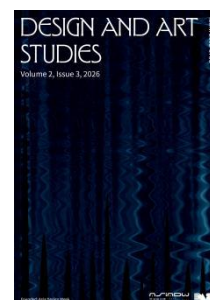




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The Overall Design of the Costume Image of Empress Dowager Xie Daoqing of the Song Dynasty: Based on the *Hundred Flowers Scrolls* · *Legend of the Past*

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Abstract

The ninth episode of the fourth season of *National Treasure* brought the audience to the Jilin Provincial Museum. The first national treasure presented was the *Hundred Flowers Scrolls*, a birthday gift from Song Lizong, the fifth emperor of the Southern Song Dynasty, to Empress Xie Daoqing. The *National Treasure* · *Hundred Flowers Scroll* tells the story of the first year of Deyou (1275 AD) of the Southern Song Dynasty. In that year, the Yuan army marched south, and many ministers fled the court. Zhang Shijie fought the Yuan army at Jiaoshan in Zhenjiang and was defeated in the first battle. Prime Minister Chen Yizhong, impeached by the students of the Imperial Academy, fled Lin'an. Empress Dowager Xie Daoqing, left with no other choice, wrote a letter in frustration to Chen Yizhong's mother, urging her to persuade her son to honor his duties of filial piety and loyalty. An important part of the program's creation was to reconstruct Xie Daoqing's clothing style based on comprehensive factors, including her status, the social clothing fashion of the Song Dynasty, and the narrative setting of the story. This paper presents detailed textual research and analysis of the clothing style, color, fabric, and pattern of Empress Dowager Xie Daoqing by drawing on her life history, unearthed archaeological objects, and Song Dynasty tomb paintings.

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1. Introduction

In 2017, the cultural and museum program *National Treasure*, created by China Central Television (CCTV), was first broadcast. To date, it has aired four seasons. *National Treasure* pioneered the "immersive cultural relics narrative" format. In contrast to the one-way presentation of traditional cultural heritage programs, the production team reconstructs historical scenes using film-level set and reproduction technologies, enabling audiences to witness the fascinating stories behind legendary cultural relics across time and space. The team skillfully employs digital technology to break away from conventional approaches to interpreting cultural artifacts and to redefine cultural heritage. As one of the key segments in the ninth episode of the fourth season of *National Treasure*, filmed at the Jilin Provincial Museum, *Hundred Flowers Scroll* · *Legends of Past Generations* tells the story of Empress Dowager Xie Daoqing, who made every effort to preserve the Song state on the eve of the Southern Song Dynasty's collapse in the first year of the Deyou reign. This paper provides a detailed analysis and textual research of the clothing style, color,

fabric, and pattern of Empress Dowager Xie Daoqing, drawing on her life history, unearthed artifacts, and paintings from Song Dynasty tombs.

2. Xie Daoqing's Life and the Historical Background of Her Era

In the first year of the Deyou reign (1275), the Yuan army advanced southward, the Song forces were defeated at Jiaoshan, and Prime Minister Chen Yizhong, impeached by the Imperial Academy students, abandoned his post and fled. Left without capable officials, Grand Empress Dowager Xie Daoqing bore the weight of the crumbling state alone. This political circumstance directly shaped the costume design choices: in the face of mass ministerial desertion and dynastic collapse, it was essential to foreground Xie Daoqing's authority and gravity as the supreme ruler through her attire. Accordingly, the *dashan* and *xiapei* ensemble discussed below—the highest ceremonial dress of Song imperial consorts—was selected as the centerpiece of this image. It institutionally asserts her identity and status as Grand Empress Dowager, while its dignified and solemn visual character resonates intrinsically with the gravity of the historical moment.

2.1 A Biographical Overview of Xie Daoqing

Xie Daoqing was the empress of Zhao Yun, Emperor Lizong of the Song Dynasty. She was born in Linhai, Taizhou (present-day Linhai, Zhejiang), and came from a prominent family. Her grandfather, Xie Shenfu, had served as Grand Councilor of the Right and had strongly supported Song Ningzong in installing Empress Yang. Her father, Xie Qubo, was Xie Shenfu's second son. He was gifted in talent, upright in virtue, and skilled in writing. He served as Prefect of Lizhou (Lin, 2023, p.75). However, her father died early and left no significant assets to Xie Daoqing, and the Xie family's fortunes gradually declined.

In the seventeenth year of the Jiading reign of the Southern Song Dynasty (1224 AD), Emperor Ningzong died, Zhao Yun ascended the throne, and Empress Yang was honored as Empress Dowager. To repay the Xie family's past support, Empress Dowager Yang issued an edict to select a daughter from the Xie family for the imperial harem. At that time, only Xie Daoqing remained at home unmarried, so she was sent to the palace. After entering the palace, she was first granted the title of Lady of Tongyi County. In the third year of the Shaoding reign (1230 AD), she was promoted to Imperial Consort Jin, and in December of the same year, she was formally appointed empress.

