

## **The Application of "River Cliff and Sea Water" Patterns in Contemporary Chinese Clothing Design in Ming and Qing Dynasty Buzi patterns**

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**Abstract:** The Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) were two glorious periods in Chinese history in which art, culture and science flourished. Among the myriad artistic achievements of these eras, textiles, porcelain, and paintings featured intricate and symbolic motifs, with the Ming and Qing patches being a systematic set of hierarchical insignia patterns. "River Cliff and Sea Water" pattern is commonly used in the Ming and Qing dynasty patch, implying the unification of the mountains and rivers, all things are peaceful. This paper explores and researches the origin, cultural value and artistic characteristics of the "River Cliff and Sea Water" pattern and its application principles in contemporary Chinese clothing design. **Keywords:** "River Cliff and Sea Water" pattern, Contemporary Chinese style, Clothing design, Applied research

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

China is a country with a rich history, and among its countless contributions to the world of art and aesthetics, the Jiangya seawater pattern stands out as a blend of reverence for nature and human creativity. Delving deeper into the origins and significance of these patterns, we can discover a cultural phenomenon in which the pattern must be intentional

and the meaning auspicious.

### 1.1 The origin and early description "River Cliff and Sea Water" pattern

Water is not only the source of life, but also the source of culture, and human civilization has shifted from the civilization of big rivers to the civilization of the sea. In traditional Chinese culture, rivers are often regarded as life-giving entities that nourish the land and the people. The cliffs in "River Cliffs and Sea Water Patterns" symbolize strength and endurance with their majestic stature, while the sea, with its endless expanse, focuses on the infinite spirit and the mystery of life. Inspired by the dramatic landscape around them, the artists sought to capture the serenity of the river, the strength of the cliffs, the rhythm of the waves, and the vastness of the sea (Zhao, 2013).



**Figure 1:**

The Chinese people, with their long history of the Yellow River civilization and the Yangtze River civilization, have applied water ripples to what they see and think in their daily lives out of respect and reverence for water. The earliest appearance in the early Neolithic period, Zhejiang Yuyao Hemudu culture pottery has appeared in the incised water ripples; Shang and Zhou gray pottery and printed hard pottery also have water ripples on the decoration. Among the various forms of water ripples, the most classic one is the scroll pattern. The carriers of this pattern are mostly found in many pottery vessels excavated in the Yellow River basin, and it is characterized by a circle of swirls, just like the snakes or dragons in the early totem worship (Eremina et al., 2022).

During the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods, the expression of water ripples was gradually visualized on wadang, lacquer, jade, and painted pottery and primitive celadon (Chen, 2005). The water wave pattern is still popular on the celadon of the Eastern Han Dynasty, the Three Kingdoms and the Western Jin Dynasty. In the development of

historical dynasties with the Wei and Jin Dynasties as a turning point, the shape of the water ripple pattern is gradually presented in a realistic state, and its overall form is more naturalized, whether it is a babbling brook or a shocking wave, all of them are depicted realistically (Chen, 2006).

During the Sui and Tang dynasties, the water ripple pattern has been combined with many other patterns to form a new pattern. By the Song Dynasty, the water pattern began to move towards a more poetic path with the continuous promotion of literati and ink artists. Ma Yuan, a famous painter of the Southern Song Dynasty, painted "The Yellow River Against the Current" Ma Yuan's water picture has twelve segments, each of which shows a different gesture of the water, and his works have also influenced the Japanese painting style - with the ukiyo-e style of the Japanese wave pattern, which is called the "eagle's claw pattern", and the two have relatively similar characteristics. The two have more similar features and vivid images (Zhen, 2022).

During the Song Dynasty, a more orderly water wave pattern appeared, that is, the ring water pattern (Atterton & Thompson, 2010). It is often closed concentric circles, so the lines are very fine, but this has a sense of order pattern depicted, but there is a more vivid sense of beauty. The water pattern later gradually extended to the wave pattern, corresponding to a variety of combinations of forms, such as "Jiangya seawater pattern", commonly known as "Jiangya seawater," "seawater Jiangya", is Often decorated in the ancient dragon robe, the hem of the official dress auspicious pattern (Qiu, 2010). Japanese wave pattern from the Japanese ukiyo-e style prints, tracing its roots. There are significant differences between Chinese and Japanese wave motifs. In China, the wave pattern usually appears in the form of cloud and water patterns, which resemble clouds and water, with a hazy aesthetic and the beauty of a soft mood.

In Japan, the shape of the wave pattern has different forms of expression, such as the eagle's claw wave, which has a strong visual impact, surging, showing a strong aggressiveness. Overall, although both use waves as their subject matter, there are significant differences in the forms of expression and visual effects, which reflect the differences between the two countries in terms of aesthetic and artistic styles as well as philosophies of dealing with things (Choguill, 2018). Yuan period of the water wave pattern depicted more delicate and flexible, decorative lines of the twists and turns of the majestic (Innes & Booher, 2018). Development to the Ming and Qing dynasties, water wave pattern basic stereotypes, the emergence of a more flat pattern modeling, such as the river cliff sea water pattern. This programmed depiction makes the water ripple pattern of decorative

meaning more intense. From the cylinder single generalization to the figurative embodiment to the abstract reflection, the water ripple pattern of the thousands of forms in the long river of history continues to present, greatly enriched the treasure trove of traditional decorative patterns of ancient China (Tzoulas & James, 2010).

