

# Eight Auspicious Patterns of Ming Dynasty

Xiangyang Bian<sup>1</sup>, & Menghe Tian<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Collage of Fashion and Design, Donghua University, Shanghai, China

Correspondence: Xiangyang Bian, College of Fashion and Design, Donghua University, Shanghai, NO. 1882, West Yan-an Road, 200051, China. Tel: 86-21-6237-3978. E-mail: bianxy@dhu.edu.cn

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## Abstract

"Auspiciousness" is the common pursuit of the Chinese nation for a long time, and it is the hope of the Chinese people for the future. In the long history of China, auspicious elements represent good omen and have a considerable proportion in Chinese traditional culture. In this paper, the Ming Dynasty Wanli period, blue ground wrapped branches eight auspicious brocade, with a relatively clear vein, existing in the silk Museum of Hangzhou, China, well preserved. Overall, this fabric is dark blue as the base, and the gold thread is covered with asymmetric patterns, showing a relatively complete pattern of wrapped branches. At the same time, the existing relevant studies on the analysis of the eight auspicious patterns mainly focus on the application of the eight auspicious patterns on porcelain in different periods, the application of the eight auspicious patterns in the internal and external decoration of buildings and the application in the depiction of figures in temple mural.

**Keywords:** Auspicious patterns, Pattern, Fabric, Fashion History



Figure 1. Lamella blue ground wrapped branches eight auspicious Zhijin satin in late Ming Dynasty

## 1. Introduction

"Auspiciousness" is the common pursuit of the Chinese nation for a long time, and it is the good hope of the Chinese people for the future. The word "auspicious" first appeared in the book "Zhuangzi · Human world" in China, inserted in "virtual room white, auspicious stop" (Zhuang Zi, 2022), it means that, if a person can remove the items in the room that block the sun, then the whole room will be filled with sunshine, it's a metaphor indicating calm down and abandon miscellaneous thoughts, will summon good luck and great things. Therefore, in the long history of China, the good omen represented by auspicious elements has a considerable proportion in the traditional Chinese culture. The blue ground wrapped branches eight auspicious brocade made during the Wanli period of the Ming Dynasty in this article has a relatively clear pattern and vein, which is now in the China National Silk Museum, well preserved. Overall, this fabric has a dark blue background and the gold thread is covered with asymmetric patterns, showing a relatively complete pattern of the eight auspicious patterns of the wrapped branches.

As one of the most classic auspicious patterns in Chinese traditional culture, the eight auspicious patterns were particularly popular in the Ming and Qing dynasties. This pattern is the combination of entangled branch pattern

and eight auspicious patterns. The twig patterns are mostly wavy, swirly, or S-shaped in the branches of vine plants, and are paired with leaves, flowers, animals, etc., which means generally good luck and good omen (Wang Fang, 2018). Auspicious pattern is a typical representative of traditional Chinese silk pattern, with a certain symbolic and implied meaning, people use this pattern attached to clothes or home, to obtain wonderful, avoid disaster, longevity, and health. Since the eight auspicious patterns of twig were widely spread among the royal family and the folk people in the Ming and Qing dynasties of China, the in-depth study of this fabric has certain reference value for the traditional Chinese auspicious patterns.

At present, the existing relevant studies on the analysis of the eight auspicious patterns are mainly aimed at the application of the eight auspicious patterns on porcelain in different periods, the application of the internal and external decoration of buildings and the application of the depiction of figures in temple murals. In the existing literature, there are relatively few studies on the eight auspicious patterns on fabrics, so this paper takes the fabric flaky blue ground wrapped branches of eight auspicious brocade as the basis, to sort out the development and evolution of the eight auspicious patterns in China's Ming Dynasty.

## 2. Flaky Blue Ground Wrapped Branches of Eight Auspicious Brocade and Auspicious Patterns

This piece of blue wrapped branches of eight auspicious brocade, in the fabric content point of view, wrapped branches and eight auspicious patterns are clearer, respectively, there are two dark blue longitude and latitude lines and another golden warp, belonging to the knot class weaving gold silk satin (China Silk Museum, 2017).

At the same time, according to the collection records of the China Silk Museum, this belongs to the fabric of the Wanli period of China's Ming Dynasty, that is, the reign of Zhu Yijun, the emperor of the Ming Dynasty. In the first ten years of his reign, with the assistance of his famous minister Zhang Juzheng, he carried out the "Wanli New Policy", which greatly improved the decadence in the society at that time, as well as the declining economic condition of the country, and the society showed a more positive appearance. At the same time, the mother of Ming Shenzong believed in Buddhism and offered more Buddhas and bodhisattvas. So that the eight auspicious patterns with Buddhist colors gradually began to prevail in Ming society. At the same time, the early Ming Dynasty implemented the suppression policy on the businessmen, the Ming Dynasty work "Agricultural Policy book - Volume 4" mentioned that "on the emphasis on the suppression of the end, ordered the farmer's home to wear noil gauze cloth, the merchant's home only allowed to wear cloth. But there is a merchant in the farmer's home, also not allowed to wear noil gauze" (Xu Guangqi, Ming Dynasty), even in the Wanli years of Zhang Juzheng to implement Wanli New policy, the relevant policies have eased, but the possibility of merchants using satin is still relatively small. At the same time, the Ming Dynasty also had a relatively strict hierarchical dress system for officials: from the first to the fourth, from the fifth to the seventh, from the eighth to the ninth, from the eighth, to the ninth, from the first to the eighth. According to the painting "Going Out for the Police and Entering the Road", officials in the Ming Dynasty also wore blue official robes, but not dark blue, while the depiction of the emperor showed dark blue clothing.

