

# The Artistic Style Characteristics of Turquoise in Tibetan Jewelry

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**Abstract:** Jewelry is not only an important material culture of the Tibetan people, but also its precious spiritual and cultural heritage. As the "stone of the soul" of the Tibetan people, turquoise embodies the magic of Tibetan jewelry art. This paper starts with the relationship between turquoise and Tibetan culture, and analyzes the connotation and uniqueness of turquoise in Tibetan culture. Moreover, the artistic expression of turquoise in Tibetan jewelry is analyzed, and the inspiration of turquoise in Tibetan jewelry design is obtained, hoping to provide useful reference for the inheritance and development of contemporary jewelry design and national decorative art.

**Keywords:** Turquoise, Tibetan Jewelry, Artistic Style

## 1. Introduction

There is a local folk song in Tibetan areas that says: "The beautiful blue sky is the treasure basin of pine stones, and the brilliant sun is the pure gold decoration. As long as your pine treasure basin does not change, my pure gold decoration naturally with you. The majestic snow mountain is the treasure basin of crystal, and the brave lion is the decoration of silver. As long as your crystal treasure basin does not change, my silver decoration naturally with you. Green sea water is jade treasure basin, and gold and silver fish is coral decoration. As long as the jade treasure basin unchanged, my coral decoration naturally with you together. Round seat is the treasure basin of happiness, and young boys and girls are auspicious decoration. As long as your happy treasure basin is unchanged, my auspicious decoration nature with you together." In their folk songs, Tibetans use turquoise, coral, jade, sun, lion and fish to symbolize everything in the world, showing the harmonious coexistence, interdependence and mutual decoration between man, nature and society, and reflecting the unique view of jewelry decoration.

Tibetan jewelry culture has profound aesthetic connotation, and the artistic forms and forms of artistic expression are also rich and diverse. The collocation of different materials and processes, with different forms of various gems to show a variety of manifestations, which can be roughly divided into headdress, ear, neck, hand, waist, chest and so on. The gem materials used are mainly coral, amber, pearl, turquoise, agate, etc., which all have the common characteristics of gems: first, high hardness, not easily broken; second, good luster and beauty; third, certain economic value. In the development and evolution, Tibetan jewelry has absorbed the cultural and artistic essence of the surrounding areas and various ethnic groups, and formed an art form with the unique temperament of the snowy plateau with its rich types, highly comprehensive forms of expression, superb craftsmanship and unique aesthetic value. In terms of shape, color and pattern, exaggerated shape, large and complete structure, rich religious shape or pattern, strong color contrast and collocation, these characteristics deeply represent Tibetan jewelry. Tibetan jewelry, with its rich implication, cultural uniqueness and exquisite craftsmanship, is not only the object of interpreting the Tibetan production and life style, but also the precious heritage of spiritual civilization and material culture. It contains rich cultural connotation and emotion, and with its unique cultural characteristics and exquisite craft, it has become one of the precious temples of Chinese national art, and is an indispensable part of the brilliant treasure house of Oriental jewelry art. Turquoise is one of the earliest gems as ornaments. It is the favorite sacred decoration of the Tibetan people, a symbol of wisdom and luck, and reflects the wealth and aesthetic appreciation of the Tibetan people. As a powerful carrier of Tibetan jewelry art, it plays a unique role in its unique color, vivid shape and elegant style.

## 2. The Origin of Turquoise and the Connotation of Turquoise in Tibetan Culture

According to archaeological data, the earliest turquoise ornaments unearthed in China originated from the Peiligang culture period around 7000 BC. According to Zhang Hongzhao in the *Shi Ya* records: "The name of turquoise in China began in the Qing Dynasty, the name of Dian Zi began in the Yuan Dynasty, bidian or Yunlang dian in the Yuan history is what we call turquoise." And he explained: "This jewelry's

appearance is like a pine cone, and its color is also near the pine cone, so it is named as Green Pine Cone (turquoise).”<sup>[1]</sup>

