

# **The Integration of Chinese Historical Costumes and Contemporary Women's Fashion: with Special Reference to the Shuitianyi**

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## Abstract

This study investigates the potential for integrating Chinese historical costumes with modern fashion with particular reference to shuitianyi (水田衣), a historical dressing style of China. The shuitianyi was worn by ordinary people in the Ming and Qing dynasties (Ming: 1368-1644; Qing 1644-1911); made of patches, the composition of various colours and fabrics made this style distinct from the other Chinese costumes. However, this style has disappeared from Chinese dressing culture with little historical or material reference left. The investigations undertaken for this research into the cultural and social background of the shuitianyi have established a new and relatively comprehensive understanding of its history; further, the discovery of new visual references during the course of this study has offered a clearer depiction of this style of garments. The discoveries and analyses undertaken by this research overthrow previous misapprehensions and errors about the origin, history and style of the shuitianyi. An investigation into the history and status of the Chinese qipao enabled a better understanding of Chinese dressing culture. Furthermore, the comparison of the qipao and the shuitianyi has resulted in a greater understanding of the disappearance of the shuitianyi. Based on the theoretical study, a series of practical works was produced, aiming to demonstrate the intended integration of historical reference through an embodied outcome. Taking inspiration from the shuitianyi, patchwork design became the central theme of a fashion collection, showing a new approach to integrating various materials and fabrics. Further, a three-dimensional effect was sought in the Chinese-inspired collection, as Chinese traditional clothing and patchwork appeared to be structurally flat. To demonstrate the new patchwork designs and technique, an initial work was made as design statement; it inspired the production of a ready-to-wear collection that integrated Chinese dress forms and other sources of inspiration such as Art Deco style, within a contemporary womenswear collection.

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## ***The Principal Dynasties of China***

Xia (夏)	21 <sup>st</sup> century-16 <sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.
Shang (商)	16 <sup>th</sup> century-11 <sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.
Zhou (周)	11 <sup>th</sup> century-256 B.C.E.
Western Zhou (西周)	11 <sup>th</sup> century-771 B.C.E.
Eastern Zhou (東周)	770-256 B.C.E.
Spring and Autumn (春秋)	770-476 B.C.E.
Warring States (戰國)	476-221 B.C.E.
Qin (秦)	221-207 B.C.E.
Han (漢)	202 B.C.E.-220 C.E.
Three Kingdoms (三國)	220-280
Jin (晉)	266-420
Southern and Northern Dynasties (南北朝)	420-589
Sui (隋)	581-619
Tang (唐)	618-907
Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (五代十國)	907-979
Song (宋)	960-1279
Northern Song (北宋)	960-1127
Southern Song (南宋)	1127-1279
Yuan (元)	1271-1368
Ming (明)	1368-1644
Qing (清)	1644-1911

## Map of China



A Map of China, from National Geographic Education

## Chapter One: Introduction

This study examines the dressing culture in modern China, as the interaction between cultural heritage and clothing has become unclear. Many Chinese are proud of their long history of costume culture; however, most of the historical styles have largely become unknown, even within Chinese cultural communities. Being aware of this phenomenon, this research aimed at integrating Chinese historical costume with contemporary fashion, to re-introduce unfamiliar styles within the form of modern design.

### Subject of study

This study began with an interesting illustration of the shuitianyi (Fig. 1), a historical dressing style of China. It was made of patchwork and the composition of different colours and fabrics had made this style distinct from others. Apart from the costume of ethnic minorities, for instance, traditional clothing of the Dong (侗) and Yi (彝) (Fig. 2), the application of patchwork was infrequent in Chinese costume. Further, in traditional clothing, patchwork appeared to be partially used as a decorative design, unlike in the shuitianyi which was entirely made of patches. The shuitianyi was an unusual and popular style, yet, it has disappeared from Chinese clothing culture with little information left about it. The shuitianyi was a fashionable style prevalent amongst ordinary people (commoners) in the Ming and Qing dynasties (Ming: 1368-1644; Qing: 1644-1911); documents about original historical costume are mainly about those of the imperial families and formal attire for officials, there are few suggestions of the clothing styles worn by commoners. The historical reference of shuitianyi seems to be limited; moreover, the depictions in costume books are very little and similar in contents. General information about the shuitianyi is described in many books, including the fact of its prevalence amongst women in the Ming and Qing dynasties, the

patchwork design and the development in style. Furthermore, as a fashionable piece, the origin of shuitianyi and its popularity was likely to be associated with social and cultural phenomena. The investigation into its historical background in the late Ming period had broadened the perception of shuitianyi, which allowed a relatively thorough understanding of this style; to a certain extent, this exploration had offered the explanation of its appearance and prevalence during that specific period.



Fig. 1 The shuitianyi, illustrated by Zhou and Gao, based on one gown depicted in the “Yanqinyiqing” (燕寝怡情), an album of the Qing dynasty



Fig. 2 Decorative patchwork applied on traditional costume of the Yi (彝), one of the ethnic minorities of China

The qipao (旗袍, also known as cheongsam in the West) is a symbolic piece of Chinese clothing (Fig. 3); it has demonstrated the intended practical integration sought in this research, as the current fashion is always well-combined with this Chinese traditional style. Having provided an example, the investigation into qipao was considered relevant to this research; further, this clothing is comparatively better known and explored. The study of qipao has enabled a better understanding of the Chinese clothing culture being examined.

The conducting of qualitative interviews related to the practical work undertaken encouraged participants to express their perception of the intended integration and discuss some issues within Chinese dressing culture, for example, the qipao culture and its huge decline in popularity in today's China. Moreover, the case study of qipao generated some valuable information for the further exploration of shuitianyi; the comparison between these two forms of clothing indicated some possible reasons why the shuitianyi disappeared.



Fig. 3 The qipao of 1930-1940, collection of the V&A Museum

### **Research aims**

Having noticed the dissociation between contemporary Chinese dressing culture and its own costume heritage, this study aimed to demonstrate the potential for integrating Chinese cultural tradition with modern fashion. This study aimed to add to our limited knowledge of the shuitianyi and to investigate clothing culture in today's China; a series of works were produced, aiming to reflect the theoretical study and manifest the proposed integration embodied within a fashion collection.



### *Exploration of shuitianyi*

This study aimed to make a contribution to the knowledge of shuitianyi, as this style has rarely been explored; even though there is little information about the shuitianyi, yet, mistaken references are common in costume books. An attempt was made to find new references to evidence this dressing style; the historical literature is very little, however, it was considered that the visual depiction of shuitianyi might be more than the usually referenced three paintings. In order to support further investigation, the search for new depictions of this style was regarded crucial to this study. During the course of exploration, the impression of shuitianyi that initially inspired this research became doubtful and arguable. Some new images were found, yet, a question was raised to argue against the popularity or even existence of the irregular style of shuitianyi, the style which is normally taken to be definitive. Based solely on depiction in a single figure painting, the supporting material of this irregular style seems to be lacking in persuasiveness; yet, it has long been regarded as representative of shuitianyi. In the intention to clarify the definition of this dressing style, the discussion about so-called irregular shuitianyi has become the biggest argument within this research. Moreover, the further findings generated in this research have suggested that the regularly patched shuitianyi was the popular form and it consisted of a field-like structure (Fig. 4). The general definition of this dressing style seems to include some indeterminate and arguable information, for example, the unclear association with Buddhist costume and the impression of irregularly structured patchwork. The literature review and new imagery references have enabled a comparatively comprehensive understanding of shuitianyi; by taking the historical and cultural background into

consideration, a better understanding of its popularity and disappearance had been made in this research.



Fig. 4 The shuitianyi, illustrated by Shen, based on the “Yanqinyiqing”

#### *Investigation of Chinese clothing culture*

To review the integration of Chinese historical costumes and modern fashion, this study has further explored the dressing culture of modern China. Costume history in the West is well-documented and explored, resulting in rich references which can and typically are drawn on for the purposes of design; inspiration taken from the past has always been regularly integrated with modern fashion. The most common pieces used to indicate Chineseness are the qipao and Mao suit (Fig. 5). The prevalent style of qipao is tightly-fitted to reveal the feminine silhouette; yet, featuring uniform-like style, while the Mao suit has been inspirational for both men’s and women’s fashion. Apart from these two forms of clothing, other forms of Chinese costume have long been unfamiliar to the fashion world, regardless of their potential for inspiration. Overall the literature search and review has suggested the

lack of interaction between Chinese dressing style and its own costume heritage. In today's China, the traditional or historical style is dissociated with mainstream fashion, resulting in the loss of cultural distinctiveness within Chinese clothing culture. Extensive internationalisation in style has further marginalised the role of historical and traditional clothing. Many within Chinese cultural communities have been aware of this phenomenon and have tried to further integrate their cultural traditions with contemporary fashion. Further, the fashion industry is aiming to develop in China; the integration with cultural heritage seems to be essential for the future success. The case study of qipao has generated some important information to learn about Chinese clothing culture, for example, its role in today's China and the potential reasons that caused the decline in popularity. Moreover, the interviews conducted during this research with participants from Chinese cultural backgrounds have enabled the investigation into their dressing culture and attitudes, and further, to explore their perception of Chineseness and issues about cultural identity in clothing.



Fig. 5 Mao Zedong (毛澤東) and the Mao suit, 1957

### *Production of a fashion collection*

Based on the theoretical study, a series of works were produced to demonstrate the potential for the intended integration. The practical work has echoed the aim of this research; further, the outcome of a collection was purposely to offer a relatively broader perception of Chineseness in fashion. Taking the inspiration from shuitianyi, patchwork design became the design theme for production. A new approach to combining diverse fabrics and materials was introduced within this collection; further, the first design was composed of an experimental style of patchwork, made to display the design and present a different attitude toward patchwork. The restructured outline of the first design was inspired by the silhouette of Rococo costume; yet, the production was developed from a traditional Chinese pattern making technique. It was aimed to utilise eye-catching shapes to further highlight the applied patchwork design. Inspired by the first design, a collection of eight garments was produced, aiming to show different styles of patchwork design, generated from a series of experiments in material and textural composition. The early twentieth century witnessed a great cultural interaction between the West and East; the pinnacle of Orientalism eventually swayed the entire creative generation of the West, including costume design and fashion illustration. Simultaneously, the modish style of the West had great impact on Chinese clothing culture, after the fall of Qing in 1911 in particular. The chic and modern look of Art Deco fashion became popular in China, evidenced in the advertisement poster (see Fig. 40); the emergence of the body-hugging style of qipao further demonstrated the extensive Western influence on Chinese fashion. Featuring exoticism and nourished by multiple cultures, Art Deco style and fashion was sought for inspiration, evidenced in the choice of fabrics, silhouette design and fashion styling. Being

aware of the lack of three-dimensional tailored structure in Chinese traditional clothing, an attempt was made to add a three-dimensional sensation to this collection, ranging from patchwork design to outline silhouette. An exhibition was held, which provided the vehicle to have a closer contact with real work; moreover, this exhibition proved very useful as a stimulus for the interviews, which were conducted to understand people's views about this research and the collection. Moreover, the exhibition seemed to encourage the participants to further discuss other issues that they felt relevant to this study, for example, fashion trends and other designers' collections.

## **Conclusion**

This study further explored the shuitianyi and reintegrated this style with modern fashion design. A new definition of this dressing style is given in this study, intending to clarify the former mistaken information, including the use of blurred references that potentially misled people's understanding of shuitianyi. A series of works were produced to demonstrate the aim of this research; moreover, the design outcome enabled the intended integration to be examined. Further, the collection was beneficial for the conducting of interviews, which generated some valuable data for this study, including people's perception of this series of work and their views about the qipao, which reflected the current dressing culture in China to some extent.

## Chapter Two: Methodology

To conduct a practice-based research, the methodology might appear to be slightly different from traditional theoretical research. The structure of this study was divided into two sections, the theoretical study and practical work; each section contains various methods, designed for the varied necessity required during the course of this research.

### **Section one: Theoretical study**

#### *Literature search and review*

The literature review is considerably important to research; as Lindlof and Taylor (2011) suggested, it enables researchers to have a better understanding of the studied subject and the background information (p. 80). To review fashion culture, the integration between contemporary design and inspiration drawn from the past is common; further, the historical or traditional themes have long been one of the most popular subjects on stage. However, the examination of dressing culture in modern China had indicated the dissociation between costume traditions and mainstream fashion. Further, cultural distinctiveness in Chinese clothing has just disappeared and been largely replaced by westernised or internationalised styles. Having been aware of this phenomenon, this research aimed to demonstrate the potential for integrating Chinese historical costumes with modern fashion. This study started with the exploration of the intended subject of shuitianyi, which was a historical dressing style of China. Featuring patchwork design, the colourful composition of various fabrics had made this style unique to the other historical costumes. Reviews of literature have always included published studies which are relevant to the selected topic (Jackson, 2009, p. 30). Intending to gather the literary references of shuitianyi, a field trip to China

and Taiwan was undertaken in 2009, with the aim of visiting some major libraries, including the National Library of China in Beijing, Shanghai Library, Library at National Palace Museum in Taipei, National Central Library in Taipei and Cultural Centre Library in Kaohsiung. The initial literature search and review had supported the basic information about shuitianyi in the beginning stage; however, it was difficult to find any further information about it, as the depiction of this style was basically the same in every costume book. Moreover, the field of the Chinese historical costumes of ordinary people appears to be less explored; the historical documents and records were mainly about the attire of the imperial families and formal clothing for officials (Wu, 1999, p. 56). Therefore, as a form of fashion garment that was prevalent amongst the commoners, the historical references for shuitianyi are relatively few.

#### *Collection of imagery reference*

In order to further explore the shuitianyi, this study aimed to conduct primary imagery search and data collection. Many museums offer detailed information about their collections on their website (Hewson et al., 2003); this service is very useful, as the gathering of relevant images is crucial to understanding the shuitianyi. An initial attempt was made to look into online collections of some major museums, which potentially have the objects depicting this style of garments. For example, the British Museum, Kyoto National Museum, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, National Museum of China, National Museum of History in Taipei, National Palace Museum in Taipei and Victoria and Albert (V&A) Museum. Moreover, museums like the British Museum, V&A Museum and the Museum of Fine Arts Boston have more complete collections available for preview; the image preview functions well, which enabled observation in detail. However, the

functionality of online object searching of museums in China and Taiwan appears to be less useful; collections are normally incomplete and the definition of images is comparatively low. Therefore visits to some principal museums in China and Taiwan became necessary for further data gathering. During the field trip in 2009, the Museum of Ethnic Costumes at Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology, Shanghai Museum, Metersbonwe Costume Museum in Shanghai, Shanghai Textile and Costume Museum at Donghua University, National Museum of History in Taipei and National Palace Museum in Taipei were visited for data collection.

Data collection is essential to research and the source of data can be varied (Rajendra Kumar, 2008, p. 56); since the image finding was considered important to this study, a huge amount of online and onsite search for image references was undertaken. Some depictions of shuitianyi were found in museums, for instance, the British Museum and Museum of Fine Arts Boston; yet, these objects were collected from earlier auctions of Sotheby's. Therefore, to look into the sold lot archive of Sotheby's was considered relevant to this study for the purpose of data collection. Moreover, the well-functioning system of Sotheby's website enabled further searches for potential objects which might be related to the shuitianyi. The only known image references of the shuitianyi were depicted in one particular album, the "yanqinyiqing" (燕寢怡情); it was formerly in a private collection and later had been divided into at least two groups. Twelve paintings were collected in the Museum of Fine Arts Boston; yet, another group of twelve was auctioned off in Shanghai by boguzhai (博古齋) in 2010, later, these paintings were once again in private collections. As a fashion style for commoners, the shuitianyi was more likely to be depicted in some relatively unfamous work by anonymous artists. This information had suggested that, other objects depicting this style



were most likely to be kept in private collections rather than in museums. Hence, auction houses like Sotheby's appeared to be potential sources for searching for the relevant objects. An attempt was made to look into antiques on the website of some major auction houses in China, such as hanhai (翰海) in Beijing and boguzhai in Shanghai; however, it was difficult to make any in-depth search as the online service is less functional compared to Sotheby's.

