. In 1929 the *qipao* was regulated as the national dress for women and was recognized as the symbol of Chinese femininity by 1940 when it was worn by Song Meiling.

The *qipao* almost disappeared during the communist period from the 1950s until the 1980s when women were encouraged to look and act like men. Gender differences were not only minimized but an emphasis was placed on desexualization. The iron woman was the image of Mao's female gender ideology "women hold up half of the sky". As mentioned above wives of prominent government officials would occasionally wear *qipao* on foreign visits, or while entertaining foreign dignitaries, but for the most part the *qipao* was abandoned during this period. During the Cultural Revolution, *qipao* symbolized feudalism and bourgeoisie fashion. It was not until the period of Economic Reform that the *qipao* made a comeback.

During the period of economic reform, the *qipao* began to return, but not as the symbol of

Chinese femininity that it once was. Under the influence from Hong Kong, *qipao* was initially adopted mainly by the service industry in China as a uniform and was primarily seen on hostesses and waitresses. At this time some educated women were employed in various positions, however, unlike during the communist period the majority were once again placed beneath men in the financial and political hierarchy. The *qipao* at this time was associated primarily with the service industry and virtuous women would not wear it.

By the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century the *qipao* not only regained its status as the cultural symbol of Chinese femininity but also become internationalized fashion. The traditional style of *qipao* became associated with elegance and ethnic identity and was worn for formal occasions by celebrities in Asia and the West. The modern *qipao* or *qipao*-inspired dress are associated with the international fashion trend of oriental beauty look, it added acceptable sexiness to the symbolism of *qipao*. Women in contemporary China are highly educated however there is still a stress on the role of the woman as home-maker and the individual most responsible for raising the next generation. The gentleness, refinement, and modesty of the traditional Confucian female remain important qualities with an added focus on appropriate education which has become a new standard of women's. However, while the struggle for gender equality continues in China, women are now more comfortable with their femininity and showing it tastefully and publicly, hence the elegance of the modern *qipao*.

Thus, we can see that research question two is also explained by this study. The changes in *qipao* clearly are related directly and indirectly to women's position within Chinese society. The meaning of the *qipao* changed throughout history as its significance and audience changed.

## SIGNIFICANCE

### **Use of DeLong's Theory Clarifies Qipao Origins**

DeLong used her methodology Visual Structure Analysis in the United States successfully. This study demonstrates that DeLong's framework can also be used cross-culturally as a useful tool in determining the origins of the *qipao*. By doing comparisons across historical time periods, it was feasible to determine the validity of the claim that the *qipao* evolved directly from the Manchu robe. Ultimately this form analysis supported the conclusion that the elements of the *qipao* from its earliest days came from a variety of sources not just the Manchu robe, but also from western sources.

### **Explores Qipao Meaning Historically**

This study explored the meaning of the *qipao* historically. Analyzing the changes in symbolism across several time periods, demonstrates how the *qipao* evolved from a symbol of national identity, to a symbol of feudal and bourgeoisie excess, to a representation of a lack of virtue, and finally returning to its status as an international icon representing Chinese femininity.

### **Explores Chinese Cultural Changes And Their Impact On Women And Qipao**

This research explores the historical changes in China from the end of the Qing dynasty to the present. It identifies the impact that periods of political and economic upheaval had on Chinese women and how this was represented in their clothing and lifestyle. We see how women's struggle for equality was represented in various time periods and the varying degrees

of success that women had in fighting for legal, financial, and political equality. We also see the changes in the willingness and level of acceptance in showing the female form through the changes in *qipao* fashion throughout history.

## LIMITATIONS

### **Non-Random Sample of Pictures**

Pictures were selected from existing literary and media sources. Due to the use of DeLong's theory it was necessary to select photographs that most clearly displayed the model's full body and the overall length and form of the *qipao*. Because of these criteria, the sample is biased slightly towards images with high resolution and full body framing. Historical pictures are primarily taken of prominent historical figures and thus may not represent the fashions worn by the common people, though it is likely those fashions were influenced by the celebrities.

