

# Secrets of the Dragon Robes

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An old Chinese proverb says that the reign of every emperor starts when he dons his new robes. Clothing was seen as a status symbol in many dynasties and constituted the mark of an individual's position in society. For example, the fur of a black fox and the color yellow were reserved for high officials and members of the imperial family. The general public was not allowed to wear or even possess such clothes, although they were allowed to sell them. Anyone found to violate this rule was subject to harsh punishment, including even the death penalty.

## Curved Sleeves and Separate Heavy Collars

The Qing Dynasty was born when the Manchu conquered the Chinese empire in 1644. The Manchu were horsemen who came from northeastern China and conquered the Chinese empire toward the end of the Ming Dynasty. However, in terms of culture, tradition, customs and science, the Manchu had much to learn from the highly developed Chinese. They accepted not only the highly advanced system of state officials but also the Chinese ideograms, their rituals and customs, and even their ideology and religion. After their conquest, the Manchu admired the highly developed Chinese culture yet retained pride in their own roots.

Before they settled down, traveling clothes were the most important possession of the Manchu. They consisted mostly of animal skins, cut in the shape of the dead animal in order to maximize

the use of the raw material. The imperial wardrobe owes its horse-shoe-shaped sleeves and the separate, heavy collars to the Manchu traditions. Since the Manchu made a living by hunting in the north-eastern climes, it was important to be protected from the cold. They wore long, curved sleeves, which could be placed over the hands to protect them from the cold. The separate collar was also meant to protect the hunters from the cold during long rides.

Unfortunately, the long curved sleeves turned out to be a hindrance in everyday life at the imperial court. For this reason, court officials wore them rolled up most of the time and rolled them down only when they had to greet someone new. This habit, started by the emperor and his officials was eventually transferred to everyone. Thus, it became a ritual of the Chinese people to roll their sleeves up and down when greeting a stranger.

## The Most Elaborate Gown on Earth

Before any gown was allowed to touch the body of a Chinese emperor in the Qing Dynasty, it required two and a half years of labor at the hands of the court tailors. There was a tailor's shop in the palace dedicated to making the emperor's clothes. The patterns and the cuts of the clothes were developed in this shop and had to be approved by the emperor and the highest imperial officials. Then, the patterns were passed along to the silk manufacturers. When the fabric was ready, it was cut by another artisan and passed on to a third to sew it together and finally, to embroider it. Only the

finest threads were used for the embroideries, including threads of real gold. The emperor employed 500 artisans for the stitching and another 40 for the gold embroideries.

## A Robe for Every Occasion

The imperial wardrobe during the Qing Dynasty included a variety of gowns and robes. There were robes for celebrations, special robes for ceremonial occasions, travel clothes, and clothes to wear during snow and rain, as well as clothes for everyday use within the private apartments and outdoors. According to the demands of the weather, they were either lined or unlined, made from silk, leather, or cotton. The colors were chosen to perfect the imperial wardrobe. Some of the colors reserved for the emperor were bright yellow, red, blue, and light blue. Yellow was reserved mostly as a color for celebrations. The other three colors were worn during ceremonial days of sacrifice in the three major temples: The emperor wore blue at the Temple of Heaven, red at the Temple of the Sun, and light blue at the Temple of the Moon. With every robe, the emperor also wore a matching belt and hat.

The commonly known dragon robes are embroidered with golden dragons. They were gowns for special celebrations, and the emperor wore them only on auspicious days of feasting.

The color yellow was worn on festive occasions, whereas the other three colors were worn on days of sacrifice.

A simple ceremonial robe was worn on all other festive occasions such as weddings, days of sacrifice, and the New Year.

## The Twelve Patterns of the Dragon Robes

The emperor's gowns were heavily adorned with artful ornaments and hidden symbolism for good luck: The dragon dominated each imperial costume. The most important element of Confucianism, it symbolized the emperor's power. A dragon robe contained nine dragons, one on each shoulder, another on the back, and one covering the chest, and one each on the bottom garments; the last four dragons decorated the bottom of the imperial robes.