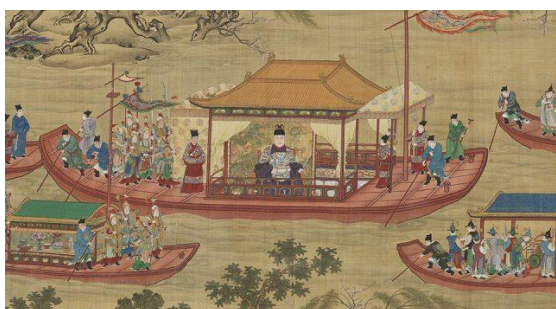


Figure 2-1. Part of the "Going Out and Entering the Map"



Figure 2-2. Part of "Going Out and Entering the Map"



Figure 2-3. Part of "Going Out and In"

Therefore, the material of the "satin" belonging to the fabric can basically rule out the possibility that the owner is a wealthy businessman, and the purpose of weaving is a private transaction. In contrast, its purpose is more likely to be used for the feudal nobility, and there is a high probability that it is used for the emperor.

## 3. Eight Auspicious Patterns

### 3.1 Definition and Meaning of Eight Auspicious Patterns

The twig pattern and eight auspicious patterns in this fabric are the classic auspicious theme combination in the Ming and Qing dynasties, this paper will focus on the eight auspicious patterns (Zhiquan, 2020). The eight

auspicious patterns, alias "Eight treasure patterns", come from Tibetan Lamaism and are known as the "Eight treasures of Buddhism": the golden Falun, the white conch, the treasure umbrella, the treasure bottle, the lotus, the victory building, the treasure fish and the auspicious knot.



Figure 3. Eight auspicious patterns

Their patterns are generally the eight items symbolizing "auspicious" in Buddhism, which have corresponding uses in Buddhist or secular occasions, and each has different meanings: In Buddhist sayings, the meanings of "eight auspicious" are respectively: Falun, which is mainly composed of wheels, spokes and rings, representing the wisdom and meditation in Buddhist teachings, is the Dafa circle to turn the world; White conch, in Buddhism is known as the mascot with Bodhisattva fruit sound, can symbolize power and authority; The concept of treasure umbrella in Buddhist teachings is mainly used to express the wish to avoid disaster and evil, or to symbolize authority and power, showing the thing that can spread freely and bend over sentient beings; The treasure umbrella represents the thing that covers all three clean medicines; The lotus flower, or "Miao Lian", is the embodiment of the concept of purity in body, mind, language, and mind, and is the thing that emerges from the five untainted worlds. The vase, which means auspiciousness and wealth, is a firm, lively and fresh thing, representing the happiness and wisdom of the things without leakage; In Buddhism, it means that one can get rid of the root causes of troubles and SINS, and walk to the right path of practice, which can achieve liberation and escape from pain. The meaning of treasure fish is more distinct, which not only contains the wisdom of distinguishing right from wrong, but also the integration of fish and water into a symbiotic pattern, surrounded by water around the fish, implying the meaning of liberation, immortality and detachment, showing people's desire to pursue the liberation of the world on a higher level; Auspicious knot, that is, the auspicious symbol of the Chinese nation "China knot" source of inspiration, which has a similar concept to the Mobius ring proposed by German mathematician Mobius and John Listine in

1858, that is, the infinite cycle of " $\infty$ " (Li Y, 2019), the difference is that in contrast, the auspicious knot contains more circular, happiness cycle.



Figure 4-1. Buddhist auspicious knot



Figure 4-2. Classic style of Chinese knot

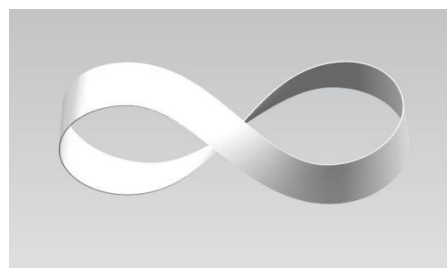


Figure 4-3. Mobius ring

### 3.2 The Development of Eight Auspicious Patterns in the Ming Dynasty

The earliest eight auspicious patterns appeared on porcelain bottles in the Yuan Dynasty, mostly in the form of printing in celadon of Longquan Kiln and egg white glaze of Jingdezhen Kiln, but they were not popular at that time, and the arrangement of patterns was more random. Until Zhu Yuanzhang, Emperor Taizu of the Ming Dynasty, promoted Buddhism, the eight auspicious patterns gradually began to prevail and formed a certain arrangement law. More appeared on the surface of porcelain bottles, Buddhist, and secular occasions in the architectural elements, as well as the character theme in the temple, such as Buddha, Bodhisattva, arhats, and

other Buddhist images of the temple murals.

