

The influence of traditional Chinese five-color view on ancient jewelry

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Abstract: This study explores the cognitive evolution of the traditional Chinese five-color view in different historical dynasties and examines the performance of the five-color view in different dynasties. Secondly, we paid attention to the first appearance of the five-color concept in ancient jewelry, analyzed the role of the five colors in the design and production of ancient jewelry, and the cultural implications they contained. Subsequently, we studied the profound impact of the five-color concept on contemporary jewelry design, and explored how this ancient aesthetic concept is inherited and developed in modern design. Finally, through the summary of the above research, we draw conclusions about the historical evolution and contemporary inheritance of the five-color concept in the field of ancient jewelry, which provides profound insights into understanding the continued influence of Chinese traditional culture in jewelry design. Overall, this study aims to reveal the multi-dimensional influence of the five-color view in different periods and fields, and to provide theoretical support for the inheritance and innovation of Chinese traditional jewelry culture.

Keywords: Chinese traditional five-color concept, Ancient jewelry design, Contemporary jewelry design

1. Introduction

In traditional Chinese culture, the five-color concept is an ancient and profound aesthetic concept that covers five basic colors: red, yellow, blue, white, and black. This concept not only runs through many art fields such as painting, architecture, and clothing, but also profoundly affects the design and production of ancient jewelry. Through their unique understanding of the five colors, the Chinese people have given jewelry a profound cultural connotation, making it not only a material decoration, but also a cultural expression rich in symbolic meaning.

In this topic, we will explore the profound influence of the traditional Chinese five-color view on ancient jewelry. The five elements, five directions, and five flavors represented by the five colors, as well as the emotions and symbols they carry in Chinese culture, are fully reflected in the design and selection of jewelry. By delving deeper into this topic, we can better understand the aesthetic preferences of ancient Chinese people for color, and how this aesthetic was integrated into their lives, beliefs, and cultural heritage. This will also help us more fully understand the profound impact of traditional Chinese art on all aspects of daily life, and provide us with profound inspiration for understanding and inheriting this precious cultural heritage.

2. Dynasty understanding of the Five Color Concepts

2.1 The view of five colors in the Five Elements Culture

The Five Elements Theory is the basic way for people to understand the world. Through the evolution of Yin and Yang into the five basic dynamics of metal, wood, water, fire, and earth, ancient philosophers used the Five Elements Theory to explain the formation of all things in the world and their interrelationships. Dong Zhongshu, a scholar of the Han Dynasty, believed that the five elements are the basic material elements that make up the world, and he advocated the theory of induction between heaven and man, believing that all indescribable thoughts, concepts and emotions in the world are suggested by colors, and colors become the symbols of humans, gods and heaven. Communication channels, the traditional Chinese five-color view is derived from this. The five elements correspond to the five colors, among which gold, wood, water, fire and earth are black, water is black, earth is yellow, wood is cyan,

gold is white, and fire is red.

2.2 Symbol of the five colors

At the end of the Warring States Period, Zou Yan, a scholar of yin and yang in the Qi State, developed the "Five Virtues Theory". The "Five Virtues" refer to the virtues of the "Five Elements". All ancient emperors respected the virtues of the Five Elements, which meant that they followed the destiny and demonstrated their emperor's virtues. , such as Chengmude in Wei, Chengjin in Jin, Tude in Tang, Chenghuode in Ming, etc. ^[1]The five elements correspond to the five colors. They give the colors special meanings of destiny and ethics, which have been valued and used by emperors of all dynasties, such as Shang Qing in the Wei Dynasty, Shang Bai in the Jin Dynasty, Shang Huang in the Tang Dynasty, and Shang Hong in the Ming Dynasty. The five colors are used to distinguish the high and low, and predict the rise and fall of the country, the replacement of dynasties, and the good and bad luck of personnel. Color is therefore endowed with special symbolic meanings and specific functions.

During the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period, "Book of Zhou Li Kao Gong Ji" recorded the corresponding directions of the five colors: "The thing about painting a fur coat is a mixture of five colors. The east is called green, the west is called white, the south is called red, the north is called black, and the sky is called black. It is called Xuan, and the earth is called Yellow."^[2] The five colors correspond to the five directions. The feudal emperors used the directional concept of the five elements to establish the equal supreme status and power of the monarch, ministers, and generals. The yellow located in the center of the five directions became the exclusive color of the ancient emperors. They wore yellow robes and sat in yellow. The dragon chair and throne, all decorations in the palace and the chariots for going out are also called "yellow chariots" and "yellow houses". The five colors have become symbolic colors representing status and power. These are concretely reflected in the hierarchy of architecture, clothing, etc. In terms of division, it is used in the architectural decoration, clothing, utensils and other colors of royal nobles.^[3]

The palace jewelry of the Qing Dynasty was colorful and varied in the "five colors" of green, red, yellow, white and black. It had very strong and prominent characteristics. The color matching of jewelry was keen on contrasting and complementary colors such as red, green and red and blue. Although the colors are rich and gorgeous, they can also achieve a harmonious balance in being rich and eye-catching, bright but not boring, and publicity without losing connotation. ^[4]The laws and regulations of jewelry in the Qing Dynasty were very hierarchical, and status was demonstrated by color. The excellent color of gemstones corresponded to the status of concubines. For example, rubies include rose red, rose red, bright red, dark red, blood red and pigeon blood red are rare treasures; corals include peach red, crimson red, and bright red is the most valuable; sapphires are not ideal if they are too deep or light, and azure blue is the most valuable. The best; lapis lazuli is available in sky blue or dark blue, with blue-violet being the most valuable; crystals are available in purple, rose, yellow, smoky, white milk, with blue crystal being the rarest.