### **Rural Women Not Discussed**

As stated in the methodology, this research focused on the Middle and Upper class of the Shanghai area. Due to this limitation this research cannot make assertions about *qipao* adoption and style in rural areas.

### **Position of Women Oversimplified**

In each time period the struggle for gender equality was complex. Due to the nature of this research it was necessary to generalize the position of women during each of these time periods. The statements made in the previous sections represent on average the position of women in urban areas during the time period discussed.

## 6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alison, L. (1981). *The Language of Clothes*. New York: Random House.
- Anonymous. (1985, March 4). Chinese women active in world arena. *Beijing View*.
- Arthur, L. B. (1999). Dress and the social construction of gender in two sororities. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 17(2), 84-93.
- Bao, M. (2004a). *Jindai Zhongguo Nvzhuang Shilu (The Memoir of Neoteric Chinese Women's Clothes)*. Shanghai: Donghua University Press.
- Bao, M. (2004b). Chinese lady's dailywear in late Qing Dynasty and early Republic Period. In *Jindai Zhongguo Nvzhuang Shilu (The Memoir of Neoteric Chinese Women's Clothes)*. Shanghai: Donghua University Press.
- Bao, T. (1973). *Yi shi zhu xing de bainian bianqian (One Hundred Years of Change in Good, Clothing, Accommodation and Travel)*. Hong Kong: Dahua Press.
- Barnes, R., & Eicher, J. B. (eds.). (1993). *Dress and Gender: Making and Meaning in Cultural Contexts* (pp. 1-28). New York: Berg Publishers.
- Berger, A. A. (1992). *Reading Matter: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Material Culture*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers.
- Bian, X. (1997). Shanghai's fashion during the late Qing Dynasty period. *Journal of China Textile University*, 14(3), 55-56.
- Bian, X. (2006). *In terms of Original Prevalence of Qipao (lun qipao de liuxing qi yuan)*.
- Bian, X. (2003). Origin of qipao fashion in early Republic period. *Journal of Donghua University*, 20(4), 21-26.
- Bingham, M. W., & Gross, S. H. (1980). *Women in Modern China: Transition, Revolution and Contemporary Times. Women in World Area Studies*. Hudson, Wisconsin: Gary E. McCuen Publications, Inc.
- Brandautopsy. typepad.comBrand (2005). Autopsy: Sex Sells. Retrieved March 12, 2009, from [http://brandautopsy.typepad.com/brandautopsy/2005/10/sex\\_sells.html](http://brandautopsy.typepad.com/brandautopsy/2005/10/sex_sells.html)
- Chang, E. (1987). Chinese life and fashions. *Lianhe wenxue (Unitas)*, 3(5), 66-72.

- Chang, P. N. (1996). *Bound Feet & Western Dress*. New York, NY: Doubleday.
- Chen, D. (1919). Xin Qingnian xuanchuan, 7(1).
- Chen, R., & Chen, W. (2007). Study on silhouette evolution and construction design change of qipao. *Journal of Zhejiang Sci-Tech University*, 24(2), 155-159.
- Chen, T. M. (2001). Dressing for the party: clothing, citizenship, and gender-formation in Mao's china. *Fashion Theory*, 5(2), 143-172.
- Cheng, N. (1987). *Life and Death in Shanghai*. London: Grafton Books.
- Chew, M. (2007). Contemporary re-emergence of the qipao: political nationalism, cultural production and popular consumption of a traditional Chinese dress. *The China Quarterly*, 189(-1).
- Chow, E. N., Zhang, N., & Wang, J. (2004). Promising and contested fields: women's studies and sociology of women/gender in contemporary china. *Gender Society*, 18(2), 161-188.
- Claire, R. (Ed.). (1997). *Evolution & Revolution Chinese Dress 1700s ~ 1990s*. Sydney: Powerhouse Publishing.
- Clark, H. (2000). *The Cheongsam*. Hong Kong; New York: Oxford University Press.
- Cochran, S. (Ed.). (1999). *Inventing Nanjing Road: Commercial Culture in Shanghai, 1900-1945*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University East Asia Program.
- Cosbey, S., Damhorst, M. L., & Farrell-Beck, J. (2003). Diversity of daytime clothing styles as a reflection of women's social role ambivalence from 1873 through 1912. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 21(3), 101-119.
- Croll, E. (1977a). The movement to criticize Confucius and Lin Piao: a comment on "the women of China". *The University of Chicago Press, Signs*, 2(3), 721-726.
- Croll, E. (1977b). A recent movement to redefine the role and status of women. *Cambridge University Press on behalf of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, (71), 591-597.
- Damhorst, M. L., Miller-Spillman, K. A., & Michelman, S. O. (2005). *The Meanings of Dress* (2nd ed., p. 559). New York: Fairchild Publications.
- Delong, M. R. (1987). *The Way We Look: A Framework for Visual Analysis of Dress*. Ames: Iowa State University Press.