In Tibetan culture, Gyu means “yu” in Tibetan, which refers to turquoise, which is also called “pine ear stone”. According to research, Tibet is not rich in a large number of turquoise. The earliest source of turquoise is likely to be first spread from Persia (today's Iran) to India, the origin of Buddhism, and then into the Tibetan areas. Located in the Gangdiss Mountains (present-day Ali) region near ancient India, with the center of the world sacred mountain, the ancient Xiangxiong Dynasty (about 1500 BC, collapsed in the Tubo Dynasty in 645) is formed. Other religions in Southeast Asia, such as benzene, Hinduism and Jainism, are all originated from Mount Gangdises. Therefore, it is very likely that the green pine entered Tibet early through ancient religion. With Princess Wencheng's friendship with the Tang Fan, the Tang Dynasty began to have more trade with the Tubo, further driving the trade between turquoise and the inland. It was not until the Qing Dynasty that the post transmission system was established, and the affairs of Tibetan post stations were more under the hands of central officials stationed in Tibet. The convenience of transportation has driven the development of transportation between the two places and the economic and trade exchanges between the two places, and turquoise and other living and production tools will flow into Tibet to a greater extent.

In the eyes of the Tibetan people, turquoise is not only the embodiment of the gods, but also a symbol of power and status. It is not only a kind of human body decoration to meet the aesthetic needs, but also is endowed with the mysterious religious color and is used to describe the social status, class, gender and occupation within the society. At the beginning of the establishment of the Tubo Dynasty, Songtsan Gampo had a kind of reporting system, that is, made of different materials to the nobles and officials, to express different grades and officials. *The Tibetan Biography of the New Tang Dynasty* recorded: “As for the ornaments of the official, the peak is the Se jewelry. The second is gold, and silver coated gold third. The lowest is copper. They vary in different size, which are hung on their arms to distinguish between their status.”<sup>[2]</sup> Among them, the highest level of “Se jewelry”, most people think that this is the pearl. Historians believe that the pearl may be introduced into Tibet from Persia, and some people think that it may be turquoise. The crown of the first Tibetan king was inlaid with turquoise, and the turquoise was also used as a tribute or a gift to the noble people. In the past, local officials in Tibet inlaid different gems to mark different rank, status, knowledge and property. The fourth rank official's ornaments are inlaid with turquoise. In Tibetan Buddhism, turquoise is also the most sacred totem worship, known as “soul jade” and “soul protection stone”, which is the soul sustenance and amulet of Tibetans. In Tibetans, many can often be seen wearing turquoise on their chests cause they are basically religious. They believe that turquoise is their soul and the symbol of the soul in their body.

### 3. The Uniqueness of Turquoise in the Tibetan Culture

The Tibetan areas are not rich in turquoise, but the Tibetan people still have a strong love for turquoise, which is formed by the comprehensive local geographical environment, religious belief, application function and other factors.

From the perspective of geographical environment, because most of the Tibetan areas are located at high altitude, the plateau is vast and people live scattered, the plateau environment composed of brown, gray and yellow gradually forms the aesthetic psychology of pursuing bright color and strong color. Color view is more beautified, which advocates pure primary color “positive color”, the cloudy color and mixed between the color, complex color as “non-positive color” contrast. The turquoise with the luster of regular blue, blue green and high porcelain is in line with the aesthetic requirements of the Tibetan people. In the hearts of the Tibetan people, the bright colors of turquoise decorate the desolation of the land, filling the poverty of life with enthusiasm.<sup>[3]</sup>

Second, from the perspective of religious belief, turquoise is the sacred totem worship object of Tibetan Buddhism. In Tibetan Buddhism, many Buddha are useful turquoise to decorate, such as the Potala palace of Tibetan Buddha, the thirteenth Dalai pagoda etc. Most of them have the turquoise in forehead, navel, chest, hand, foot, such as prominent parts, before the altar must also worship utensils must be inlaid with turquoise, used to exorcism.<sup>[4]</sup> This belief is reflected to jewelry, which makes the use of turquoise in jewelry has a certain auspicious meaning. For married Tibetan women, turquoise beads on their hair are essential, expressing a wish for her husband's longevity, and are often sewn with other valuable objects on women's dresses or children's hats. Sometimes the front of the whole coat is decorated with turquoise, metal sheets, shells, beads and buttons of various materials, not only to have a good look, but more importantly, to believe that it can play a protective role.