Although she did not receive the special favor of Emperor Lizong after entering the palace, Xie Daoqing remained virtuous and courteous, and peace reigned in the inner palace for many years. In the first year of the Deyou reign (1275 AD), her son Emperor Duzong died, and Zhao Xian, only four years old, succeeded to the throne. With the sovereign weak and ministers scarce, Xie Daoqing, now the 65-year-old Empress Dowager, was compelled to take over the regency at the repeated requests of the court officials. Yuan forces and foreign enemies invaded, yet the prime ministers still fought only for power and profit, factions warring against one another. Xie Daoqing exempted taxes and rectified military discipline, but the decline proved difficult to reverse. In the spring of the following year, the city of Lin'an fell to the Yuan army. To protect the people of Lin'an from the ravages of war, Xie Daoqing surrendered to Kublai Khan, the founder of the Yuan Dynasty, outside the city walls, and the Southern Song Dynasty collapsed. Xie Daoqing was escorted to Dadu (present-day Beijing) and later titled Lady of Shouchun County. Seven years later (1283 AD), she died of illness at the age of 74 and was buried at Fayun Temple in Linhai.

2.2 The Historical Context of Xie Daoqing's Era

The period of Xie Daoqing's life (1210–1283 AD) spanned from the late Southern Song Dynasty (1207–1279 AD) to the early Yuan Dynasty (1271–1285 AD). During the reign of Emperor Ningzong, Shi Miyuan was adept at political manipulation. After Ningzong's death, he orchestrated a coup and installed Emperor Lizong. Emperor Lizong, knowing that Shi Miyuan was too powerful at court to be removed, willingly acted as a puppet ruler. In the sixth year of the Shaoding reign (1233 AD), Lizong began to rule in his own right. In the early stage, he appointed Zheng Qingzhi and Shi Songzhi and implemented the "Duanping Restoration" (Duanping Genghua), actively responding to the Mongol military threat. However, in his later years, treacherous officials dominated the court, and corrupting influences were introduced into the imperial family. In the fifth year of the Jingding reign (1264 AD), after the death of Emperor Lizong, Emperor Duzong (Zhao Qi) took power, but his debauchery and trust in sycophantic ministers further corrupted the court. In 1271, the Mongol Empire changed its dynastic name to "Dayuan." The Yuan Dynasty was formally established and began its southern invasion to destroy the Song Dynasty. After the battles of Dingjiazhou and Jiaoshan, the Song forces were defeated. The Yuan army entered Lin'an, and the Southern Song court surrendered. Song loyalists enthroned Emperor Duanzong in Fuzhou in a bid to continue the Song line. The Yuan army pushed southward, and the Song court fled into exile by sea. The Right Grand Councilor, Wen Tianxiang, was defeated and captured in battle against the Yuan. After Emperor Duanzong's death, Zhang Shijie led his remaining forces into the mountains to continue fighting the Yuan, but the Song army was defeated. The Left Grand Councilor, Lu Xiufu, carried the last child emperor into the sea and drowned himself, marking the final end of the Southern Song Dynasty (Chen, 2020).

The story depicted in the Hundred Flowers Scroll takes place in the first year of the Deyou reign. At that time, in July, Zhang Shijie commanded the naval forces against the Yuan army at Jiaoshan in Zhenjiang. However, because they were outnumbered, the Song army was eventually defeated. The Prime Minister, Chen Yizhong, having been impeached by students of the Censorate, fled Lin'an. Xie Daoqing, left with no one to turn to, wrote a letter in frustration to Chen Yizhong's mother, attempting to persuade him through the principles of filial piety and loyalty (Lin, 2023, p.82). Chen Yizhong did not return until October.

In the first month of the second year of the Deyou reign (1276 AD), the Yuan army led by Boyan reached the city of Lin'an. Chen Yizhong requested that Xie Daoqing relocate the capital for safety, but the plan fell through because they failed to agree on a time to meet (Tuotuo et al., 1985, p.12532). With no other course of action left, Xie Daoqing finally chose to surrender. She sent Supervising Censor Yang Yingkui to Gaoting Mountain with the imperial jade seal and a surrender memorial, asking Boyan to accept their submission. In the memorial was the plea: "We cannot bear to see the more than three-hundred-year-old ancestral altars suddenly fall," revealing that she still harbored hope of preserving the ancestral temple (Guo, 2023, p.145). However, Boyan was not satisfied with the surrender memorial and demanded that the Grand Councilor come in person to negotiate the terms of surrender. Grand Empress Dowager issued a final appointment. Wen Tianxiang was named Right Grand Councilor and Privy Councilor and sent to negotiate peace with the Yuan, but he was detained by the Yuan army. The Song court dispatched another delegation to present a new surrender memorial to Boyan. On the fifth day of the second month, Zhao Xian led the civil and military officials to the Xiangxi Hall and knelt facing the direction of the Yuan capital, begging to become a vassal of the Yuan Dynasty. With this, the formal rule of the Southern Song Dynasty came to an end (Guo, 2023, pp.146–147).

