

# A Brief Discussion on the Themes of Women's Embroidery in the Ming and Qing Dynasties

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## Abstract

Embroidery is a part of the needlework that is one of the four virtues of women in ancient times, including "appearance, speech, needlework and behavior". (Chen Baoliang, 2004) The education of women in old times mainly focused on the "feminine virtues" and "needlework". Due to cultivation at an early age, the upper-class women were mostly clever and intelligent, and did not have to earn their own living. Because of the restraints of the traditional society, they could not devote too much of their time and energy to the technical improvement of the needlework. The embroidery works of women in the Ming and Qing dynasties, however, show different characteristics from that of the previous age. They skillfully adopted the ideas of old masters, and with continuation and development, they showed signs to separate embroidery from traditional needlework, eventually making it into an independent art.

**Keywords:** Women, Embroidery, Ming and Qing Dynasty, China

In 2008, the Shanghai Museum held an "International Seminar on Gu Embroidery," at which senior scholars gathered together for an in-depth discussion and made further achievements on Gu embroidery research. Based on the seminar, and by collecting historical records and studying the old masterpieces of embroidery, this paper makes an in-depth analysis of the themes and sketches of embroidery works produced by women in the Ming and Qing dynasties. Due to the author's limited capacities, there may be certain deficiencies in this paper. Comments and corrections are welcome.

## 1. Themes with rich contents

Embroidery works by Ming and Qing women have very rich content and colorful themes. They can be broadly divided into three categories: figures, landscapes and flowers, fish and birds.

### 1.1 *The theme of figures based on religion and legends*

#### 1.1.1 Gods, Buddhism and Taoism

Gods, Buddhism and Taoism form a special theme in the Ming and Qing embroidery works. It is very common and a large number of items are preserved to this day. Historical records about the Ming and Qing embroidery works are rather scarce, and due to the limit of the author's capacities, the collected information is not exhaustive. According to accessible records, women who chose religious figures as their embroidery theme account for about half of those who produced embroidery works in the two dynasties. Along with the theme of flowers and birds, it is the most frequently chosen theme (Table 1).

#### Insert Table 1 Here

Embroidery works available to the author are mainly works of Gu embroidery and those by Shen Shou in publications, which are of a large amount, including the Buddhist figures in "Gu Embroidery of 18 Arhats", "Gu Embroidery of Arhats" and "Gu Embroidery of Maitreya Buddha", as well as Taoist figures in "Portrait of Queen Mother" and folk gods such as "Portrait of Zhong Kui", "God of Longevity" and "Gods of Good Fortune, Prosperity and Longevity".

After the founding of the Ming Dynasty, the rulers decreed the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism as the official ruling ideology, but they did not ignore the function of orthodox religions in "helping the monarchy by accumulating merits". While imposing control and restraints, they also gave religions promotion and protection. As a result, Buddhism and Taoism had a certain impact in the Ming Dynasty. (Nan Bingwen, 2006) Before the Ming Dynasty, Guan Daosheng was the only woman good at embroidery, (Note 2) and her subject was still

Buddhist figures. (Note 3) So, we may assume that the traditional Confucian society did not encourage women to concentrate too much on embroidery. The printing and spread of such books addressing women in the early Ming dynasty as *Women's Commandments* and *Women's Lessons* were constraints and rules imposed on women's activities and thoughts. That the society was rather tolerant of women's practice of Buddhism may be due to the fact that women embroidered Buddhist figures to pray for the blessing of the family. It did not exceed the scope of "women's place at home" (Note 4) and was till an act of "filial piety and obedience". (Note 5) Such tolerance gave them the room for practice and their embroidery skills showed differences in quality. So people would make their choice in purchase for collection or as gifts. For example, the "Fayuan Temple" had in its possession Yu Yunyu's "Hair Embroidery of 18 Arhats", (Note 6) and "Lord Lian Ying's wife" also embroidered "a small portrait of Dharma" for Ying Xiaofeng, an outsider. (Note 7) Secondly, some family members of the women good at embroidery were themselves Buddhist devotees, such as Gu Shouqian, Han Ximeng's husband, called himself "Master of Embroidering Buddhist Figures" (Note 8) These are exterior causes. The interior reasons, on the one hand, is that the ladies automatically accepted the traditional Confucian idea that "ignorant women are virtuous" and they gave up other themes in embroidery except religion. For example, Fang Weiyi, a female painter, was described in the "Preface to Qingfen Pavilion Collection" as "pure as jade and very intelligent, but she never made a show of her talents; ... when she occasionally painted a Buddhist figure, it looked very splendid, but was disregarded as showing inferior skills." (Tao Yongbai & Li Shi, 2006) The writer believes that the similar may happen to the women embroiderers. On the other hand, the ladies themselves were believers in Buddhism and hoped to obtain divine salvation through embroidering Buddha, which is reflected in both women's paintings and poetry. For instance, when Xing Cijing painted a portrait of Guanyin Buddha, she would write on the portrait a poem in words associated with Buddhism and Buddha worship. (Li Shi, 2008)