Third, in terms of function, in the hearts of Tibetan people, turquoise can be used as pigments and cure diseases. In terms of pigment use, natural turquoise is ground into fine powder, often used in the painting of Thangka and murals. As a natural pigment, turquoise can make the Thangka color bright and last for a long time. At the same time, the same is true in the murals. The Potala Palace, Jokhang Temple and other cultural relics sites are all painted with turquoise paint. Turquoise is also a kind of Tibetan medicine, which can detoxify and clear the liver. According to the clinical research of Tibetan medicine, it is found that turquoise has the effect of removing wind, clearing heat and detoxification, clearing liver and gallbladder, promoting blood circulation and removing blood stasis. "25 pine pills", "70 pine pills" and other drugs were launched to treat hepatitis B diseases.

In addition to the above characteristics, turquoise also serves as a symbol to reflect people's life centrally. *Pine Ear Stone Jewelry* (Chinese translation as *Turquoise*) takes a turquoise headdress as a clue, describes the complicated and unfortunate life of Ban Dan's family, which includes the customs and habits of different classes of Tibet, describes the customs and customs of Tibet, and opens the cultural door of the Tibetan nation. The book won the Tibetan Novel Prize, the Fourth Mount Qomolangma Literature Prize, and the highest Prize for Tibetan Literature, which also proves the special status of turquoise in the Tibetan nation. Both the officials and the people regard it as a treasure and has the function of reflecting the social reality.

#### 4. The Form of Turquoise in Tibetan Jewelry

##### 4.1. Strong color relationship

In Tibetan jewelry, the design and application of turquoise is based on the specific ideological basis, transforming the national aesthetic and emotional expression into specific physical forms. In the national standard (GB / T 36169-2018), the turquoise is graded according to the different color phase, lightness and saturation. Color phase is divided into: blue, green and blue, blue and green, green, yellow, orange. Lightness is divided into: bright, bright and dark. The saturation is divided into: shallow, medium, bright, thick. Its rich colors constitute a great aesthetic feature of Tibetan jewelry art: blue and red, blue and green, blue and green, blue and black, green and red.

The Tibetan area is vast, and its headdress characteristics have regional differences, but the basic color relationship is still unified. For example, the headdress of Naqu women is also combined with turquoise and coral, with the silver light inlaid with coral, and the contrast between red and blue. Women in Linzhou County, the suburb of Lhasa, inlaid turquoise and coral on the silver plate. The turquoise is in the center of the headdress, with a circular shape, and symmetrical coral and turquoise on both sides. From the perspective of color itself to see the cold and warm coordination and contrast used to produce the artistic effect of the headdress, the cooperation between different colors will produce different effects. Because the color characteristics of red and green are strong and equipped with characteristics of visual attraction. It is unified and change as well as quiet and eye-catching, achieving the "extremely vulgar and elegant" artistic effect.

Earring and hand ornaments with small volume, often cleverly use red and green, yellow and blue, black and white and other contrast. At the same time, it also can add gold, complex color or neutral color, in order to achieve coordinated effect, let tonal become harmonious, lively, vivid. From the color collocation of the hand decoration, gold, silver, copper as the main tone, there are red coral, turquoise, black agate, sky beads of all kinds, showing the contrast and harmonious beauty of color. Yellow and blue are also the prominent collocation of Tibetan jewelry. The collection of the Tibet Museum, Gawu, is gilded with symmetrical shape. The box is dotted right in front with turquoise. The blue itself of turquoise is a kind of cool tonal, the visual feeling that gives a person foundation is cool and quiet, deep and luxurious, and yellow bright and dazzling collocation shows a kind of strong luxuriant contrast feeling.

##### 4.2. The Composition of Dots, Lines, Planes and Bodies

Tibetan jewelry uses the rules of contrast, harmony, symmetry, balance, priority, proportion, rhythm, stability and change, and so on, to flexibly combine the combination of points, lines, surfaces and bodies, showing the unique aesthetic pursuit of Tibetan jewelry.