## 2. THE PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS OF JIANGYA SEAWATER PATTERNS

The philosophical aspects of traditional Chinese patterns should not be ignored, and they are intertwined with Taoist and Confucianism. Taoism emphasizes harmony with nature, which is perfectly reflected in the "River Cliffs and Sea Water" pattern. The curving river reflects the Taoist belief in following the natural course or "way of life". The cliffs and the sea symbolize yin and yang, representing the duality of existence - strength and gentleness, action and stillness (Johnson, 2018). The Confucian focus on resilience, morality and social order is also reflected in these patterns. The unwavering cliff is a symbol of moral integrity, and the ever-flowing river represents the continuation of traditions and values passed down from generation to generation. The wisdom that water brings to people is not only out of survival, but also in the crystallization of ideas in the philosophy of life and dealing with people. Water, and not just water, it is rivers, lakes and seas, rain, dew, snow and frost, is an important part of the symbiosis with all things in heaven and earth. People spend a great deal of time looking at water, writing about water, drawing water, getting close to water, and then becoming one with it. As the embodiment of the ideal personality, water does not compete, willing to doom, at the same time, in the interaction with others, water also maintains a gentle and sincere attitude. Ancient people look at the rolling river, there is a "passer-by, do not give up day and night" feeling, associated with the passage of time, relentless and decisive. It is as if the world is silent admonition: life is like a dream, a bottle of libation river moon (Liu & Wang, 2021).

## 3. AESTHETICS AND ART

The beauty of river cliff seawater patterns lies in their complexity and attention to detail. Ancient artists went to great lengths to ensure that every element, be it the ripples in the water or the jagged edges of the cliffs, was depicted with precision. This meticulous craftsmanship is a testament to

their deep respect for nature and dedication to their art. While primarily rooted in realism, these models also contain elements of abstraction. This allows for a certain fluidity and adaptability in their presentation to a wide range of mediums, from textiles to metalwork. The rich color palette, often dominated by blues, greens and earthy tones, further enhances the visual appeal and creates an immersive experience for the observer (Ratner, 2012).

Ma Yuan's Layered Waves painting uses the brush to outline the forms of water waves swaying in the breeze and rapid waves and rapids, bringing out the dynamic beauty of waves in a static form. And a mountain stone stands in the water, and is embellished with auspicious clouds. It symbolizes the blessing of the mountains and the sea, and also carries the meaning of unification of rivers and mountains; with the wave pattern on the bottom, embellished with all kinds of flowers, its meaning is to create the poignant meaning of "falling flowers and flowing water", which is mostly used for weaving brocade.

#### 4. SYMBOLISM AND CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE.

The "river cliffs and seawater" patterns are not only decorative elements; they have a deep symbolic meaning. Each stroke tells a story, and these motifs tell tales of courage, love, adventure and spiritual pursuit. Rivers are often depicted as meandering endlessly, symbolizing the winding journey of life. Cliffs with rugged surfaces represent challenges and the ability of the human spirit to overcome them. The ebb and flow of waves represents the cyclical nature of life, while the vastness of the ocean represents the unknown, urging exploration, discovery and the search for enlightenment (Smith, 2020).

These patterns are also of socio-cultural importance. They are commonly used in the clothing of the elite, especially during ceremonial events, as a sign of status and sophistication. In addition, they play an important role in rituals, acting as a bridge between the secular and the sacred.

#### 5. THE REVIVAL OF CONTEMPORARY FASHION IN CHINA

The cyclical nature of fashion allows designers to draw inspiration from the past and innovate for the future. At a time when authenticity, tradition, and identity are celebrated, the "river cliff and sea water" motifs that graced the art and textiles of the Ming and Qing dynasties have been a major

source of inspiration. Before delving into the details, it is important to understand the context of this revival. The global fashion industry has undergone a shift that now emphasizes sustainability, history and cultural authenticity. This turning point provides an opportunity for Chinese designers to showcase their rich heritage, incorporating modern techniques and aesthetics (Zhu, 2018).

### 5.1 Weaving history into modernity design

Modern fashion is characterized by its integration with digital technology. These digitally revitalized motifs add depth, making the wearer not only the viewer but also the carrier of an ancient narrative. Additionally, the fusion of these traditional motifs with modern styles-such as oversized silhouettes, asymmetrical cuts, or nontraditional blended fabrics-creates a unique juxtaposition that embraces art nouveau while carrying on tradition.