A new image of shuitianyi was found on the British Museum's website collections; contact with the museum was made, in order to get further information about this print. Moreover, an appointment was arranged for viewing this specific object individually, as it was not in the current display. A good research-related system like the British Museum has allowed researchers to investigate into some specific objects, which are potentially relevant to the intended subjects of study. As Kawamura (2011) suggested, the direct observation of object was crucial for costume study (pp. 92-93); however, the shuitianyi had long since disappeared from Chinese clothing culture and an existing piece of it had not been found yet. Hence, the opportunity to closely observe this print was considered important, which offered an alternative method for investigating the shuitianyi through its original historical depiction. Moreover, another depiction of shuitianyi was found on Sotheby's website; the higher definition images of this painting were provided by the auction house, which allowed further observation in detail.

### *Interviews*

The shuitianyi was a historical style prevalent in late Ming and early Qing dynasties; as the existing references are limited, some interviews with experts in this field were conducted in China and Taiwan, aiming to further explore the shuitianyi. An attempt was made to

interview the primary costume researchers in China, intending to understand their views about shuitianyi and experience in conducting research in this field of study. Gao Chunming (高春明) is an important researcher in costume study who works at Shanghai Arts Institute; further, he is one of the principal authors in the field of Chinese historical costumes. The interview with Gao Chunming in 2010 generated some crucial information for this study, including his perception of shuitianyi and his suggestion of its popularity in the late Ming period and its subsequent disappearance in the Qing dynasty. To share his experience, he pointed out the importance of museums in data collection; further, he indicated the serious phenomenon of plagiarism in this field, which might have explained the repetition and limitation in the literary depiction of shuitianyi. An interview with Huang Nengfu (黃能馥) was conducted in 2010; he is an authority on Chinese historical costumes and textile study. Yet, he was not aware of the popularity of shuitianyi in Ming and Qing dynasties, but instead associated shuitianyi with the religious costume of Buddhists. In fact, the literary and image references of religious shuitianyi are much richer in comparison with the fashionable shuitianyi. According to Huang Nengfu, the lack of discovered relics of shuitianyi had potentially resulted in the lack of awareness of this style of garments.

Interviewing experts is an efficient method for data collection (Kolb, 2008, p. 146); to further investigate into the historical background of shuitianyi, some interviews were conducted with academicians and researchers whose expertise is in history of Chinese Ming and Qing dynasties. Professor Lin Li-Yuen (林麗月) of the Department of History, National Taiwan Normal University, was interviewed in 2010; she provided other thoughts about the shuitianyi, including the potential area of its popularity and Li Yu's criticism of shuitianyi. Li Yu (1610-1680) was a literatus who lived in late Ming and early Qing; his writing about

shuitianyi had provided essential information to study this dressing style. It had indicated the method of making shuitianyi and further evidenced its popularity during late Ming and early Qing. Wang Cheng-Hua (王正華) and Wu Jen-Shu (巫仁恕) are associate research fellows of the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica in Taiwan; their study is closely related to the material culture of Ming and Qing dynasties. These interviews had offered a better understanding of the cultural and social background of shuitianyi, which had benefited the generation of a relatively thorough perception of this dressing style and its historical context.

Aiming to explore this subject of study, semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to collect specific information from each of these experts. "Semi-structured interviews allow researchers to develop in-depth accounts of experiences and perceptions with individuals." (Cousin, 2009, p. 71). These interviews were of considerable importance to this study as they offered the crucial material to explore the shuitianyi, including its historical and cultural background; furthermore, it had expanded the researcher's original thought about shuitianyi, which inspired a relatively broader method of exploring this dressing style.

#### *Case study*

The case study is a widely used research strategy (Yin, 2009, p. 4); aiming to further explore the integration of Chinese style and modern fashion, a case study of qipao was conducted. Originating from the traditional ethnic costume of the Manchurians, it later became the representative clothing during the Qing dynasty, the qipao culture has lasted for centuries. However, it was not until the early twentieth century that this dress became fashionable and gained a general popularity in China. The image of the qipao was widely spread through the mass media; it soon became recognised as the item of Chinese dress which always

signified Chineseness. Deeply influenced by the Western fashion and international trend, the traditionally loose-fitted costume was transformed into body-hugging dress during the 1920s and 1930s. The integration with modern fashion became the key which enabled the qipao to survive from disappearance. Furthermore comparisons between the shuitianyi and qipao provided potential explanations for the disappearance of shuitianyi.

From Imperial Qing to Republican China (1912-1949), and later the People's Republic of China established in 1949, the status of the qipao has experienced significant political changes, including during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Some argued against the qipao's as being representative of Chinese costume heritage, still, this piece reflects Chinese dressing culture to a certain extent. As Stake (1995) suggested, the investigation into a particular case could be useful to understand the specific research questions (p. 3). The qipao is a relatively explored topic and the existing references relating to this dress form are comparatively richer than that of other costumes of China. Further, the analyses of qipao produced some important data, including the features that promoted the spread of this piece and the potential reasons that have caused a huge decline in its popularity in today's China. The case study of the Chinese qipao formed an essential part of this study; it enabled further investigation into the issues within Chinese dressing culture, in which, during the course of modernisation and westernisation, a great loss of Chinese cultural distinctiveness was experienced.

## **Section two: Practical work**

### *Design and production*

A series of fashion garments were produced to demonstrate the intended integration of Chinese historical style and contemporary fashion; inspired by the studied subject of shuitianyi, patchwork had become the theme of the creation. Generated from a series of experiments on material and composed structure, a new attitude toward patchwork had been introduced, intending to further integrate it with fashionable garment design. Moreover, this method of making patchwork had allowed diverse materials and fabrics to be combined in an unconventional way.

The data collected from the theoretical study had produced rich sources of inspiration, which strongly influenced the outline design of garments and patchwork creation. For instance, the chic silhouette of 1920s and Art Deco style had inspired the simple dress design for this collection; further, the frame-like structure used on patchwork design was developed from the impression of religious shuitianyi. The early twentieth century, witnessed a great cultural exchange between East and the West; the review of Western fashion and case study of qipao had indicated some mutual features between Art Deco style and the integration that this study aimed to demonstrate. For instance, chic and modern sensation, multiple cultural integration and exoticism; Art Deco had become one of the principal themes of this creation which impacted on outline design, choices of fabrics and further, the styling for photo shoots, including make-up and hair style. Through the study of Chinese historical costumes it became evident that the historical lack of alteration of silhouette was potentially caused by the traditional method of making clothing. Intending to add three-dimensional features to the Chinese-inspired design, an attempt was made to

develop the flat pattern making technique into a structural three-dimensional one. From the restructured outline like the first design, to details of the patchwork, to integrate three-dimensional sensation within this series of work had become one of the main aims of production.

Apart from the theoretical study, the online imagery search had enabled a convenient and quick collection of design sources. Moreover, to search for collections of other designers has always been beneficial to develop ideas for fashion design. Various themes on stage appeared to be inspirational for the creation, for example, Chineseness, patchwork design, Art Deco fashion, subject of exoticism and styles from the past. Websites like Style.com were widely used for gathering visual inspiration; the keyword search function allowed an efficient review of the theme-related fashion collections online. Further, designers like John Galliano and Roberto Cavalli have frequently visited Chinese theme for inspiration; to investigate into their reinterpretation of Chinese style had offered a broader perception of the integration of Chineseness and modern fashion.

An aim of this research was the interaction between the theoretical study and the practical work. The literature review and the study of historical costumes had offered broad source material for inspiration and creation which enriched the design process in terms of its cultural depth. Moreover, the material outcome of a series of work had echoed another aim of this research which was to demonstrate the integration of Chinese historical costume and modern fashion. The final collection that embodied Chineseness had enabled further investigation into some of the subjects that it had been intended to discuss and explore, for example, Chineseness in fashion, clothing culture in modern China and the qipao.

### *Exhibition and interviews*

To display the material outcome of a collection, an exhibition was held, aiming to break the boundary of self-reflection and to seek group-interaction. This exhibition allowed people to have a closer contact with real work, which enabled them to make observations in detail; as Gillham (2000) suggested, an exhibition could sometimes be linked to some fields as an approach to evidence the research (p. 89). With the intention of collecting the relevant data, including people's perception of this series of work, a selected group of people were interviewed.

The conducting of interviews was considered important for data collection; intended topics were discussed, including the perception of Chineseness in this series of work and in general fashion, their views about patchwork design and the intended integration. As a method of data collection, qualitative interviewing is considerably flexible, which allows the participants to guide the conversation to a certain degree (Keightly, 2008, p. 185). Within the field of art and design, thirteen people were interviewed; seven participants were from a Chinese cultural background, and these interviews were further developed to discuss the issues within Chinese dressing culture, including their perception of qipao and its role in today's China. Yet, the subjects were flexibly changed and expanded, based on the developed conversation of each interview.

According to the feature of qualitative interviews, semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect the relevant information. The relatively free and flexible method is likely to encourage the participants to communicate their own understanding, experience and perspectives (Mason, 2004, p. 1020). Moreover, an attempt was made to maximise the use of exhibition, some interviews were conducted in the exhibition place. More direct

contacts with actual work had encouraged the participants to further develop the discussions during the course of interviews, for instance, some made comparisons between garments which were similar in style and displayed next to each other.

### *Analysis*

The designed topics were the themes that this study sought to further explore through the interviews. To analyse the qualitative data, thematic analysis was applied; as Lapadat (2010) suggested, it has long been commonly applied within many fields of study, to identify themes (pp. 925-926). It clarified the information gathered from the participants and enabled the data to be systematically analysed and organised; further, it allowed for potential readers to understand the discussed subjects in an orderly manner.

### **Conclusion**

This study began with the initial literature search and review, libraries and museums had provided essential sources for the exploration. To enable the further study of shuitianyi, this study heavily depended on museums, aiming at finding new image references of this style. The theoretical study provided a rich source of design inspiration, and simultaneously, the production of practical work had embodied the integration that this study sought to demonstrate. Further, the material outcome enabled the relevant subjects to be further discussed and explored, including the topics of Chinese dressing culture and the phenomenon of disconnection with costume heritage in modern China.



## Chapter Three: Fashion Context

In this chapter, Chinese dressing culture is examined in order to help the understanding of the fashion industry and circumstances in modern China. Further, an exploration is undertaken of the phenomenon of the association between fashion and cultural inspiration. Exotic themes and historical subjects in particular, are reviewed in this chapter.

### ***3.1 Historical and Traditional Sources of Inspiration for Fashion Design***

Fashion has frequently referred to the past for inspiration (Luther, 2010, p. 599); traditional or historical inspiration is one of the long-lasting themes on the catwalk stage. Having constantly sought for new elements, designers often look to cultural heritage from around the world. The dressing styles worn in former days have recurrently been reintroduced to the fashion world; further, traditional clothing culture, such as ethnic and folk costume, has always been inspirational for fashion design (Jones, 2005, p. 19). This phenomenon is rather obvious in the West; year after year, designers have regularly drawn ideas from the past.

Sometimes inspirational subjects can be dated back to thousands of years ago, yet, some design themes and influences are taken from only a few decades earlier. Ancient Egyptian culture has long been a common motif for design (Curl, 2005, p. 396); this very theme has inspired many fashion designers, for example, Alexander McQueen, John Galliano and Sophia Kokosalaki. Alexander McQueen utilised the Egyptian theme in his fall 2007 collection (Fig. 6); the colour scheme and structure of garments corresponded to the typical impression of ancient Egypt. In Christian Dior spring 2004 couture collection, from the costume to make-up and hair style, John Galliano re-presented the Egyptian image in a rather dramatic way (Fig. 7). To capture the sensation of ancient Egypt, Sophia Kokosalaki

reintegrated this historical theme with modern style in her spring 2009 collection (Fig. 8). In Western costume history, ancient Rome and Greece has long provided rich sources of inspiration; as North (2007) indicated, the Roman and Greek styles were influential upon costume, during the period of Neoclassicism (pp. 26-27). Some designers also refer to these ancient cultures for inspiration; for example, Vera Wang used ancient Rome as the theme of her spring 2008 collection (Fig. 9), and in Jean Paul Gaultier's spring 2006 couture collection, the inspiration was obviously taken from the ancient Greek culture and costume (Fig. 10). The history of costume and fashion has been well documented in the West, which has enabled designers to better utilise the references for creation. Designer Vivienne Westwood is a good example whose work has always associated with wide range of historical themes (Blanco, 2007, p. 63); as Gaimster (2011) indicated, she is apt at utilising historical inspiration and re-integrating it with modern and contemporary design (p. 22). For example, she designed a dress for Lady Bianca Job-Tyoran in 1994 and the inspiration was taken from Rococo style of the eighteenth century (Fig. 11).



Fig. 6 Alexander McQueen, Autumn/Winter 2007



Fig. 7 Christian Dior, Spring/Summer 2004 Couture Collection



Fig. 8 Sophia Kokosalaki, Spring/Summer 2009



Fig. 9 Vera Wang, Spring/Summer 2008



Fig. 10 Jean Paul Gaultier, Spring/Summer 2006 Couture Collection



Fig. 11 Vivienne Westwood, dress, 1994, collection of the V&A Museum

Furthermore, the popular styles of the twentieth century in particular, were often re-presented on stage season after season. For example, Marc Jacobs applied Art Deco style in Louis Vuitton spring 2011 collection (Fig. 12), and one year after, in Gucci spring 2012 collection, Frida Giannini also presented the theme that was inspired by the 1920s and Art Deco fashion (Fig. 13). Dior's New Look of 1947 (Fig. 14) was one of the subjects that kept coming back to fashion; designed for Christian Dior, John Galliano re-visited this signature style for many seasons, for example, the fall 2007 and spring 2011 couture collections (Fig. 15 and Fig. 16). Further, Alber Elbaz was inspired by the silhouette of New Look and showed a new interpretation in Lanvin's fall 2006 collection (Fig. 17). To reintroduce the feminine look to women after the Second World War (1939-1945), Christian Dior (1905-1957) took inspiration from the historical costumes; he revisited the nineteenth century for his new collection of 1947 (McDermott, 2002, p. 30). The New Look had demonstrated the integration of historical costume with current style; today, it had become an inspirational theme from the past, which has constantly had an influence on contemporary designers.