3. Textual Research and Analysis of Xie Daoqing's Clothing Style and Color

3.1 Textual Research and Analysis of Xie Daoqing's Clothing Style

Women's clothing in the Song Dynasty largely inherited the forms of Tang Dynasty attire. Jackets (*ao*), short jackets (*ru*), skirts (*qun*), robes (*shan*), shawls (*beizi*), and trousers (*ku*) represented the main clothing types. Influenced by the Song Dynasty's political strategy and the country's internal and external troubles, women's clothing became conservative and restrained. Compared with the free and open styles of the Tang Dynasty, Song women's clothing was more elegant, ceremonious, and simple. Building on the Tang ritual system, the Song Dynasty absorbed the fine cultures of foreign peoples while refining and streamlining the system. As a result, many norms and regulations governed women's clothing in the Song Dynasty. The formal costumes of Song empresses included the *Huiyi*, *Zhuyi*, *Liyi*, and *Juyi* (Tuotuo et al., 1977, pp.3534–3535), while the large-sleeved robe (*dashan*) and embroidered stole (*xiapei*) were used as regular attire. In light of the historical period in which Xie Daoqing lived and her exalted status as Empress Dowager, the overall costume design referenced the portrait of "Empress Dowager Zhaoxian" of the Song Dynasty (Figure 1) and adopted the combination of *dashan* and *xiapei* commonly worn by women of the imperial clan. A long *beizi* overgarment was added for a more layered look, with a *moxiong* (chest covering) and a long skirt worn underneath.



Figure 1. Portrait of Empress Dowager Zhaoxian of the Song Dynasty.

The large-sleeved robe, also known as *dashan*, originated from the women's *pishan* (draped robe) of the late Tang Dynasty. It became especially popular during the Northern Song Dynasty and could only be worn by aristocratic

women. In Zhou Fang's Tang Dynasty painting *Ladies with Flowers*, aristocratic women and maids appreciate a garden in spring and summer. The noblewomen wear a lightly veiled *pishan* over a long, ankle-length brocade skirt. Based on clothing items unearthed from Song tombs, such as the Huashan Song tomb in Gaochun, Nanjing, and the Huang Sheng tomb of the Southern Song Dynasty in Fuzhou (Figure 2), the typical Song Dynasty *dashan* has a straight collar, a front-opening symmetrical style, and wide, open sleeves. There are two loops on both sides of the collar and another two loops on the left and right hems of the front flap (Gong, 2010, p.281).

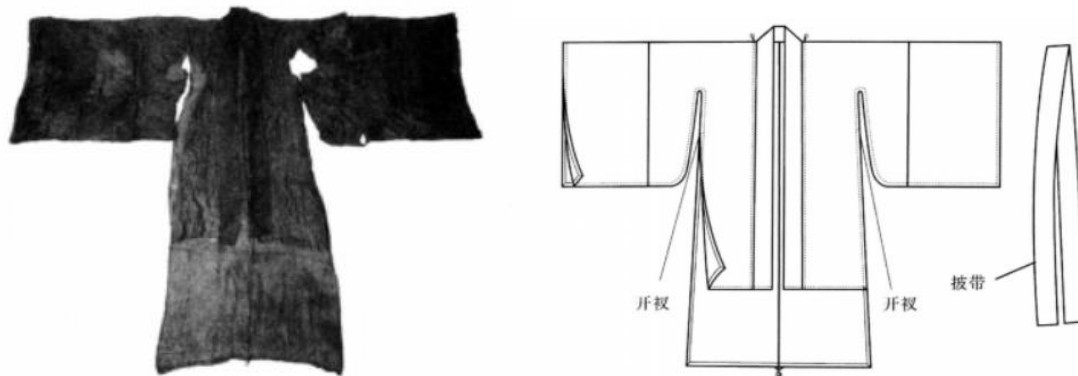


Figure 2. Large-sleeved robe unearthed from a Song tomb at Huashan, Gaochun, Nanjing.

Exquisitely embroidered *xiapei* first appeared as early as the Northern and Southern Dynasties. In the Sui and Tang Dynasties, people compared it to beautiful rosy clouds, hence the name *xiapei* ("rosy-cloud stole"). Some Taoist priests also used it as a vestment. The Tang emperor's belief in Taoism led palace women to wear *xiapei* as well, and the practice gradually spread to common women. In the Song Dynasty, *xiapei* became part of the formal dress code, and titled ladies had to be granted permission to wear it. Ordinary women could not wear *xiapei*, and the embroidery patterns on it varied according to rank. It consists of two long, narrow silk ribbons. The front ends of the ribbons are cut into triangles and stitched together. Some have two or three horizontal loops sewn at this point, so that one loop from each seam hangs in the middle of the pendant, which is used to fasten to the buttons on the collar side of the *dashan*. A horizontal loop is attached around the shoulders to connect the two straps, keeping them flat and aesthetically pleasing (Lu, 2022, p.171). The ornament hanging at the lower edge is the *xiapei* pendant, made of precious materials such as gold and silver. Its function is to weigh down the *xiapei* so that the fabric drapes naturally against the body. In terms of craftsmanship, Song Dynasty *xiapei* pendants underwent complex techniques such as hollow carving and filigree inlay. The patterns are mostly auspicious motifs, such as auspicious clouds and luan-phoenixes, and are both practical and exquisite.

