

# Empire of Style



Silk &  
Fashion  
in Tang  
China

BuYun Chen

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# Empire of Style: Silk and Fashion in Tang China



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Tang dynasty (618–907) China hummed with cosmopolitan tendencies. Tang fashion is proven to possess flourished in response to a confluence of sociable, economic, and political adjustments that brought innovative weavers and stylish courtroom elites to the forefront of history. This first book on fashion in premodern China is informed by archaeological sources—paintings, figurines, and silk artifacts—and textual records such as for example dynastic annals, poetry, tax documents, economic treatises, and sumptuary laws. Across the empire, elite men and women subverted regulations on gown to acquire majestic silks and au courant styles, as shifts in economic and social structures gave rise to what we now acknowledge as precursors of a modern fashion system: a new consciousness of time, a game of imitation and emulation, and a change in modes of creation. In *Empire of Design*, BuYun Chen reveals a vibrant fashion program that emerged through the attempts of Tang artisans, wearers, and critics of clothes. Its capital at Chang'an was the most populous town in the globe and was linked via the Silk Road with the critical marketplaces and thriving cultures of Central Asia and the Middle East.



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