Fig. 12 Louis Vuitton, Spring/Summer 2011



Fig. 13 Gucci, Spring/Summer 2012





Fig. 14 Christian Dior, *Bar Suit*, "New Look" collection, Spring/Summer 1947, collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Costume Institute



Fig. 15 Christian Dior, Autumn/Winter 2007 Couture Collection



Fig. 16 Christian Dior, Spring/Summer 2011 Couture Collection



Fig. 17 Lanvin, Autumn/Winter 2006

Apart from the Western traditions, some other traditional costumes, styles or textiles have been reintroduced to the public through shows, exhibitions and the mass media. In recent years, the traditional textiles of the Miao (苗), an ethnic group of China, have gained attention because of the exquisite design and quality; as Fraser (2004) indicated, the Miao's textiles have gradually become known and recognisable outside the regions of Miao (p. 47). Further, Shanghai Tang's spring 2011 collection showed the integration of traditional printing and dyeing of the Miao and modern garment designs (Fig. 18). Moreover, traditional or historical costumes appear to be highly respected in some societies and countries. According to Balasescu (2007), in Iran, the garments inspired by traditional clothing were esteemed particularly amongst the privileged classes (p. 302). Originally inspired by the Western gown and becoming popular in the nineteenth century, the traditional holoku is still frequently worn by Hawaiian women. Moreover, this continuance of wearing the holoku

signified the wearer's association with Hawaiian culture (Arthur, 1998, p. 283). In the early twentieth century, the Nivi style of sari was re-introduced and soon became the distinctive symbol of Indian fashion (Tu, 2009, pp. 30-31). Today, women in India are still closely associated with their sari culture; furthermore, designers like Tarun Tahiliani, are keen to re-integrate traditional Indian motifs with contemporary fashion (Fig. 19). According to Alaoui (1999), the traditional caftan of Morocco has recently been revived by some contemporary designers (pp. 88-89); today, the caftan is highly respected in Morocco, amongst the wealthy women in particular (Abaza, 2007, p. 285). In recent years, the Moroccan fashion style has gained popularity and become known on the world stage; for example, the distinctive Moroccan style was well integrated with chic and modern fashion when presented in Joanna Mastroianni's fall 2008 collection (Fig. 20). The kimono has long been associated with the traditional clothing culture of Japan; however, it has gradually been marginalised in Japan's contemporary society, although it is still worn on traditional occasions (Assmann, 2008, p. 359). Nevertheless, the kimono has continued to be worn, and most importantly, been associated with Japanese cultural traditions. The kimono has inspired many Western designers to reinterpret this traditional costume with modern fashion. For example, Giorgio Armani looked to Japan for inspiration and further utilised the kimono and obi-like adornment to signify a Japanese sensation in his Armani Privé fall 2011 couture collection (Fig. 21). Moreover cutting edge and influential designers, such as Yohji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo, have brought the Eastern aesthetics to the West in the late twentieth century (Bye, 2010, p. 123) by applying traditional Japanese shape and technique to Western clothing.



Fig. 18 Shanghai Tang, Spring/Summer 2011



Fig. 19 Tarun Tahiliani, Spring/Summer 2010



Fig. 20 Joanna Mastroianni, Autumn/Winter 2008

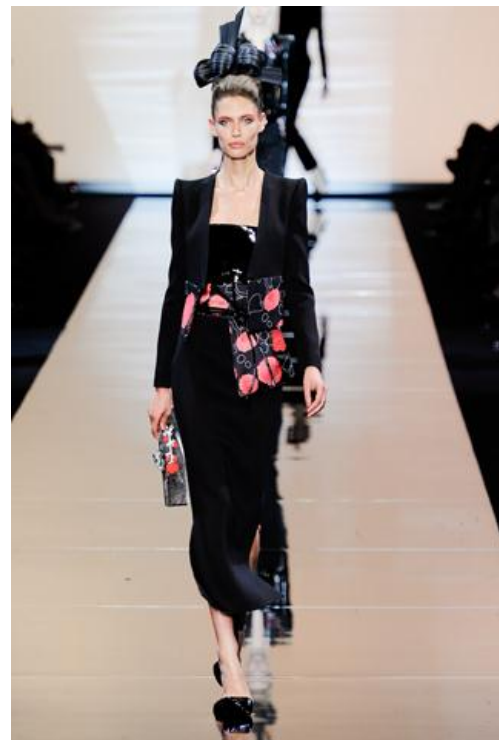


Fig. 21 Armani Privé, Autumn/Winter 2011  
Couture Collection



However, the continuance of some clothing cultures is threatened due to the extreme internationalisation and westernisation of style. Many are aware of this phenomenon and eager to keep their cultural tradition in clothing. Malaysia's batik has currently experienced a revival, aiming to encourage the local Malaysians to be further associated with their clothing heritage (Newman, 2007, p. 11). Once colonised by Japan and deeply influenced by the Western fashion after liberation in 1945, Korean traditional costume, the hanbok, had almost disappeared in the mid twentieth century. Yet many attempted to revive their hanbok culture through modern design, intending to keep the national costume alive. (Cho, 1999, pp. 76-78). China has never been colonised in this way, but the traditional clothing has just disappeared from dressing culture (Sisci, 2008). Hanfu (漢服) comprises the traditional and historical costumes of Chinese Han, the biggest ethnic group of China; yet, it has gradually become unknown in China (Brown and Brown, 2006, p. 79). Within Chinese cultural communities, many are engaged in trying to bring back the hanfu tradition, aiming to re-orientate their cultural identity (Wong, 2006).

"The myth that clothing never changed in China is a product of this modern metaphysic of seeing." (Ko, 1997, p. 6); Chinese historical costume in particular, has long been regarded as immutable. Yet, it is certain that the costumes of China had altered in style throughout history; as Finnane (1996) suggested, the cultural heritage of Chinese clothing and costume is indeed a rich repository (p. 100). According to Li (2006), the costume of each dynasty of China differed in style (p. 39); Xu (2003) also suggested that, the traditional Chinese attire changed across different dynasties (p. 115). Nevertheless, it is indisputable that the forms and shapes of traditional apparel were lacking in innovation, in comparison with Western costumes. Due to the relatively conservative attitude toward exposure of skin in Chinese

traditional society, the body was extensively wrapped and covered; this hidebound idea in costume appeared to be one of the potential reasons that caused the relative lack of alteration, in terms of outline style. As Chan (2001) indicated, the traditional costumes of China are loose and unfitted (p. 144); the pattern making tended to be simple and flat, as the clothing was made unfitted to the body. The outline silhouette of Chinese historical and traditional attire might look changeless; still, the variation was noticeable in the detail, for instance, the pattern design and ornamentation.

The Chinese theme is familiar to the fashion world; yet, the source of inspiration seems to be limited. The qipao is the dress code for Chineseness; further, the Mao suit has also been recognised as the signified style of China, for example, in Yves Saint Laurent's fall 2004 collection, Tom Ford re-integrated the Mao suit with soft fabric and stylish cutting, to give the uniform-like piece a modern and feminine look (Fig. 22). Apart from these two styles, the rest of traditional Chinese costumes have remained unfamiliar or even unknown to the fashion world. Yet, many undiscovered dressing styles are potentially available for further integration with modern fashion. The fashion industry is comparatively young in China; however, the rich cultural sources of inspiration enhance the possibility of developing new designs. The future of China's fashion industry seems to be promising; yet, bringing cultural distinctiveness to design appears to be essential for success (Finnane, 2005, p. 605).



Fig. 22 Yves Saint Laurent,  
Autumn/Winter 2004

Historical costumes in the West have long provided the broad range of inspiration for designers from around the world. Nevertheless, the Chinese historical styles are rarely applied on the catwalk stage due to the lack of their exploration. The cultural heritage of Chinese costume is rich yet barely known. Fashion is constantly looking for variety and novelty; to further integrate Chinese styles from the past with contemporary design appears to be imaginable as an approach to new creations.

### ***3.2 Exotic and Multicultural Themes on Stage***

Exotic and cross-cultural inspiration has long been influential upon the fashion world (Sumathi, 2002, pp. 152-153); these additional sources have always brought new design elements, which have resulted in the constantly changing style of modern fashion. Season

after season, still, exoticism is an exciting theme on stage; furthermore exotic inspiration has become the leitmotif of fashion (Craik, 1994, p. 38). More and more unfamiliar cultures were introduced to the audiences, who are always expecting novelty and variety from designers. As Brandini (2009) indicated, the styles which were formerly marginal to mainstream fashion have gained new attention from fashion designers (p. 164). Inspired by various sources, designers are keen to produce their invigorated collections; some specific cultures appear to be more frequently brought back to the fashion stage, for example, African, Chinese and Japanese themes.

The inspirational African theme has been popular amongst designers; distinctive African influences were evident in everything from garment design to accessory style (Loughran, 2009, p. 243). The African-inspired print is one signature, which is widely used on stage and the vivid colour combinations have always signified cultural exoticism; for instance, Lanvin's spring 2003 collection and the spring 2010 collection of Marc by Marc Jacobs (Fig. 23 and Fig. 24). The Chinese theme is often seen in fashion, according to Steele and Major (1999) visions of China have inspired designers worldwide (p. 69). The qipao has signified Chineseness more than any other item of Chinese clothing (Finnane, 2005, p. 594). For instance, Jean Paul Gaultier used the silhouette and detailed design of the qipao, such as high collar and slit, in his fall 2001 couture collection; to complete the look, the original one-piece dress was combined with other garments, for example, trousers and a Western style of gloves (Fig. 25). The images of Japanese geisha or kimono have delivered an irresistible exotic sensation to the fashion world; as Kawlra (2002) indicated, the kimono has long been used as a popular design theme in the West (p. 300). Moreover, some well-known Japanese

designers, for instance, Issey Miyake and Rei Kawakubo, introduced their cultural distinctiveness to the fashion world in the late twentieth century (Fig. 26 and Fig. 27).



Fig. 23 Lanvin, Spring/Summer 2003



Fig. 24 Marc by Marc Jacobs Spring/Summer 2010



Fig. 25 Jean Paul Gaultier, Autumn/Winter 2001 Couture Collection



Fig. 26 Issey Miyake, *seashell coat*, 1985, collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Costume Institute



Fig. 27 Rei Kawakubo, dress, Comme des Garçons Spring/Summer 1997, collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Costume Institute

The search for new inspiration from other cultures and regions is perhaps nothing new to fashion. In fact, this exotic or multicultural subject has long been one of the major themes which has regularly been employed on the fashion stage by designers from around the world. Today Western fashion has looked into unfamiliar worlds for inspiration (Rovine, 2004, p. 205); further, the existence of exotic inspiration amongst clothing culture can be traced back to centuries ago. According to Gale and Kaur (2004), Japanese art, Chinese and Indian cultures have been frequently visited by the European as the essential source of inspiration since the eighteenth century (p. 67). Kirk (2008) also indicated that, the great interest in Japanese dress was clearly revealed in the fancy dress books of the 1880s (p. 123). Paul Poiret (1879-1944) introduced his Oriental mind to the Western world in the early

twentieth century. As Vettese (2008) indicated, Oriental design was the signature style of Paul Poiret (p. 138); he successfully made this exotic look become one of the most memorable styles of that period (Fig. 28). The Art Deco style of design and fashion was full of exotic features, as Lussier (2009) indicated, the exotic style had become extremely popular in the 1920s (p. 22).

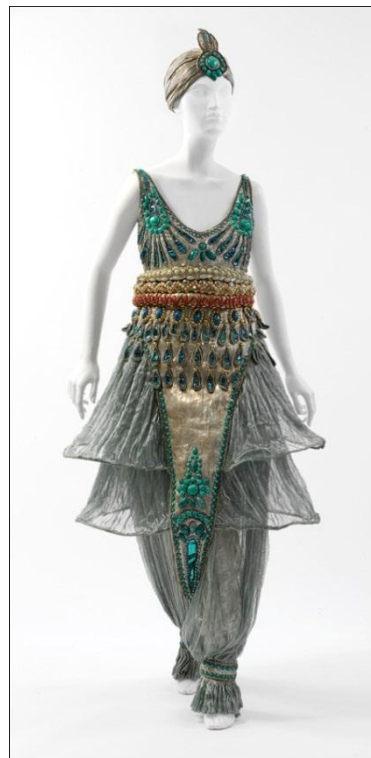


Fig. 28 Paul Poiret, costume, 1911, collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Costume Institute

Fashion has always sought after novel themes for stimulation; designers are keen and excited at bringing fresh images into the fashion world. Incessantly, Western designers are looking for design ideas from other cultures (Loughran, 2009, p. 245); cross-cultural and exotic subjects have provided wide-ranging inspirations. Since more and more non-Western styles and designs have been drawn onto the stage, fashion has become diversified and

increasingly multicultural. As Skov (2003) indicated, multicultural styles have been popularised on the international fashion stage in recent years (p. 239); doubtless, the multiplied inspirations have brought new styles and further reinforced the cultural depth of designs.

As fashion is constantly looking into other cultures for uniqueness and exoticism, inspiration taken from Asia has become one of the long-lasting sources of creation (Leshkovich and Jones, 2003, p. 282). Clark (2009) further indicated, that the Oriental theme has long been mingled with fashion design (p. 177). According to Chrisman-Campbell (2007), in the late eighteenth century, the comfortable costume of the Middle and Far East had great impact on female's fashion in the West. Moreover, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries Orientalism became one of the influential themes of Western costume (Mackrell, 1990, p. 31). The oriental theme was obvious, yet, sometimes in detail; the fabric and textile features of oriental style and pattern were prevalent in the eighteenth century (Fig. 29 and Fig. 30). The nineteenth century, witnessed the pinnacle of Japonisme in the West, some products, including garments, were manufactured and directly imported from Japan (Fig. 31). After the remarkable debut of the Ballets Russes in Paris in 1909, the Western world was amazed by the Oriental sensation along with its colourful and exotic designs, and "Orientalism" became so prevalent, particularly in Paris. Léon Bakst (1866-1924) was influential in introducing the aesthetics of the East to the West. He was a Russian painter and costume designer, who later worked at the Ballets Russes as scene and costume designer. His designs for Scheherazade and Firebird in 1910 were highly influential (Fig. 32); Bakst's work impacted on mainstream fashion as the awareness of cultures outside the West was raised (Webber-Hanchett, 2007, p. 46-47). The Oriental theme had impacted



Western clothing culture long before the twentieth century, however, it was not until the stimulation of the Ballets Russes that Orientalism swept the fashion world and affected an entire creative generation (Steele, 1998, p. 216-217). As Mears (2010) indicated, the trend of Orientalism was extremely popular in the early twentieth century (p. 547). The prevalence of Oriental style was evident in many forms of art and design, for instance, costume design, fashion style, illustration, accessories, decorative style and pattern design (Fig. 33, Fig. 34, Fig. 35, Fig. 36 and Fig. 37). During the Art Deco era in particular, many significant artists and designers created some inspirational Oriental designs; for example, Étienne Drian (1885-1961), Jeanne Lanvin (1867-1946), Jeanne Paquin (1869-1936), Léon Bakst, Mariano Fortuny (1871-1949), Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) and Paul Poiret.



Fig. 29 *Robe à la Polonoise*, 1780-1785, collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Costume Institute



Fig. 30 Pattern design in detail



Fig. 31 Dressing gown for Western market, 1880s, collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Costume Institute



Fig. 32 Léon Bakst, costume illustration of the Firebird, 1910



Fig. 33 Pablo Picasso, *Costume for the Chinese Conjuror from Parade*, 1917, collection of the V&A Museum



Fig. 34 Jeanne Lanvin, evening ensemble, 1934, kimono-inspired design, collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Costume Institute



Fig. 35 Mariano Fortuny, dressing gown, 1930, collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Costume Institute



Fig. 36 Étienne Drian, *Pagode: Costumes Parisiennes*, 1914, collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Costume Institute



Fig. 37 Jeanne Hallée, dress (detail), 1907, collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Costume Institute

Among the various Oriental subjects, Chinese inspiration has become one of the most common themes on stage. Particularly in the early twentieth century which witnessed significant cultural exchange between China and the West. Not only did Western fashion greatly impact on Chinese dressing styles, Chinese traditional and even modern clothing features also influenced Western fashion (DeLong et al., 2005, p. 167). “The domain of dress is an extraordinarily rich repository of Chinese cultural history.” (Finnane, 1996, p. 100); many designers have frequently looked into Chinese traditional or historical costumes for inspiration, for example, Anna Sui, John Galliano and Vivienne Tam.

