

# Evolution and Innovative Design of Cloud Shoulder Adornments in Ming and Qing Dynasties from the Perspective of Hanfu Elements

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## Abstract

In this study, from the perspective of Hanfu elements, the evolution and innovative design of cloud shoulder adornments in the Ming and Qing dynasties were systematically examined. Through methods such as literature research, data collection, and practical research, the origins, development, and their association with the historical and cultural context were revealed. The study found that the cloud shoulder adornments in the Ming and Qing dynasties underwent a process of evolution from simplicity to complexity and from uniformity to diversity in terms of design and patterns. These changes reflected the shifting aesthetic concepts of the time and the pursuit of clothing aesthetics, enriching the design elements and aesthetic connotations of cloud shoulder adornments. The findings of this research provide inspiration for modern designers to create Hanfu works with distinctive characteristics and individuality. The significance of this study lies in uncovering the evolutionary process and design features of cloud shoulder adornments in the Ming and Qing dynasties, offering important references and inspirations for related research and creative endeavors. By integrating traditional elements with modern design concepts, we can promote the inheritance and development of Chinese traditional culture, as well as the dissemination and application of Hanfu in contemporary times. This holds positive implications for the revival of Hanfu culture and the preservation of traditional heritage.

## Keywords

Evolution, innovative design, cloud shoulder adornments, Ming dynasty, Qing dynasty.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background and Research Significance

With the increasing global attention on Chinese culture, Hanfu, as an important carrier of traditional Chinese clothing culture, has gained growing interest from academia and the public both domestically and internationally. Hanfu elements, as the fundamental components of Hanfu, not only contain rich historical information but also reflect the aesthetic preferences and cultural connotations of ancient Chinese people. The cloud shoulder adornment, specifically the four-piece Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder in the Ming and Qing dynasties, serves as a typical representation of Hanfu elements, possessing unique aesthetic value and historical significance. However, there has been relatively limited research on the four-piece Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder in the Ming and Qing dynasties, especially from the perspective of Hanfu elements.

This study aims to systematically analyze the historical evolution of the four-piece

Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder in the Ming and Qing dynasties, explore its cultural connotations from the perspective of Hanfu elements, and provide theoretical foundations and design inspirations for modern Hanfu design. Additionally, through the study of innovative designs for the four-piece Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder, this research intends to promote the innovative development of traditional culture and infuse new vitality into contemporary clothing design. Furthermore, this study contributes to enriching and improving the theoretical framework in the field of Hanfu research, elevating the status and influence of Hanfu culture in the international academic community.

### 1.2. Literature Review

Research on Hanfu elements began in the mid-20th century, with studies primarily focused on the origins, development, structure, patterns, and other aspects of Hanfu. In recent years, with the revival of Hanfu culture, there has been an increasing emphasis on the research of

Hanfu elements in academia. However, there has been relatively limited research specifically on the four-piece Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder in the Ming and Qing dynasties, and most studies have remained at the descriptive analysis stage, lacking in-depth exploration from the perspective of Hanfu elements.

Early studies on the four-piece Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder in the Ming and Qing dynasties mainly relied on documentary records and material investigations for descriptive analysis. In recent years, as the research on Hanfu elements has deepened, scholars have started studying the four-piece Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder from different angles. For example, Jia Jingting analyzed the pattern characteristics of the four-piece Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder from a pattern perspective, highlighting the changes in patterns during its inheritance and development [1]. Li Shuxia explored the historical evolution of the four-piece Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder and the cultural factors behind it from the perspective of the social and historical background [2].

Furthermore, some studies have also focused on the application and innovative design of the four-piece Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder in modern clothing design. For instance, Du Yanzhen discussed the innovative application of four-piece Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder elements in modern women's clothing design based on contemporary aesthetic demands [3]. Wang Siqi incorporated the traditional four-piece Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder into modern clothing design, providing inspiration and reflections on the integration of tradition and modernity in design approaches [4].

Although there have been some studies examining the evolution and innovative design of the four-piece Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder, there remains a lack of systematic and in-depth research from the perspective of Hanfu elements. Therefore, this study will conduct a comprehensive analysis of the historical evolution and innovative design of the four-piece Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder in the Ming and Qing dynasties, from the perspective of Hanfu elements, aiming to provide theoretical support and design inspirations for modern Hanfu design. Moreover, it hopes to further promote the development of research on Hanfu elements and enrich the theoretical framework in related fields.

### 1.3. Research Methods

To delve into the study of cloud shoulder adornments in the shape of 'sihe ruyi' from the Ming and Qing dynasties, this research employed a combination of literature review, physical analysis, and practical research methods. In the literature review phase, a wide array of historical documents, costume journals, and artifact catalogs related to cloud shoulder adornments from the Ming and Qing periods were extensively gathered. These materials encompass detailed information on the origin, development, and evolution of cloud shoulder adornments. Through systematic literature research, this study can comprehensively understand the changes and evolution of cloud shoulder adornments during different historical

periods, providing theoretical support for subsequent design processes.

