



The Evolution of the Girdle as a Reflection of Ancient Social Concepts

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Abstract. This paper explores the relationship between belts and ancient social concepts through an overview of the evolution of Chinese belts through the ages. As an important part of ancient costumes, the belt is not only a kind of decoration, but also a symbol carrying culture, hierarchy and social ideas. Then the waist belt is studied in depth from the aspects of its modeling, use function and structural characteristics, and the connotation of the ancient people's thoughts in the social environment at that time is revealed through the perspective of the development of the waist belt.

Keywords: belt; evolution; social concept

1 Introduction

As an important part of ancient Chinese dress, the belt has a long history and rich cultural connotation. The evolution of the belt not only reflects the change of the times, but also its form, function and cultural connotation are the embodiment of the ancient social concepts. Through the study of the belt, we can explore the ancient design thinking, concepts and social background. Through the study of belts, we can get a glimpse of the ancient design thinking, concepts and social background, and then explore the connection between belts and the concepts of the ancient society, in order to better understand the cultural connotation and thought system of the ancient society. Through the comprehensive analysis and organization of the literature, it helps to reveal the significance of the belt in ancient society and its influence on the lifestyle of ancient people. The findings of this paper will provide us with new perspectives and thoughts for a deeper understanding of ancient society. The development of China's ancient girdle has gone through thousands of years of history from the primitive society to the Qing Dynasty. According to the course of the girdle's development, the author, on the basis of synthesizing the research results of the predecessors, divides the development of the girdle into four major phases: the budding phase, the forming phase, the developing phase, and the maturing phase.

2 The budding stage of the belt

Primitive society period is the budding stage of the development of China's belt, this stage of the belt and the related belt began to appear, due to the relatively long period of time, the physical object is mostly non-existent, therefore, the primitive colored pottery, murals, sculpture in the figure is an important way for us to understand the belt.

Regarding the origin of the belt, Huang Nengfu and Chen Juanjuan pointed out in their book "History of Chinese Dress" that as early as in the middle of the Paleolithic period, people began to use animal skins to protect themselves from the cold, and at this time the dress was to solve the people's needs for survival, and thereafter, along with the development of the productive forces, the sewing of animal skins, the spinning of yarn and the production of clothes, the gradual formation of the dress.[1]The emergence of early clothing, for the creation and development of the belt to create the possibility of Yangshao period on the excavation of colored pottery appeared on the figure of the belt, but at this time the belt decoration is relatively simple, mostly only practical parts. In the middle and late primitive society, with the development of productive forces, in manufacturing to meet the needs of people's lives on the basis of living ware began to make the appreciation of life, both practical and decorative, belts can't be an exception, Yangshao culture unearthed on the figure of a human-shaped pot of colored pottery that is tied with decorative patterns of the belt (Figure 1). Feng Yingzhi pointed out in his book "Ancient Chinese Belt Culture Briefly" in an article that the clothing of the primitive society in China did not use buttons, only a few small belts were sewn on the lapel for tying the knot, and cited the "Shuowen - Department" that the name of such a small belt is called "dickey", which was later developed into a large belt tied around the waist, which is another type of viewpoint on the origin of the belt. This is another type of viewpoint on the origin of the belt.[2]

In the development of belt parts, there appeared early "belt hooks" (Fig. 2), which were unearthed at the Liangzhu Culture site, and Huang Nengfu and Chen Juanjuan mentioned the function of these belt hooks in their book "The History of Chinese Clothing," pointing out that their function should be to tie one end of the belt, and the other end should be used to hang objects. Different from the belt hooks used for ancient belts during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods.[1]88 Later researchers basically follow this view, but did not do further research on its function. This kind of belt hook not only has the practicality, after the polishing, carving treatment is very beautiful, the emergence of the belt hook, further demonstrates the primitive society ancestors to the pursuit of beauty. Primitive society in the belt to meet the practical needs of fixed clothing, the ancient ancestors of the belt decorated, became both practical and aesthetic arts and crafts.[3]



Fig. 1. Yangshao culture human-shaped colored pottery jar



Fig. 2. Jade belt hook found in Liangzhu culture

3 The formation of the belt stage

Pre-qin to qin and han period is the formation of the belt stage, at this time with the development of productive forces, the primitive society followed by the transition to slavery and thus the class society gradually present, to the western week period already has a perfect hierarchy. Clothing was regarded as a tool to "divide the nobility and inferiority, and to distinguish between the equal and the superior".^{[1][135]} The belt, as part of the costume, is also a sign that shows the hierarchy of the wearer.