The qipao or cheongsam is a well-known Chinese garment (Brown and Brown, 2006, p. 79); varied styles have originated due to the different approaches toward reinterpreting the qipao, which has enabled this dress to be utilised as the theme of design season after season. Roberto Cavalli integrated qipao style with modern fabric and Western cutting in his



spring 2003 collection; his version of the qipao was even tighter to the body and resulted in a revealing and sexy silhouette (Fig. 38). Interestingly, in this very same season, Miuccia Prada showed a completely different style of qipao in her Mui Mui collection; loose-fitted cutting combined with soft fabrics, the originally body-hugging piece had been transformed into a leisurely luxurious style (Fig. 39).



Fig. 38 Roberto Cavalli, Spring/Summer 2003



Fig. 39 Mui Mui, Spring/Summer 2003

As one of the essential references of exotic inspiration, Chinese culture has long provided opulent resources for design and creation; simultaneously, Western styles also seem to be novel and exotic to China. In the early twentieth century, when the monarchy of the Qing dynasty was replaced by Republican China in 1911, the Western influence upon China was rather obvious. The seclusion policy of the Qing was discarded in the late nineteenth century which enabled China, once again, to get into contact with the outside world. Chinese clothing culture rapidly changed, as people were eager to be transformed from a

conservative look into modern apparel. Undoubtedly, the exoticism from the West influenced China in many aspects, including the attitude toward fashion. The birth of the modern qipao was probably the best example which demonstrated the integration of Chinese traditional attire and the Western styles. In the early twentieth century, the Chinese qipao was altered from loose-fitted to body-hugging; this modernised or westernised piece was swiftly popularised within Chinese cultural communities. The modern qipao soon became a fashion icon, and later, swept the Western fashion world as the symbol of exotic Chineseness.

The 1920s witnessed the Western impact on Chinese clothing culture; simultaneously, the Oriental and Chinese style became extremely popular amongst women's fashion in the West. Through the contact with Western styles, Chinese women were encouraged to show their natural silhouettes; yet, the influences from the East had inspired the production of comfortable and sensible clothing for women. Interestingly, the women in the West were freed from tight costume; yet, the fitted style had freed and enabled Chinese women to regain their confidence and reveal their natural curves, which had long been hidden and covered under the traditionally loose-fitting attire. The Oriental style had a great impact on Western fashion, particularly during the 1920s; the straight-lined silhouette of the East was influential to the style of Art Deco fashion. Again, the chic and modern look of the 1920s and Art Deco style had reinforced an awareness of modishness and style in China. The influence was evident in old Chinese posters, an important fashion media at that time; from garment design to accessories, make-up and hair style, the Western effect was beyond doubt (Fig. 40).



Fig. 40 Old poster, Hong Kong, 1934

Today, the cultural interaction between the West and East has continued and is comparatively much more obvious and rapid than it used to be in the twentieth century. China's clothing culture is radically rich; yet, the exploration of historical or traditional costumes is very limited. The Mao suit is another style which is also recognisable as symbolic of Chinese style; however, it is less frequently seen on the catwalk compared to the qipao. Apart from these two forms of garments, other styles of Chinese fashion were scarcely introduced to the fashion world. In recent years, more and more designers are engaged in combining different Chinese styles with contemporary fashion; for example, designer Zhang Zhifeng (張志峰) established "NE·TIGER" in 1992, aiming to create China's own luxury brand and aiming to further employ Chinese cultural heritage (Fig. 41). Still, this phenomenon was limited within the regions of Chinese cultural communities. China's rich cultural heritage has much more to offer for inspiration; even so, the lack of exploration has limited its potential for further development. The fashion world is constantly looking for

variety and novelty; to reintroduce formerly unknown styles to the fashion stage would bring the freshness that fashion has always sought for.



Fig. 41 NE·TIGER, reinterpretation of Chinese historical costume, China Fashion Week in Beijing, 2009

### ***3.3 Clothing Culture in Modern China***

Today, international fashion has become the mainstream in modern China, which has resulted in the loss of cultural identity in clothing. Apart from the remote regions and areas of the ethnic minorities, the dressing style of Chinese people is like the rest of the world (Craik, 2009, p. 91); distinctness in clothing has largely disappeared from today's China. The Western influence on Chinese fashion is beyond doubt; moreover, the styles popularised by countries nearby, such as Japan and Korea, have been particularly prevalent amongst the young. As Finnane (2008) indicated, Japanese cultural influence upon Chinese fashion could be traced well back to the 1980s (p. 265). In the early twenty-first century Korean culture



has been widely spread across Asia (Li, 2007, pp. 24-25); following the big success of its TV dramas, Korean fashion has become increasingly popular in recent years.

All these external impacts seem to further marginalise Chinese traditional clothing culture; yet, within Chinese cultural communities, many are aware of this phenomenon and eager to preserve this distinctive cultural heritage from complete disappearance. Intending to keep the clothing tradition, some attempted to pass down the skill of garment making. Yang Cheng-Gui (楊成貴: 1931-2006) was probably the best example; he was an exclusive qipao maker, who always aimed to continue the qipao culture within the Chinese cultural communities, such as China and Taiwan. Many designers or companies also contributed to maintain Chineseness in clothing design; various sources of cultural inspiration were applied to approach the mutual aim. You Jia (尤珈) is an associate professor of Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology, who designed the series of blue-and-white porcelain dresses for the Beijing Olympics in 2008. Exquisite embroidery was employed to present beautiful patterns inspired by Chinese porcelain. Using the qipao silhouette, the outline design was simple and chic; yet, the alteration in style differentiated this series of works from the traditional qipao (Fig. 42). Wu Haiyan (吳海燕) is one of the best known Chinese fashion designers, whose work has always presented a good combination of Chinese themes and current trends (Fig. 43). Moreover, her successful fashion shows in Hangzhou (杭州) were very influential in promoting the integration of the local silk industry and women's fashion in Hangzhou (Ye, 2009). Mark Cheung (張肇達) is a very successful designer, who established his own brand in 1991. He has always sought Chinese culture for inspiration, ranging from common themes like Tibet to rarely explored subjects such as meditation (Fig. 44).



Fig. 42 Official dress for Beijing Olympic 2008

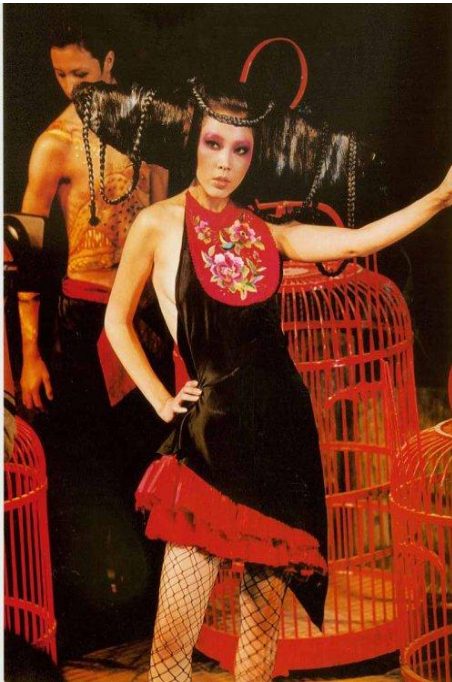


Fig. 43 Wu Haiyan's fashion show in Hangzhou, 2001



Fig. 44 Mark Cheung's Tibet-inspired collection, China Fashion Week in Beijing, 2006

Furthermore, some luxurious brands like Shanghai Tang, NE-TIGER and Shiatzy Chen are symbolic of Chineseness. Doubtless, the qipao is the typical reference, yet, other references also inspired the creation; for example, the ethnic costume of the Chinese Miao people has become the theme of Shanghai Tang's spring 2011 collection (Fig. 45). Combined with sheen and luxurious fabric, the theme of old Chinese ink and wash painting was utilised in Shiatzy Chen's spring 2010 collection (Fig. 46). Being one of the biggest clothing manufacturers, China has long been regarded as a country that has always re-produced clothes and copied styles (Tsui, 2009, p. 1); yet, in recent years, many are engaged in developing China's own fashion.



Fig. 45 Shanghai Tang, Spring/Summer 2011



Fig. 46 Shiatzy Chen, Spring/Summer 2010, Paris Fashion Week

To represent Chinese culture, a new style has emerged and become popular amongst Chinese cultural communities in recent years. A pop song called the “qinghuaci” (青花瓷), meaning blue-and-white porcelain, became extremely popular after its release in 2007.

Sung and composed by Jay Chou or Chou Chieh-Lun (周杰倫), the Chinese lyrics were written by Fang Wen-Shan (方文山), the popularity of this song brought traditional porcelain into pop culture. In the dresses designed by You Jia for the Beijing Olympics, the symbolic porcelain pattern along with a simple yet vibrant colour scheme was well integrated with elegant dress design. Doubtless, because of the Olympic Games, the media must have promoted the association of Chineseness and qinghuanci further internationally. Moreover, Beitucheng (北土城), a station of the Olympic line featured blue-and-white patterned decoration (Fig. 47); again, this reinforced the status and visibility of qinghuaci and its representation of Chineseness. After the Olympic Games, the qinghua pattern remained popular in China; as a new symbol for Chineseness, it was widely used in many products, from souvenirs to luxurious garments. Further, many Chinese designers have utilised this subject in their work, for example, Guo Pei (郭培) and Zhang Zhifeng (Fig. 48 and Fig. 49). Delftware was one of the inspirations of Christian Dior's spring 2009 couture collection; the blue-and-white pattern was integrated with Dior's signature feminising silhouette (Fig. 50). Employing a similar theme, John Galliano's approach was quite different from many Chinese designers; his design tended to be more implicit as the blue pattern was partially applied. However, most Chinese designers attempted to emphasise the theme, and the dress was extensively covered by the blue-and-white pattern. In fact, a few years earlier than the Olympic Games, Roberto Cavalli once utilised the theme of Chinese traditional porcelain in his fall 2005 collection. Patterned with dragon designs, he further emphasised the Chineseness in this blue-and-white dress (Fig. 51).





Fig. 47 Image of Beitucheng Station in Beijing



Fig. 48 A dress of qinghua pattern, designed by Guo Pei, 2010



Fig. 49 NE·TIGER, China Fashion Week in Beijing, 2009



Fig. 50 Christian Dior, Spring/Summer 2009  
Couture Collection



Fig. 51 Roberto Cavalli, Autumn/Winter 2005

Roberto Cavalli's design in 2005 did not result in the qinghua fashion in China; in terms of "qinghuaci", it was introduced into the pop culture by Jay Chou in 2007. In China the pattern has become a trendy theme amongst women's fashion, for celebrities in particular. Having the formal and international events to attend, they need something to emphasise their cultural identity, and the outfit has always been essential way of doing this. After the popularisation of qinghua pattern, many have chosen this new iconic Chinese design to attend some public events or occasions. For example, the 7<sup>th</sup> Bazaar Charity Night 2009 in Beijing, Ke Lan (柯藍) wore a qinghua pattern dress (Fig. 52) and Vivian Hsu (徐若瑄) also chose a qinghua featured dress to attend the 4<sup>th</sup> Asian Film Awards 2010 in Hong Kong (Fig. 53).



Fig. 52 Ke Lan attended the 7th Bazaar Charity Night in Beijing, 2009



Fig. 53 Vivian Hsu attended the 4th Asian Film Awards in Hong Kong, 2010

China is one of the biggest consumers for Western luxury brands (Mead, 2011, p. 563); in spite of its big success in international trade, China's fashion industry and design is barely recognisable to the world (Finnane, 2005, p. 587). Aiming to raise the international awareness of China's fashion, many are keen to create China's own brands, potentially featuring Chineseness. Some other Asian countries have experienced colonisation, hence, their cultural and national identity tend to be crucial after their liberation. Countries like Korea and India appear to be keen to keep and revive their traditional distinctiveness in clothing; today, the sari still closely relates with Indian women's life, and the Korean hanbok is generally associated with their traditional occasions and ceremonies. Never having been colonised, somehow, traditional clothing culture has largely become disconnected with modern China. However nowadays, the traditional culture seems to be undergoing a renaissance in China, particularly after the Beijing Olympic Games. The memorably magnificent opening ceremony widely broadcast Chinese cultural heritage; within Chinese

cultural communities, many were inspired and encouraged to re-engage with their splendid culture.

Continuously influenced by the Western trend and also some Asian pop cultures, re-orientating China's developing fashion has become inevitable. After the imitative pursuit of international, Japanese or Korean fashions, the awareness of the distinctiveness within Chinese cultural history is awakening, this has encouraged a new integration of traditional subjects and modern styles. For example, Chineseness has become prevalent amongst Mandarin popular music for years; classic lyrics and historical themes have been reintroduced within the form of current styles, such as Hip Hop or R&B. Many designers have also attempted to reintegrate Chinese traditional subjects with modern styles, aiming to produce China's distinctive fashion style. With massive domestic demand, fashion is a big market in China; the development of its fashion industry has become essential and its rapid expansion in the near future is highly predictable.



## Chapter Four: Study of Chinese Historical Costumes

China has a rich and long costume history; however, many distinctive styles have largely become unknown even within Chinese cultural communities. To reintroduce historical costumes within the form of modern fashion, some styles appear to have the potential for integration, for example, the beizi (背子) of the Song (960-1279) and bijia (比甲) of the Ming (Fig. 54 and Fig. 55). Aiming to investigate the costume culture of China, this study has further explored one rarely known dressing style, the shuitianyi.



Fig. 54 Example of the beizi, a coat-like piece, prevalent amongst women in the Song dynasty, illustrated by Zhou and Gao



Fig. 55 The bijia, popularly worn by women in the Ming dynasty, illustrated by Zhou and Gao

### 4.1 Shuitianyi

#### Introduction of the shuitianyi

The shuitianyi (水田衣) is a specific style of garment; shui (水) literally means water, tian (田) means farmland or field, yi (衣) means garment, and shuitian together means the paddy

field or rice paddy. In terms of 水田衣, 水田 depicts the style of clothing the features of which gave a field-like impression. Some garments were named based on how they looked, for example, pagoda sleeves and swallow-tailed coat; similarly the name of shuitianyi also indicated the visual appearance of this dressing style.

When considering the strong connection between the shuitianyi and its original Chinese characters, a better comprehension of characters would help us to establish an initial understanding of this clothing. According to the “Liushu” (六書: the six categories of Chinese characters), both 水 and 田 were like the appearance of what they referred to; therefore, these two characters were catalogued to pictograph (象形). People named this dressing style 水田衣, because of its visual association with the paddy field. Made of various fabrics and shaped in rectangles, the structure of this style resembled the character “田”; this association made it easy to depict the style and impression of the shuitianyi.

Referring to Chinese costume, the shuitianyi has mainly been catalogued into two kinds of costume, a piece of religious clothing and a fashionable style. The religious shuitianyi (Fig. 56) has a longer history to trace back; today, it still refers to specific Buddhist costume. It also refers to a historical dressing style (Fig. 57), prevalent in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties of China. Whether referring to the Buddhist costume or a fashionable style, unquestionably, the field-like structure is the mutual feature of these two forms of clothing.