In the physical analysis phase, this research collected physical specimens of cloud shoulder adornments from the Ming and Qing periods, including those housed in museums, art galleries, and private collections. Through meticulous dissection, photography, and documentation, this research acquired details about the form, patterns, and decorations of the cloud shoulder adornments. These data serve as foundational information and a source of inspiration for subsequent innovative designs.

Practical research methods constitute one of the core methodologies of this study. Combining design practice with theoretical exploration, practical design aims to innovate cloud shoulder adornments in the 'sihe ruyi' shape and organically incorporate ancient costume elements with modern and Western elements. During the design process, this research referenced traditional cloud shoulder adornment forms, patterns, and wearing styles while introducing modern aesthetic concepts, with the goal of creating fashionable and uniquely charismatic cloud shoulder designs.

Through the aforementioned research methods, this study aimed to comprehensively understand the historical evolution of 'sihe ruyi' cloud shoulder adornments during the Ming and Qing periods and, based on this understanding, engage in innovative design to promote the inheritance and development of Hanfu culture.

## 2. Overview of Hanfu Elements

### 2.1. Definition and Characteristics of Hanfu Elements

Hanfu elements refer to various visual elements that constitute Hanfu, including designs, patterns, colors, fabrics, etc. [5]. These elements are not only fundamental

components of Hanfu but also the core carriers of Hanfu culture, deeply reflecting the daily customs, aesthetic preferences, and cultural connotations of ancient Chinese people. Hanfu elements possess the following characteristics:

(1) Diversity: Hanfu elements encompass a wide range of patterns, designs, colors, fabrics, etc., reflecting the diversity and inclusiveness of Hanfu throughout its historical evolution.

(2) Cultural Essence: Hanfu elements integrate the essence of traditional Chinese culture, such as Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, as well as various folklore and historical stories, embodying the cultural pursuits of ancient Chinese people.

(3) Aesthetics: Hanfu elements exhibit distinctive aesthetic features, such as symmetry, harmony, and rich pattern imagery, reflecting the pursuit of beauty and taste among ancient Chinese people.

(4) Symbolism: Many patterns and motifs within Hanfu elements hold specific symbolic meanings, such as dragons, phoenixes, and Ruyi, conveying auspiciousness, wealth, longevity, and other positive wishes cherished by ancient Chinese people.

### 2.2. Historical Evolution of Hanfu Elements

The historical evolution of Hanfu elements includes the development of structure, fabrics, colors, patterns, and more. The following is a brief description of the historical evolution in these aspects:

Structure: The structure of Hanfu has undergone continuous evolution, from simple styles in the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties to intricate forms in the Ming and Qing dynasties. Each dynasty possessed its unique clothing characteristics, such as the Ruqun in the Qin and Han dynasties, round collars in the Wei, Jin, Northern and Southern dynasties, and cross-collar garments with wide sleeves in the Sui and Tang dynasties.

**Fabrics:** The fabrics of Hanfu developed from initial materials such as hemp and silk to a variety of materials including silk, satin, and gauze. In terms of craftsmanship, the luxurious techniques of gold and silver thread weaving and bead embroidery during the Sui and Tang dynasties showcased the opulent style of Hanfu.

**Colors:** The colors of Hanfu transitioned from monochrome to vibrant and colorful. For example, during the Qin and Han dynasties, clothing with a multitude of colors emerged, while the Sui and Tang dynasties featured contrasting and vivid color combinations.

**Patterns:** Hanfu patterns evolved from simple geometric shapes and flora and fauna motifs to intricate and elaborate designs. The patterns throughout different dynasties incorporate various cultural, religious, and historical elements, such as dragon, phoenix, lotus, and Bagua (eight trigrams) symbols, signifying auspicious meanings.

### 3. The Four-Piece Ruyi-shaped Cloud Shoulder in the Ming and Qing Dynasties and Its Evolution

#### 3.1. Origin and Development of the Four-Piece Ruyi-shaped Cloud Shoulder in the Ming and Qing Dynasties

The four-piece Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder originated during the Ming Dynasty and experienced development throughout the Ming and Qing dynasties. It is a distinctive decoration that combines traditional cloud patterns, Ruyi motifs, and other elements, showcasing a rich national character [6]. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the four-piece Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder gradually became an important decorative element of Hanfu, widely applied in ceremonial attire, official garments, and folk costumes.

#### 3.2. Main Characteristics of the Four-Piece Ruyi-shaped Cloud Shoulder in the Ming and Qing Dynasties

(1) **Structural Characteristics:** The four-piece Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder consists of four independent Ruyi-shaped cloud motifs, interconnected to form a complete decoration. This structure not only serves decorative purposes but also provides practical functions for securing sleeves and collars.

(2) **Pattern Characteristics:** The patterns of the Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder are based on cloud patterns and Ruyi motifs, and incorporate other auspicious symbols such as lotus flowers, bats, etc. These patterns symbolize auspiciousness, blessings, longevity, and reflect people's yearning for a better life.

(3) **Craftsmanship Characteristics:** The four-piece Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder in the Ming and Qing dynasties employed exquisite embroidery, brocade weaving, and other techniques, enhancing the three-dimensional and delicate nature of the patterns. In terms of colors, the Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder often adopted vibrant and contrasting color combinations, presenting a splendid and dazzling visual effect.