#### 1.1.2 People and their stories

Historical records do not contain much information on the theme of people and their stories in the embroidery of Ming and Qing dynasties. Some women are briefly mentioned, including Yun Zhu, Lu Yuansu, Zhao Huijun, Qian Hui, Lian Ying's wife and Zuo Youyi. (Note 9) These people only account for about a quarter of the number of lady embroiderers (Table 1). There are a number of embroidery works with this subject. They can be divided into three types: 1) the residences and gatherings of literary men and scholars, such as "Gu Embroidery of Seven Zhulin Sages" and Yun Zhu's "Pine Trees and Five Scholars"; 2) historical stories, such as "Gu Embroidery of the Return of Wen Ji" and "Gu Embroidery of Wang Zhaojun's Departure"; 3) the stories of ordinary people, such as "Gu Embroidery of Fishermen and Woodcutters" and "Gu Embroidery of Gathering Herbs".

The probable reasons are as follows: First, figure paintings were in decline in the Ming Dynasty. Xie Zhaozhe, a Ming scholar observed in his *Five Miscellaneous Comments* that "today's people only focus on paintings of charm and good taste, and seldom paint people and their stories." (Note 10) Similarly, the figure paintings in the Qing dynasty were also much inferior to those in the Song and Yuan dynasties. The figure paintings in the Ming and Qing dynasties changed from the emphasis on realism and depicting the lives of the nobility in the Tang and Five Dynasties to the literary stories and historical stories in pursuit of humanities. Second, upper-class ladies mostly followed their family traditions and their paintings and embroidery works could not divert from the male perspective and aesthetic standards.

#### 1.1.3 Portraits

Portrait is unique in the embroidery works by Qing ladies. Shen Shou was one of the ladies whose works survived both in the original and in historical records. Her representative works are "The Italian Queen Elina" and "The Actress Becky" (Note 11) (Figure 1). Painters in the late Qing Dynasty received Western influence and there emerged such court portrait painters as Giuseppe Castiglione, etc., who combined the Western technique of perspective, light and shadow with traditional Chinese painting technique of brushwork and colors. Among the women embroiders, Shen Shou was their equal. Different from the women embroiders in the Ming Dynasty and the early Qing Dynasty who followed men's standards in drawing sketches for their embroidery works, Shen Shou adopted the Western painting technique of light and shadow, not affected by male painters in the Qing dynasty, but through her own experience of studying abroad. This can be seen in her writing: "My skills of needlework are not given, but acquired from learning in childhood and continuous practice later. They are only traditional methods. I have realized that embroidered objects should look real and lively. I have seen European oil paintings, which are based on photography. The shadow is born out of light, and light has ying and yang, which is to be differentiated. With concentration and reflection, and combining new ideas with old methods, I gradually achieved my purpose". (Note 12) Shen Shou's choice of themes can be regarded as the awakening and self-awareness of women's creativity.