Traditional Chinese colors do not only refer to a certain color, but the overall concept of color. With the change of dynasties and the changes of time, the colors are also changing, and the concept is gradually changing. As one of the forms of political expression, color serves as a symbol of identity and restricts people's behavior. In a sense, the meaning given to color is becoming more and more complex, and has long gone beyond the body's basic feeling of color.

3. The five-color concept first appeared in ancient ornaments

The theory of the Five Elements and Five Colors can be traced back to the Warring States Period. The Five Elements and Five Colors have extraordinary significance and provide people with a medium to classify hierarchical status. In ancient times, the five-color theory also existed in the clothing worn by people. Take a closer look at the sparks that will be created when the five colors first appear in ancient jewelry.

3.1 Cyan in Five Color Concept

In the five-color concept, green is the color of life, which symbolizes the color of growth of all things. This color in the jewelry of ancient royal nobles has its glorious history. It is the most conspicuous blue-green color in the history of ancient jewelry development and can never be copied.^[5] According to the "Han Feizi·Wai Chu Shuo" at the end of the Warring States Period, the Chu people made a wooden box

for their pearls. The surface of the wooden box was "embellished with pearls and jade, decorated with roses, and decorated with feathers and emeralds." This was the earliest five-color appearance on a woman. The color of green is the point of emerald green. As shown in Figure 1, the Qing Dynasty's head and face with green phoenix and peony pattern. In ancient times, women used kingfisher feathers to decorate their jewelry. Since the Warring States Period, using green feathers as decoration has become popular.



Figure 1: Counting the head and face of the green phoenix blowing peony pattern

My country's rich jade resources have inspired jade culture. Jade is an important part of jade culture, and various green jade jade ornaments emerge in endlessly. After being introduced to China in large quantities in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, it dominated the world of jade and gradually replaced nephrite jade. For example, the jadeite jade with lotus leaf pattern in Figure 2 is from the Qing Dynasty. There is incomparable greenness in jade, which penetrates this green complex into the soul of every Chinese.



Figure 2: Qing Dynasty jadeite lotus leaf pattern water spoon

3.2 Red color in the Five Colors Concept

As the saying goes, "Coral red for thousands of years is red for thousands of years." Coral is the only soul in jewelry that has a history of thousands of years. It grows on the seabed at depths of 200 to 2,000 meters and is extremely difficult to mine. From the perspective of history at home and abroad, red coral has a lofty status and is regarded as an auspicious and happy thing. It represents noble power. It is also called "Ruibao" and is a symbol of happiness and eternity. People use red coral as a protection and prayer. A token of blessing from "God".

Red coral has always been a favorite treasure and decoration among the dignitaries of the Chinese court. About five thousand years ago, Uncle Ho presented Dayu with a large number of rare treasures due to his contribution to flood control. Dayu only chose three of them, one of which was coral. In the

Han Dynasty, the royal family and aristocrats started planting jade trees in their front yards. "Coral branches and jasper leaves" were placed in the front yard of the main hall, which was extremely luxurious. Chinese emperors of all dynasties have the tradition of wearing red corals to pray for blessings and ward off evil spirits. Emperor Qianlong and Empress Zhuang Xian also particularly liked red corals. To this day, the Palace Museum in Beijing still preserves huge red corals in the palaces of the Ming and Qing Dynasties, as shown in Figure 3. Gold-plated copper from the Qing Dynasty Pot of red coral bonsai. This is the largest coral bonsai in the collection of the Palace Museum. The coral is 64.5 centimeters high and 75 centimeters wide. It has natural branches like ancient trees. Its color is pure and moist pink, and its branches are evenly distributed. It is a rare giant tree. The coral is planted in a gold-plated copper crabapple-style flowerpot. The whole flowerpot is engraved with entwining lotuses, and is surrounded by burnt blue flowers. The height of the pot is 99 centimeters.



Figure 3: Qing Dynasty gilded copper pot with red coral bonsai

3.3 Yellow in Five Color Concept



Figure 4: Liao Prince Consort Amber Necklace

In ancient times, amber with the same earth color was often used to make pendants. Amber has been regarded as a precious treasure since ancient times. It comes from pine resin, and pine trees symbolize longevity in China. They are also widely made into religious objects. The Chinese have loved the scent of pine since ancient times and regard amber and ambergris as precious spices. In ancient China, there were concubines who used the fragrance of amber to attract the king's attention. Guo Xian of the Han

Dynasty recorded in "Dongming Ji" that "the emperor was lucky that the palace lady Lijuan wore amber as a pendant and put it in her clothes so that no one would know it."^[6] The amber necklace of Princess Chen of the Liao Dynasty is shown in Figure 4. It is a necklace with strong Khitan ethnic characteristics and a representative ornament for believing in Buddhism and secularizing Buddhist thought. The amber beads, round carvings and relief amber ornaments are alternately interspersed with fine silver wires, mainly dragon patterns, and the patterns are abstract and dynamic.