(4) **Cultural Connotations:** The four-piece Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder integrates various cultural elements, including religion, folklore, and history. It serves not only as a decorative item but also as a reflection of the social culture, aesthetic concepts, and customs of that time.

#### 3.3. Evolution of the Four-Piece Ruyi-shaped Cloud Shoulder in the Ming and Qing Dynasties

##### 3.3.1. Evolution of Shape (as shown in Table 1)

(1) **Simplification of Appearance:** In the late Ming dynasty, the cloud shoulder already had a certain decorative nature.

During the early to late Qing dynasty, the use of gold and silver embellishments decreased, and people began to pay attention to the internal structure and aesthetic beauty of the four-piece Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder. This shift indicates a gradual transition in people's pursuit of clothing aesthetics from surface extravagance to inner quality [7-8].

(2) **Refinement of Shape and Lines:** In the late Ming dynasty, the cloud shoulder adopted the four-piece Ruyi-shaped design, with the four Ruyi cloud motifs connected around the neck. The simple heart-shaped Ruyi motif in the early Qing dynasty evolved into a complex longevity lock shape in the late Qing dynasty, with lines becoming more intricate, transitioning from a single-line edge frame to a double-line edge structure. This change reflects the development of aesthetic preferences of the time and the fine pursuit of patterns and shapes.

(3) **Increasing Layers:** The single-layered cloud shoulder design in the late Ming dynasty developed into two-layered, three-layered, or even multi-layered cloud shoulders with different orientations during the early Qing dynasty. This layered design added a sense of three-dimensionality and visual impact to the cloud shoulder, making it more attractive in clothing.

##### 3.3.2. Evolution of Tassels

From the late Ming dynasty to the late Qing dynasty, tassels became fewer and simpler, with a reduction in gold and silver jewelry, gemstones, and bell ornaments on the tassels. This change signifies the shift in aesthetic preferences towards simplicity and elegance from the previous complexity and grandeur.

##### 3.3.3. Evolution of Patterns

From the late Ming dynasty to the Qing dynasty, the evolution of patterns in the four-piece Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder underwent a process of simplicity to complexity and from uniformity to


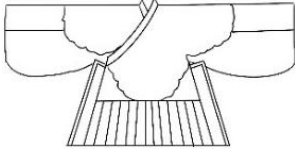
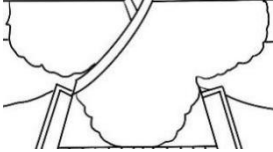


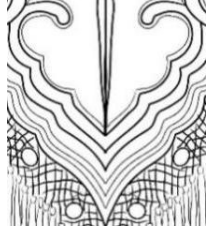


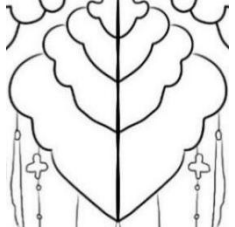

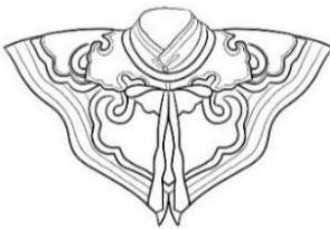
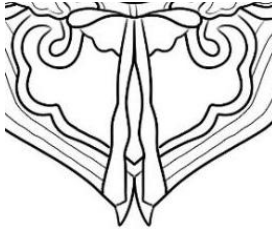
Dynasty	Clothing Image	Reconstructed Shape	Ruyi-Shaped Design
Ming Wanli	 "Chinese Textile and Costume Collection"	 Drawn by the author	 Drawn by the author
Qing Kangxi	 <a href="http://news.sohu.com/a/560375603_121119187">http://news.sohu.com/a/560375603_121119187</a>	 Drawn by the author	 Drawn by the author
Qing Jiaqing	 <a href="https://www.sohu.com/a/313916093_661596?sec=wd">https://www.sohu.com/a/313916093_661596?sec=wd</a>	 Drawn by the author	 Drawn by the author
Qing Tongzhi	 <a href="http://news.sohu.com/a/560375603_121119187">http://news.sohu.com/a/560375603_121119187</a>	 Drawn by the author	 Drawn by the author

Table 1. Styles of the Four-Piece Ruyi-shaped Cloud Shoulder in the Ming and Qing Dynasties

diversity, reflecting the changes in aesthetic preferences and the exploration of clothing pattern designs.

### 3.3.3.1. Late Ming Dynasty

During the Ming dynasty, the cloud shoulder, as a pattern on clothing, mainly featured embroidered dragon motifs, also known as cloud shoulder patterns. A dragon motif runs through the entire cloud shoulder, accompanied by decorative elements such as seashore wave patterns, flowers, and cloud patterns, showcasing a royal and solemn style [9].

### 3.3.3.2. Early to Late Qing Dynasty (as shown in Table 2)

(1) Transition from Simplicity to Complexity: In the early Qing dynasty, cloud shoulder patterns primarily consisted of simple floral designs. As time progressed, floral patterns became increasingly complex and diverse during the middle and late Qing period, incorporating the everyday life of people and particularly the dynamic figures of theatrical characters, adding liveliness and artistic value to the cloud shoulder.

