

# Innovative Design and Contemporary Inheritance: A Study of Women's 'Beizi' in the Song Dynasty

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## Abstract

Beizi is one of the traditional Chinese costumes. The designers redesign Beizi, and the innovative design of Beizi becomes popular. The paper is about women's Beizi in the Song Dynasty. It analyzes and summarizes the shape, color, and fabric of female Beizi. Meanwhile, by doing a questionnaire and data analysis with SPSS, it showed the result of KMO and Bartlett's test is reliable. As a result, Beizi reflected the traditional styles in modern costumes which is the application of Chinese costumes. The paper aims to use data analysis to examine more characteristics of Chinese costumes and enhance modern recognition of traditional culture.

**Keywords:** Beizi, data analysis, contemporary inheritance, innovative design

## 1. Introduction

Costume culture is the most direct manifestation of the politics, economy, and culture of a country, which is also an important symbol of human civilization. Beizi having strong cultural characteristics is one of the most representative costumes in the Song Dynasty. This paper explores the impact of social development on costumes culture through the changes of the form of the costume of Beizi in the Song Dynasty by data analysis. Moreover, it aims to use data to excavate the cultural elements of traditional costumes and provides a reference for improving cultural fashion design.

## 2. Women's Beizi in the Song Dynasty

Beizi originated in the Sui and Tang dynasties and was popular in the Song and Ming dynasties. Moreover, it was one of the daily costumes of ancient women in the Song Dynasty (Feng, 2017) and a dress that both men and women could wear. The costumes of women can be defined from the garment structure. The Beizi with asymmetrical collar, is similar to the cardigan and its costumes pieces on both sides of the body are not sewed (Liu, Shao, & Ma, 2009). This kind of Beizi is suitable for people from different classes. Besides, it is elegant and straightforward, and its making materials can change with varied seasons (Zhao, 2019). Therefore, it is worn popularly in daily life and formal occasions, including weddings, sacrifices, and funerals. In short, it has been one of the most popular costumes in the Song Dynasty, which is suitable for multiple occasions.

## 3. Song Dynasty Beizi Analysis of Elements

Shape, color, and fabric are three elements of costumes. Costumes are designed and formed by the combination of these three elements. Therefore, they are also known as three elements of costumes design (Liu, 2005). This paper analyzes women's Beizi in the Song Dynasty and summarizes its features based on ancient books and documents, paintings, and sculptures. This helps to tap its artistic value and apply it in modern costumes design.

### 3.1 The Modelling Structure

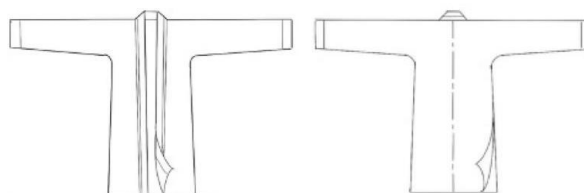


Figure 1. Flats of Song Dynasty Beizi

Cardigan is the most common style of Beizi. Cardigan was born earlier than Beizi. It is the most popular dress

style of Beizi in the Song Dynasty. Cardigan can also be called the straight collar. It refers to a piece of costume that the collar is joined to the front of the garment. It is similar to the collar pattern of the modern cardigan (Figure 1).

The sleeve structure of Beizi has several different patterns. The main difference is the length and width of the sleeve. As for Beizi's size, it mainly includes long and short styles. The great Beizi is longer than the knee, and even the longest one can reach the ankle. The length of the short Beizi is similar to that of the present short skirt. In general, people from different class levels wear Beizi in different sizes. Workers wear short Beizi because it is convenient for labor. Furthermore, aristocratic officials wear long Beizi as it shows their status.

### 3.2 The Color

In ancient Chinese traditional concepts, costumes colors also contain much deeper meanings, such as the symbolization of hierarchy (Zhu & Qu, 2007). The choice of costumes color should be consistent with the user's identity in the Song Dynasty. Different identities use different colors. Few Song Dynasty costumes survive in modern times, and most fabrics have faded. Therefore, it cannot be used as the main object of color research. In this condition, it is necessary to combine the ancient books, paintings, and sculptures of the Song Dynasty to study the color of the Beizi. Based on the analysis of the female images in these historical materials, we can find some using habits of Beizi's color.

According to some Song Dynasty words, female Beizi is primarily red, followed by yellow and purple. According to the female characters in figure paintings in the Song Dynasty, it is more frequent to see red and brown Beizi. Women of different statuses wear different colors of clothes. Special classes such as matchmakers and prostitutes wear red and purple Beizi. Farmers and traders wear colors of low brightness and saturation, such as beige and light green. In addition, it was influenced by the dyeing and weaving technology and social aesthetics in the Song Dynasty. The color of Beizi is rather plain and elegant. Women of Song often wear white skirts or slacks with Beizi. This kind of color collocation means it can build a sort of gentle, virtuous aesthetic feeling.