According to a large body of unearthed images and written materials, such as *Miscellaneous Records of the Court and the Provinces since the Jianyan Reign*, it is recorded that the everyday clothing of the empress was once thought to differ from that of scholar-official families. Later, it was found that the Lin'an Prefectural Administration submitted a list of items to the Zhejiang Fiscal Commission. The items listed included: cooked white gauze crotch trousers, a white silk shirt, a bright yellow gauze skirt, a pink gauze *moxiong*, a red gauze belly wrap, and a pink gauze short shirt (Li, 2000). The anonymous Southern Song painting *Geletu* (Music and Dance Performance) depicts a group of Song court musicians preparing before a performance (Figure 3). In the painting, the musicians are elegantly dressed, wearing *moxiong* and bright red hats, their every gesture exuding a restrained and elegant charm. From this, it can be inferred that in the Song Dynasty, the new fashion of wearing *moxiong* as underwear began to prevail among the upper class and then spread to commoners.

Song Dynasty women's skirts were slimmer than those of previous dynasties. Building on earlier forms, they developed into the "all-around pleated skirt." The width of the skirt was typically more than six panels wide, often six, eight, or twelve panels, with fine pleats "as numerous as eyebrow wrinkles" (Cui, 2022, p.14). Due to the constraints of the feudal ritual system, women's trousers were not supposed to be exposed, so they had to be covered with a long skirt. Closed-crotch trousers (Figure 4) unearthed from the Southern Song tombs at Huashan in Gaochun, Nanjing, and from Huang Sheng's tomb in Fuzhou are long trousers with straight legs, box pleats on both sides, and two ties.



Figure 3. Detail of the anonymous Southern Song painting *Geletu*.

Collection of the Shanghai Museum.

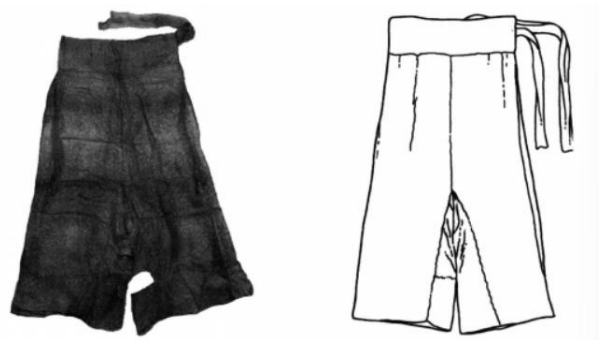


Figure 4. Closed-crotch trousers from the Song tomb at Huashan, Gaochun, Nanjing.

3.2 Textual Research and Analysis of Xie Daoqing 's Clothing Color

The Song people favored a detached, elegant aesthetic, which was closely associated with the flourishing literati culture of the period. They did not pursue ostentation but preferred freshness and refinement, and found the pairing of bright red and green unbearable. During the Song Dynasty, the dyeing and weaving industry developed and prospered, and dyeing techniques were superb. Artisans actively explored new possibilities in color. The production of goose yellow, kneaded blue, pink, and other hues became simpler, so clothing color schemes featured a greater variety of shades.

Compared with the strict regulation of men's clothing colors, the restrictions on women's clothing in the Song Dynasty were relatively lenient. The *History of Song: Treatise on Carriages and Attire* records that the clothing of imperial consorts was no different from that of the courtiers, which indicates that social status did not strictly limit the colors of Song women's clothing. An examination of Song Dynasty tomb murals reveals that the colors of women's garments included light red, light yellow, light purple, white, and blue. Song Dynasty figure paintings also show that the Song people favored light, elegant colors and excelled at using low-contrast combinations such as red with yellow and blue with yellow. For example, the hostess in the anonymous painting *Hand-Washing and Flower Viewing* (Figure 5) wears a light purple long robe, a white long skirt, and a light yellow draped shawl (*pibo*). Similarly, in *Canon of Filial Piety for Women* (Figure 6), there is a combination of a white long robe with a light blue long skirt, covered by a purple *pibo*. The colors of Song skirts were brighter than those of coats, with the most precious being the yellow dyed with turmeric. The *Miscellaneous Records of the Court and the Provinces since the Jianyan Reign* records the everyday clothing of Empress Chenggong of the Southern Song Dynasty and of scholar-official families, noting that there were also bright colors such as "true red" and "bright yellow" (Li, 2000). This indicates that although Song women's clothing was primarily characterized by elegant colors, more splendid colors were also used in daily life. In conformity with Empress Dowager Xie Daoqing's noble status, precious yellow was chosen as the main color. Goose yellow was selected for the unlined inner garment, the *moxiong*, and the all-around pleated skirt; for the outer *dashan* robe, bright yellow was used; and this was complemented by a red *xiapei* for a subtle contrast. The border pattern of the *dashan* is predominantly gold, echoing the fabric.



Figure 5. Detail of the anonymous Southern Song painting *Hand-Washing and Flower Viewing*.

Collection of the Palace Museum.



Figure 6. Detail of Ma Hezhi's Southern Song painting *Canon of Filial Piety for Women (Nü xiaojing tu)*.

Collection of the Taipei Palace Museum.