(2) Relationship between Floral Patterns and Layers: In the Qing dynasty, floral patterns on the cloud shoulder were

distributed across different layers, with different sizes of flowers representing different identities. For example, larger floral patterns might dominate the lower layers, while smaller floral patterns served as embellishments on the upper layers, creating a sense of hierarchy and visual richness.

(3) Diversification of Themes: From the early to late Qing dynasty, the patterns of the four-piece ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder became increasingly diverse, covering elements such as flowers, birds, landscapes, figures, and stories, reflecting a diverse aesthetic taste and attention to life and culture.


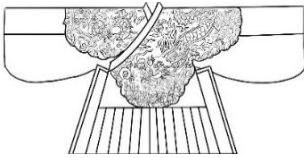


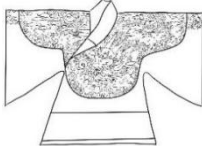



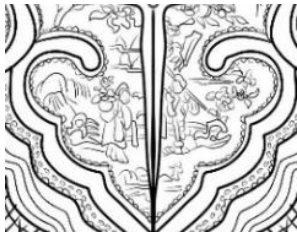



Dynasty	Clothing Image	Partially Reconstructed Shape	Pattern Details
Ming Wanli	 "Chinese Textile and Costume Collection"	 Drawn by the author	 Drawn by the author
Ming Chongzhen	 "Chinese Textile and Costume Collection"	 Drawn by the author	 Drawn by the author
Qing Kangxi	 <a href="https://huaban.com/pins/3392225115">https://huaban.com/pins/3392225115</a>	 Drawn by the author	 Drawn by the author
Qing Xianfeng	 <a href="https://huaban.com/pins/3397839769">https://huaban.com/pins/3397839769</a>	 Drawn by the author	 Drawn by the author

Table 2. Details of patterns in the four-piece Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder in the Ming and Qing dynasties

In summary, from the perspective of Hanfu elements, the four-piece Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder underwent significant changes in shape, patterns, and wearing styles from the late Ming dynasty to the late Qing dynasty. The design of the cloud shoulder gradually developed from a simple style to a complex and diverse artistic form, continuously enriching and expanding the design elements and aesthetic connotations of the cloud shoulder. These changes reflect the development of aesthetic preferences and the exploration of clothing pattern designs, as well as a shift in people's pursuit of clothing aesthetics from surface extravagance to inner quality.

### 3.3.4. Evolution of Wearing Styles

In the late Ming dynasty, the cloud shoulder was worn as an open garment. As time went on, during the early to middle Qing dynasty, it was paired with a jacket or changyi and worn with a mianqun as the lower garment. By the late Qing dynasty, an overlapping wearing style emerged, incorporating a stand-up collar structure and securing the cloud shoulder with ropes to prevent it from falling off. These changes reflect the constant adjustment of social trends and the balanced pursuit of comfort and aesthetics by the wearers.

In conclusion, from the perspective of Hanfu elements, the four-piece Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder underwent significant evolutions in shape, patterns, and wearing styles from the late Ming dynasty to the late Qing dynasty. The design of the cloud shoulder gradually developed from a simple style to a complex and diverse artistic form, continuously enriching and expanding the design elements and aesthetic connotations of the cloud shoulder. These changes reflect the development of aesthetic preferences of the time and the exploration of clothing pattern designs, as well as a shift in people's pursuit of clothing aesthetics from surface extravagance to inner quality.

## 4. Innovative Design of the Four-Piece Ruyi-shaped Cloud Shoulder in the Ming and Qing Dynasties from the Perspective of Hanfu Elements

### 4.1. Design Concepts and Principles Based on Hanfu Elements

In the innovation of designing Hanfu elements, it is important to adhere to the following concepts and principles:

**Respecting Tradition:** Understand and respect the historical background and traditional aesthetic values of Hanfu culture, and follow the original design ideas and craftsmanship.

**Innovation and Development:** Based on traditional Hanfu elements, combine modern aesthetic demands and technological advancements to create innovative design styles and techniques.

**Integration of Diversity:** Merge Hanfu elements with other cultural, artistic, and technological fields to form a unique design style.

### 4.2. Innovative Design Methods for Hanfu Elements Combining Modern Aesthetics

**Understanding Modern Aesthetics:** In-depth research on the aesthetic demands and trends of modern consumers, integrating Hanfu elements with contemporary fashion elements to create novel design styles.

**Incorporating Fashion Elements:** Utilize modern popular colors, patterns, materials, and other elements to enhance the fashion sense of Hanfu elements and increase their appeal in the contemporary market.

**Personalized Design:** Provide diverse design options to meet the personalized needs of different consumers and enhance the product's competitive differentiation.

### 4.3. Innovative Design Methods for Hanfu Elements Incorporating Technological Advancements

**Utilizing Advanced Technologies:** Apply advanced technologies such as digital printing, 3D modeling, virtual reality, etc., to enhance the creativity and practicality of the designs.