Gems are generally arranged and combined regularly to enhance the overall sense of rhythm and rhythm. Tibetan girls usually weave their hair into hundreds of small braids, and then weave it into a

mesh, with turquoise and coral gems arranged at a certain distance, presenting a rhythmic, rugged and simple yet gorgeous style. At the same time, the whole composition is a straight line, making people feel hard and lively, forming a kind of organized aesthetic feeling. Green and red are repeatedly arranged to foil each other, although the number is many but the level is clear. Gem constitute a point, the combination of points and constitute a line, and multiple groups of lines constitute a large surface, gentle, light, a sense of order, appear luxurious and generous, shining. The butterfly hair pressure worn by Tibetan women daily is in a symmetrical form, with the water drop-shaped turquoise inlaid in the middle to form a main surface. On the surface, the form of red coral and turquoise as dots, the overall shape of the butterfly, and a line composed of flowers to make the whole appear more clever, points, lines and surfaces echo each other, forming an integrated. At the same time, the butterfly hair pressure and other headdress are collocated in the black hair, very decorative interest. In the traditional Tibetan ring style composition, turquoise is mostly inlaid in the ring in a circle or oval, with a single or multiple combined with other gems. The inlaid gem is mainly oval. The common Tibetan saddle-shaped ring, with turquoise as the main stone and the Tibetan traditional combination pattern, highlighting the status of turquoise, is a symbol of wealth, but also has some religious color.

The composition of turquoise on Tibetan jewelry is different from the turquoise used in inland jewelry. It is more ground into a round, oval and other shapes to decorate decorative jewelry, less common carving. This design style is partly influenced by religious beliefs. In the Buddhist concept of reincarnation, people pursue the perfection and liberation beyond the cycle of life and death. This concept is reflected in the attention of the Tibetans to the completeness and lines of the whole composition when making jewelry, and also reflects the yearning and pursuit of harmony and beauty. The original traditional Buddhism believes that the universe is composed of three major elements: water, fire and earth, corresponding to the circle, triangle and square. The circle represents the cycle of the universe, and is the source of the cosmic power. Square represents the magnetic field produced by all substances in nature, which has the function of condensation and enhancement. These patterns and forms are not only the forms of artistic expression, but also the embodiment of the cosmic philosophy and the idea of the unity of man and nature. Therefore, the composition form and pattern of the whole Tibetan jewelry contain rich religious, philosophical and cultural connotations. They are not only the decoration of material, but also the expression and pursuit of people's pursuit of spiritual harmony and the integration with nature and the universe.

#### **4.3. Gem Form Organization and Application**

In the process of making jewelry, the Tibetan people mostly use unpolished gems and keep the original form embedded in the metal as much as possible to reflect the love and protection of nature. In the Tibetan Museum of the full set of Tibetan costumes display, headdress, ornaments, shoulder ornaments and so on are used with turquoise, turquoise is followed and polished. The headdress is arranged with a variety of gems, with a relatively clean small turquoise inlay, and some small round and cylindrical combinations with other gems to play an ornament role. The ornaments is dominated by round and accompanying turquoise, arranged in intervals with other gems. Shoulder ornaments are mainly large turquoise, which is basically with iron line. There are also some headdresses that are the main components of the large suit of turquoise. Among the headdress of Tibetan women in Daocheng County, Ganzi Prefecture and Xumi Tibetan women in Muli County, Liangshan Prefecture have two symmetrical turquoise hanging in the most prominent position on the forehead. The women's headdress in the northern area of Mozhugongka County is "white jade", turquoise and coral cross distribution, the middle is inlaid with the shape of green pine, surrounded by round turquoise and coral, the whole shape is left and right symmetry, and the use of turquoise is basically with iron lines.<sup>[5]</sup>

Turquoise is also directly polished into the shape of the jewelry directly inlaid. "Egore" earrings are the turquoise earrings of noble women, because it is large and heavy, it is not normally worn on the ear, but by wire hanging on the wig bracket hanging over the face. Generally, the relatively clean turquoise is polished into a plane shape, and then inlaid in the metal according to the shape, and the top is a water drop. The second layer also became a fatter water drop shape, with a prominent piece in the middle, showing a sense of hierarchy. The third layer of round turquoise surrounded by a circle of metal beads, the bottom of the symmetrical curve for petal shape, the bottom is dotted with a round pearl. The whole right symmetry, hanging in front of the ear, both show the innocence and nobility of women, but also foil its beautiful flowers. There are also turquoise water drop earrings often worn by women in Qamdo, Xizang province. The turquoise with different colors is inlaid in the shape of water drop, showing the beauty of rules and changes.

Smaller pieces of turquoise stones are usually used in small bodies such as earring and hand

ornaments, with a single directly as earrings or earrings with patterns. As for Wei Tibet area men's earrings, aristocrats with long earrings, mainly silver, turquoise according to the style polished into the corresponding shape on the inlay. Plain people are mainly a turquoise directly do earrings, hanging down a red coral eardrop. In some ga wu and daily belt ornaments, small turquoise will also be single or symmetrical ornament inlaid on it as decoration, presenting a simple and elegant simple beauty. Therefore, in terms of the pattern, small pieces are mainly clean for inlay ornament, such as smaller earrings, and inlay on Gawu.