Fig. 56 Anonymous, painting (detail), 15<sup>th</sup> century of the Ming, an example of the religious costume of Buddhism, collection of the British Museum



Fig. 57 The fashionable shuitianyi, illustrated by Shen, according to the depictions in “Yanqinyiqing”

### Religious costume

Written by Ding Fubao (丁福保: 1874-1952), “A Dictionary of (Chinese) Buddhist Terms” (佛學大辭典) was published in 1922; according to this reference, the shuitianyi was defined as a monk’s robe or Buddhist kesa (kasaya in Sanskrit), its features based on a rice-paddy structure. According to Buddhist scripture, Buddha was aware of the lack of a representative costume for Buddhism and intended to introduce one. Buddha was inspired by the regularity of the structure of paddy field; hence, Ananda (one of the most devout attendants of Buddha) was requested to invent a religious costume, based on the inspiration originating from the simple tidy image of a paddy field, the shuitian (Taisho Tripitaka Vol. 23, No. 1435 十誦律). However, 水田衣 (shuitianyi) is not the only name of this Buddhist costume in Chinese, others such as 田相衣 (tianxiangyi) or 福田衣 (futianyi)

also implied this religious garment. The character “田”, was used to delineate the structure of this Buddhist shuitianyi.

As a piece of religious costume, the shuitianyi has long been associated with Buddhism and also Taoism; the existing references about the religious shuitianyi were richer, in comparison with the fashionable shuitianyi. Comparing today’s shuitianyi with historical examples, the composition seemed to be much more interesting and complicated in the past (Fig. 58 and Fig. 59). Sometimes, various fabrics and textiles were combined to make this religious piece, which made the shuitianyi even richer in composition.



Fig. 58 Li Gonglin (李公麟), *the 18 Luohan crossing the sea* (detail), late 11<sup>th</sup> to early 12<sup>th</sup> century, an example of religious shuitianyi, made of various fabrics, collection of the British Museum



Fig. 59 Li Gen (李根), *the Wuliangshan Luohan*, 18<sup>th</sup> century, example of the common style of religious shuitianyi, collection of the British Museum

On the stage of Chinese opera (or Beijing opera), costume was carefully applied to clearly express the age, identity, career, status and sometimes personality of the characters.

Costumes have always been designed to help the audiences have a better understanding of the play; a costume called the niguyi (尼姑衣: Buddhist nuns clothing) or douguyi (道姑衣: Taoist priestesses clothing) (Fig. 60) was specifically designed for young Buddhist nuns or Taoist priestesses. The niguyi is a combination of three pieces of garments (Xu, 2000, p. 301); amongst all, the “shuitian wen chang kanjian” (水田紋長坎肩: shuitian patterned long vest) is the piece that signifies the religious status of Buddhist nuns or Taoist priestesses. Song (2003) suggested that the shuitian patterned piece worn on the stage of the Cantonese opera of the Qing was inspired by the fashionable shuitianyi, prevalent amongst the Ming and Qing (pp. 110-111). Normally composed of three different colours, some believed that, this shuitian vest on stage came from the real Buddhist costume (Bonds, 2008, p. 178). However, as a symbol for Buddhism or Taoism, the source of this shuitian costume of Chinese traditional opera was most likely to originate from the religious shuitianyi, rather than the fashionable style of the Ming and Qing.



Fig. 60 Illustration of the niguyi, a costume designed for Buddhist nuns or Taoist priestesses on the stage of Chinese traditional opera

## **A historical dressing style**

The depiction of the shuitianyi can be found in many Chinese costume books, even though the garment is a rarely explored subject. It was difficult to translate the shuitianyi into English, still, interpretations were found; for example, the “paddy-field gown” (Finnane, 2008, p. 49), “paddy field dress” (Garrett, 1994, p. 22) and “rice paddy jackets” (Zang, 2003, p. 131). Through this investigation, it has been demonstrated that, the shuitianyi actually referred to a style, rather than any specific forms of garment. Aiming to avoid the potential confusion caused by the translation, it has been intended here to apply the original transliteration, the “shuitianyi” in this study.

In the shuitianyi, different fabrics were cut into geometric figures to compose a certain look, visually like the paddy field. Many suggested that, to make the shuitianyi, the patches were regularly cut in rectangles (Zhou and Gao, 1984, p. 167); afterwards other geometric figures were applied to make the composition more interesting. According to Gao (1998), the shuitianyi in the Ming dynasty tended to be more free in style, as different shapes of patches were combined together to make this style of garment (pp. 179-180). The diversity of patches, including shaped figure, colour and material, had made the shuitianyi rich in variation; patchwork application had differentiated it from the other Chinese historical costumes. According to Zang (2003), this dressing style was likely to be the most dazzling in style amongst all of the women’s clothing popular in the Ming dynasty (p.131).

Many references have suggested that the shuitianyi was a very popular dressing style amongst women’s costume in the Ming and Qing dynasties (He, 2006, p. 167). It was a fashionable style, in which the specific decorative sensation originated from the composed patches (Huang, 2007, p. 161). Some implied that, this dressing style was unique to the Ming



dynasty (Yuan, 2006, p. 142); however, more references have indicated that, the popularity of the shuitianyi continued in to the Qing dynasty (Cai, 2001, p. 758). Li Yu (李漁: 1610-1680), who was a historian and novelist, lived in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties; his writing, the “Xianqingouji” (閒情偶寄) revealed that this dressing style was still popularly worn in the Qing dynasty. A new image discovery of the shuitianyi was found in the British Museum; a lady who wore this patched clothing was depicted in a print (Fig. 61). According to the record provided by the British Museum, this piece dated back to the K’ang-His (or Kangxi: 康熙) period (1662-1722) of the Qing. According to the costume and hair style, the characters were most likely from the Ming not Qing; yet, this information suggested that, people in the early Qing were well aware of this dressing style. Furthermore, the shuitianyi was depicted in some classic novels of the Qing, for example, the “Lulinwaishi” (儒林外史) and the “Hunglouloumeng” (紅樓夢). An image of a shuitian style undergarment again demonstrated the continuance of this style in the Qing (Fig. 62); according to Yun (2006), this piece was likely to be made and worn in the late Qing (p. 74).



Fig. 61 Anonymous, print, late 17<sup>th</sup> to early 18<sup>th</sup> century, the depiction of shuitianyi worn by a woman, collection of the British Museum



Fig. 62 A piece of undergarment, late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century, an example of the use of shuitian style in late Qing dynasty

Many sources indicated that, the shuitianyi began to gain popularity amongst women in the late Ming. Some further suggested that, the shuitianyi appeared during the reign of Chongzhen (崇禎: the last emperor of the Ming, 1627-1644) (Sun, 2008, p. 51); Zhou (1984) also indicated that, this dressing style emerged in late Chongzhen period (p. 410). According to “Xianqingouji”, Li Yu regarded that, the shuitianyi originated from the late Chongzhen reign, and the popularity was related to the fall of the Ming dynasty. However, according to this study, the new reference has suggested that, this dressing style might have occurred several years earlier than the specification of the late Chongzhen period. The “Xiyuan yaji tu” (西園雅集圖) was a well-known historical painting of the Northern Song (960-1127); Li Gonglin (李公麟: 1049-1106) had depicted a famous gathering of the noted literati at the “xiyuan”, the Western Garden. Thereafter, the Xiyuan yaji tu had become a popular subject that many artists have attempted to re-paint and re-interpret. From the Southern Song



(1127-1279) to the Qing, many well-known painters have had their own interpretation of this piece; for example, Ma Yuan (馬遠) of the Southern Song, Zhao Mengfu (趙孟頫) of the Yuan (1279-1368), Chou Ying (仇英) of the Ming and Yuan Ji (原濟) of the Qing. Doubtless, these different versions have furthered understanding of ancient Chinese culture and life, albeit that some have argued about the reality of this so-called “elegant gathering” in the Northern Song (I, 1997, pp. 267-268). Furthermore, this subject was so popular it even spread from China to Korea; some painters, for example, Kim Hong-Do (or Danwon: 1745-1806) reinterpreted this Chinese subject with his own style (Huang, 2008, p. 113). Each version of the Xiyuan yaji tu is varied in detail, including scenery, people and costumes. Amongst all, the version of Zhao Xiulu (趙修祿: Ming dynasty, dates unknown) appeared to be relevant to this study, as a lady who wore the shuitian long vest was depicted in this painting (Fig. 63). An attempt was made to look for a similar depiction of the shuitianyi in other Xiyuan yaji tu, yet, not all the versions could be found. Further, amongst all the examined versions, this same lady or the other depicted characters wore some other costumes, varied in style, yet, nothing seemed to be like the shuitianyi. The inscription on Zhao Xiulu’s painting had indicated the year, which was “萬曆甲寅”, 1614 A.D.; this piece was believed to be painted during the Wanli period (萬曆: 1573-1620). This new image reference suggests that the appearance of shuitianyi was most likely to be earlier than the Chongzhen reign. According to Wang (2005), the shuitianyi was depicted in the “Shangyuan dengcai tu” (上元燈彩圖), an old painting of the Ming; it was painted by an anonymous artist, however, based on the depicted details, including costume and urban scenery, it was regarded to be completed during the Wanli to Tianqi (天啟: 1620-1627) period. Another reference from historical painting indicated that, this shuitianyi might have had been

popular amongst ordinary people many years earlier than the existing references have always suggested.



Fig. 63 Zhao Xiulu (趙修祿),  
the *Xiyuan yaji tu* (西園雅集  
圖) (detail), 1614, a lady was  
wearing the shuitianyi,  
collection of the Wuhan  
Museum, China

### ***The confusion of shuitianyi***

In terms of shuitianyi, it generally refers to either religious costume or a historical dressing style. The appearance of religious shuitianyi was at least eight hundred years earlier than the fashionable shuitianyi. Cai (2001) had suggested that, the origin of the shuitianyi of Ming and Qing was deeply influenced by the Buddhist costume (pp. 758-759); yet, due to the lack of relevant references, this surmise appears to be uncertain. To associate the shuitianyi with specific forms of garment, Garrett (1994) further indicated that, the side fastening was like monk's robe (p. 22). Apart from the field-like structure, the actual connection of the shuitianyi, between Buddhist costume and fashionable style, was still unsure.

The confusion about the shuitianyi, between the religious costume and fashion style, has existed for years. Further, some references of Buddhist costume were applied to depict the fashionable shuitianyi. The ancient verse “caiyi xue shuitian” (裁衣學水田) has always been employed to demonstrate the early version of the shuitianyi of the Tang (618-907). From the “過廬四員外宅看飯僧共題七韻” (guo-lu-si-yuan-wai-zhai-kan-fan-seng-gong-ti-qi-yun), a poem of Wang Wei (王維: 701-761), this verse literally means “to tailor the clothing by imitating the paddy field”; hence, many attempted to associate this ancient reference of the Tang with the shuitianyi of the Ming and Qing. To explain the fashionable shuitianyi, Zhao and Xiong (1996) suggested that, this style of making garments was likely to appear much earlier in the Tang (pp. 165-166); moreover, Zhao (1990) also indicated that, people in the Tang had used the same method to make garments (pp. 196-197). Based on this ancient verse, Zhou and Gao (1996) further indicated that, initially, the patches of the shuitianyi were regularly cut, yet, this method of cutting and making clothing had existed in the Tang (p. 162). Wang Wei, also known as the “Poetic Buddhist” (詩佛: shifo), was a famous Chinese poet of the Tang. He was deeply influenced by Buddhism and the affection of religion was naturally reflected in many of his works. The further references of this specific poem had suggested that, the “caiyi xue shuitian” was in fact, associated with the Buddhist costume. As Gao (1998) indicated, the appearance of the shuitianyi was as early as the Tang, yet, it referred to the Buddhist kesa worn by the monks (p. 179). Somehow, many have appeared to associate the fashionable shuitianyi with the Buddhist costume. With no further references to demonstrate the connection between these two forms of clothing, this study intends to clarify the confusion that potentially originated from the mutually used term of the shuitianyi in Chinese language.

### ***Depiction in the Lulinwaishi (儒林外史) and Hunglouloumeng (紅樓夢)***

The shuitianyi was mentioned in Lulinwaishi and Hunglouloumeng; these two classic novels enabled the comprehension of this dressing style from different angles. Both novels were completed during the “Kang-Qian” (康乾) era also known as the “High Qing” period, from the late seventeenth century to late eighteenth century. Lulinwaishi or “The Scholars” was a classic satirical novel written by Wu Jingzi (吳敬梓: 1701-1754); the author attempted to utilise the Ming’s historical background, yet, stating and satirising the society in the High Qing. In chapter 14, a lady is described changing her single coloured overcoat into a “shuitian pifeng” (水田披風), the shuitian cloak; to indicate the patchwork feature, Wu Jingzi had specifically used the term “shuitian” to describe the style of this cloak. Known as one of the “Four Great Classical Novels” (四大名著) of China, the Hunglouloumeng or “Dream of the Red Mansions” was a relatively famous novel of the Qing. The first eighty chapters were written by Cao Xueqin (曹雪芹: 1715-1763 or 1724-1764), however, the author of the last forty chapters is uncertain, the argument over this issue has continued for years. The Hunglouloumeng is a huge and exquisite piece, which has long been the significant cultural resource for learning the culture, custom, life and society of Chinese Qing. This novel was also celebrated for its good description of the costumes, which enabled the further exploration of the clothing culture of the Qing. The shuitianyi was depicted in chapter 63 and 109, yet, it was referred to different kinds of clothing. In chapter 63, a “shuitian xiao jiaao” (水田小夾襖), was worn by the young maid, Fang Guan (芳官); featured of shuitian structured composition, the padded jacket she wore was made of patches in three different colours. The religious shuitianyi was depicted in chapter 109; the “shuitian qingduan xiangbian chang beixin” (水田青緞鑲邊長背心) was worn by Miao Yu (妙玉). This long vest

with cyan satin braiding indicated the patched style of clothing and simultaneously implied her association with the Buddhism or the Taoism.

The references from these two classical novels demonstrated different styles of the shuitianyi, for example, the shuitian cloak and shuitian jacket. Therefore, in terms of “shuitian”, it referred to a style of clothing which was composed of patches and featured a resemblance to shuitian, the paddy field. Referring to Yun (2006), a piece of shuitian structured undergarment had revealed another type of clothing, characterised by the shuitian style (p. 74) (see Fig. 62). Based on these references, the definition of the shuitianyi could be further clarified; in terms of Chinese costumes, the shuitian or shuitianyi generally referred to a garment made of patches and featuring a field-like structure. To depict the character of patchwork, the shuitian style could be associated with many types of clothing, for example, the shuitian cloak, shuitian gown, shuitian robe, shuitian dress and shuitian vest.

Some authorities have attempted to associate the shuitianyi with a specific style of clothing, for example, a gown, robe or dress. According to Kong (2007), the style of shuitianyi incorporated a high collar designed with a decorative “yunjian” (a decorative piece, often seen in women’s costume of Ming and Qing) on the shoulders (p. 186). Garrett (1994) had further bound the shuitianyi to a particular style of gown; “An unusual style of gown reaching to mid-calf was made up of small pieces of differently coloured cloth in a patchwork design.” (p. 22). Again, Finnane (2008) regarded the shuitianyi as a patchwork gown (p. 49). However further investigation of the historical references conducted in this research has suggested that, the shuitianyi was most likely a dressing style featuring patchwork, without the association with any specific type of clothing. The shuitianyi has

been barely studied and explored; although it was once very popular centuries ago, existing references are very rare. Images and pictures of the shuitianyi are extremely scarce; many learned this dressing style from an ancient album, the “Yanqinyiqing” (燕寝怡情). The depictions of the shuitianyi in this album have for a long time been the only visual references published in books about Chinese historical costumes. Having had such a great impact on the perception of shuitianyi, this album might have resulted in the fixed association with specific styles; for example the mid-calf gown, high collar design and the yunjian were depicted in this album. Aiming to clarify the definition of the shuitianyi, this study has drawn on some historical references to provide a broader description of this dressing style.