**Intelligent Design:** Utilize technologies such as artificial intelligence and big data for design research, providing intelligent solutions for the design of Hanfu elements.

**Sustainable Development:** Focus on environmental protection and sustainability, adopt eco-friendly materials and production techniques, achieving green development in the design of Hanfu elements.

### 4.4. Analysis of Innovative Cases of the Four-Piece Ruyi-shaped Cloud Shoulder in Modern Clothing

In the 21st century, with the rapid development of society and the advancement of technology, traditional craftsmanship has been gradually replaced by new technologies, leading to the gradual disappearance of many traditional cultural crafts. In order to enhance the cultural confidence of the nation, General Secretary Xi Jinping advocates the revival of Chinese traditional culture, promoting the rise of Guochao (national trend). As an indispensable element of ancient Hanfu, the cloud shoulder appears in new forms, combining modern elements and textures, showcasing a retro trend [10].

#### 4.4.1. WOO Brand Scarf: Fusion of Tradition and Modernity

In the AW 2020 collection, the WOO brand introduced a digitally printed scarf called "Yunxia Yingri" ingeniously incorporating the four-piece Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder element into the print design, capturing the essence of Oriental artistic aesthetics and auspiciousness. The vibrant red and orange colors evoke the image of colorful clouds elegantly surrounding the wearer's shoulders



Fig. 1. WOO Brand Scarf



Fig. 2/ Effect of WOO Brand Scarf  
[http://www.360doc.com/content/23/0312/14/1071664389\\_1071664389.shtml](http://www.360doc.com/content/23/0312/14/1071664389_1071664389.shtml)

and neck, exuding an Eastern charm (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).

In terms of color application, the scarf features a contrast between the inner part, mainly in purple, and the outer part in orange, with a blue border, delineating a distinct outline. Additionally, the designer retained the fringe edge element of the Qing dynasty's tassels for embellishment. In terms of silhouette, the scarf centers around half of the four-piece Ruyi-shaped motif, with overlapping layers of the four-piece Ruyi-shaped design, showcasing a rich sense of depth. In terms of patterns, the designer incorporates original floral and animal elements, with a focus on interactions between flowers such

as plum blossoms and chrysanthemums and auspicious birds such as phoenixes, creating a natural ecological landscape.

The WOO brand has always adhered to respecting traditional artistic expressions and relentlessly pursued innovation. Through collaborations with Western artists, they draw inspiration from a rich artistic background, imparting profound significance to their creations. In WOO's works, we can see countless inspirations from various fields such as art, history, philosophy, and the humanities, injecting unique charm into modern fashion designs.

#### 4.4.2. Gaia Legend: Modern Interpretation and Multicultural Fusion of the Cloud Shoulder

In the Gaia Legend brand's 2020 Spring/Summer collection showcased at Paris Fashion Week, the cloud shoulder element was creatively applied, perfectly integrating classical traditional culture with contemporary fashion, creating an elegant, dignified, and magnificent new era of Eastern aesthetics. This innovative design draws inspiration not only from traditional opera themes but also from excellent traditional Chinese culture and intangible cultural heritage, aiming to highlight the beauty of details through craftsmanship, pattern design, and fabric textures. Gaia Legend's combination of Chinese and Western influences, along with its inclusive nature, has attracted significant attention in both domestic and international markets, showcasing the charm of Chinese traditional clothing culture, which is full of fashion and innovation.

In Gaia Legend's Paris Fashion Week show, the cloud shoulder element was skillfully extracted and incorporated into the details of designs such as pockets and cuffs, showcasing the brand's unique design concepts. For example, in the wedding attire of a talented scholar and a beautiful lady, the cloud shoulder design with a double-layered circular shape is combined with intricate embroidery craftsmanship, presenting a dazzling

artistic effect. The cloud shoulder design in the Peony Pavilion series (see Figure 3) creates a dynamic feel through techniques such as embroidery and beadwork, resembling tassels. Additionally, Gaia Legend conceived a unique design concept by combining the cloud shoulder with the Mandarin collar in the Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder design (see Figure 4).

Gaia Legend's innovative design of the cloud shoulder in the “戏韵·梦浮生” (Drama Rhythm · Dream Floating Life) fashion show embodies a modern interpretation and stylish representation of traditional elements. As an important element of Hanfu, the cloud shoulder represents nobility, grandeur, and auspiciousness. By incorporating the cloud shoulder element into the details of the garments, Gaia Legend successfully showcases respect and homage to Chinese traditional culture and infuses it into contemporary fashion design. This innovative design not only pursues aesthetics but also conveys the classic symbols and meanings of Chinese culture, as well as the brand's integration and inclusiveness of diverse cultures. Through the fusion of Chinese and Western cultures, Gaia Legend's designs possess both the elegance and mystery of the East, as well as the avant-garde and boldness of Western fashion, presenting a powerful and unique aura.

In conclusion, the innovative design of the cloud shoulder presented by Gaia Legend in the “戏韵·梦浮生” fashion show showcases a unique interpretation and modern reinterpretation of traditional culture. Through meticulous design details, Gaia Legend successfully integrates the cloud shoulder element into the garments, displaying an elegant, dignified, and magnificent new era of Eastern aesthetics. This innovative design not only conveys the classic cultural elements of Chinese mythology but also garners high attention and recognition in domestic and international markets, further promoting the fashion development of Chinese traditional clothing culture.