The performance of the hierarchy, one of the present belt material, the Shang and Zhou period of the belt has two main categories, a class of silk made of silk, known as the "big belt" or "silk taping", a class of leather for the, known as the "large belt leather". Leather belt development of the early only the poor and lowly people leather belt bundled outside, have the status of the people are leather belt bundled inside, and then outside the bundle Squire belt (a kind of large belt).^{[3][165]} The second manifestation is in the accessories of the belt. Since the Western Zhou Dynasty, jade jewelry gradually became popular, while the emperor and nobles wore jade as a way to show their status. There is a belt style called "group ribbon", as stated in the "Yuzao" in the Book of Rites: "The emperor wears white jade and Xuan group ribbon, the nobles wear mountain Xuan

jade and Zhu group ribbon..., and the scholar wears Wen and Yan group ribbon." This clearly stipulates the requirements for wearing ribbons for different social classes. Dai Sheng, translated by Jia Taihong in the Western Han Dynasty. *Book of Rites*. Beijing: Xiyuan Publishing House, 2014:388. The system of wearing ribbons changed during the Han Dynasty. The "Yufu Zhi" records the system of wearing ribbons in the early years of the Han Dynasty, which was "wearing double seals, measuring two inches in length and six centimeters in width. Chengyu, feudal lords, kings, nobles, and nobles used white jade, black rhinoceroses were used for stones ranging from 2000 to 400, and ivory was used for even private disciples."

Clearly stipulates the requirements of different classes of wear.^[4] The system of wearing ribbons changed in the Han Dynasty, and the "Records of Public Apparel" recorded that the system of wearing ribbons in the early years of the Han Dynasty was "to wear double seals, two minutes in length and six minutes in square. The marsupials, vassal kings, princes, and marquises used white jade, while those below the middle two thousand stones up to four hundred stones used black rhinoceros, and those from two hundred stones up to private disciples used ivory."^[5] It can be seen that the Han Dynasty distinguished the grade of the wearer by the length of the pendant and the texture of the item suspended. During the Western Zhou, Qin and Han Dynasties, peiyu no longer appeared as a single jade pendant, but as a group pendant, which was a combination of several pieces of peiyu suspended in colorful groups on a leather belt by, Juan, Ju, Wang Yu, Chong Ya and other parts, in the shape of a belt, hanging down from the waist.^{[1]237} The group pei also appears in the emperor statues after the Qin and Han dynasties, with a relatively long period of continuity (Fig. 3). Thirdly, the structural components of the belt are shown in the structural parts of the belt, and the parts of the belt that are more intensively studied from the Western Zhou to the Qin and Han periods are the belt hooks and the belt cuffs.