### ***The Yanqinyiqing (燕寝怡情)***

The Yanqinyiqing was originally stored in the Qing’s palace and later kept by a private collector in late Qing. This album comprised 24 figure paintings; 12 of them were collected in the Museum of Fine Arts Boston and the other 12 were auctioned off in Shanghai in April 2010 (Tong, 2010). Yet, according to Museum of Fine Arts Boston, there were 48 leaves of paintings in the original album before it was divided into several groups. This album was potentially painted before or during the reign of Qianlong (乾隆: 1736-1795), yet, the painter was unknown. The depicted figures were clear in detail; therefore, this material has long been the important resource for costume study. A lady wearing a shuitian long vest was depicted in one painting amongst the 12 pieces collected in Boston (Fig. 64); composed of two colours, this image has always been used as the illustration of shuitianyi. Another group of 12 paintings auctioned in Shanghai also had the depiction of this dressing style. A gown with long sleeves was worn by a lady (Fig. 65), also featured of shuitian structure and

composed of two coloured fabrics; this painting was another often seen illustration of the shuitianyi. These two images were the only published illustration of the so-called regular shuitianyi, as the patches were cut in rectangular shapes and regularly composed to make the clothing. Within the group of paintings auctioned in Shanghai, another regularly composed shuitianyi was depicted; it was a long vest made of two different fabrics and this painting is a new example of the regular shuitianyi (Fig. 66). Many believed that, the composition of shuitianyi was developed from regular to irregular (Zhou and Gao, 1996, p. 162); furthermore, Ye (2000) indicated that the shuitianyi looked like the patchwork design of hippie culture in the West because of the irregular composition (p. 305). This irregular shuitianyi is based on one figure painting within the group auctioned in Shanghai (Fig. 67); the composition of this depicted gown was much more complicated than the ordinary one. Because of the application of various geometric figures, the structure has become irregular. Many attempted to illustrate the shuitianyi with this irregularly composed gown; hence, this patchy style has long become the representative one of the shuitianyi. However, this single pictorial reference seemed to be the only information about the irregular style. Based on the existing references, these depictions of shuitianyi in the Yanqinyiqing were the only images that have previously been used to study this dressing style. New imagery references were found in this study, for example, the print in the British Museum and the painting of Zhao Xiulu, yet, nothing in them was related to the irregular shuitianyi, in terms of composition and style. This irregular example might just be an exception, as no further images or references were found to demonstrate its popularity.



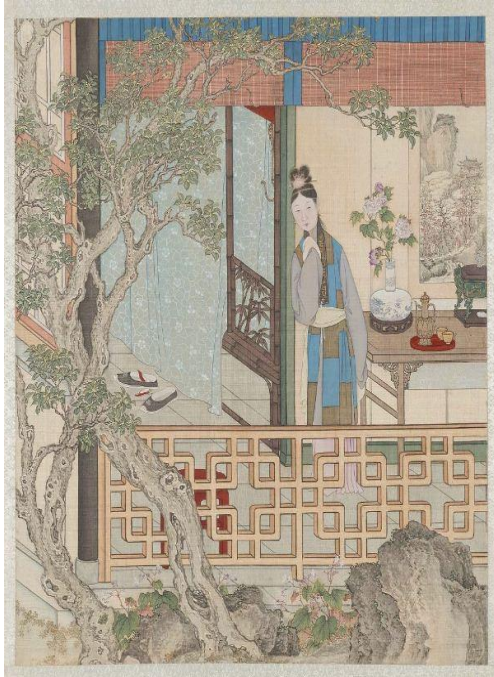


Fig. 64 Anonymous, figure painting, 18<sup>th</sup> century, a shuitian style long vest was depicted, collection of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston



Fig. 65 Anonymous, figure painting, 18<sup>th</sup> century, a lady was wearing the shuitian style of gown, private collection



Fig. 66 Anonymous, figure painting, 18<sup>th</sup> century, a depiction of shuitian style vest, private collection

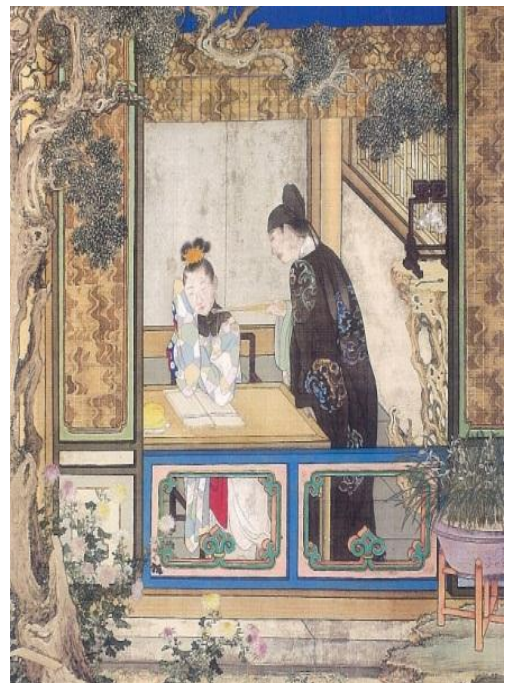


Fig. 67 Anonymous, figure painting, 18<sup>th</sup> century, a gown composed of various coloured fabrics, private collection



### ***Men's shuitianyi***

An interesting scene happened in chapter 63 of the *Hunglouloumeng*; while Fang Guan was wearing a shuitian jacket along with trousers, other characters suggested that, this young maid and her master, Jia Baoyu (賈寶玉), looked like twin brothers. Fang Guan's image in this scene was associated with a boy; various reasons might have caused this association, for example, her casual behaviour and costume. According to this reference, the shuitianyi here was not strictly a women's style, further, the association with a men's look seemed to be acceptable. The debate about the issue of the historical background of this novel has lasted for years; this piece was written in the Qing, still, some believed that it depicted the story of the Ming. Hence, it was uncertain that, which dynasty this potential association of the shuitianyi and men's costume referred to. Furthermore, based on the *Shangyuan dengcai tu* (上元燈彩圖), Wang (2005) suggested that, the shuitianyi was overtly popular in late Ming, and this dressing style was worn by men as well (p. 5). Apart from this reference, the shuitianyi has long been regarded as specifically a costume for women only; many have indicated that, this dressing style was prevalent amongst women in Ming and Qing (Dai et al., 1994, p. 118). The *Shangyuan dengcai tu* was an old painting depicting urban life of the late Ming; the painter was unknown, however, this painting was dated back to the early seventeenth century, Wanli to Tianqi period (Zhang and Zhou, 2010, p. 46). This painting was a good material to study the urban life of late Ming; the scene was well depicted in detail, even the pattern on clothing was clearly viewable. Based on the depiction in this painting, the shuitianyi might have been popularly worn by men; this is a new and important reference, and one that broadens our understanding of this dressing style. This painting had suggested that, the shuitianyi was also worn by men; furthermore, it was likely to be a

fashionable piece amongst the men, as this style was largely depicted in this painting (Fig. 68 and Fig. 69). The style of men's shuitianyi was similar to the women's; again, the structure was regularly composed which visually reminded people of shuitian, the paddy field. Furthermore, the clothing culture had been developed to the extreme in late Ming; the phenomenon that men wore women's clothing and simultaneously, women would put on men's costume had become a fashionable and popular phenomenon in late Ming (Wu, 1999, p. 71). As indicated earlier, the Yanqinyiqing used to be the sole visual reference used to explain the shuitianyi, therefore, this dressing style has long been regarded as a costume or style which was unique to women. This new image reference has broadened the definition of shuitianyi; it was a fashionable style prevalent amongst both men and women, particularly in late Ming.



Fig. 68 Anonymous, *the Shangyuan dengcai tu* (detail), late 16<sup>th</sup> to early 17<sup>th</sup> century, depiction of shuitianyi worn by men in late Ming dynasty, private collection



Fig. 69; see Fig. 68

### ***Li Yu (李漁) and the Xiangqingouji (閒情偶寄)***

Li Yu was a Chinese novelist and litterateur; his writing, the “Xiangqingouji” provides important information about the life, culture and society of the late Ming and early Qing dynasties. The Xiangqingouji, or “The Secret Notebook of Li Yu: A Chinese Manual on the Arts of Happiness” (translated according to its French version), is crucial material in the study of the shuitianyi. He strongly disapproved of the prevalence of shuitianyi, still, essential information about this dressing style is revealed through his argument, including information about the style and way of making it. He thought this style of costume originated from some dishonest garment makers who attempted to hold back the remaining fabrics and offcuts from the clients’ orders, later, to utilise these fabrics to make a new garment for extra profit. Although the origin of the shuitianyi was uncertain, many believed that, its popularity reflected the aesthetics at that time (Cai, 2001, p. 758). Li Yu further indicated that, the existence of seam was to adjust the difference in natural figure; yet, the production of shuitianyi involved too many unnecessary seams, which was completely opposite to the traditional aesthetics of costume. He mentioned that, sometimes, the strips had increased to several tens or even hundred to make the shuitianyi; according to his description, the composition of this style of garments was presumably regular in pattern. He employed an old Chinese saying, the “天衣無縫” (tianyi wufeng), to support his debates; this proverb literary means that, the heavenly garment is made seamless. He also indicated that, the textile was purposely cut to compose this style of garment; this provided further evidence that, the shuitianyi was designed made of patches. According to Li Yu, the complete textile or fabric was cut into pieces, in order to make this style of garment. This information suggested that people who wore the shuitianyi might be relatively wealthy;

only the well-to-do could afford this expense, not to mention the fact that to make the shuitianyi was comparatively time-consuming. Li Yu argued that, the phenomenon that women wore the shuitianyi was particularly inappropriate, as this style of clothing looked like the religious costume of Buddhism. The ordinary Buddhist costume was featured regularly in composition; again, this reference has suggested that, potentially, the shuitianyi in the Qing was still regularly patched. Moreover, he implied that the fall of the Ming dynasty was related to the prevalence of the shuitianyi. He believed that the phenomenon of the fashion for incomplete and patched clothing like the shuitianyi led to the problems and disruptions that happened during the Ming period. Li Yu lived in Chinese late Ming and early Qing; therefore, the Xiangqingouji was considerably reliable in reflecting the life and culture of that time. His disapproval of the shuitianyi still provided important information about this dressing style, which had further demonstrated its popularity in the Ming and Qing. Moreover, he also indicated the fact that, this style of garment was made of patches, which were purposely cut and re-pieced together to present a certain look. According to Li Yu, the shuitianyi prevalent amongst women was most likely of the regularly patched sort and structure, which looked like the religious shuitianyi.

### ***Interview with Gao Chunming (高春明)***

To further explore the shuitianyi, an interview with Gao Chunming was conducted in Shanghai on 23<sup>rd</sup> of November, 2010. He is an important researcher in the field of costume study, who has published many books about Chinese historical costume; this interview generated some crucial information relevant to this study. Gao believed that the style of shuitianyi was developed from being regularly patched to irregularly composed and made of various materials cut in varied geometric figures. Because of this combination of different

colours and fabrics, he thought the shuitianyi reflected the aesthetic consciousness of Ming and Qing. He believed that there was a connection between the religious shuitianyi and the fashionable style of shuitianyi; however, it was just a suggestion as no further references were found. He indicated that, the shuitianyi was closely associated with the social phenomenon of late Ming; ordinary people tended to prefer novelty and variety in style, further, transgression in clothing had become very frequent, particularly amongst the haves. The shuitianyi was made of diverse colour and material, which was richer in variation; he thought it was related to its popularity amongst women at that time. He thought the lack of references of shuitianyi was understandable; because it was not an ordinary style, the depiction of it would be relatively rare. Also, it was not a formal style and original references relating to the clothing of ordinary people are considerably fewer in China. Further, as a fashionable style, he thought the pursuit of the next style was predictable. Moreover, he suggested that the irregular shuitianyi might have a feeling of incompleteness, which might have caused its disappearance in China, as the Chinese prefer something which hints at being complete and perfect.

### ***The regular and irregular style***

As indicated earlier, many researchers derived their view of the style of irregular shuitianyi based on one figure painting within the Yanqinyiqing. The composition of this depicted gown was very complicated, as the colour segments were much smaller than the regularly patched shuitianyi. Based on this gown, a replica illustration was often applied to demonstrate the shuitianyi; however, the segmentation of each patch was obviously much bigger than the original proportion (Fig. 70 and Fig. 71). This patchy gown was dissimilar to the other three paintings of the shuitianyi; this might be an exceptional shuitianyi, yet, there

was a possibility that this irregularly structured gown was not an example of shuitianyi. Even if this style once appeared in the Ming and Qing, its popularity was doubtful, as this depiction was the only reference of this so-called irregular shuitianyi. Amongst the four paintings in this album, only one depicted this version of the shuitianyi; this provides further doubts about the popularity of the irregular style. Moreover, it was unlikely that two different styles of shuitianyi would appear at the same time, as the original style was liable to be replaced by the newly developed one. Comparing this irregular style with the regular shuitianyi in this album, the composition and structure was completely different (see Fig. 64-67). The composition of this irregular gown was more complicated; applying various shapes, the colour segments were irregular and relatively small. However, the regular shuitianyi was much simpler, in terms of composition; applying only two colours, the three regular garments were made of rectangular patches which were comparatively bigger in proportion. Whether in structure or in the colour composition, these two styles appeared like two extremes; the coexistence of these two styles of shuitianyi was still arguable.

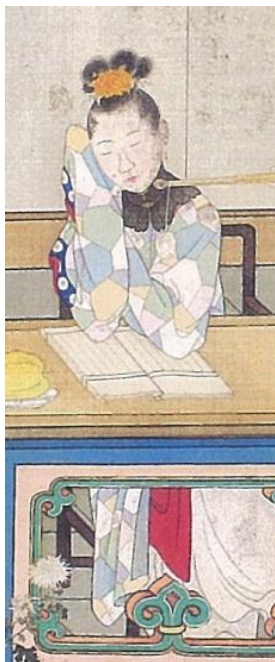


Fig. 70 Detail of the garment, see Fig. 67



Fig. 71 Illustrated by Zhou and Gao, see Fig. 70 for detailed image

The structure of the shuitianyi could be varied from regular to irregular; yet, apart from this figure painting in Yanqinyiqing, all other references seen during this research only depict the regularly patched shuitianyi, even after the mid Qing dynasty. The print found in the British Museum was dated back to the early Qing (see Fig. 61); the shuitianyi was regularly composed and featured a field-like structure. Even though the historical background of this print was probably the Ming, still, this regularly structured shuitianyi was apt to be the style prevalent in the Qing. A new depiction of the shuitianyi was found in a handscroll of the Qing; this painting was auctioned off at Sotheby's New York in 2007. This painting dated back to the nineteenth century, painted by an unknown artist; two colours were used to make this shuitianyi (Fig. 72), and again, the structure was composed in order. The scene of this erotic painting seemed like a brothel of the Ming period; the lady who wore the shuitianyi was playing musical instruments for entertainment. As Lin (2002) indicated, the styles prevalent amongst the brothels, south of the Yangtze River (江南) in particular, were very influential on women's clothing culture in the late Ming (pp. 484-485). Being worn by a lady at the brothel, this depicted shuitianyi was most likely a trendy style at that time. This information suggested that, this version of shuitianyi was presumably a newer style compared to the depictions found in the Yanqinyiqing. Again, this raised doubts about the existence and popularity of the irregular shuitianyi. Further, the Yanqinyiqing was painted potentially a hundred years earlier than this erotic painting, which made the occurrence and prevalence of the so-called irregular shuitianyi even more doubtful.