3.4 White in Five Color Concepts

White gemstone accessories mainly include pearls, mother-of-pearl, Hetian white jade, etc. Among them, pearls, the oldest organic gemstones on earth, were produced in pearl oysters and nacreous molluscs 200 million years ago, and my country was one of the first countries in the world to utilize pearls. The use of pearls in our country began in the Eastern Zhou Dynasty. Since the Qin and Han Dynasties, the use of pearls has become more and more common. In Figure 5, you can see the recorded pictures of super-large special-shaped sea pearls from the Qing Dynasty. Pearls symbolize innocence, perfection, nobility and authority in people's hearts. There is a saying in "Zhuangzi" about "the pearl of a thousand gold". King Zhao of Qin ranked pearls and jade as the first among "treasures of ornaments". It can be seen that pearls were worth a city in ancient times. The orbs on the emperor's crown and robes, and the hairpins and earrings in the concubine's accessories are all symbols of supreme authority and incomparable nobility.



Figure 5: Qing Extra large special-shaped seawater pearl

3.5 Black in Five Color Concept

The earliest amber products unearthed by archeology in my country are very, very early, from the Neolithic Age. Figure 6 shows the Sanxingdui No. 1 sacrificial pit in Guanghan, Sichuan. A heart-shaped black amber pendant was unearthed, which is the image of a cicada. It is similar to the jade cicada craftsmanship we more commonly see: one side is incised with cicada back patterns, and the other side is incised with cicada belly patterns. There is such a record in "The Classic of Mountains and Seas", "The west current pours into the sea, and there is a lot of pei in it, and there will be no wrinkles if you wear it." The "Compendium of Materia Medica" records: "Yai amber is the longest of all ambers," and it is a precious kind of amber. Various types of amber are believed to cure diseases by wearing amber.



Figure 6: Neolithic heart-shaped amber pendant

4. The influence of five colors on contemporary jewelry design

In modern jewelry design, many jewelry are still influenced by the historical influence of the Five Color Views in the selection of raw materials, such as the most typical raw material of red coral. Red coral was a precious medicine in ancient times. "Compendium of Materia Medica" records that it has the effects of improving eyesight, stopping bleeding, and removing blood stagnation; Tang Materia Medica records that red coral "removes tingling in the eyes, soothes the mind and calms the mind, and cures vomiting." Wearing red coral jewelry can regulate secretion in the human body. Promote blood circulation, remove stubborn blood, break bones, nourish and beautify the skin, and make people lucky and wealthy. Women who have worn red coral jewelry will be surprised to find that red coral seems to be alive. It will show subtle color changes depending on cloudy and sunny days, dry and wet seasons, light and dark, and the physical condition of the wearer. This is why it is mysterious of unique charm. There is a lady in my country who has loved red coral all her life - Soong Meiling. ^[7]In a very classic photo of Soong Meiling, who often appears in the public eye, she is wearing a black cheongsam, with a string of top-quality red coral beads necklace tied around her neck and on her ears. Wearing red coral earrings. Against the background of red coral, it looks particularly noble and elegant.

In jewelry design, designers have always pursued the natural color of rough stones. Even with the development of science and technology today, we can artificially cultivate many novel colors. People still have a great interest in the original natural color of rough stones attraction. Many rough stones have still maintained their rare and precious status to this day, and have evolved many different new patterns in the design of jewelry products.^[8] Such as the jadeite jellyfish brooch pendant from Huanluan Classical Jewelry Studio, as shown in the Figure 7. The design retains the original color of Diancui, changing the dull and solemn feeling of Diancui in people's inherent impression. The smart jellyfish lines break this "rule" and make it vivid.



Figure 7: Emerald Jellyfish Brooch Pendant

Another aspect of the five-color concept has more influence on the emotional value orientation of contemporary designers. They are good at using colors to convey the emotional language of their works, such as passionate red, vibrant green, clean white, calm and hidden Black and so on.^[9]

5. Conclusions

As the thousand-year foundation of traditional Chinese colors, the Five Color Concept is not only a participant in history and culture, but also a developer of the times. In the past five thousand years, the five colors have carried the theory of the five elements and five colors that correspond to destiny, and have a lofty hierarchical status and class ruling power. The five colors were transformed from the intangible to the tangible, entrusted in various rare treasures and made into wearable jewelry. The wearer became a symbol of class, and the five colors became revered and admired by people of that era.^[10] Today, the five-color concept still contains a strong cultural connotation. It has penetrated into people's lives, emotions, and yearning for freedom. Contemporary jewelry has more rich expressions. The five colors are hidden in them like shadows. Designers express themselves through the five colors. Color, people use the five colors to open up the depths of their hearts.

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