Different from the traditional auspicious patterns, such as the longevity character pattern, wrapped branches pattern, etc., the eight auspicious patterns with a strong religious color, its popularity and the spread of Buddhism in the Ming Dynasty are related to each other. At the same time, to a certain extent, the popularity of the eight auspicious patterns in the Ming Dynasty was strongly related to the concepts of the people at the same time. People had a strong yearning for the concepts of "auspicious", "smooth" and even "eternal life", and even there was a trend of cultivation and ascension to heaven (Gao Jiangbang, Ming Dynasty). People's pursuit and desire for "auspicious" became more straightforward and stronger. The pursuit of good luck and "drawing a lucky picture" showed people's expectation for a better life in the Ming Dynasty. At the same time, the eight auspicious patterns with Buddhist beauty and transcendence connotations became popular elements in social life, among which the eight auspicious patterns were more classic.

The evolution of the eight auspicious patterns in the Ming Dynasty showed a parabolic change path: the early eight auspicious patterns were rigorous in style, but in the Yongle period of the Ming Dynasty to the middle of the Ming Dynasty, the eight auspicious patterns gradually entered the climax stage of development, and their forms of expression began to appear diversified and detailed characteristics. In the middle of the Ming Dynasty, with the decadence of politics and economy, the frequent occurrence of social conflicts and peasant uprisings, and the increase in the change rate of population flow, the popularity of the eight auspicious patterns at this time has made them a classic element of society and began to appear in the folk to be created and played. In the "Chenghua chicken pot song notes" literature has recorded "the rest of the vanilla, fish algae, melon, eight auspicious, Upohua, passionflower, Sanshika, all kinds of different, all depict seijian, point color light".

However, the decline of the late Ming Dynasty, social order chaos makes the expression of the eight auspicious lines more rigid, lack of exquisite polishing, such as the beginning of this article mentioned that the sheet blue ground entangled branches eight auspicious brocade, is the fabric of the late Ming Dynasty Wanli years, its weaving method is mainly to outline the outline, but the lack of details to describe the play. Therefore, the development of the eight auspicious patterns during the Ming Dynasty was a gradual convergence process, from the early and middle stages of "fine painting, dot color" to the later period of simple rigidity, with religious color of the eight auspicious patterns have been deeply engraved in social customs, and the subsequent development is no longer limited to religious places.

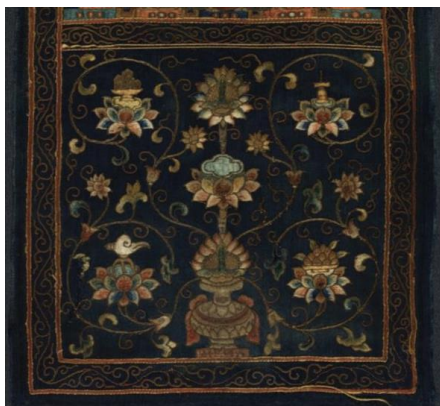


Figure 5. An embroidered portrait of Manjusri Bodhisattva in the middle of Ming Dynasty



Figure 6. Embroidery piece of the King of Heaven statue in the early Ming Dynasty



Figure 7. Eight Auspicious tattoo block with green glaze of Longquan Kiln in early Ming Dynasty

### 3.3 Fabric Image Restoration

According to the photo of the fabric in the official website of China Silk Museum, the specific image is as follows:



Figure 8-1. Golden Falun and restoration



Figure 8-2. White conch with restoration diagram



Figure 8-3. Treasure umbrella and restoration picture



Figure 8-4. Vase and restoration diagram



Figure 8-5. Lotus flower with restoration



Figure 8-6. Victory Building and restoration



Figure 8-7. Goldfish and restoration picture



Figure 8-8. Auspicious knot with restoration diagramThree.

#### 4. Summary and Outlook

The development and evolution of the eight auspicious patterns in the Ming Dynasty was triggered by the flaking blue ground and the eight auspicious patterns, which showed a parabolic development path, from the slow development in the early stage, to the rapid popularity in the middle stage, and gradually began to converge after the middle stage. The development of the eight auspicious patterns also showed the development trend of Buddhism in the Ming Dynasty. The eight auspicious patterns also revealed the changes of folk customs in the Ming Dynasty, which is of great significance for the study of social fashion and humanistic concepts in the Ming Dynasty.

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