Fig. 72 Anonymous, painting, 19<sup>th</sup> century, an example of regularly patched shuitianyi, private collection

Aiming to further understand this dressing style, an attempt was made to compare the depiction of shuitianyi in the Yanqinyiqing (see Fig. 64-67), the print (see Fig. 61) and the erotic handscroll painting (see Fig. 72). The colour composition of the print was obviously richer than it was in the Yanqinyiqing; at least two more colours were applied, however, the patched structure was very alike. Structurally varied, the erotic painting appeared to be different from the other two, yet, the field-like structure was the same. To compose the shuitianyi, the patches were divided into smaller pieces, which had resulted in the textural change in the later version of the shuitianyi. As Li Yu indicated, the strips were increased to make this style of garment; the shuitianyi composed of more strips was revealed in this nineteenth century painting. Considering the relevant information it seems possible that the



shuitianyi was likely to be developed from fewer strips to more strips; yet, the appearance of an irregularly patched style was still short of evidence.

Somehow, the irregular style has become the defining representation of shuitianyi, however, the popularity or even existence of this style is unsure due to the lack of relevant information. The additional references found during this research have demonstrated that, the regularly patched shuitianyi was the style that gained prevalence in the Ming and Qing. This study sought to clarify the image of the representative shuitianyi. In consideration of the fact that many have always regarded the irregular style as the typical shuitianyi, an attempt was made to further define this dressing style.

### ***The pianyi (偏衣)***

Excavated from the “Jiangling (江陵), Jicheng (紀城) tomb number one”, dating back to the Chinese Warring States period (戰國: 476 B.C.-221 B.C.), the costume depicted on the wooden figurine was probably the earliest image example of a Chinese garment largely covered by patchwork (Fig. 73 and Fig. 74). This costume was made of four rectangular patches distinguished by two different colours. Because of the structure, it was visually alike the chessboard and even obviously, it seemed like Chinese pictography “田”, the field. It looked like the pianyi, which was recorded earlier in the “Zuozhuan’ (左傳), an ancient literary source from the Chinese Spring and Autumn period (春秋: 770 B.C.-476 B.C.); dating back to about 660 B.C., the pianyi was worn during an event. The depiction in Zuozhuan about this bicolour costume was potentially the earliest literature reference of patched costume in China. Furthermore, the structure of pianyi and shuitianyi looked alike, because of the mutual feature of field-like composition.



Fig. 73 The wooden figurine, 476-221 B.C., the early example of costume largely made of patches, collection of Hubei Provincial Museum, China

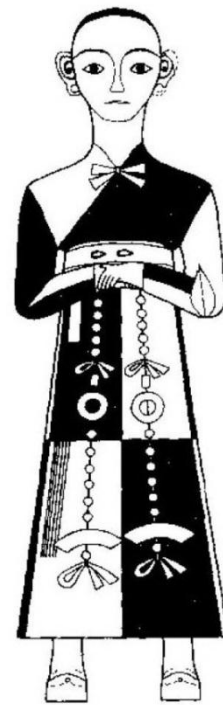


Fig. 74 Illustrated by the editing group of the Institute of Archaeology of Hubei Province, based on the wooden figurine excavated from Jicheng tomb one in 1995, see Fig. 73

Yet, the pianyi was regarded as strange clothing; it was informal and even unlucky to wear pianyi during the Spring and Autumn period. Later, due to the nourishing culture and with less taboos, novel styles of costume were easily originated, developed and spread during the Warring States period, throughout the southern part of China in particular (Shen, 2002, p. 53). The discovery of the wooden figurine in Jiangling, a historical city in southern China, might have suggested that, this once strange style had become accepted and potentially popular in Southern China during the Warring States period.

### ***New styles in southern part of China***

Because of the fear of the unknown and unfamiliar, the pianyi was once criticised and differentiated from “normal” costume. It was regarded as odd and far too novel; the conflict caused by the colour contrast made this style further disapproved of during the Spring and

Autumn period. Later, the pianyi along with other new styles of clothing seemed to be accepted in the southern part of China during the Warring States period.

Thousands of years later, Li Yu was concerned about the popularity of the shuitianyi, and even hinted that the prevalence of this style was a symbol of the fall of Ming dynasty. Based on the existing references, the popularity of this dressing style during late Ming and early Qing was beyond doubt. Yet, it was very likely that the prevalence of shuitianyi was limited to certain areas, as the existing references about this style were extremely rare. Further, the depiction in the Shangyuan dengcai tu had revealed that, the shuitianyi was popularly worn in Nanjing (南京) or the area nearby. Furthermore, the area south of the Yangtze River or Changjiang River has long been the important area for producing textile, cloth and fabric. Taking the material resource into consideration, southern China seems more likely to be the region where this style of clothing could be made and popularised. Zhao Xiulu was born in Chaoxian (巢縣), nearby Nanjing; this regional association increases the potential interpretation that the depicted shuitianyi in his Xiyuan yaji tu was popularly worn in southern China. In the Lulinwaishi, the lady who wore the shuitian cloak was depicted in Xihu (西湖) or West Lake; again, the Xihu was a heritage site in Hangzhou City, south of the Yangtze River. Evidence has demonstrated the popularity of shuitianyi in the South, yet, it is uncertain whether this style was popularised in the other regions of China.

The atmosphere in southern China was for a long time much freer and culturally nourished; therefore, it would be easier for new styles to become acceptable and even popular in the southern area. The pianyi was a historical example, which was forbidden due to custom and taboo but later became accepted in the South. The development of the modern qipao provides another example of how cultural difference in areas resulted in different attitudes

toward clothing styles. The qipao was a costume from the northern part of China; yet, it was modernised in Shanghai, and later became a fashionable style which spread to other cities. Deeply influenced by the Western fashion, the qipao was tightly fitted; some thought this dress was inappropriate due to the revealing feature, yet, it was widely accepted in the South, particularly in Shanghai. The dressing styles frequently changed during the late Ming; because of the novelty in style, Suzhou (蘇州) south of the Yangtze River became the fashion centre of the Ming (Wu, 2007, p. 142). Due to the open-minded cultural environment, presumably, novel styles like shuitianyi were apt to gain popularity in southern China.

### ***The prevalence and disappearance***

The phenomenon of pursuing novelty in style is obvious in late Ming; after the mid Ming, women's dressing styles changed a lot as they continued to look for newfangled clothing (Wu, 2003, p. 71). As Finnane (2008) indicated, the shuitianyi was probably the most eccentric style amongst all (p. 49); this dressing style was rich in variation, and the feature of uniqueness seemed appropriate to the environment. To pursue the novelty and distinctness, the dressing styles had constantly changed in late Ming (Lin, 2002, p. 480). The field-like structure was new to the consumers at that time; patchwork enabled further variation in colours, fabrics and textiles. To express individual difference through attire, this dressing style became prevalent amongst men and women, presumably from the late Ming.

Sun (2008) suggested that, the disapproval from the literati in particular, had caused the temporary popularity of shuitianyi (p. 51). The discovered references evidence the popularity of shuitianyi in the Ming and Qing; the concrete reason that caused the disappearance of this dressing style is speculative. With no association with specific types or

forms, the shuitianyi was free in style; however, this might have caused its easier disappearance from within the clothing culture. Further, the outline style and garment form could always be passed down from generation to generation, yet, patchwork design was heavily reliant on a maker's aesthetics, technique of making and craft skill. To review the costume history of China, some specific garments appeared to be more memorable because of the distinctiveness of their silhouette, for example, the yunjian (雲肩: a decorative piece on the shoulders) (Fig. 75). The patchwork had made the shuitianyi unique from the others; simultaneously, this patched composition had made its continuance even harder. The existing historical record or references about common costumes appears to be rare (Wu, 1999, p. 56); as an informal style prevalent amongst the ordinary population, the disappearance of shuitianyi was predictable due to the lack of record and depiction of it. As indicated earlier, the shuitianyi was likely to have originated in the atmosphere of pursuing novelty; although this style was already rich in variation, the change in taste was apt to impact on the prevalence of shuitianyi. The children's baijiayi (百家衣) was examined in this study, in order to further explore the disappearance of shuitianyi. Regularly composed, the baijiayi also features patchwork design; traditionally, it is made of a hundred patches gathered from different families, aiming to bless the new born infants or children. The appearance of baijiayi can be traced back as early as the Northern Song; yet, as an ancient tradition, this style of costume has been passed down from generation to generation. The baijiayi is still produced and worn in today's China (Fig. 76); in comparison with the baijiayi, the lack of association with custom or tradition might have caused the easier disappearance of shuitianyi.



Fig. 75 The yunjian, early 20<sup>th</sup> century, collection of the National Museum of History, Taiwan



Fig. 76 The children's baijiayi, produced for sale in Zhouzhuang (周莊), a historical town nearby Shanghai

### ***Shuitianyi in today's China***

The shuitianyi was a fashionable style once prevalent amongst men and women; however, this style has largely become unknown in today's China. Apart from illustration in costume books, sometimes, the reproduction of shuitianyi could be found in exhibitions held to demonstrate Chinese historical costumes. Having celebrated the 20th anniversary, "The Dalian International Fashion Festival", held in Dalian (大連) also had a special exhibition of Chinese historical costumes; a reproduced shuitianyi was on display as one of the Ming's costumes (Fig. 77). An exclusive show of Chinese historical costumes was held by the APW (Asien-Pazifik-Wochen) Berlin in 2001; replicas of shuitianyi were worn by the models to display the lively and colourful composition of various patches (Fig. 78). To reproduce this historical piece, the patches were irregularly cut and pieced; this information had further indicated that, many have associated this irregular style with the original shuitianyi.



Fig. 77 A reproduced shuitianyi, displayed as an example of costume of the Ming



Fig. 78 A series of shuitianyi, reproduced for a Chinese costume show in Berlin, 2001

Designed by a noted Japanese costume designer, Emi Wada, a series of reproduced shuitianyi appeared in the film, “Reign of Assassins” (劍雨) 2010 (Fig. 79). Emi Wada is an experienced designer, who once won the 58<sup>th</sup> Academy Award for best costume design. Because of the vivid colour combination, this series of reproduced shuitianyi was visually impressive; yet, she employed the irregular style to represent this dressing style of the Ming. Through the modern media the shuitianyi was reintroduced to the public, which has potentially benefited the awareness of this historical style. Nevertheless, it must have furthered the impression of patchy structured of the shuitianyi. However, her perception of this irregular style of shuitianyi was understandable, as most of information appeared to imply the irregular style as representative of shuitianyi.





Fig. 79 The reproduced shuitianyi, designed by Emi Wada, 2010

Two replicas of shuitianyi were found in an exhibition held in the heritage buildings of Cicheng (慈城), a historical town in the southern China; again, patches were irregular cut and then pieced together to make these two garments (Fig. 80). Aiming to reintroduce the traditional handcraft and needlework, this exhibition also included a detailed description of shuitianyi. A good intention is rather obvious; nevertheless, the common misunderstanding of this style was included, for example, the application of misleading references about the religious shuitianyi. Further, the image of reproduced shuitianyi was used in the advertisement poster, which introduced a tour trip to Cicheng (Fig. 81). This information had suggested that, some still associate the shuitianyi with Chinese cultural heritage. Moreover, a series of cup designs had applied historical costumes from different dynasties; the shuitianyi was depicted as one symbolic style within Chinese clothing culture (Fig. 82). This information had implied that, the shuitianyi was a considerable style amongst Chinese



historical costumes. However, the depiction of the shuitianyi was based on the irregularly patched style, which was commonly illustrated in many costume books.



Fig. 80 The biggest reproduced piece of shuitianyi, displayed in Cicheng



Fig. 81 The tourist poster with an image of reproduced shuitianyi



Fig. 82 A cup designed with the illustration of shuitianyi

The existence or popularity of this irregular style was uncertain, yet, the relevant references had indicated that, many have always associated the shuitianyi with the irregularly patchy style. The irregular style has long been illustrated to demonstrate the shuitianyi in costume books, which had definitely impacted on people's perception of this dressing style. Many books have also included the regular shuitianyi, however, as the relevant information had suggested, people appeared to prefer the irregular style. Personal romantic thought might have been involved, furthering the association with the irregular shuitianyi; doubtless, the patchy style appeared to be more interesting and rich in composition. As stated the prevalence or even existence of this irregular style is arguable; however, the regularly patched piece featured of field-like structure was the definite style that was once popularly worn as a fashionable style in the Ming and Qing.

## ***Conclusion***

The shuitianyi was a fashionable style featuring the application of patchwork; the regular composition had associated this style of garments with the vision of paddy field, the shuitian. Most references had indicated that, this style originated in late Ming; Li Yu even implied that the fall of the Ming dynasty was predictable because of the appearance and popularity of the shuitianyi during the last reign of Chongzhen. However, new evidence has suggested that, this style seemed to appear at least twenty years earlier than the existing references had indicated. Some attempted to define the shuitianyi as a particular style of gown or dress; yet, with no association with specific forms of garment, it was actually a dressing style featured a field-like structure, made of patches. Moreover, the exploration of shuitianyi had long been limited to women's costume, yet, new evidence found has confirmed its prevalence amongst men's clothing culture in the late Ming dynasty.

Based on one figure painting in the Yanqinyiqing, many regard the irregularly patchy style as the representative form of shuitianyi. However, due to the lack of supporting references and information, the popularity or even existence of this irregular shuitianyi is arguable. Although the development from regular to irregular is doubtful, the style of shuitianyi actually altered in structure. The density of composing the patches changed, as Li Yu indicated, the strips constantly increased, which resulted in too many seams in the shuitianyi. To compare the depictions of shuitianyi, new imagery found in an erotic painting demonstrated the change in style (see Fig. 72); yet, the field-like structure was kept as the symbolic feature.

People who wore the shuitianyi appeared to be comparatively wealthy; according to Li Yu, many attempted to cut complete lengths of textile or fabric into pieces, in order to make

this style of garments. Hence, the production of the shuitianyi was very material-and time-consuming. Based on the depictions in Yanqinyiqing (see Fig. 64-66), the characters appeared to be leisured and wealthy. A man and woman who wore the shuitianyi were depicted in a print found in the British Museum; according to the attire and the fact that a third figure was depicted carrying luggage for them, this man and woman were likely to be wealthier (see Fig. 61). In the Lulinwaishi, the lady who wore the shuitianyi was accompanied by a maid, which implied that this lady was likely to be rich. In terms of culture and economy, the area south of the Yangtze River has long been a well-developed region. Hence, the popularity of shuitianyi in the South increased the possibility that this style was once accepted or even prevalent amongst the wealthy.

As some references suggested, this style was most likely to be popularised in southern China, south of the Yangtze River in particular. However, it was uncertain whether the shuitianyi had spread to other regions or not. The classification of social status tended to be loose after the middle of the Ming period; further, in the late Ming, the occurrence of class transgression and presumption became very common, particularly in clothing. Constantly pursuing new style trends, shuitianyi enabled the ordinary population of the Ming to express their individual difference and to present personal taste and aesthetics in clothing. Having investigated the social and cultural context of the late Ming period, this study suggests that, the prevalence of shuitianyi was closely related to the development of an open-minded attitude toward novelty and distinctness in clothing.