Fig. 3. A set of jade pendants during the Warring States period

A belt hook is a hook used to fasten a belt around the waist, and the hook head and hook button are used to connect the two ends of the leather belt respectively. Ding Xifan. *The Evolution of Jade Belt Hook's Modeling and Decoration Style*[J]. *Art and design (theory)*, 2007, (09):200-202. Hua Mei in his monograph "Chinese clothing history" pointed out that the emergence of hooks should be no later than the end of the Western Zhou Dynasty, hooks have begun to use in leather and in the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States period has developed a variety of forms, hooks with materials such as copper, jade, gold, etc., there are a variety of mixed use of materials to produce the hooks of the case of the jade belt hooks Jade belt hooks were generally used by princes and lords (Fig. 4), symbolizing the eternal transmission of wealth and power. Therefore, most of the jade belt hooks were unearthed in the tombs of noble princes and lords during the two Han dynasties, which is a manifestation of the ritual system of the two Han dynasties.^[7]Belt hooks gradually declined in the Wei, Jin, North and South Dynasties until the Tang and Song dynasties, when the number of belt hooks decreased significantly and the type became single. The belt is a ring-shaped buckle, its shape or square or round, the exquisite with buckle pin, when the belt into the buckle, and then insert the buckle pin can be. The buckle is a ring with a tongue or a beak-like protrusion, which can be used to hold the belt in place.^[8]The band has a raised section that holds the band in place, but is not as movable as modern band tongues.^[6]⁵⁵The article "Northern China Bronze Translucent Carved Band Decoration" published by Wu En has systematically interpreted the Northern Band Decoration during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods, arguing that with the exchanges between the northern ethnic minorities and the Central Plains, the development of the band decoration has produced a clear regionality, and that the Xiongnu and the Eastern Hu are mostly translucent, mostly decorated in relief with the fighting animal motifs, and the picture of beasts devouring each other with the rustic and rugged style of art (Fig. 5). Ancient documents call them Xianbei, Shibi, Xuzha, Rhinoceros Vi, and Private Bladeless Heads.^[9]



Fig. 4. Tomb Band Hook of the King of South Vietnam, Qin and Han Dynasties



Fig. 5. Northern Band Hook of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods

With the application of the belt hooks and belts, the emergence of the hooks and belts (also known as Guo Luo belt) that is, with the belt hooks will be linked together at both ends of the belt. The late Spring and Autumn period, and the emergence of the belt buckle, its function and belt hooks, belt with the function of both ends of the belt will be fixed together (Figure), the belt buckle in the Han Dynasty ushered in the development of the heyday of the different shapes, exquisite craftsmanship, widely used, and became a necessity for people.^[10] During the reign of Emperor Wen of the Han Dynasty, Emperor Wen wore a "red ribbon". A group of ribbons was worn on top of the robes, the color of the ribbons indicating the level of status, to which purple ribbons and above could be added jade rings and belts.^{[11]165} To summarize, the belt and its belt tool during the Shang, Zhou, Qin and Han Dynasties not only have practical and decorative roles, but also have the role of reflecting the wearer's identity and status, and show significant differences between the north and south. There was a systematic development in the types of belts and structural components of belts, which laid the foundation for the development of belts in later generations.

4 The development stage of the belt

Wei, Jin, North and South Dynasties period, the North and South regimes stand side by side, the northern belt belt style introduced into the Central Plains region, the creation of its style was absorbed by the Central Plains and the southern regime, the Sui and Tang dynasties to implement open and inclusive ethnic policy, with the economic and cultural exchanges, the domain of the new materials, technology into the Central Plains, the innovation of the form of the belt, the Liao, Song and Jin period, the rapid development of the commodity economy and the advances in technology, the production of belts more exquisite craft, the Central Plains During the Liao, Song and Jin Dynasties, the rapid development of the commodity economy and technological progress made the production of waistbands more exquisite, and the technology of the Central Plains was absorbed by the neighboring minority regimes. Minority belts also retained some of their own characteristics. Yuan Dynasty and its predecessor, the Mongol Empire, in the war of foreign conquest, absorbed Central Asia, the Central Plains, Western Europe and other cultural elements, and integrated them into the arts and crafts works, showing a diversity of characteristics.