## Insert Figure 1 Here

### 1.2 Flowers, fish and birds

Historical records show there were a large number of lady embroiders in the Ming and Qing dynasties focusing on this theme and they account for about one half of the total number. There is detailed information on some women, including Huang Hangong, Han Ximeng, Lu Yuansu, Chen Huaxiang, Qian Peiyu, Lian Ying's wife, Li Elu, Zuo Youyi, Xue Fang, Shen Shou (Table 1). Among the existing works, there are Han Ximeng's "Collection of Gu Embroidery of Flowers and Birds", "Collection of Flowers, Insects and Fish", "Collection of Song and Yuan Masterpieces", "Dead Trees and Bamboos", "Plum, Tea and Birds", (Note 13) of which, Han Ximeng's "Collection of Gu Embroidery of Flowers and Birds" and "Collection of Flowers, Insects and Fish" are the most outstanding. Their colors are elegant and the needlework is neat and dense, not only reproducing the effect of painting, but also strengthening the vividness of insects and birds. (Figure 2)

## Insert Figure 2 Here

Chinese paintings with the theme of flowers and birds were rather prosperous in the Ming Dynasty. However, the styles of lady embroiderers were clearly very different from those of the paintings. This is mainly because the sketches of their embroidery works were mainly taken from the masters in the Song and Yuan dynasties, or they learned their brushworks from their fathers and brothers who were contemporary master painters. Their style was different from the splash-ink freehand of the early and mid-Ming and Qing dynasties, but was somewhat similar to the exquisite touch-brush style of the later period. (Note 14)

### 1.3 Landscape

Historical records show a number of lady embroiderers used the landscape theme in their works, including Han Ximeng, Lu Yuansu, Zhao Huijun, Yun Zhu, Lian Ying's wife, Zuo Youyi, Shao Kun and Shen Shou, accounting for about one-third of the total number. Among the existing works there are Gu embroidery products such as "Dongshan Mountain" and "Landscape by Mi Fu" in Han Ximeng's "Collection of Song and Yuan Masterpieces". Historical records do not give sufficient descriptions of embroidery works with the theme of landscapes, just as those with the theme of people and their stories. A direct understanding requires a study of the existing works. The landscapes of women's embroidery works do not present much magnificence and grandeur, but often show elegance and delicacy.

To sum up, the women's embroidery works in the Ming and Qing dynasties often present the theme of religious figures, because the embroidery of Buddha did not exceed the scope of women's place at home, and in particular, reflected women's "filial piety and obedience". So people at that time mostly adopted the attitude of encouragement and tolerance. Many women's embroidery works also present the theme of birds and flowers. This is mainly due to the impact of the prevailing painting styles, as well as women's perspective and feelings. Portrait as a particular theme appeared in women's embroidery works in the late Qing dynasty, of which Shen Shou's works are unique representatives. Through overseas study, she learned the principles of light and shadow in the Western art and integrated it into her own embroidery works, which reflect the tendency of women breaking away from the male dominance and moving towards conscious creativity.

## 2. Sketches based on famous paintings

An embroidery work usually has a sketch prior to its creation. Jia Shu mentions in his *Kao Gong Ji* that "an embroidery work requires a sketch prior to its creation, so it needs the work of both a painter and an embroiderer". (Note 15) Women's embroidery works in the Ming and Qing dynasties based their sketches on extensive sources. Take Gu embroidery as an example; there are four types of sketches, including masterpieces in previous dynasties, contemporary paintings, famous old sketches and self-created sketches. (Note 16) In addition, women in the Qing Dynasty had a new type, that is, the Western paintings.

### 2.1 Masterpieces in previous dynasties

Historical records show that among women embroiderers who based their sketches on masterpieces in previous dynasties, there were Xin Cijing, Han Ximeng, Xu Zhennu and Lian Ying's wife.

"Xing Cijing was Xing Tong's sister and the wife of Ma Zhen, a high-ranking government official. She was good at painting ink flowers and drawing Buddhist figures, and learned her skills from Guan Daosheng. One of her works was hair embroidered Buddhist figure, which is very exquisite. Her calligraphic style followed her brother. She had a unique style in embroidery, and was regarded as a master of needlework." (Note 17) Historical records do not mention her sketches, but judging by the description of "learning from Guan Daosheng", her hair-embroidered Buddhist figure should be based on the similar sketch as that of Guan Daosheng.