### 3.3 The Pattern

On the one hand, the pattern of Beizi came from weaving patterns of the fabric. On the other hand, it came from embroidery and painting (Figure 2). These patterns were influenced by folk praying and religious culture. In addition, designs of fabrics were influenced by the painting themes of the Song Dynasty. At that time, flowers and birds were the most popular themes. The shape of patterns was gradually realistic, and the composition was strict. People preferred to use flowers, birds, fishes, and insects as subjects in the Song Dynasty. This type of pattern also often appeared in the Beizi design (Figure 3). Seeing from the museum's existing Song Dynasty costumes, the flower motif of the fabric dominated the Song Dynasty.

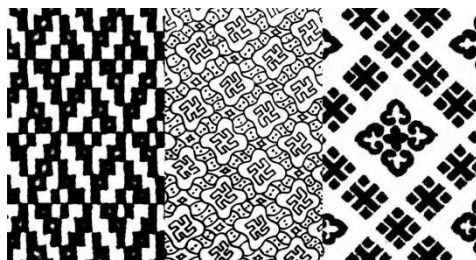


Figure 2. The pattern of the fabric.



Figure 3. The pattern of the flower type

### 3.4 The Fabric

Fabric is the carrier of costumes, and its elements include texture, performance, and material (Liang, 2018). Here is only a brief description of the fabric material. Due to the rapid development of silk weaving technology and trade in the Song Dynasty, many costumes fabrics such as silk, leno and silk tapestry. It can be found from the actual unearthed costumes fabrics that leno used more frequently. Leno is a kind of silk fabric with a thin texture and delicate fibrous tissue. It originated before the Spring and Autumn Period and Warring States Period. Its weaving technology became more mature than before, and the production scale also further expanded during the Song Dynasty. The popularity was promoted in the whole society at that time (Yang, Chen, He, Chen, Su, & Cai, 2020). Therefore, in the hot summer, the high-grade silk fabric was used more by wealthy families in the southern region of the Song Dynasty (Wu, 2011). Wealthy families mostly use silk costumes fabrics. Workers at the bottom of society, including farmers and vendors, use cotton and linen. This kind of fabric is rough but solid, durable, and cheap.

In general, women's clothes were preferred soft and lowly bright in the Song Dynasty. In terms of patterns, they were influenced by painting styles, so it was popular to use flower patterns to decorate clothes. In terms of fabrics, wealthy families preferred to use silk, while low-income families preferred to use cheap materials.

## 4. Inheritance and Innovative of Beizi in Modern Fashion Design

In the contemporary era, traditional Chinese costumes culture is supposed to combine with the modern costumes design style. It can inherit the traditional costume culture of the Chinese nation and establish a fashion system with Chinese style and increase national cultural confidence.

### 4.1 Traditional Costume Elements and Modern Dress Style

The western costumes design system emphasizes the human body as the main decorative object. Costumes are made based on three-dimensional cutting. Traditional Chinese costumes are made chiefly by flat-cutting methods. Therefore, these kinds of clothes are looser than those in western countries. This different cultural concept has also caused a considerable difference in Eastern and Western costumes. Since the founding of the new China, modern western costumes design and production concepts have gradually been accepted by Chinese people. The traditional costumes, different from Western costumes, cannot conform to the public artistic vision. As a result, it began to withdraw from the stage of history gradually.

Costumes are a carrier of cultural transmission and a page of values and national forms (Jia & Liang, 2020). Therefore, the current problem that needs to be solved is to combine traditional costume elements with modern costumes styles in costumes design. This kind of costume can retain traditional costume culture and conform to contemporary public aesthetics. It requires us to combine modern lifestyles and the needs of the era. Designers should combine traditional aesthetic ideas with contemporary western design concepts and extract traditional costumes elements. It also requires us to use modern design techniques and expression forms for design. Moreover, it needs to conform to general aesthetics.

### 4.2 Inheritance and Innovation

The author did a satisfaction questionnaire survey about 7 Beizi dresses in modern design. The questionnaire was released through the network, and 356 valid questionnaires were collected. The primary descriptive results of the questionnaire will be shown in the table below (Table 1). The reliability and validity of the questionnaire were tested by data analysis. In the statistical reliability scale, Cronbach's Alpha value was 0.966 ( $> 0.8$ ), which has passed the reliability test (Table 2). In KMO and Bartlett's test tables, the data is below 0.05, which has passed the validity test (Table 3). From the above data, the result of this questionnaire is valid. Samples of this questionnaire survey are mostly younger students with higher education levels and consumer groups with monthly income below 5000 yuan.

Table 1. Basic Sample Information

Variable		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	142	39.9
	Female	214	60.1
Age Group	Under 18	26	7.3
	18~25	256	71.9
	26~30	45	12.6
	31~40	26	7.3

	41~50	1	.3
	51~60	2	.6
Education Background	Under the high school	74	20.8
	More than a high school	249	69.9
	Master degree or above	33	9.3
Monthly Average	Under 999	175	49.2
	1000-2499	55	15.4
	2500-4999	43	12.1
	5000-9999	40	11.2
	More than 1000	43	12.1
Professional	Students	235	66.0
	Liberal professions	18	5.1
	Civil servants	16	4.5
	Engineer	19	5.3
	Teacher	18	5.1
	Professionals	34	9.6
	Others	16	4.5
	Total	356	100.0