At this time, the mincing belt is particularly typical. "Mincing" originally referred to the decorative leather strips hanging down from the saddle of a horse, but later it was used on the waistbands of herdsmen, and the mincing belt was attached with a hammer ring to hang small tools and objects (Fig. 6).^{[3]266}Mincing belts were introduced to the Central Plains from the North and South Dynasties to the Yuan Dynasty and were still in use. Early mincing belt hanging flint, knife, sharpened stone and other living tools, so that the wearer to use. Early Tang Dynasty hanging objects of the mincing belt by the rulers called "mincing seven things" and only the military officials above the fifth grade can be worn. Since then, the mincing belt to adapt to the life of the people in the central plains, the structure has changed, in the kaiyuan period of the tang dynasty rulers officially ordered to stop wearing "mincing seven things".^[11]The holes on the mincing belt for hanging objects gradually evolved into the belt quill, which was inlaid on the belt quill. Influenced by the Han Chinese regime, some of the mincing belts of the Liao, Jin, Xixia and Yuan Dynasties also eliminated the small belt hanging down from the belt, leaving only the lower part of the belt loop, which was also eliminated thereafter, leaving only the belt loop. However, the minority regimes still retained their own national belt characteristics, that is, the same belt has two different design styles, part of the Liao mincing belt is still hanging bow, arrows, pouches and other parts, which is similar to the structure of the early mincing belt.^[12]Xixia also retained in the leather belt tie mincing mincing seven things, Xixia murals appear in the mincing belt still have hanging ring and hanging short belt.^{[6]249}This feature has continued into the Yuan Dynasty and appeared a variety of mincing belt form, including the red mincing belt (that is, the belt body decorated with red), double buckle single tail belt (has two belt body when the long end of the belt buckle on the buckle on the short belt leather threaded in the eyelet or peach-shaped quill hole, it is connected to a lengthened belt), a single tail belt (only one), gold mincing belt (silk body, decorated with gold belt quill, belt quill using hammer disc technology production), jade mincing belt (belt body silk, decorated with gold belt quill, belt quill using hammer disc technology production), jade mincing belt (belt quill), jade mincing belt (belt quill using hammered disc technology production), the mincing belt (belt body silk, decorated with gold belt quill), and a number of mincing belt forms. Tail), gold mincing belt (belt body silk, decorated with gold belt quill, belt quill using hammer plate technology), jade mincing belt (inlaid jade belt quill), These mincing belt mostly found in the Liao Dynasty tombs, silk mincing belt and sterling silver mincing belt also appeared at this time, which is the previous generation of the mincing belt in the case of very few appearances.^[13]

Jade belt is the common name for the belt inlaid with jade (belt plate), which is also proved to be an extraterritorial imported belt. Shen Congwen pointed out in *The History of Chinese Dress* that the design of inlaying gold and silver on the belt was imported from the West.^{[3]86}Later studies also support this view that the rich jade resources of the Western countries also created conditions for the development of jade belts, and that jade belts should be the result of exchanges between Chinese jade culture and Western culture. Chen Shiyu, in his article "Crossing Gold and Binding Jade - The Origin and Recovery of Several Types of Leather Belts from the Northern Dynasties to the Ming and Qing Dynasties," suggests that jade belts were developed from mincing belts, and that the mincing belts of the Central Plains region only retained their belts after

removing the rings and other parts, and that thereafter the belts began to be inlaid with jade materials.^[14] During the Wei, Jin and North-South Dynasties, there are records of the Central Plains Dynasty accepting jade belts from the Western Regions and important tributes. The more typical jade belt in the Song Dynasty is the white jade platoon square jade belt around the waist of the statue of the Southern Song emperors in the South Smoky Hall.^{[3]106} This type of belt is characterized by a buckle located in the middle of the belt, but here the buckle is not inlaid with gold or jade, and there is a buckle on the side of the belt and at the end of the belt. The buckle is rectangular and decorated with relief carvings. During the Tang dynasty, most of the quills on jade belts were round and semi-circular, known as "round quills" or "group quills" (Figs. 7 and 8), and there were also square quills. In the Late Tang and Fifth Dynasties, as the number of round or semicircular bounties declined, the proportion of square bounties increased, and so did their size (fig. 9).