4. Textual Research and Analysis of Xie Daoqing's Clothing Fabrics and Patterns

4.1 Textual Research and Analysis of Xie Daoqing's Clothing Fabrics

Luo was originally a type of net used for hunting and fishing in ancient times. *Luo* fabric is a traditional leno-weave textile that first appeared in the Shang and Zhou Dynasties, was developed and perfected during the Song Dynasty, and became popular among the common people. The twisting of the warp is called *jiao* (twisting). There are two-end leno *luo*, three-end leno *luo*, and four-end leno *luo*, all characterized by being lightweight and breathable. Generally, ancient *luo* fabric is divided into two categories: fixed twisted-group and non-fixed twisted-group. Non-fixed twisted-group *luo*, also called chainlike leno, was widely popular throughout ancient Chinese history. It is characterized by a strict 1:1 ratio between the ground warp and the twisting warp, but without clearly defined twisted groups; that is, one twisting warp can twist with two adjacent ground warps (Zhou, Zhao, & Bao, 2022, p.323). Depending on whether it is patterned, chainlike leno is further divided into two types: plain *luo* and patterned *luo*. Plain *luo* refers to fabric without a pattern, while patterned *luo* refers to fabric with a jacquard pattern.

The most critical aspects of the leno-weave production process are the treatment of the warp threads and the equipment used for twisting. Leno-weave fabric requires high warp strength. The Song people used a starch-paste process to treat the warp threads, namely, applying paste to the warp to prevent or reduce fuzzing and breakage during weaving (Cai, 2016). For example, the Southern Song annotated version of the *Silkworm Weaving Picture* (Figure 7)

collected by the Heilongjiang Provincial Museum depicts the paste-application process and tools. Currently, the clearest image data on the leno-weave loom comes from the Southern *Song Farming and Weaving Picture* collected by the National Museum of China. The front part of the loom is situated between the conventional heald frames and the weaver (Zhao, 2005, p.279). The entire twister mechanism consists of two heald frames. There is a movable connecting rod between the frames linking them. The two heald frames can move up and down within the range controlled by the connecting rod. Each heald frame is equipped with a base heald and a half heald. The two fully symmetrical heald frames together form a complete twister unit (Zhang, 1983, p.36).

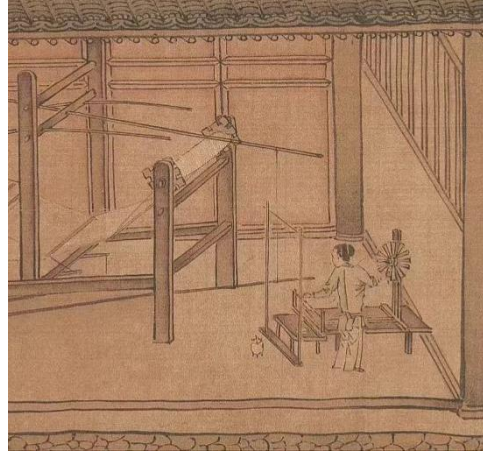


Figure 7. Detail of *Silkworm Weaving Picture* in Wu's annotated version, Southern Song Dynasty.

Collection of the Heilongjiang Provincial Museum.

Based on cultural relics unearthed from the Hejiazao Song tomb in Hengyang, Hunan Province; the Huang Sheng tomb in Fuzhou; the Zhou tomb in De'an, Jiangxi Province; and the Huashan Song tomb in Gaochun, Nanjing, silk fabrics of the leno-weave type can be found. Drawing on artifacts excavated from the Song Dynasty tomb in Gaochun, Nanjing, for the *Hundred Flowers Scroll* stage production, the *dashan* designed for Empress Dowager Xie Daoqing was made of *luo* fabric. *Luo* fabric is light, breathable, and soft. In ancient times it was deeply cherished by the court aristocracy and other upper-class circles, which accords well with the status of Empress Dowager Xie Daoqing.

4.2 Textual Research and Analysis of Xie Daoqing's Clothing Patterns

4.2.1 Peony Pattern

"Shengse flowers" refers to sketch-like, naturalistic depictions of sprigs. Under the influence of flower-and-bird paintings done from life, the style of textile patterns in the Song Dynasty increasingly tended toward realism, with rigorous compositions. The *Dongjing menghua lu* (*Record of the Splendors of the Eastern Capital*) mentions that young dancers at palace banquets wore crimson, green, purple, and blue floral robes tied with four ribbons, each holding a flowering branch (Meng, 2021), and their robe patterns were executed in a realistic floral style. Furthermore, the Song people were passionate about flowers—planting, admiring, and wearing them in their hair. This love of flowers also promoted the popularity of floral motifs in the Song Dynasty.

The peony flower is majestic and rich in symbolic meaning. It has been praised since ancient times as the queen of flowers and enjoys the reputation of "national color and heavenly fragrance." The style of peony patterns in the Song Dynasty is simple and elegant. Their application spanned nearly all decorative fields, including porcelain, clothing, jade, and everyday items. The patterns are also diverse, predominantly in the form of detached sprigs and winding branches. The leaves usually show veins, most being realistically rendered, and some forms resemble curling grasses. Variations in the shape of the flower head mainly fall into four types: layered, realistic, freehand, and rounded. The flower head is usually shown from the side or a three-quarter downward angle, with a few rendered from a frontal perspective. A large number of peony patterns have been unearthed from Song tombs, including the Huashan Song tomb in Gaochun, Nanjing; the Huang Sheng tomb in Fuzhou; and the Hejiazao tomb in Hengyang, Hunan. The reference pattern for the main body was selected from the brown silk peony-and-crabapple pattern unearthed from the Huang Sheng tomb in Fuzhou (Figure 8), and the border pattern was based on the painted plum-blossom, orchid, reed, and wild-goose decorative band unearthed from the same tomb (Figure 9). Based on the epitaph of Huang Sheng and the gold and gold-plated ornaments found among the unearthed cultural relics, it can be inferred that Huang Sheng was the principal wife of Zhao Yujun of the Southern Song Dynasty and was of noble status. Therefore, the peony pattern is also befitting of Xie Daoqing's status.