In summary, the innovative application of the Four-Piece Ruyi-shaped cloud



Fig. 3. Cloud shoulder design in the Peony Pavilion series

[https://www.sohu.com/a/345537883\\_559321](https://www.sohu.com/a/345537883_559321)



Fig. 4. Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder design

[https://www.sohu.com/a/345537883\\_559321](https://www.sohu.com/a/345537883_559321)

shoulder in modern fashion demonstrates the potential of combining Chinese traditional culture with contemporary design aesthetics. Through creative interpretations and adaptations, designers can infuse new vitality into long-standing elements and contribute to the continuous revival and preservation of Chinese traditional culture. As our society continues to develop, it is crucial to strike a balance between preserving our rich cultural heritage and embracing the possibilities offered by new technologies, ensuring that the beauty of traditional

craftsmanship remains relevant and appreciated by future generations.

## 5. Innovative Design Practice and Challenges of the Four-Piece Ruyi-shaped Cloud Shoulder in the Perspective of Hanfu Elements in the Ming and Qing Dynasties

### 5.1. Innovative Design Practice

Building on the theoretical research previously conducted, this study embarked on innovative design for cloud shoulder adornments, naming the series ‘Alloy Ridge’. In the process of innovating these cloud shoulder designs, this study broke through the limitations of traditional styles, blending ancient costume elements with modern and Western influences to create cloud shoulders that exude a sense of fashion and unique charm. This goal was set to challenge traditional aesthetic concepts, offering modern women more diverse options, transforming cloud shoulders from mere clothing accessories into fashionable art pieces. The target audience is modern women who seek uniqueness and style and have a deep interest in cultural traditions. This study aims to attract consumers looking for unusual, personalized apparel through its innovative designs. This design aims to meet their pursuit of fashion while also respecting traditional culture. By clearly defining the design objectives and target audience, this study ensured the direction and relevance of the design, enhancing its practical significance. Next, the study will detail the specific steps and innovative aspects of the design.

#### 5.4.1. Layered Design and Visual Richness

Layered design involves fabric stacking and overlay on the basis of the cloud shoulder prototype to enrich its shape and enhance its decorative appeal. It is a method of simplification followed by complexity. By employing cutting and simplification techniques, variation of the

four-piece Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder’s form is achieved, creating a rhythm of density, variations in the weight of yarn and satin, and the processing and recombination of textural effects. Three to four layers of fabric are stacked on the sheet-like structure of the left and right cloud shoulders, combining a satin material with a patterned textural feel and a lightweight and transparent organza. Handcrafted metal fringe elements are added to the bottom layer to enhance visual richness, as shown in Table 3.

#### 5.4.2. Material Innovation and the Application of Metal Elements

Material innovation involves the creative transformation of fabrics based on ancient cloud shoulder forms, utilizing different expressions to create cloud shoulders with diverse textures and enhance their modern aesthetic. In the Ming and Qing periods, cloud shoulder adornments primarily utilized silk fabrics. In this design, silk is replaced with metal materials, breaking traditional norms and transforming the delicate image of cloud shoulders into a three-dimensional, robust metallic texture with a trendy national style. This achieves a transition from a flat to a three-dimensional effect, as demonstrated in Case 1 of Table 4. While retaining the original shape and tassel elements, a ruby is centrally placed, and metal blocks are added internally. Additionally, platinum material is used for the outer frame of the design, as shown in Case 2 in Table 4. Combining a buckle and fringe at the hanging part creates a dazzling visual effect, replacing the intricate patterns of ancient times and presenting an overall sense of elegance and grandeur.

#### 5.4.3. Breaking Tradition and Combining Innovation

By combining traditional cloud shoulder decorative elements with modern culture, a cloud shoulder combination with a complete form and harmonious color tones is created, as shown in Figure 5. Based on the original form of the traditional cloud shoulder, variations

are made to the four-piece Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder and fused with the virtual cloud shoulder sheet structure from modern technology. By incorporating modern aesthetics and innovative design techniques into the sheet’s inner form, a clever fusion of form and meaning is achieved.

Through the innovative application of traditional cloud shoulder elements and the combination of modern design concepts and techniques, we can create works that embody both traditional charm and modern aesthetics. This fusion not only demonstrates respect for and the inheritance of traditional culture but also showcases the pursuit of and innovation in modern aesthetics [11]. In a globalized context, the combination of traditional and modern cultures contributes to the creation of unique works and provides new opportunities for the inheritance and development of traditional culture.

#### 5.4.4. Fusion of Traditional and Modern Cultures

By combining traditional cloud shoulder decorative elements with modern culture, a cloud shoulder combination with a complete form and harmonious color tones is created, as shown in Figure 6. Based on the original form of the traditional cloud shoulder, variations are made to the Four-Piece Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder and fused with the virtual cloud shoulder sheet structure from modern technology. By incorporating modern aesthetics and innovative design techniques into the sheet’s inner form, a clever fusion of form and meaning is achieved.