Previously mentioned belt since the Western Zhou Dynasty, the ruler to belt style, color, parts to distinguish the status of the wearer's identity, after the Wei and Jin Dynasty, this feature is still in the belt on the continuation. In the early Tang Dynasty, the ruler will be the number of belts and materials as a distinction between the status of the wearer of the mark, the number of belts in the Sui Dynasty emperor's belt of ten a belt, to the Suzong period of the belt system has changed many times. The color of the belt is also a way to differentiate the hierarchy, "New Tang Dynasty - Zhi - Volume XIV - car clothing" recorded: (Tang Dynasty) "big belt, to vegetarian for the, to Zhu for Li, in the waist and hanging are all benefit. On the Zhu Jin Gui, the right color. Under the green silk cheap, between the colors. Bo four inches, New York, both low and high, green group, Bo three inches. The big belt is silk fabric, big belt without a harness, to color points expensive and cheap."^[15] The Jin Dynasty inlaid jade, gold, rhinoceros horn and other textures on the belt plate to distinguish the hierarchy.^{[9]401}

It can be seen that the widespread use of jade belts in the Tang and Song dynasties, as well as in the later Yuan and Ming dynasties, was the result of the role of many parties, one of which was that the integration of ethnic groups during this period accelerated cultural exchanges between the Central Plains and the rest of the world, absorbing new belt styles. The second was the gradual introduction of high-quality jades into the interior with tribute and trade. Thirdly, under the influence of the ceremonial system since the Shang and Zhou dynasties, jade has always been a symbol of status.



Fig. 6. Northern Zhou Jade Bow Belt



Fig. 7. Tang Dynasty Hu Ren Pattern Jade Belt



Fig. 8. Tang Dynasty Jade Belt



Fig. 9. Belt of Southern Song Dynasty Emperors in Nanxun Hall

Except for leather belts, cloth and silk belts still developed during this period. Starting from the Song Dynasty, some belts with completely identical shapes and structures to the original leather belts had already been made entirely of cloth. During the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, tapestry became the mainstream belt in social life.^{[1]521} During this period, special belt accessories also appeared, such as the belly hugging belt. The belly hugging belt is one of the specially shaped belts, commonly known as the "belly wrapping", also known as the "belly wrapping" or "robe belly", which was a type of decoration worn by men around their waist in the Song Dynasty. There was also a belly wrapped structure in clothing during the Jin and Liao dynasties.^{[6]524} In summary, from the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties to the Yuan Dynasty, the development of belts in China showed a characteristic of mutual integration between the north and the south. On the one hand, the Central Plains Dynasty further absorbed the belt styles of northern ethnic minorities and redesigned them according to their own living needs. These belt styles then flowed into the northern ethnic minority areas with the exchange between the two sides and gained their recognition. At this point, the components of the belt and the use of color as a symbol of identity and status are further enhanced.

5 The mature stage of the belt

In the early years of the Ming Dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang restored the "Han family attire" and integrated the belt style and belt usage system from the Tang and Song dynasties into the clothing of this dynasty.^[16] After the Qing Empire took control of the Central Plains, it implemented the policy of "shaving hair and changing clothing", which stipulated that "all Han officials and civilians, men and women, should wear clothing in the style of Manchuria.". All kinds of leather belts in Han clothing have been abolished. Cloth and silk belts replaced leather belts as the mainstream categories of ancient belts.^{[2]54}

In the Ming Dynasty, the Tang system was restored, and jade was also used to symbolize the status of hierarchy in the imperial dress system. The Ming Dynasty jade belt was similar to the Tang Dynasty in that it was still inlaid with ribbons on the belt body, and the components of the jade belt were divided in more detail. The "Tongya" describes: "Today, the leather belt has three platforms at the front, and three round peaches on the left and right sides. The sides are called fish tails, and there are two small squares for auxiliary priests, and seven at the back." (Figure 10) Although the Tang Dynasty jade belt adopts the double tailed structure, the ribbons are mostly square, which is different from the circular ribbons in the Tang Dynasty. In the portraits of emperors and nobles in the Ming Dynasty, it was found that some jade belts were tied much higher than the waist. During the tying process, a thread was used to hang the belt around the shoulder, hence the saying "jade belts are tied in a virtual manner.". In terms of the system of using jade belts, the shape of the jade belt was not yet unified in the early Ming Dynasty. After Xuande, the number of jade belt plates was twenty.^[17] Wearing jade is also a symbol to distinguish the rank of court officials. In the Ming Dynasty, it was stipulated that the first and second grades of civil and military officials should use jade, the third and fourth grades should use gold, the fifth, sixth, and seventh grades should use silver, and the eighth and ninth grades should use black horns; A first-class jade for public service.^[18] It can be seen that although the Ming Dynasty inherited some of the system of using belts from the Tang Dynasty, it still made modifications according to the needs of this dynasty. Although the Ming Dynasty had clear regulations on the use of belts, the gentry in economically developed areas such as Wuzhong and Jiangsu and Zhejiang often engaged in unauthorized use.

