Introduction:
The Tang dynasty (619-907) is known as one of the most successful time periods in ancient Chinese history in politics, social life, culture, and arts. A major factor that led to the success of Tang dynasty is its open and friendly policies to foreign nations such as Persia. The success is reflected on the fashion of the time, significant amount of design elements were inspired by the Western nations in contact with Tang China. Because of the openness to different cultures, the fashion of Tang has the most unique characteristics that distinguish it from fashion trends in any other dynasties.

In my opinion, this period of Chinese history is marvelous yet unfortunately underrated by the Western view of ancient Asian art history. I want to contribute this research to this particular part of Chinese history, and present it to the Western audience.

My research was mainly done during July and August 2014. I collected my data by visiting museums, and doing artifact analysis from the Minneapolis Institute of Arts and different parts of China such as Beijing, Shanxi, and Shenzhen. I used the artifact analysis as evidence to support my topic. The artifacts that I have looked at are mostly paintings, portraits, statues, tomb figurines, and some literature from the Tang dynasty that describes people’s lifestyle and clothing. The research resulted in a thirty pages paper, and an oral presentation with musical performances during a class on fashion trends and zeitgeist.

Historical Background:
The capital of Tang dynasty China was Chang’an (present day Xi’an, Shensi Province). Chang’an was the political, social, and economical center of the world at the time, as well as a famous city for the cultural communication between the West and the East. Residents living in Chang’an were not only Han Chinese, but also nationalities from Uyghur, Kucina, Tibet, Persia. Tang dynasty China was in contact with over three hundred nations at its peak. The silkroad connected the Western and Eastern world since Han dynasty, and the peak of its development was during Tang dynasty. Its starting point was Chang’an of China.

Three important historical figures are: Emperor Taizong (first emperor, introduced the friendly policies to foreigners), Emperor Xuanzong (led to the peak of arts, literature, and music) and Empress (first and only official female ruler in the Imperial Chinese history, caused a significant rise in feminism). Tang dynasty China’s time (year 618-907) was parallel with part of the East Roman Empire period (also known as the Byzantine Empire, year 395-1453). During the Sui-Tang periods the Chinese called Rome “Da qin” (大秦). Persia had been in a friendly relationship with China ever since Han dynasty, and this friendship developed during early Tang dynasty (it was also the Sasanid Empire period in Persia). The Tang Chinese diplomat monk Xuanzang traveled through the extreme condition and brought the Buddhist classics from India to China, Xuanzang also translated the books he had brought back into Chinese.

At the same time, the Chinese paper making techniques were introduced to India as well, and the Chinese local traditional religious classic was translated into Sanskrit. The growth of Buddhist influence in China was significant, as well as the cultural exchange between China and India.

Lifestyle and Fashion:
The people of Tang dynasty China enjoyed many activities that came from foreign countries. For example, polo from Tibet (there is also sayings that polo was originated in Persia) was the most popular sport in Tang China, from royal court members to nobilities to common people.

Exotic, foreign merchandises were very popularly desired by the Tang Chinese. Thus foreign inspired fashion carried throughout most part of Tang dynasty. The leather boots worn by the Northern and Western nomadic nations, and the silk shawls from India were part of the Tang dynasty signature looks.

Conclusion:
To Chinese people, Tang dynasty was the most glorious time period in Chinese history. Memories of Chinese and foreign nations’ culture were written, carved, and painted into each other’s culture. I believe if a society wants to be successful, it must be able to see diversity as equality as the successful ruler Emperor Taizong once said “I shall give my love to all nations in China equally regardless whether it is the Han ethnicity or not.”

Works Cited
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