Han Ximeng's copying of old masterpieces is well represented in the historical records and existing works. Mao Xianglin mentions in his *Observations in the Duishan Study*: "Gu's embroidery skill is derived from the internal court, from which they learned the special use of silk thread and combination of colors. That's why Gu's embroidery works of figures, flowers and birds are all exquisite." This indicates that Gu Embroidery works were mainly based on the paintings of court painters who worked for the internal court. (Note 18) Gu Shouqian's postscript to the "Collection of Song and Yuan Masterpieces" points out: "... My wife Meng has her special considerations and regards other sketches as of poor quality. She searched for Song and Yuan masterpieces and made 8 copies for her embroidery works, which she then made into this collection." From the existing works, we can see that Han Ximeng's sketches for her embroidery learned much from the best of the Song and Yuan internal court painting skills and gathered the advantages of many masters without merely copying their works. For example, her "Mi Fu's Landscape" in the "Collection of Song and Yuan Masterpieces" referred to Mi Fu for the method of drawing clouds and mountains, using clouds to separate the overlapping peaks and ridges. However, the texturing of trees and rocks is not as abstract as that of Mi Fu, and the elegant style is quite similar to Ni Zan (Figure 3). The layout is Han's own arrangement. This fully reflects that Han Ximeng well understood the secret of painting and was able to use it skillfully to achieve her own purpose.

### Insert Figure 3 Here

In addition, Han was good at adopting famous painters' romantic charm, learning from Song and Yuan masters' style of painting and then developing her own style. For instance, the "Bathing Horse" in the "Collection of Song and Yuan Masterpieces" is an excellent work very much like Zhao Mengfu's painting in spirit. Zhao Mengfu was a member of the imperial clan of the Song dynasty. His painting style emulated Tang and Song masters but avoided their weaknesses. In his *Rongtai Collection*, Dong Qichang regards Zhao's paintings as "having Tang masters' elegance but not their fragility, and North Song masters' grandeur but not their wildness." (Note 19) Comparing the embroidery work "Bathing Horse" with Zhao Mengfu's painting "Bathing Horses", we find there are two similarities. First, Han's horse is similar to Zhao's horses, which are both big and strong (Figure 4).

Second, the clothing of Han's figure is similar to that of Zhao Mengfu's figures. In Zhao's painting, all the figures are dressed in Tang Dynasty clothing, such as the men washing horses wear Tang-styled turbans, and their long robes with round collars and leather ribbons are also of the Tang style (Figure 5 -2). The difference is that in Han's embroidery work, the top of the turban is not as high as the Tang-styled turbans in Zhao's painting, but looks similar to the turban in the Yuan dynasty murals in Yongle Palace (Figure 5-1 and 5-3). Nevertheless, Han's turban has stuck-up ends, which is similar to the soft turban in the Tang dynasty. The author assumes that Han Ximeng's time was late Ming dynasty, which was far away from the Tang dynasty, and the clothing went through great changes, which may have mixed with certain elements of the clothing in the Yuan dynasty, or there may be certain free development of the embroiderer. However, from Han's "Bathing Horse" we can see traces of Zhao Mengfu, but there is not a single detail that shows she merely copied from Zhao's work, which demonstrates her excellent skills in painting.

### Insert Figure 4 Here

### Insert Figure 5 Here

There are relatively more specific descriptions about Xu Zhennu and Lian Ying's wife in historical records. "Xu Zhennu learned her embroidery skills from a widow. She was good at producing delicate works with elegant taste. She often imitated Li Longmian's style and the Arhats in her embroidery shows tranquility and divine brilliance, which was all embroidered with silk threads on Wuling silk. You have to look closely to realize it's not painted in ink." Li Longmian was also called Li Gonglin. He was from Anhui province and passed the imperial examination in 1029. Later he went to become a hermit in Longmian Mountain, which is why he called himself Longmian Shanren. He was a famous painter in the Song dynasty, and was best at drawing in ink and brush.

"Lian Ying's wife was good at embroidery. When asked to make an embroidery work, she always put a famous painting on the wall and imitated it day by day. The landscape, flowers and birds she reproduced, without exception, all reflected the essence of the masterpieces." (Note 20)

## 2.2 Contemporary paintings

### 2.2.1 Imitating contemporary paintings

"A representative of those who made copies of the contemporary paintings was Han Ximeng. Her "Embroidery of 18 Arhats" was drawn out of the "Collection of Arhats" by the court painter Ding Yunpeng in the Ming dynasty. Ding Yunpeng was a painter during the Longqing and Tianqi periods of the Ming dynasty. He was from

Xiuning, Anhui province, and was good at writing poetry and painting Buddhist figures. According to historical records, "When painting Taoist and Buddhist figures, Ding Yunpeng has learned the essence of Zhang and Wu. He paints with strong brushwork to produce the sense of vitality and vividness." (Fang Xun, 1959) As learning from Song and Yuan masters, Han Ximeng modeled her embroidery works on contemporary paintings, taking their essence rather than merely making copies.