- DeLong, M. R. (1998). *The Way We Look: Dress and Aesthetics* (2nd). New York, NY: Fairchild Publications.
- DeLong, M., & Hegland, Jane E. (2001). Common goals, diverse perspectives: learning through material culture analysis. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*.
- Douglas, M. (1982). *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Eaton, M. M. (1988). *Basic Issues in Aesthetics*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Edwards, L. (2008). *Gender, Politics, and Democracy: Women's Suffrage in China*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Elliott, & Mark, C. (2001). *The Manchu Way. The eight banners and ethnic identity in late Imperial China*. CA: Stanford University Press.
- Finnane, A. (1996). What should Chinese women wear? A national problem. *Modern China*, 22(2), 99-131. Retrieved May 5, 2008, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/189339>.
- Finnane, A. (2008). *Changing Clothes in China*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Fitzgerald, J. (1996). *Awakening China: Politics, Culture, and Class in the Nationalist Revolution*. CA: Stanford University Press.
- Garrett. (1994). *Chinese clothing: an illustrated guide*. Hong Kong; New York: Hong Kong; New York: Oxford University Press.
- Garrett, V. M. (1987). *Traditonal Chinese Clothing* (pp. 3-20). Hong Kong; New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gerth, K. (2003). *China Made: Consumer Culture and the Creation of the Nation*. Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press.
- Gilmartin, C. (1993). Gender in the Formation of a Communist Body Politic. *Modern China*, 19(3), 299-329. Retrieved May 13, 2008, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/189347>.
- Gilmartin, C. (1994). Gender, Political Culture and Women's Mobilization. In C. Gilmartin, G. Hershatter, L. Roffel, & T. White (Eds.), *Engendering China: Women, Culture and the State*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gilmartin, C., Hershatter, G., Rofel, L., & White, T. (2005). *Engendering China: Women, Culture, and the State*. Harvard University Press.



- Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.
- Gugong jiu cang renwu zhaopian ji (The Album of old Portain Collection from the Imperial Palace)*. (1990). . Beijing: Zi jin cheng chu ban she.
- Hatcher, E. P. (1985). *Art as Culture*. New York: University Press of America.
- Hegland, J. E. (1991). *Drag Queens, Transvestites, Transsexuals: A Visual Typology and Analysis of Male-Female Cross-Dressing*. Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Minnesota, St. Paul.
- Hodder, I. (Ed.). (1989). *The Meanings of Things*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers Inc.
- Horn, M. (1968). *The Second Skin*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Jiang, H. (2001). The Masculine-Feminine woman: transcending gender identity in Zhang Xinxin's fiction. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal, China Information*, 15(138).
- Kaiser, S. B. (1997). *The Social Psychology of Clothing: Symbolic Appearances in Context* (2nd). New York: Fairchild Publications.
- Lennon, S. J. (1990). Clothing and changing sex roles: comparison of qualitative and quantitative analyses. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 18(3), 245-254.
- Leung, A. S. (2003). Feminism in transition: Chinese culture, ideology and the development of the women's movement in China. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 20(3), 359-374.
- Li, Z. (1994). *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*. London: Chatto and Windus.
- Lock, J. (1989). The effect of ideology in gender role definition: China as a case study. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 24(3-4), 228-238.
- Lu, X. (1927a). *Anxious Thoughts on "Natural Breasts"*. Lu Xun: Selected Works (Vol. 2, pp. 353-355). Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.
- Lynch, A. (1992). *Hmong American New Year's Dress. A material culture approach*. Unpublished Dissertation, University of Minnesota.