The dragon robe was not simply meant to be an ornament for the emperor, but it was also supposed to bring good luck to the people. In addition to the dragons, eleven other symbols for good luck could be seen: 日 (ri) sun, 月 (yue) moon, and 星辰 (xing chen) stars, as the symbols for three brilliant sources of light; 群山 (qun shan) the mountain symbolized protection in all four directions of the emperor's regency; 华虫 (hua chong) the insect stood for the emperor's wisdom; 宗彝 (zong yi) the cup of wine stood for honesty, loyalty, and piety; 藻 (zao) the water lotus stood for purity; 火 (huo) fire stood for his honesty; 粉米 (fen mi) rice symbolized richness; 黼 (fu) a special pattern rendered in black and white was a symbol of the emperor's decisiveness and boldness, and 黻 (fu) rendered in black and green, was a symbol of his honesty.

Another symbol on the emperor's robes was a red bat, which sounds like the symbol for "a veritable deluge of good luck." The undergarments contained the world's oceans and the world's mountain ranges because in Chinese tradition, the emperor is regarded as the "son of heaven" who rules the whole world.



IMPERIAL COUPLE: Models wear a re-creation of empress and emperor court robes from the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) in China. STAN HONDA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

## Moss Tops Glamour Fashion List, Minogue Tumbles

LONDON (Reuters)—British supermodel Kate Moss has regained her crown at the top of Glamour magazine's annual best-dressed women list, replacing 2007 winner Kylie Minogue who slumped to 19th this year.

Moss, 34, dominated the list before the Australian pop star overtook her, but Minogue's fashion choices during the past 12 months have been too "outlandish" for many voters' tastes, a spokesman for the magazine said.

Behind Moss was British actress Sienna Miller in second place, followed by U.S. actresses Scarlett Johansson, Rachel Bilson, and Jennifer Aniston in third, fourth, and fifth places respectively.

"Kate's back with a vengeance," said Jo Elvin, editor of Glamour, of the poll decided by Glamour readers. "Her maverick approach to fashion is an inspiration and shows us all how

to be a little more daring and experimental."

Minogue's slide was partly blamed on her appearance on television talent show the X Factor wearing a figure-hugging lace catsuit that divided viewers and fashion watchers.

Topping the worst-dressed list in Glamour this year was U.S. singer Britney Spears. Former Spice Girl Victoria Beckham was voted ninth worst-dressed of 2008, but also came in 10th on the best-dressed list.

GLAMOUR'S FASHION QUEENS: Model Kate Moss (L) in November 2007 in New York City and Kylie Minogue (R) in February 2008 in Berlin, Germany.



BRAD BARKET/GETTY IMAGES



MARCEL METTELSIEFEN/GETTY IMAGES

## Australian Fashion Show Cuts Out Young Models

CANBERRA (Reuters)—Australia's fashion industry took out plans to use a 14-year-old model as the face of its annual showcase last Friday after fashion magazines refused to publish the girl's photo because she was too young.

Organizers of Australia's fashion week had planned to make 14-year-old Polish model Monika Jagaciak the star of its annual fashion shows from April 28 to May 2.

But editors from Vogue magazine and Marie Claire threatened to pull coverage of the fashion events and called for organizers to follow guidelines in place in London and Paris, which place restrictions on models under 16 years old.

"Fourteen is young and extreme," Australia's Vogue editor Kirsty Clements told Australian Broadcasting Corp. radio.

"That is a big disconnect to what you are essentially supposed to be doing, selling clothes to women, and yet you are getting them so young that they haven't even developed a curve."

"What does that mean? They are going to be washed up and on the scrap heap, which actually does happen as soon as they start to develop breast and hips. It is ridiculous."

Marie Claire editor Jackie Frank said it was time publishers and fashion companies took a stand and lifted the minimum age of models to 16.

After initially standing by its decision on Jagaciak, fashion week organizers last Friday backed down after industry pressure.

"Effective immediately both male and female models participating in AFW [Australian Fashion Week] will need to be at least 16 years of age and must be represented by a reputable model agency," organizer Simon Lock said in a statement.