Comparing the "Gu Embroidery of 16 Arhats" with Ding Yunpeng's paintings of Arhats, Han Ximeng's Arhats are similar to those in Ding Yunpeng's paintings, whether in terms of shape, the texture of clothing, the way of sitting or seats.

### **Insert Figure 6 Here**

Furthermore, according to historical records, Ding Yunpeng was acquainted with Dong Qichang, and Han Ximeng's husband, Gu Shouqian was Dong Qichang's student. Gu's family had a literary tradition and was on good terms with a number of men of letters and scholars. Gu Mingshi, founder of Luxiang Garden passed the imperial examination in 1559 and later became a high-ranking official. (Note 21) When his Luxiang Garden was completed, many men of letters, including Wang Shizhen and Zhu Chaqing wrote poems to give their congratulations. On account of this, the origin of Han Ximeng's sketch was rather clear. One of the reasons that the ladies in the Ming and Qing dynasties were able to copy masterpieces was that they could rely on their families' status and the friendship of their husbands, fathers and brothers.

#### **2.2.2 Contemporary paintings**

Xue Fang based her embroidery works directly on contemporary paintings. "Ms. Xue Fang was born in Wuxi and lived in Shanghai. She was the wife of Ni Mogeng, a painter in the Guanxu and Xuantong periods. She was good at painting and embroidery. When Mogeng painted Buddhist figures and flowers, Xue made them into embroidery works, which were highly regarded at that time". (Note 22) From this description, we can see that Ni Mogeng, Xue Fang's husband was good at painting himself, and he could provide directly sketches for Xue Fang's embroidery works, making a good complementary to her embroidery.

#### **2.3 Famous old sketches**

Lin Qingqing based her embroidery works directly on famous old sketches. According to historical records, "Lin Menghuan was from Piaoshui. His wife Hu Qingqing was good at calligraphy and painting. Menghuan gained an interest in needlework, so he sought everywhere for sketches. His wife was able to discern the secret of old masterpieces and understand their untold meanings. Her embroidery was so delicate that you can hardly see the stitches".

#### **2.4 Self-created sketches**

Lady embroiderers in the Ming and Qing dynasties were mostly good at painting, so it's possible that they could draw sketches for their own embroidery works. It is highly possible that the sketches for Han Ximeng's "Gu Embroidery of Flowers and Birds" were drawn by herself. (Note 23)

#### **2.5 Famous Western paintings**

A typical representative of those who based their embroidery works on famous Western paintings was Shen Shou. The sketches for her "Passion", "Italian Queen" and "Actress Becky" were all based on Western oil paintings or ink paintings.

To sum up, lady embroiders had rich sources for their sketches. These women's own background is particularly impressive. On the one hand, their family friendship made it possible for them to see famous paintings by painters of the royal court, and on the other hand, the literary tradition of the old families gave them opportunities to refine their skills. In addition, they worked with diligent and tireless efforts, and never deliberately imitated famous painters and even produced their own creation, which gave their sketches vitality and vividness.

### **3. Conclusion**

The themes of women embroidery works in the Ming and Qing dynasties are mostly religion and flowers and birds. This is mainly because of their social context and the influence of the art circles, as well as a way for the ladies to express their feelings. In the late Qing Dynasty, the special theme of portrait appeared in women's embroidery works, which was a phenomenon unique to the Qing dynasty. Through studying abroad and continuous self-practice, Shen Shou understood the principle of light and shadow in the Western oil paintings and applied it to her embroidery works, establishing the style of emulation embroidery. The sources of sketches for women embroidery works are masterpieces in previous dynasties, contemporary paintings, famous old

sketches, self-created sketches and Western paintings. Due to their family friendships, they were able to see the paintings of royal court painters that were not commonly seen by ordinary people. By imitation or self-creation, they combined the skills of painting with the technique of embroidery, and their accomplishments in painting have made their embroidery works into art treasures. Such creativity in embroidery through self-understanding reflects the tendency of women breaking away from the male dominance and moving towards conscious creativity.