Figure 8. Brown silk peony and crabapple pattern unearthed from the Huang Sheng tomb in Fuzhou.

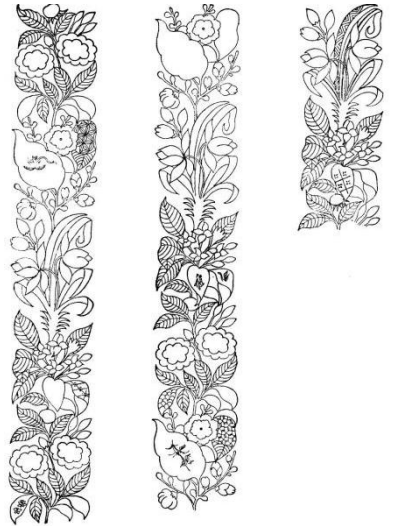


Figure 9. Painted border of plum-blossom, orchid, reed, and wild-goose pattern unearthed from the Huang Sheng tomb in Fuzhou.

4.2.2 Detached Sprig Pattern

The winding-branch structure is also a common layout for textile patterns in the Song Dynasty. A geometric curve serves as the skeleton, with the main floral branch forming the primary stem; secondary branches fill the blank areas of the composition. Flowers, bracts, leaves, and buds all appear to sprout from a single branching stem (Liu, Li, & Wang, 2023, p.362). Winding-branch patterns are divided into detached sprigs (*zhezhi*) and string-like branches. The detached-sprig pattern originated in the Tang Dynasty, originally as a concept in flower painting. As the name suggests, a single flower, or part of it, is isolated and depicted. The stems are interspersed among flowers and leaves in a curvilinear manner, distributed according to the needs of the composition. A large number of Song women's robes, trousers, skirts, shoes, and other garment types have been unearthed from the Zhou tomb in De'an, Jiangxi; the Huang Sheng tomb in Fuzhou; the Huashan Song tomb in Gaochun, Nanjing; and the Song tomb at the Changzhou Steel Factory, Jiangsu. Examining the patterns on these garments reveals yellow-brown peony and hibiscus patterns, detached-sprig patterns, peony-and-plum-blossom patterns, and so on. Among the patterns unearthed from the Song Dynasty tomb at Huashan, Gaochun, Nanjing, are a winding lotus-root pattern with stems, a lotus-and-peony pattern, and a small-sprig pattern. The reference pattern for the closed-crotch trousers was chosen from the detached-sprig hibiscus, camellia, and plum-blossom pattern from the Song tomb at Huashan, Gaochun, Nanjing. The pattern is arranged in alternating rows of hibiscus, camellia, and plum blossoms. Although of the detached-sprig type, the flowers densely cover the ground and appear extremely lush (Gong, 2010, pp.292–293).

4.2.3 Geometric Patterns

"Geometric pattern" refers to the general term for various patterns composed of the basic elements of geometric figures, such as points, lines, and planes (Zheng, 2022). Song Dynasty geometric patterns include the eight-halo pattern, S-curves, ripples, embroidered ball patterns, turtle-back patterns, lozenge patterns, etc. Geometric patterns are diverse and regular. Li Jie of the Northern Song Dynasty recorded in the *Yingzao fashi* (*Treatise on Architectural Methods*): "Lock patterns have six grades: first, lock, linked lock, agate lock, and overlapping rings; second, bamboo-mat patterns, gold-mat, silver-mat, and square rings; third, ground tortoise patterns, six-petal tortoise, cross-foot tortoise, and the like; fourth, four-petal and six-petal; fifth, sword rings; sixth, winding water" (Liang, 2023). Here, "lock patterns" refers to geometric patterns. Referring to the cultural relics unearthed from the Song Dynasty tomb at Huashan, Gaochun,

Nanjing, the pattern selected for the *moxiong* is the lozenge-flower pattern (Figure 10). The lozenge grid was printed in black, and the lozenges are filled with persimmon-calyx flowers in a staggered arrangement, forming a pattern repeat (Gong, 2010, pp.298–299). Dyeing and printing technology was further developed in the Song Dynasty, leading to the development of direct printing using adhesives. In the Northern Song Dynasty, such printing processes were prohibited for the general public; only the ruling class was permitted to use them. Therefore, the use of the lozenge-flower pattern from the Song Dynasty tomb at Huashan, Gaochun, Nanjing, was entirely in keeping with Xie Daoqing's noble status.