Through the innovative application of traditional cloud shoulder elements and the combination of modern design concepts and techniques, we can create works that embody both traditional charm and modern aesthetics. This fusion not only demonstrates respect for and the inheritance of traditional culture but also showcases the pursuit of and innovation in modern aesthetics. In a globalized context, the combination of traditional and modern cultures contributes to the



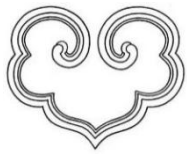
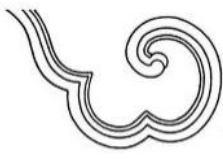
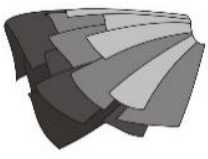

Steps	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Process				
	Cloud shoulder prototype	Selecting specific shapes	Layering	Combination

Table 3. Layered design process (Designed and drawn by the author)

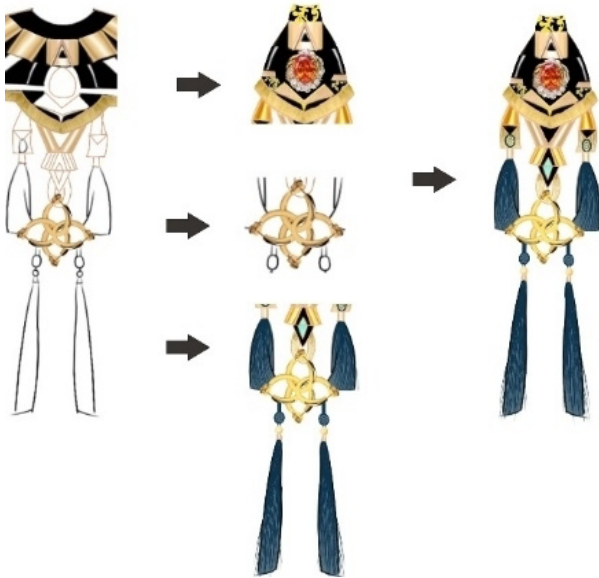


Fig. 5. Breakthrough in cloud shoulder form (Designed and drawn by the author)

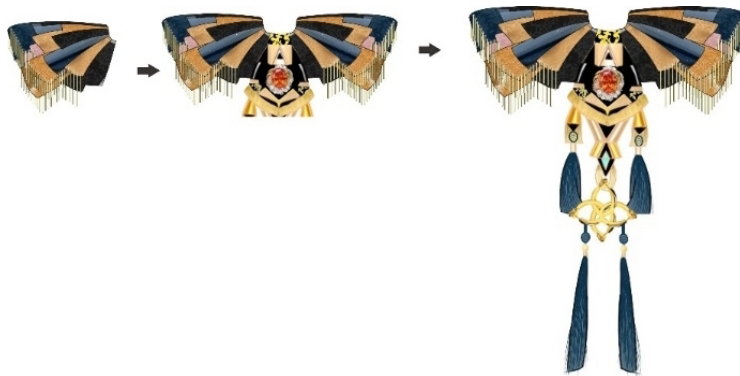


Fig. 6: Fusion of cloud shoulder forms (Designed and drawn by the author)

creation of unique works and provides new opportunities for the inheritance and development of traditional culture.

#### 5.4.5. Innovative Design of the “Alloy Prism” Series Cloud Shoulder

Cloud shoulders from the Ming and Qing dynasties are rich in cultural connotations.

They not only serve as garments but also represent Chinese culture. The concept of cloud shoulders aligns with the artistic conception of Chinese architecture, creating an aesthetic exchange [12].

For example, ancient Chinese palace architecture emphasized squareness and harmony, with typical celestial buildings of the Ming and Qing dynasties symbolizing the landscape concept of

“the circular heaven and the square earth.” Observing the overall form of Chinese clothing’s cloud shoulders, when viewed from a flat perspective, the outer circle and inner square symbolize the circular heaven and square earth. When viewed three-dimensionally, when worn on the body, the perception is similar to celestial architecture. Initially, cloud shoulders originated from preventing clothing from getting dirty during meals but gradually evolved into a type of daily attire, presenting more decorative aspects.

The “Alloy Prism” series incorporates modern and Western elements into the ancient cloud shoulder form, showcasing innovation and uniqueness through the fusion of Chinese and Western cultures. In modern society, cloud shoulders have shifted from practicality to decoration. For women, the decorative aspect of attire outweighs its practicality, and cloud shoulders serve as adornments. The slightly wider shoulder-cut design better accentuates the shoulder line, creating a straight and well-defined appearance. A gemstone is embedded in the middle of the cloud shoulder, and symmetrical, centralized, and layout techniques of dots, lines, and planes are employed to construct the internal structure of the cloud shoulder. The overall design is based on a black foundation, with gold foil wrapping the edges. The fabric on both sides is layered, creating a sense of spatial complexity. The overall structure uses a metal framework, and the center and sides are fixed with metal fasteners, forming detachable cloud shoulders, as shown in Figure 7.