The author tries to gain a glimpse of ancient Chinese ladies' life through their embroidery works. As daughters and wives, they could express their feelings by writing poems and producing paintings. They also had the opportunity to see and copy paintings by royal court painters. Their embroidery works received support from their families, praise of the general public and the award of the government. They are not lost in history, but allow people to have an occasional glimpse of their colorful works.

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### Notes

- Note 1. cf. A Brief History of Needlework, Notes on Embroidery, and Yu Tai History of Painting.
- Note 2. Shanghai Embroidery. ed. Shanghai Museum. Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House, December 2007, P17.
- Note 3. Ye Yufu has a volume of Embroidery of Eighteen Arhats by Guan Daosheng, with Monk Zhongfeng's inscription. cf. A Brief History of Needlework. Zhu Qiqian. (Republic period), P278.
- Note 4. Zhou Yi / Family: "Women's place is at home and men's place is outside".
- Note 5. cf. A Brief History of Needlework. "Zhou Zhenguan was a filial woman in the Song dynasty. She lost her father at the age of six and had to take care of her mother all by herself... Her mother died later, and she regretted her loss bitterly. To commemorate her mother's death, she used her own blood to copy 70,000 characters of Miao Fa Lotus Sutra and used her hair to embroider the sutra. She was 13 when she started, and died 23 years later when she completed her work..."
- Note 6. *A Brief History of Needlework*. Zhu Qiqian. (Republic period), P308.
- Note 7. *A Brief History of Needlework*. Zhu Qiqian. (Republic period), P310.
- Note 8. *A Brief History of Needlework*. Zhu Qiqian. (Republic period), P280, and the postscript to *Collected Works Based on Song and Yuan Masterpieces* by Gu Shouqian.
- Note 9. *A Brief History of Needlework*. Zhu Qiqian. (Republic period).
- Note 10. *Five Miscellaneous Notes*. (Ming dynasty) Xie Zhaozhe. Reprinted December 1935.
- Note 11. See *Xuehuan Notes on Sketches for Embroidery*. (Qing dynasty), Shen Shou. Transcript by (Qing dynasty) Zhang Qian. Shandong Pictorial Publishing House, June 2004, P7~9.
- Note 12. *Xuehuan Notes on Sketches for Embroidery*. (Qing dynasty), Shen Shou. Transcript by (Qing dynasty) Zhang Qian. Shandong Pictorial Publishing House, June 2004, P21~22: Preface.
- Note 13. See *Shanghai Embroidery – Treasured Works of Gu Embroidery*. Shanghai Museum and Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House. December 2007.
- Note 14. About the style of painting in the Ming and Qing dynasty, see *A General History of Chinese Paintings* (Vol. 2) by Wang Boming, Salian Bookstore, December 2000, P190~237.
- Note 15. *Zhou Li Zheng Yi*. (Qing) Sun Yirang. Zhong Hua Book Company, 1987.
- Note 16. See "A Preliminary Study of the Sources of Gu Embroidery Sketches in the Ming Dynasty and the Combination of Embroidery and Paintings." Shi Yuan. *Proceedings of the International Seminar on Gu Embroidery*. Shi Yuan believes that the Gu embroidery sketches include masterpieces in the previous dynasties,

contemporary paintings, famous sketches, published works and self-created sketches. This writer can not be sure about published works, so have only cited the other four types.

Note 17. *A Brief History of Needlework*. Zhu Qiqian. (Republic period).

Note 18. See "An Analysis of Han Ximeng's Embroidery and Her Achievements" by Yan Rong, *Proceedings of the International Seminar on Gu Embroidery*.

Note 19. *Rongtai Collected Works*. (Ming dynasty) Dong Qichang. Si Ku Quan Shu Series, Vol. 171.

Note 20. *A Brief History of Needlework*.

Note 21. *Yunjian Records*. (Ming dynasty) He Sanwei ed..

Note 22. Same as Note 19.

Note 23. See "A Preliminary Study of the Sources of Gu Embroidery Sketches in the Ming Dynasty and the Combination of Embroidery and Paintings." Shi Yuan. *Proceedings of the International Seminar on Gu Embroidery*.