In the decoration of jade belts, the Ming Dynasty applied lacquer carving techniques to the decoration of waistbands. The practice of using various brocade patterns on a large area of the sunken bottom paint layer to complement the patterns on top was widely borrowed and applied to the carving process of jade belt patterns.^{[17]42}

At the same time, painting and sculpture elements from the Ming Dynasty were also used in belt design, making it a collection of diverse arts. After the mid Ming Dynasty, a new belt structure was also developed, which attached a short secondary belt on the back of the belt near the tail, with a buckle hole on it. The buckle was attached to the belt, and the tail did not need to pass through the buckle and was directly inserted into the belt, so that the buckle could not be exposed. In the Ming Dynasty, there was also a type of double tailed leather belt that divided the front strap in half and was fixed in the middle with a latch. The buckle was usually kept in a closed state, and when in use,

only the middle latch of the front strap needs to be opened.^{[14]74} There is relatively little research on belts in the Qing Dynasty, and only Huang Nengfu and Chen Juanjuan's "History of Chinese Costume" pointed out that during the Qing Dynasty, except for the system of waist belts still remaining in court belts, all other leather belt systems were abolished in practical life. The types of belts in the Qing Dynasty include leather belts with jade beams (used by emperors for hunting in the fields), waist belts (a type of belt for men, made of double-layer fabric with buttons), and auspicious clothing belts.^{[1]751}

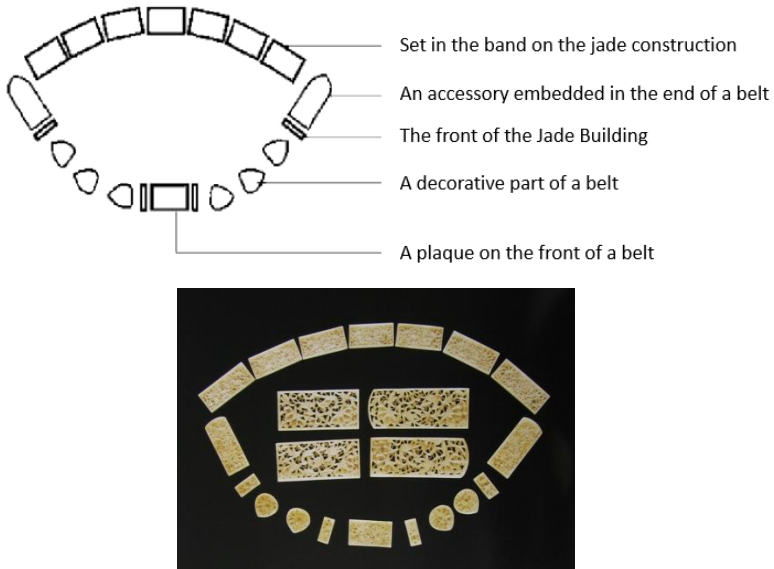


Fig. 10. (above) Ming Dynasty jade belt structure, (below) real thing

6 Conclusion

In summary, the belt is an important component of ancient clothing. During the evolution of the belt, we can see the changes and evolution of its function and symbolic significance in different periods and social classes. The evolution of the belt is closely related to ancient social concepts. It has both practical functions and carries the significance of social hierarchy and identity symbols, while also reflecting the aesthetic concepts and cultural characteristics of ancient society. Through the study of belts, we can better understand the ideas, values, and social structure of ancient society, as well as the important position and significance of belts. At present, there is still relatively little specialized research on waistbands. In some studies, there are conflicting and ambiguous definitions of key information such as the type, title, and age of appearance of waistbands, which still need further exploration by future researchers.

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