- Lynch, A., Detzner, D. F., & Eicher, J. B. (1995). Hmong American New Year Rituals : generational bonds through dress. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 13(2), 111-120.
- Lynch, A., Michelman, S. O., & Hegland, J. E. (1998). Cross-cultural and intra-societal application of DeLong's framework for visual analysis. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 16(4), 145-156.
- Mao, Z. (1956). *Collected Works of Mao* (4 vols.) Beijing: People's Publishing Work.
- Michelman, S. (1987). *Kalabari Female and Male Aesthetics: A Comparative Visual Analysis*. Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Minnesota, St. Paul.
- Michelman, S. (1992). *Dress in Kalabari Women's societies*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Minnesota, St. Paul.
- Michelman, S. O., & Eicher, J. B. (1995). Dress and gender in Kalabari women's societies. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 13(2), 121-130.
- Miller, D. (1987). *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*. New York: Basil Blackwell.
- Nie, C. (1992, April 4). Nan Xing Sui Gan "Reflections on my trip South". *Shizhuang "Fashion"*, (2), 11.
- Paff, J. L., & Lakner, H. B. (1997). Dress and the female gender role in magazine advertisements of 1950-1994: a content analysis. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 26(1), 29-58.
- Prown, J. (1994). Mind in matter: an introduction to material culture theory and method. In *Interpreting Objects and Collections* (Illustrated, pp. 133-138). London and New York: Routledge.
- Roach, M. E. (1965). *Dress, Adornment, and the Social Order* (p. 429). New York: Wiley.
- Roach, M. E., & Eicher, J. B. (1973). *The Visible Self: Perspectives on Dress*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.
- Roach-Higgins, M. E., & Eicher, J. B. (1992). Dress and Identity. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 10(4), 1-8.
- Roberts, C. (Ed.). (1997). *Evolution & Revolution Chinese Dress 1700s ~ 1990s*. Sydney: Powerhouse Publishing.
- Roberts, J. (1999). *A Concise History of China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Scharm, S. R. (1992). The Pre-Marxist period, 1912-1920. In *Mao's Road to Power: Revolutionary Writings 1912-1949* (ed., Vols. 1-1). Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.
- Schoppa, R. (2006). *Revolution and its Past: Identities and Change in Modern Chinese History* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Siu, B. (1982). *Women of China: Imperialism and Women's Resistance, 1900-1949* (p. 208). London: Zed Press.
- Steele, V. & Major, J. S. (1999). *China Chic: East Meets West* (p. 197). New Haven, Conn. & London: Yale University Press.
- Stone, G. (1962). Appearance and the self. In *Human Behavior and Social Processes: An Interactionist Approach* (pp. 86-118). New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Sun, F. (1991). *Xinhai geming shidai de qingnian fushi "Young People's Dress in the Period of the 1911 Revolution"*. Tianjin: Baihua wenyi chubanshe.
- Tam, V., & Huang, M. (2000). *China Chic*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers Inc.
- Tan, J. (2003). Confucianism and Neo-confucianism. In *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (2nd ed., Vols. 1-4, pp. 95-99).
- Tavris, C. (1974, May, pp 43-97) "The Speak Bitterness Revolution", *Psychology Today*.
- Thomas, H. (1943). *The First Lady of China (The Historic Wartime Visit of Mme. Chiang Kai-shek to the United States in 1943)*. New York: International Business Machines Corporation.
- Tilley, C. (1990). *Reading Material Culture*. Oxford, England: Basil Blackwell.
- Tu, S. (1948). Shanghai daguanyuan (The big View of Shanghai City). *Zhongguo tushu zazhi gongsi (China Books and Magazine Company)*, 19-21.
- Wang, G. (1991). *Sun Zhongshan yu Shanghai (Sun Yat-sen and Shanghai)*. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chuban she. p. 312
- Wang, G. (2006). *Wo yu Shaoqi (Me and shaoqi)*. Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe.
- Wang, Y. (1957). *The Research and Examination of Chinese Women's Gown in Successive Dynasties*. Taipei: Chinese Chi Qap Pesearch Association.