**Figure 2:**

The true essence of mending motifs lies in the meticulous hand craftsmanship of the past, and realizing this, contemporary designers are reviving the ancient art of hand embroidery. Gold, silver and silk threads are meticulously woven to recreate these motifs on garments, capturing not only the visual appeal but also the soulful essence of the design. China's vast cultural landscape combines function with art and transforms everyday objects into symbols of cultural pride. In a fast-paced world dominated by machine manufacturing, the hand-embroidered cloth sub-patterns remind us of the humanity, artistry, and craftsmanship that turns an ordinary garment into a masterpiece (Brown & Jones, 2022).

### 5.2 Symbolism and storytelling: beyond aesthetics

Perhaps the most profound impact of the River Cliff seawater motif is intangible. Beyond the visual spectacle lies a treasure trove of stories, values and philosophies. Through these motifs, contemporary Chinese fashion

offers the wearer and viewer a journey into the realms of nature, existence and ancient wisdom. Designers often add narrative to their creations, inviting a deeper look into the symbolism of each pattern. The swirling river on the dress is more than an aesthetic choice; it speaks to the fluidity, challenges and progress of life. The rugged cliff motif on the shirt proves its resilience and strength. Through such storytelling, fashion moves beyond its materialistic realm and into the realm of education, introspection and connection (Chen & Wang, 2021).

### 5.3 Synthesis of tradition and modernity

In an era when global fashion tends to favor uniformity, the uniqueness of cultural expression shines through. Among the many examples of such expressions, the integration of Jiangya seawater motifs into contemporary Chinese fashion epitomizes how tradition and modernity can be seamlessly intertwined, a synthesis that demonstrates a fascinating panorama of China's rich artistic heritage and the creative drive of modern design. The design application principles are also summarized below:

#### 5.3.1 Jiangya seawater motifs: a historical context

To understand the significance of incorporating these motifs into modern fashion, it is important to understand their historical and cultural roots. Originating from the artistic imagination of the Ming and Qing dynasties, these motifs depict the serene beauty of meandering rivers, the majesty of towering cliffs, and the vastness of the sea. Each stroke, each curve, is not merely an artistic expression, but a reflection of philosophical thought and the respect for nature that is deeply rooted in Chinese culture (Liu, 2017).

#### 5.3.2 Guiding modern design through a cultural compass

Rich in historical and philosophical depth, the Jiangya seawater pattern provides a source of inspiration for contemporary designers to innovate. These motifs act as a cultural compass as designers navigate the sea of modern fashion. Designers anchor their designs to a heritage, ensuring that as styles evolve, they do not stray from their cultural roots. By embracing these motifs, designers aren't just using decorative elements. They evoke centuries of history, philosophy and art. It's a conscious effort to ensure that each piece of clothing or accessory resonates with a sense of identity and tradition. However, this affirmation of the past does not come at the expense of innovation. Contemporary materials, avant-garde silhouettes



and cutting-edge fabrication techniques are fused with patchwork patterns to produce pieces that are both timeless and contemporary (Smith & Johnson, 2019).

### 5.3.3 Seamless Fusion of Contrasts

One might think of tradition and modernity as opposing forces; however, in the realm of Chinese fashion, they blend tradition and elegance. River cliffs with seawater motifs, babbling rivers and rugged cliffs naturally lend a structured form to the flowing fabric of a modern dress or a modern jacket. The digital age has further amplified this fusion. Through modern techniques such as digital design, ancient patterns are rendered with unprecedented precision and versatility, making them suitable for a wide range of modern garments and accessories (Wang & Yang, 2019).



**Figure 3:**

### 5.3.4 Resonance with a global audience

Jiangya seawater patterns are deeply rooted in Chinese culture, and innovative design of them realizes the fusion of tradition and modernity with universal appeal. In today's globalized world, where borders are becoming increasingly unstable, there is a growing appreciation for designs that are both culturally distinctive and universally relevant. These patterns, which resonate with audiences around the world, enhance cultural traceability and cultural confidence. The designs tell a story that, while inherently Chinese, touches on universal themes of harmony, resilience, and the interplay between man and nature. Moreover, in an era where sustainability and authenticity are increasingly prominent, the conscious choice to incorporate traditional themes is compelling. This is in line with



the global shift towards more conscious consumption, where a piece is valued not only for its aesthetic appeal, but also for its cultural and historical significance.

## 6.CONCLUSION: BRIDGING ANCIENT AND MODERN WITH ELEGANCE

The use of Jiangya seawater patterns in contemporary Chinese fashion is a journey - a journey that spans centuries, yet feels immediate and present. It is a loud and clear statement about China's strength in celebrating its heritage while remaining firmly rooted in the present. When fashion enthusiasts drape themselves in clothes adorned with these motifs, they share a legacy and become bearers of a story that began centuries ago. The bridge between the deep artistic achievements of ancient China and the dynamic pulse of today's fashion world was not built brick by brick. It is interwoven with reverence, innovation and vision. It proves what Chinese style truly represents in its essence: a symphony of the timeless and the contemporary, where the past is not only remembered but revisited, and the future is not only expected but conscious.

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