#### ***4.4. The Organic Combination of Function and Aesthetics***

As a kind of natural gem, turquoise not only meets the needs of Tibetan jewelry, but also has an important wealth function.

According to the natural environment, living environment and economic level of the Tibetan people, the turquoise is processed into various ornaments, which is the most direct expression form of the Tibetan people's aesthetic view. If turquoise is equipped with gold and silver ornaments and other gem, the integral style is exaggerated, whose style is peculiar coarse and generous than the ornaments of other nationalities. The combination of turquoise with coral, amber, gold, silver and other textures also shows the unity and diverse aesthetic characteristics of Tibetan jewelry materials. Turquoise is collocated with coral, amber and other different materials with the color contrast mainly of green and red, blue and red, blue and yellow and so on. The strong color contrast displayed reflects the aesthetic characteristics of Tibetan jewelry color clarity, contrast and harmony.

From the perspective of wealth function, in the traditional nomadic life, Tibetan compatriots need to transform the property accumulated by several generations of their family into portable jewelry, so that they can move around to find a place of abundant water and grass. Women's jewelry is sometimes the accumulation of wealth of the whole family, so Tibetans attach great importance to the use of gems as the accumulation of wealth. Women's social status or the affluence of their family is often reflected in the jewelry they wear. The more the amount of jewelry, the more it can show their status and wealth. According to records, when a daughter gets married, even the poor parents will do their best to buy turquoise, coral, amber and other jewelry as their daughter's dowry. Women usually keep the jewellery behind, which can be used if divorced in the future. Therefore, the gems in Tibetan jewelry not only reflect the wearer's family status, social status and economic status, but also are a kind of life security.

### **5. Implications of Turquoise Application in Tibetan Jewelry Design**

As a part of Tibetan jewelry culture, turquoise is an important part of spiritual culture in addition to its own economic value, whose external image reflects the unique characteristics and value entities of Tibetan jewelry. Based on the artistic expression form of turquoise in the design of Tibetan jewelry, it is the top priority to draw inspiration and guide the modern jewelry designers to create the works with profound cultural connotation and inject new vitality into the traditional culture.

In terms of cultural inheritance and respect, turquoise has a profound historical and symbolic significance in the Tibetan culture. Jewelry designers should respect and protect this cultural heritage, and inherit the Tibetan cultural tradition by using turquoise in the jewelry to ensure its continuous existence. In terms of the expression of spiritual value, turquoise is not only a gem, it represents the spiritual connection and values. Designers can use turquoise to show respect for the natural, social and spiritual world, and to convey such values to people through jewelry. In terms of national identity, turquoise is one of the symbols of Tibetan culture. Applying it to jewelry design can highlight national identity and let people have a deeper understanding and understanding of Tibetan culture. In terms of turquoise modeling, each piece of turquoise is unique, with a unique color and texture, which provides designers with rich creative materials, and can create unique and creative Tibetan jewelry. From the aspect of the harmonious coexistence between nature and man, the Tibetans connect the turquoise with the elements of nature together, showing the reverence for nature and the concept of harmonious coexistence. Designers can use inspired to create design works that blend jewelry with nature. From the perspective of the integration of cultural tradition and modernity, contemporary jewelry design can combine traditional cultural elements with modern design concepts to create works with both a sense of historical inheritance and in line with modern aesthetics. From the aspect of sustainability, sustainability should be concerned in the collection and use of turquoise. Choosing legal and sustainable supply chains to ensure rational mineral mining, as well as reducing environmental impacts.

## 6. Conclusion

Turquoise, as a gem with a long history and cultural heritage, is loved by people because of its unique formation conditions and resource advantages, showing a rich variety of varieties, excellent quality and colorful characteristics. At present, the key to the development of turquoise industry is to deeply explore its cultural value and show it through innovative design. Through exploring the unique value of turquoise in Chinese traditional culture, the public is guided to pay attention to its cultural, artistic and emotional value, so that culture becomes the source of design, and then promote the development of turquoise industry, and influence and change the public lifestyle.

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