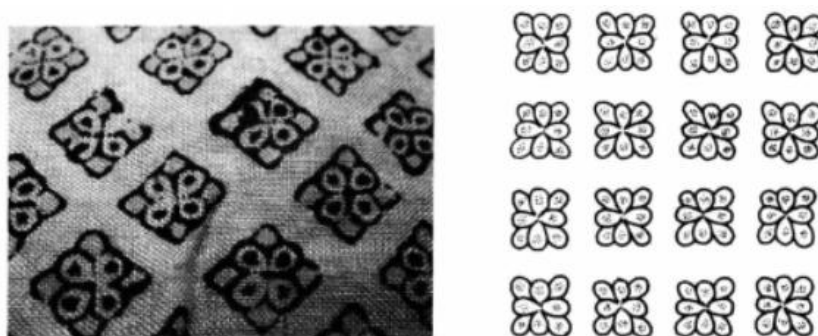


Figure 10. Lozenge-flower pattern unearthed from the Song Dynasty tomb at Huashan, Gaochun, Nanjing.

5. Textual Research and Analysis of Xie Daoqing's Headwear and Footwear

5.1 Textual Research and Analysis of Xie Daoqing's Headwear

During the Song Dynasty, women, whether commoners or imperial consorts, often wore headdresses (*guan*). Common types included high crowns, horned crowns, pearl crowns, rounded crowns, shoulder-draping crowns, phoenix crowns (*fengguan*), dragon-and-phoenix hairpin crowns, and so on. Among them, the phoenix crown was worn together with the *xiapei* and was considered one of the noblest ensembles for women. The earliest record appears in the *Zhouli: Digest of the Rites of Zhou*, which states: "The (official) costume of the empress... embroidered garments, purple *fengguan*, three large cords" (Chen, 1987). The *Book of Rites: Jade Ornaments* also mentions: "The daughter of the king, then *fengguan* and *xiapei*, brocade garments, wearing beads, gold earrings, all in accordance with the prescribed manner" (Chen, 2004). Jewelry featuring the phoenix motif had been popular since the Han Dynasty. From the Song Dynasty onward, the phoenix crown was formally incorporated into the ceremonial dress system, becoming the headdress of aristocratic women. It was stipulated that only the empress, imperial consorts, and titled noblewomen were permitted to wear it (Wu & He, 2022). Moreover, the form of the empress's phoenix crown differed from that of other consorts: the empress's phoenix crown was decorated with dragons, whereas the crowns of other consorts were not, in order to highlight the empress's supreme status. The *History of Song: Treatise on Carriages and Attire* records: "For the first rank, nine flowered hairpins, precious ornaments matching the number of flowers, nine *Zhai* patterns, and so on; for the second rank, eight flowered hairpins, eight *Zhai*; for the third rank, seven flowers, seven *Zhai*; for the fourth rank, six flowers, six *Zhai*; for the fifth rank, five flowers, five *Zhai*" (Hua et al., 2015). The design of Xie Daoqing's phoenix crown was primarily based on the crown worn in the portrait of "Empress Dowager Zhaoxian" of the Song Dynasty (Figure 11).



Figure 11. Detail of the phoenix crown in the Portrait of Empress Dowager Zhaoxian of the Song Dynasty.

Among women's hairpins, there is a type called *buyao* (step-shake). The *Shiming: Explaining Ornaments* records: "*Buyao* has a dangling pearl, which shakes when one takes a step." The pendant is either a dangling pearl or a small gold piece, referred to in the *Shiming* as a "shaking leaf." The leaves could be round or heart-shaped, with a small hole at one end. A fine gold wire passed through the hole, and the gold leaf was then tied to the head of the hairpin. The hairpin stem branched out, and birds perched on the branches while the leaves swayed among them (Yang, 2018, p.97).

In later periods, the style of *buyao* changed, and fine silver or copper wire was often used to form spiral branches, with flower petals and bead jade bound at the top (Yang, 2018, p.100), as seen in the *buyao* unearthed from the tomb of Princess Yongtai of the Tang Dynasty in Qianling, Shaanxi. Xie Daoqing's *buyao* is modeled after the gold *buyao* unearthed from the Song tomb in Shuanglong Town, Langzhong, Sichuan Province (Figure 12), and the mural from the Nanzhuang mural tomb in Dengfeng, Zhengzhou (Figure 13). The two gold plaques share the same hairpin-head pattern, decorated with flowers such as hibiscus and peony, with edges adorned with lotus leaves.



Figure 12. Gold *buyao* unearthed from a Song tomb in Shuanglong Town, Langzhong, Sichuan Province.



Figure 13. Mural from the Nanzhuang mural tomb in Dengfeng, Zhengzhou.

5.2 Textual Research and Analysis of Xie Daoqing 's Footwear

The shapes of women's socks in the Song Dynasty were also very diverse. There were sock-trousers, as well as soled socks and soleless socks, with soled socks being the predominant type. Qing dynasty scholar Yu Huai's *Women's Shoes and Socks* states: "Ancient socks had soles and could be worn without shoes; modern soleless socks cannot be walked in even a single step without shoes" (Liu & Sheng, 1992, p.329). The fabric used was mostly fine silk gauze. A pair of detached-sprig patterned socks made of *luo* gauze (Figure 14, left) was unearthed from the Southern Song tomb at Huashan, Gaochun. They are composed of two types of fabric. The ankle portion uses a three-weft *luo*, while the leg portion uses a three-warp, three-weft *luo*. The pattern is a detached-sprig floral design.

