

Regulating Costumes During the Qing Dynasty - 1

These three Tibetan chubas in the display case show the pattern design you would find on a dragon robe from the Qing imperial court. The Tibetan robe, known as a chuba, has a banded collar and long narrow sleeve-ends without cuffs, while the Manchurian dragon robe has a round neckline and long narrow sleeves with hoofed-shape cuffs.

The Qianlong Emperor, one of the Manchurian monarchs who reigned in the 18th century, commissioned his officials to establish costume regulations. These regulations were compiled into an illustrated publication for the nobles and officials to use in ritual ceremonies called **Huangchao liqi tushi (皇朝禮器圖式)** or “Illustrated Regulations of the Ceremonial Paraphernalia of the Imperial Qing Dynasty”. This album contains illustrations that demonstrate the permitted style and use of dragon patterns for costumes.

The Mactaggart Art Collection contains one original section of illustrations from the entire volume. A painting from the section shows how dragon patterns were to be incorporated into court costumes for both the empress and the empress dowager (the mother of the emperor). The pattern design includes dragons and clouds on the body, as well as rocks and waves along the bottoms.

The yellow “Silk Brocade Tibetan Chuba” demonstrates the costume regulations with the position and number of dragons. There are nine dragons on this chuba - located on the front, back, and shoulders. A ninth dragon is unseen and underneath the right-side placket. This pattern design for the dragon robe became common during the Qing dynasty.