## Crossword



- Across
- Syrian bishop
  - Dorm dweller
  - Detest
  - Careen
  - Land unit
  - Folded sheet of paper
  - Hairstyle
  - Salty water masses
  - Tales
  - Ecclesiastic cap
  - Corn syrup brand
  - Pigpen
  - 24 ation
  - 25 Sunflower State
  - 29 Rainy mo.
  - 30 Happy cat sound
  - 32 Central daylight time
  - 33 Goads
  - 36 Capital of Vietnam
  - 37 River (Spanish)
  - 38 Bust
  - 39 African nation
  - 40 Peat
  - 41 Fat
  - 42 Manservant
  - 43 Saturate

- Usage
- Charity
- Greedy person
- Infer
- Stitch
- X
- Rocket builders
- Little House on the \_\_\_?
- Act in opposition to
- Dazzle
- Anger
- Fish tank growth
- Japanese dress
- Attention-Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (abbr.)
- Plump down
- One of Columbus' ships
- Fish catchers
- 22 City in Ohio
- 26 Rub clean
- 27 Bye
- 28 Took
- 29 Adorn
- 30 Sheets of glass
- 31 Section
- 32 Arrogant
- 34 Hoist
- 35 Lubricated
- 36 What the pilot uses
- 39 Bundles of hay
- 40 Madagascar franc (abbr.)
- 42 Abandon
- 43 Midwestern state
- 46 Protrusion of organ
- 48 Take off the lid
- 49 Disdain
- 50 Exchange
- 51 Villi
- 52 Wants
- 54 Association (abbr.)
- 56 Asian country
- 57 Hit
- 58 Building addition
- 59 Gone by
- 61 Food fish

- Down
- Mid-Eastern dwellers
  - Match
  - Small fruit
  - Lotion ingredient
  - Furniture wheel
  - Large water body
  - Epoch
  - Office furniture
  - Mount (2 wds.)
  - Boxer Muhammad
  - Twit
  - Aurora
  - Sports car brand
  - Points



## Bravo's 'Project Runway' Jumps to Lifetime, NBC Sues

NEW YORK (Reuters)—NBC Universal and its Bravo cable network will lose the popular television reality show "Project Runway" as the show unveiled plans last week to jump to rival cable network Lifetime Television.

The show, in which fledgling fashion designers compete for money to launch their own line, has been one of Bravo's top-rated shows.

NBC Universal filed suit last Monday in New York State Supreme Court against the show's producer, the Weinstein Co, claiming that the network and Bravo had the right of first refusal for future cycles of the show and any spinoffs.

"Project Runway" will move to Lifetime for its sixth season beginning in November as part of a five-year deal, the network and The Weinstein Co. said.

In the lawsuit, NBC claimed it

has been negotiating with Weinstein for more than a year to gain exclusive rights to broadcast subsequent cycles of the program, but that Weinstein threatened to take the show to another network unless NBC agreed to acquire a package of unrelated Weinstein films for "many millions of additional dollars."

NBC is seeking a preliminary and permanent injunction to prevent Weinstein from taking the show to another network.

"It is always unfortunate when parties try to win in court what they have lost in the marketplace," David Boies, an attorney for Weinstein said in a statement.

Project Runway just completed its fourth cycle, and NBC said in the suit that it is in production for the fifth season on Bravo.

But NBC said last Monday that it may have to decide whether to

continue to air the show. "NBC Universal regrettably had no alternative but to bring legal action to enforce its rights to this program, including the right to decide whether it is in the best interest of the company to continue to air the show under the proposed financial terms," the company said in a statement.

Heidi Klum, the show's supermodel host, and Tim Gunn, chief creative officer at Liz Claiborne Inc who mentors the show's contestants, have also agreed to move to Lifetime, the network said in a statement.

The seven-time Emmy-nominated show premiered on Bravo in 2005 and averaged more than 3.5 million viewers per episode in its most recent season.

NBC is controlled by General Electric Co. France's Vivendi owns a minority stake.