The practice of footbinding is generally believed to have originated during the Five Dynasties, though some scholars argue it began as early as the Tang Dynasty. While its origins remain debated, it is evident that during the Song Dynasty, small feet were widely admired, and foot size became an important indicator of female beauty. In the early period, footbinding was popular among palace and aristocratic women and later spread to the common people. However, not all Song women practiced footbinding; those engaged in productive labor did not. Based on artifacts unearthed from the Huashan Song tomb in Gaochun, Nanjing; the Zhou tomb in De'an, Jiangxi; and the Huang Sheng tomb of the Southern Song Dynasty in Fuzhou, it can be seen that Song women generally wore *gongxie* (bowed shoes), commonly worn by women with bound feet. The detached-sprig floral-patterned *luo* gauze shoes (Figure 14, right) were unearthed from the Southern Song tomb at Huashan, Gaochun. The shoes are curved in a bow shape, with boat-shaped uppers 16 cm in length, and the soles are slightly upturned. Geometric lines are embroidered in silk thread on the uppers, and a tie connects the shoe to the ankle (Gong, 2010, pp.302–303).

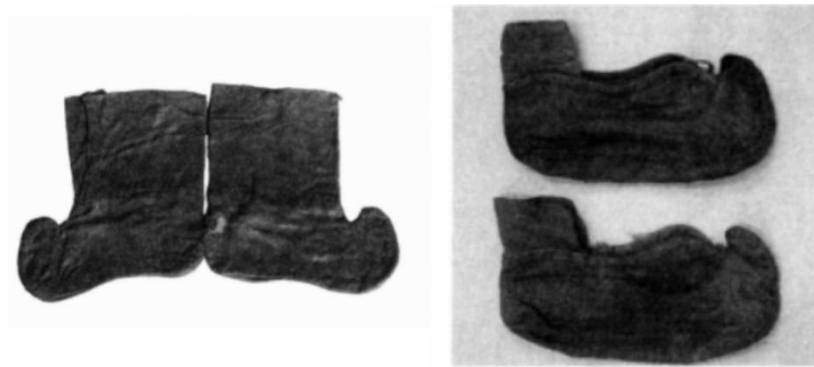


Figure 14. Detached-sprig patterned *luo* gauze socks (left) and shoes (right) unearthed from a Song tomb at Huashan, Gaochun, Nanjing.

6. Summary

The costume image design of Empress Dowager Xie Daoqing is based on paintings and objects unearthed from Song tombs. The primary fabric used is *luo* gauze, which is light, breathable, and soft, and was favored by the upper class of the Song Dynasty. The inner *moxiong* is a silk lozenge-patterned *moxiong* with small floral motifs, and the lower body is clad in a pale yellow silk all-around pleated skirt. The outer robe is a large-sleeved *dashan* patterned with peony and crabapple blossom motifs. The gold border pattern on the robe is the plum, orchid, reed, and wild-goose design, and a red *xiapei* with an exquisite embroidered pattern is draped over the outside. These elements are juxtaposed so that the cloud-and-phoenix pattern together with the pearl-decorated edge of the *xiapei* produce a soft yet magnificent effect. On the head, a dragon-and-phoenix crown and phoenix hairpins are worn, while on the feet are bowed shoes with detached-sprig lotus-and-plum-blossom decoration, highlighting dignity and elegance. The overall appearance of Empress Dowager Xie Daoqing is elegant and richly decorated. The costume design takes into account comprehensive factors, including her noble status, the story's setting, and the social fashion of the Song Dynasty. It also accounts for the practical requirements of the stage performance in completing the final design (Figure 15).



Figure 15. Stage presentation of Empress Dowager Xie Daoqing's costume image.

7. Conclusion

The choices regarding clothing style, color, fabric, and pattern for Empress Dowager Xie Daoqing have been systematically studied, drawing on her historical background, unearthed tomb artifacts, and Song Dynasty paintings, in order to accurately reproduce the clothing fashion of aristocratic women in the late Southern Song Dynasty. The phoenix crown and *xiapei* ensemble highlights the solemnity and elegance of imperial consorts in the Song Dynasty. The use of bright yellow garments underscores the noble identity of the royal family. The lightness, fineness, and breathability of *luo* fabric, produced by a twisting process, also demonstrate the superb textile technology of the Song Dynasty. The choice of bowed shoes helps us understand the aesthetic standards of female footbinding in the Song period. As a cultural carrier, clothing possesses both symbolic and narrative functions. This design is devoted to reconstructing the clothing style of Song aristocratic women. It also seeks to convey the spirit of the age and the level of craftsmanship at the time, and to provide a new avenue for future generations to understand the lives and aesthetics of Song Dynasty women.

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Ethics Statement

Ethics approval was not required because this study analyzes published literature and publicly available institutional documents and does not involve human participants, experimental intervention, or identifiable personal data.

Availability of Data and Materials

The core documentary corpus is provided in the accompanying supplementary material. All underlying documents are publicly available through the references and URLs cited in the manuscript.

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Author Contributions

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