Table 1. The percentage of famous Ming and Qing women who chose Buddhism as the theme of their embroidery works in the historical records (Note 1)

Ming and Qing women good at embroidery in the historical records	Wang Changqing's wife, Xing Cijing, Huang Hangong, Yuan Jiushu, An Zheng, Han Ximeng, Jiang Pu's wife Wang, Lu Yuansu, Chen Huaxiang, Zhao Huijun, Qian Peiyu, Xu Zhennu, Yun Zhu, Yu Yunyu, Qian Hui, Lian Ying's wife, Li Elu, Zuo Youyi, Shao Kun, Lin Qingqing, Xue Fang, Shen Shou	Altogether 22 women
Women who chose religion as their theme	Wang Changqing's wife, Xing Cijing, Yuan Jiushu, Han Ximeng, Xu Zhennu, Yu Yunyu, Qian Hui, Lian Ying's wife, Xue Fang, Shen Shou	10 women (about one half)
Women who chose figures as their theme	Yun Zhu, Lu Yuansu, Zhao Huijun, Qian Hui, Lian Ying's wife, Zuo Youyi	6 women (About one quarter)
Women who chose landscape as their theme	Han Ximeng, Lu Yuansu, Zhao Huijun, Yun Zhu, Lian Ying's wife, Zuo Youyi, Shao Kun, Shen Shou	8 women (about one third)
Women who chose flowers and birds as their theme	Huang Hangong, Han Ximeng, Lu Yuansu, Chen Huaxiang, Qian Peiyu, Lian Ying's wife, Li Elu, Zuo Youyi, Xue Fang, Shen Shou	10 women (about one half)



Portrait of the Italian Queen



Actress Becky

Figure 1.



Figure 2.



Gu Embroidery of  
Mi Fu's Landscape

Mi Fu's Landscape

Ni Zan

Figure 3.



Gu Embroidery: Bathing Horse



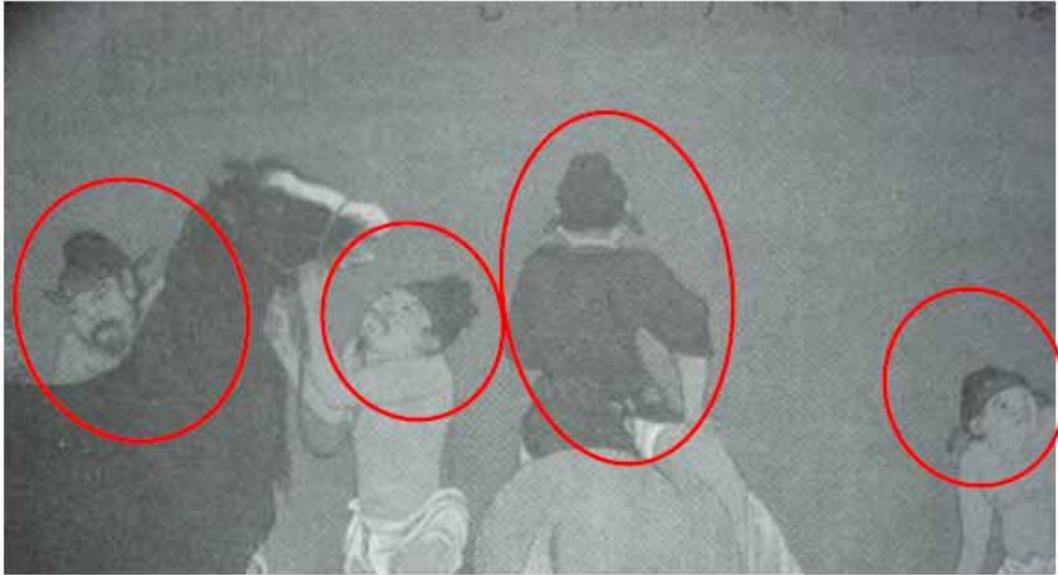
Details of Zhao's Bathing Horses

Figure 4.



Details of Han's Bathing Horse

a



Details of Zhao's Bathing Horses

b



Yuan dynasty mural in Yongle Palace

c

Figure 5.



Gu Embroidery of 16 Arhats



An Arhat painted by Ding Yumpeng

Figure 6.