Table 2. Reliability statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Terms
.966	46

Table 3. KMO and Bartlett's test

Sample Sufficient Degree of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Mmetric	.964	
Bartlett's Sphericity Test	The approximate chi-square	13586.118
	Df	1035
	Sig.	0.000

Samples of the questionnaire are seven kinds of costumes with good online sales. The questionnaire was made respectively from six aspects: fabric, style, practicality, pattern, tradition, and fashion. The public believes that practicality, tradition, and fashion are the top three factors in modern traditional costume design. The top three items of public satisfaction are ranked in Table IV. The satisfaction of the top three in practicality, fashion, and tradition is shown in Table V. According to the data, more than 60% of the public thinks they are practical. A has the highest practicability satisfaction, while B has the highest satisfaction with tradition and fashion. C's satisfaction degree of tradition and practicality is lower than A and B.

Table 4. Three items of Beizi with high public satisfaction



Table 5. Satisfaction analysis table of three costumes

The Serial Number	Practical Satisfaction	Fashion Satisfaction	Traditional Satisfaction
A	67.03%	41.50%	46.90%
B	65.95%	44.10%	49.10%
C	64.35%	39.60%	47.70%

The survey showed that all Beizi retain their traditional styles in design. All three pieces have the silhouette of a short coat. They have the characteristics of timely action and easy collocation. Therefore, they are efficient. Designers make design transformations for different aspects, including fabric, color and pattern. For example, the structural changes of sleeve, and collar shapes are more characteristic for modern costumes, such as the lantern sleeve. These patterns add modern fashion elements in pattern design and use 3D digital printing, computer embroidery, and other technological means. Their fabrics have also been changed to adopt more synthetic fabrics to make them cheaper and easier to clean.

#### 4.3 Design and Application

Based on the analysis of the questionnaire results, the inheritance and innovation of traditional costumes is not a re-enactment of the shape and way of dressing in traditional costumes. Based on promoting Chinese excellent traditional costumes culture, designers should design costumes that conforms to the modern aesthetics of mass costumes, promote Chinese excellent traditional costumes culture, and explore ways to inherit and innovate costumes culture.

The essence of design is to solve problems creatively, based on the needs of users, and the potential development value of the market as the fundamental, serving the work, study, and life of modern humans (Peng & Liu, 2020). Modern costume is the main product of fashion expression, and its value is reflected along with consumer demand. Consumers pursue costumes styles and styles as their primary needs, along with spiritual needs. Therefore, the cultural attributes of costumes have surpassed its material attributes and become the first element of costumes consumption.

Design is the basic term of modern design. Design research constitutes a comprehensive discipline involving many aspects (Wan, Liu, & Kong, 2008). Design art is the excavation of humanistic spirit by design behaviors (Wang, Yang, & Yang, 2014). Beizi conducts re-innovation in modern times. It must be characterized by conventional Chinese costumes elements and conform to modern aesthetics of costumes and lifestyles. Besides, it must have a solid Chinese style and meet the basic requirements of fashion at the same time (Bian, 2006). Based on modern people's lifestyles and requirements, we should combine traditional Chinese aesthetics with modern western design concepts. It requires us to transfer the Beizi elements into modern costumes by using modern design methods and costumes expression forms. The innovative design of Beizi should keep the essence of traditional culture.

Patterns are the primary constituent elements in the aesthetics of traditional Chinese design (Qiao, 2018). Combining traditional pattern elements with modern design can enrich the meaning of modern visual images and realize cultural inheritance and innovation. Color is also an important element. It is an important visual language and the most direct element in costumes design. It can fully convey the wearer's beauty and thoughts (Liu, Jia, & Liang, 2015). Therefore, in consideration of its practicality at the same time, fashion designers also design patterns, colors, and other themes for creation. In addition, combine it with modern design concepts and fashion trends to meet the aesthetic requirements of modern fashion. Designers need to consider its commercial value and retain its characteristics.

## 5. Conclusions

To inherit and carry forward the culture of the national costumes, designers need to deeply understand and study the culture and connotation of traditional costumes. Designer's redesign for Beizi must be in line with the needs of modern society and incorporate modern fashion features. In addition, designers must clarify their style positioning and target consumer groups. Only in this way can we design fashionable costumes with traditional Chinese costume cultural characteristics and conform to modern people's aesthetic view. As a result, it can increase the influence of Chinese-style costumes in the global fashion industry.

Designers must understand the Beizi's shape, the surface features of the fabric, color, pattern, social background, ideological culture, and lifestyle of the Song Dynasty when conducting the integration design. At the same time,

they also need to understand and learn western costumes culture, and style. By combining the modern aesthetic of the public and the western fashion expression, designers can design Beizi dress in line with the general aesthetic. It adapts to the development of the era, combines traditional Chinese costumes elements with western modern costumes styles, and creates new Chinese-style costumes that conform to the general aesthetics and has market development potential to serve as a reference. The modern interpretation and redesign application of traditional cultural heritage is not only conducive to shaping national cultural brands, highlighting the appearance of "Made in China" and "Culture China," but also helps to enhance national identity and promote the construction of a "cultural power."

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