- Wang, X. (2005, July 14). Changing Face: The Evolution of Chinese Women's Dress and Appearance . Retrieved May 5, 2008, from <http://etd.lsu.edu/docs/available/etd-07142005-093123/>.
- Wen, F. (1974). Doctrine of Confucius and Mencius — The Shackle That Keeps Women In Bondage. *Peking Review*, 10, 16-18.
- Wiesbaden, H. (1995). *On the Tracks of Manchu Culture. 1644-1994, 350 years after the conquest of Peking*. NE: Stary, Giovanni.
- Wong, Y. R. (2004). When East Meets West: Nation, Colony, and Hong Kong Women's Subjectivities in Gender and China Development. *Modern China*, 30(2), 259-292.
- Wu, H., & Zuo, B. (1999). *Duhui modeng: yuefenpai 1910-1930s (Calendar posters of the Modern Chinese Woman)*. Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian.
- Wu, Y. (2008). *Chinese Women's Clothing and Body Revolution 1911-1935 (Zhongguo Funu Fushi yu Shenti Geming)* . Shanghai: China East Press Center.
- Xie, L. (2004). *Women who Wear the Traditional Chinese Dress: the Historical Perspective of Qipao*. Tokyo, Japan: Qing Gueng She.
- Xu, D. (1935, June 22). Jin san bai nian lai zhongguo di nvzhunag (Women's Dress in recent three hundred years). *Dagong bao*.
- Xue, Z. (2006). The cultural significance of Qipao in the different time periods. *Journal of Suzhou Art & Design Technology Institute*, 21, 36-38.
- Yang, C. (2007). *The Meaning of Qipao as Traditional Dress: Chinese and Taiwanese Perspectives*. Dissertation, Iowa State University.
- Yiming. (1925, June 22). Nanjing Duanzi Tan. *Shanghai Shengbao*.
- Yiming. (1926, September 10). Suo Wei Weixin (About Revolution). *Liangyou (good friend)*, 2 (2).
- Yuan. (2005). *The Chinese Clothing History* (pp. 127-161). Beijing: Chinese Textile Publisher.
- Yuan, J. (2000). *China Qipao*. (Z. Shen, Tran.). Beijing: China Textile Press.
- Zhang, J. (2002). *Xi fu dong jian: 20 shiji zhongwai fushi jiaoliu shi (Westernized Chinese Clothing: a Chinese Dress History in the Twentieth Century)*. He Fei, China: Ann Hwei Arts.

- Zhen, Y. (1946). *The Evolution of Clothing (fuyu zhi bian qian)* (Vol. 4). Shanghai.
- Zhou, X. (1984, p 534). *Ancient Chinese Costume History*. Beijing: China Drama Press.
- Zhou, X., & Gao, C. (1987). *5000 Years of Chinese Costumes*. San Francisco, CA: China Books & Periodicals, Inc.
- Zhang, T. (1940). Transition of the Chinese gown. *Liangyou pictorial magazine*, 2(1).
- Welsh, F. (1993). *A History of Hong Kong* (2nd ed.). California: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd.
- Zhang , X. (2002, February). Traditional-style Dress Comes Back into Vogue. (Online source: Chine Today <http://www.chinatoday.com.cn/English/20022/vogue.htm>)
- The fashionspot.com (2009). When stars wear *qipao* dresses. Retrieved March 12, 2009, from <http://www.thefashionspot.com>