In today’s society, people’s pursuit of clothing goes beyond the garments themselves. They also seek complementary and complete

accessories, such as matching bags, jewelry, makeup, and shoes. The jewelry piece in the “Alloy Prism” series is an earring. The earrings come in various styles, with exquisite craftsmanship, and diverse aesthetics, allowing for different choices based on one’s status, occasion, and season. While retaining the outline of the four-piece Ruyi shape, the designer employs the outer shape of the four-piece Ruyi as the earring’s design, composed of four Ruyi patterns, with an overall color scheme of palace blue. A pearl is placed in the center, symbolizing auspiciousness and fulfillment. One earring is long and adorned with a metal fringe and small metal beads, complementing the innovative fringe elements in the cloud shoulder design. The other earring is shorter and embedded with four bells, symbolizing smoothness in all endeavors. With one earring longer than the other, they are arranged in an artful manner, forming a complete set with the cloud shoulder. When worn together, they exude a sense of retro elegance, as shown in Figure 8.

The innovative design of the “Alloy Prism” series cloud shoulder, based on the ancient cloud shoulder, combines modern and Western elements, showcasing innovation and uniqueness resulting from the fusion of Chinese and Western cultures. This design not only breaks the limitations of traditional cloud shoulders but also broadens their application in modern fashion, offering more choices for women to complement their outfits and showcasing the perfect blend of fashion and elegance.

### 5.1. Challenges and Issues Faced

In the practice of innovative design for the four-piece Ruyi-shaped cloud shoulder in the perspective of Hanfu elements during the Ming and Qing dynasties, several challenges are encountered.

Firstly, the protection and development of traditional culture require long-term efforts. The application of Hanfu elements necessitates respect and understanding of the connotations and



Fig. 7. “Alloy Prism” series design (Designed and drawn by the author)

spirit of traditional culture while also pursuing innovation and development to adapt to modern aesthetics and cultural demands. Designers need to possess a solid cultural foundation and innovative consciousness to achieve a balance between the inheritance and innovative development of traditional culture.

Secondly, design practice requires professional skills and craftsmanship. The application of Hanfu elements requires the meticulous control and treatment of materials, colors, textures, and tactile sensations. It also requires proficiency in complex sewing techniques and decorative craftsmanship. Therefore, designers need to possess professional skills and knowledge and collaborate with professionals in various fields such as tailors and craftsmen to achieve high quality and exquisite cloud shoulder designs.

Lastly, the differences in market demands and cultural perceptions pose a challenge. In modern society, the pursuit of fashion and aesthetics is constantly evolving, and there are variations in people’s understanding and perception of traditional culture. Therefore, designers need to understand and grasp consumer needs and cultural backgrounds through market research and cultural exchanges to adapt to changing market demands and cultural shifts.

To address these challenges, designers need to enhance their cultural learning, cultivate innovative consciousness, continuously improve their professional skills and craftsmanship, as well as understand and grasp consumer demands



Fig. 8. “Alloy Prism” series earrings (Designed and drawn by the author)

and cultural perceptions through market research and cultural exchanges. This ensures the quality and market adaptability of cloud shoulder designs.

## 6. Conclusion

This study conducted an in-depth investigation from the perspective of Hanfu elements into four-piece cloud shoulder ornaments of the Ming and Qing dynasties, examining their evolution and innovative designs. Through the analysis and examination of historical literature and physical garments, we gained a

comprehensive understanding of the origins, development, and characteristics of four-piece cloud shoulder ornaments during the Ming and Qing periods. Significant transformations occurred in the form, patterns, and wearing styles of four-piece cloud shoulder ornaments during this time. From the initial simplicity to later complexity and diversity, the design elements of cloud shoulder ornaments continuously expanded and enriched, reflecting the changing aesthetic concepts of the era and people's pursuit of clothing aesthetics. The evolution of the cloud shoulder ornaments is closely related to societal, cultural, and aesthetic preferences, reflecting people's attention on a better life and traditional culture. Furthermore, innovative designs for four-piece cloud shoulder ornaments during the Ming and Qing dynasties were also explored. By combining traditional elements with modern aesthetic concepts, novel and unique designs for cloud shoulder ornaments can be created, integrating traditional culture with fashionable aesthetics, meeting the contemporary demand for personalized and diverse clothing.

This research holds significant importance for the inheritance and development of Hanfu culture. Through an in-depth exploration of the evolution process and innovative designs of four-piece cloud shoulder ornaments during the Ming and Qing dynasties, we can better promote and disseminate traditional culture, enrich people's aesthetic experiences, and provide new inspiration and possibilities for fashion design. However, this study also has certain limitations due to the constraints of available data and physical artifacts. Future research can expand the sample size and scope, and delve deeper into additional related literature and physical garments, in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the evolution and innovation of cloud shoulder ornaments.

In conclusion, this paper provides a systematic study and exploration of the evolution and innovative designs of four-piece cloud shoulder ornaments during the Ming and Qing dynasties, offering valuable insights for the inheritance and development of Hanfu culture. It is hoped that this research will inspire scholars and designers in related fields, promote the

inheritance and innovation of traditional culture, and drive the development and progress of fashion design.

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