## **4.2 Case Study of the Qipao**

### **Introduction of the qipao**

The qipao (旗袍) refers to women's dressing style, inspired and developed from the historical costume of Chinese Qing dynasty (Fig. 83). Originated from traditional Manchurian costume, the qipao was incorporated with Western styles and became extremely prevalent in the 1920s (Yang, 2004, p. 8); Liu (2009) also mentioned that the origin of the qipao was the gown worn by Manchurian women of the Qing dynasty (p. 15). The Manchu is one of China's fifty-six ethnic groups; they mainly live in the north-east area of China, known today as Manchuria. Established by the Manchurians, the Qing dynasty was the last empire of monarchic China. Deeply influenced by the heritage of baqi (八旗) system, habitually, the Manchurians were also called the qiren (旗人), which means people of the qi (旗). The baqi or eight banners was a system of social-political-military organisation of the Manchurians (Hucker, 1985, p. 358). Eight regiments were distinguished by colour and symbol; this was primarily a military system, which enabled the chieftain to strengthen his army and keep track of numbers of the enrolled Manchurian soldiers, along with their families. The costume of the qiren is called the qifu (旗服) or qizhuang (旗装), which is generally regarded as the original model of modern qipao.



Fig. 83 Empress's informal robe, Guangxu period (光緒: 1875-1908), collection of the Palace Museum in Beijing

Moreover, the qipao is also known as cheongsam (長衫) in Cantonese, literally meaning long gown or robe; some believed that a men's long robe was the origin of qipao (Wu, 2009, p. 110). Often, the formation of a dressing style is influenced by various elements and the original source can be obscure. The origin of qipao might be controversial; however, whether from men's gown or the banner's robe, the loose-fitted and straight-shaped silhouette was shared. Like other typical Chinese costumes, the original qipao was unfitted to the body, which is very different from the modernised qipao.

### **Development**

It was in the 1920s, that the qipao began to be associated with the modern and fashionable version; the qipao had become very popular, particularly in the early twentieth century (Clark, 1999, p. 157). Lo (2005) indicated, the qipao of the 1910s or earlier was loose and

long in length (p. 118). However, after the opening up of China, the influence from the West had a constant impact on Chinese dressing culture, along with a new attitude toward fashion. The qipao was then transformed from a loose-fitting robe to a body-hugging dress; due to the revealing feature, it was regarded as a daring style at that time (Garrett, 1994, p. 104). Encouraged and inspired by the Western styles, the qipao became increasingly fitted to the body. This new version of qipao further revealed the curvaceous feminine figure and added a sexy silhouette to this dress. According to Ross (2008), in the first part of the twentieth century, the most notable garment was the qipao, which was modelled on the West but in specific Chinese ways (pp. 156-157). This new qipao became very prevalent as a dress style amongst Chinese women in the early twentieth century.

As Western fashion constantly impacted on Chinese clothing, concerns about the loss of cultural identity were consequentially raised. In 1929, the Nanjing National Government (1927-1937) enacted the fuzhitiaoli (服制條例), clothing regulations, which explicitly listed and illustrated the formal costume for Chinese men and women. For some ceremonies, such as a graduation ceremony, qipao became one of the formal garments for women; unlike the fashionable style popularised in Shanghai, the qipao illustrated in these clothing regulations were in a relatively conservative style (Fig. 84). This formulation established the status of the qipao as the national dress of China; it was generally regarded as the national dress during the twentieth century (Chen, 2005, p. 687). Moreover, as a response to Western influence, this official clothing regulation further ensured the continuance of wearing the qipao at that time. Aimed at protecting Chinese clothing culture from complete disappearance, this regulation had secured that certain groups of people had to wear the qipao, for instance, students of some universities. This regulation, no doubt, helped to

promote the qipao; yet, the fashionable and modish features that enabled its further integration with modern styles seemed to be the key that kept this dress alive.



Fig. 84 The clothing regulations of 1929, the qipao was illustrated as one of the formal clothing for women

### The spread

To represent different style and spirit, the Beijing qipao was distinct from the Shanghai qipao. After the conquest of mainland China, the Manchurians replaced the Ming dynasty of Chinese Han (the largest ethnic group of China) and established the last imperial China. The Qing dynasty moved its capital from Shengjing (盛京, known today as Shenyang, the capital of Liaoning Province) to Beijing in 1644. Thereafter, the new capital became the political and cultural centre, where the traditional Manchu costume came to be widely known and worn. Having been turned into the costume of the imperial Qing, the Manchurian clothing became more than an ethnic costume. However, it was not until the early twentieth century, that the modified qipao became fashionable and was further spread out over the country as a



stylish piece. According to Jackson (2006), the fashion inspiration taken from Western styles first emerged in Shanghai in the early twentieth century (pp. 40-42). The Beijing qipao represented the heritage and tradition of this costume; nevertheless, the modern qipao was originated in Shanghai, the fashion capital of China. As Clark (1999) indicated, the popularity of qipao spread from the fashion centre of Shanghai to many urban cities and also to Hong Kong (p. 159).

While Shanghai became the internal centre for popularising the qipao, Hong Kong was the essential external hub for delivering the modern images of Chinese qipao overseas. Calendar posters in particular, have long been considered as the significant medium promoting this novel dressing style in the early twentieth century. As Clark (1999) indicated, the popularity of calendar posters amongst the Chinese cultural communities was very obvious (p. 157). Furthermore, many of these calendars were even sent to the Chinese associations abroad, for example, Chinatown of London and New York. Moreover, the posters featuring modern qipao were regarded as the popular and fashionable media for advertisements, for example, Hadamen Cigarettes (哈德門香菸), Shuangmeiren Cosmetics (雙美人牌化妝品), Xianshi Cosmetics (先施化妝品), Shanghai Beer, Nanyang Brothers Tobacco (南洋兄弟菸草) and Fengtiantaiyang Tobacco (奉天太陽菸草). Through the import and export trade, these posters must have exposed the modern qipao to the public and further promoted this Chinese dress outside the region of China (Fig. 85 and Fig. 86).



Fig. 85 The poster of Nanyang Brothers Tobacco



Fig. 86 The poster of Xianshi Cosmetics

The qipao had gained immense popularity as a fashionable dress, from the 1920s to the 1940s in particular; it was associated with modern or Western trends, including the make-up, hairstyle and accessories. The spread of posters and the advertising images of the qipao promoted this dress as the signifier of new Chinese fashion within the Chinese communities internally and externally. According to Chen (2005), the circulation of these fashionable images internationally boosted the qipao as the symbol of Chinese dress (p. 687). Moreover, the impetus given from celebrities was efficient to promote the qipao; they had always worn the qipao in public to express their cultural identity. The best example was the famous Song sisters, Song Qingling (宋慶齡: 1893-1981) and Song Meiling (宋美齡: 1897-2003). Song Qingling (or Madame Sun Yat-Sen) was the wife of Sun Yat-Sen (孫中山 or 孫逸仙: 1866-1925), who overthrew the Qing dynasty and established the Republic of China in 1911. Song Qingling had always been highly respected in China, and her qipao attire must have reinforced the impression of this so-called national dress (Fig. 87). According to Finnane

(2008), Song Qingling was often wearing the qipao, particularly after the death of Sun Yat-Sen (p. 145). In 1927, the younger sister Song Meiling married Chiang Kai-Shek (蔣介石: 1887-1975), who was the political and military leader of the Kuomintang (國民黨), or Chinese Nationalist Party. Song Meiling was significantly influential in Chinese politics at that time, with regard to Sino-US diplomatic relations in particular; later, she was selected as “Person of the Year” of American “Time” along with Chiang Kai-Shek in 1937. Song Meiling made several important political speeches in America, notably one in the United States Congress in 1943. To represent the Republic of China, a refined appearance and attitude was adopted wearing qipao; Song Meiling’s image was immediately spread amongst Americans. Furthermore, Song Meiling’s preference for the qipao was well revealed in the photographs of her; the qipao was worn in almost every image of her, including her attendance at the Cairo Conference in 1943 (Fig. 88). Her qipao image certainly made this dress further recognised as the symbolic piece of Chinese clothing, nationally and internationally.



Fig. 87 A photograph of Song Qingling wearing the qipao, 1941



Fig. 88 Image of Song Meiling wearing the qipao to attend the Cairo Conference in 1943

## **The decline in popularity**

Political changes in the past must have had a great impact on the popularity of qipao, particularly in mainland China. Led by Mao Zedong (毛澤東: 1893-1976), the People's Republic of China was established in 1949; as Köll (2010) suggested, this political revolution caused great changes in China's fashion industry (p. 404). Under the Communist rules, the qipao seemed to be opposite to the national spirit because of the connection with the bourgeois (Wu, 2009, p. 111). Communist China approved the frugal uniform garments, such as the Mao suit (see Fig. 5), which perfectly echoed the spirit of the new-born China. According to Steele and Major (1999), under Communist China, the qipao essentially disappeared in its homeland after 1950 (p. 53). Furthermore, the clothing regulations of the Nanjing Government of the Republican Era (1911-1949), had forced the population to wear the qipao; however, it had also promoted this dress to be further symbolised as the costume of the Kuomintang, the Chinese Nationalist Party. Finnane (2005) also suggested that, the qipao was the quintessential garment of the Republican-era (p. 594). During the Chinese Civil War (1927-1949), the Chinese Nationalist Party was hostile to the Communist Party of China; however, the Communist Party took over political power in 1949. After the establishment of the Communist China, the qipao might have become taboo, as this dress would have been regarded as the clothing of its political foe, the Kuomintang. Later, when the Cultural Revolution began, this fashionable dress was forbidden in China, for at least ten years.

The qipao was banned in mainland China during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1976); it was regarded as a symbol of capitalism and the bourgeoisie in China (Ling, 2007, p. 12). Not only the qipao, but anything fashionable was perceived to be offensive and

highly inappropriate during the Cultural Revolution. To dress in style was obviously against the spirit of Cultural Revolution; as Steele and Major (1999) indicated, fashionable style was considerably offensive at that time (p. 53). However, the qipao culture was retained within Chinese communities outside of mainland China. People in Taiwan, Hong Kong or Singapore still wore the qipao as the formal and traditional dress.

For certain reasons, the qipao is no longer a daily wearing choice for most Chinese women; according to Finnane (1996) the qipao is neither commonly worn nor highly regarded in today's China (p. 105). Later, Chew (2007) also explained that, the qipao was less worn in China after the 1950s (p. 144). The qipao had been firmly associated with the image of Chinese women, even though the numbers wearing this dress had fallen. Still, the qipao fashion has managed to come back through the mass media. Noticeably, in the 1960s, the Chinese qipao was once again glittering on the international stage due to the film "The World of Suzie Wong". The Hong Kong actress Nancy Kwan was attired in the body-hugging qipao, which was flattering and alluring (Fig. 89); the new qipao look was thought to be popularised again because of this movie and Nancy Kwan (Garrett, 1994, p. 105). Today, many are still attracted to the qipao and the so-called "qipao fever" has demonstrated this phenomenon. Particularly amongst the Chinese communities, qipao fever has always occurred after some specific films or fashion shows, in which the enchanting qipao was highlighted. For example, the "In the Mood for Love" (花樣年華, literary film, released in 2000), "Lust, Caution" (色戒, espionage thriller film, released in 2007) and John Galliano's inspirational designs for Christian Dior's fashion show in 1997 (Fig. 90, Fig. 91 and Fig. 92).



Fig. 89 Nancy Kwan and the qipao dressed in the film, "The World of Suzie Wong", 1960



Fig. 90 Maggie Cheung (張曼玉) and the qipao, her attire in this film "In the Mood for Love" has become the classic look of qipao



Fig. 91 Tang Wei (湯唯) and her qipao look in the film, "Lust, Caution", 2007

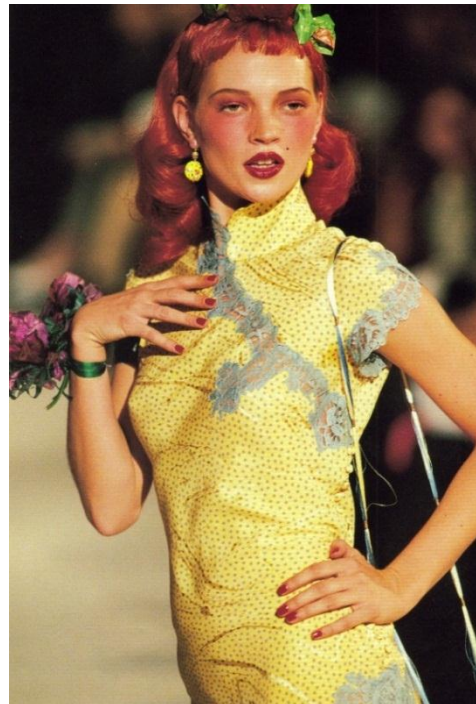


Fig. 92 Christian Dior, Autumn/Winter 1997

## **Symbol of Chineseness**

As a symbol of Chinese style which hints at the exoticism of the Orient, the qipao has become a familiar silhouette on the fashion stage. According to Ling (2007), the qipao or cheongsam has been regularly revived in the fashion marketplace by contemporary fashion designers (p. 12). Designers have always revisited the qipao for inspiration; for example, in Chanel's pre-fall 2010 collection Karl Lagerfeld borrowed the qipao outline, yet, to further integrate with Chanel's signature fabric (Fig. 93). Some features of Chinese qipao seem to be well blended with the onward trend; the qipao collar, side slits and the obliquely fastened buckles in the front had become the elements which have always delivered qipao sensation. According to Yin (2010), the style of stand-up collar was pervasive in the late Qing dynasty (p. 72); the high collar has become the symbolic design which would immediately signify the Chineseness. The stiff and rather high collar draws the attention to the wearer's face; as Ross (2008) suggested, the high collar design had embellished the shape of the wearer's face (p. 157). This style of collar is often seen on the stage; however, the design has always been altered to better correspond to the trends. The outline of Mandarin collar has always reminded people of the Chinese theme, in spite of the variation in style and material. The slits on both sides had allowed the semi-nomadic Manchurians to have the basic movement, such as walking and horse-riding (Clark, 1999, p. 155); later, this slit design had become the recognisable feature of qipao. Moreover, as this dress became more and more fitted to the body, a higher slit was required to enable walking and moving; this slit design had furthered the feminine, sexy and desirable sensation of the qipao. The buckle was originally designed to fasten the outfit; however, many contemporary designs applied these frogs with no consideration of the functions, apart from to signify the Chineseness. Apart from these



classic features, the consistency between the qipao and modern styles has turned this dress into a global fashion commodity. This one-piece dress seems to perfectly fit with modern ornaments, in both Oriental and Western styles. Furthermore, it goes well with a modern coat and even furs; trendy accessories have added a contemporary and fashionable look to Chinese qipao.



Fig. 93 Chanel, Pre-fall 2010

### **Qipao in today's China**

The qipao is a highly recognised costume of China; many have regarded it as the symbolic Chinese dress, especially in the Western world (Brown and Brown, 2006, p. 79). In spite of the fact that, the qipao is a globally recognised clothing code for Chineseness, many disapprove of this dress as being representative of Chinese dressing culture. The qipao originated from the costume of the minority Manchurians; as a piece of ethnic clothing, many have argued against its representativeness of Chinese costume culture. As the largest ethnic group of China, the Han people in particular have disputed this for years. In spite of



the regime of Manchurian Qing, the Han culture has long been regarded as the legitimate Chinese civilisation. Furthermore, many have attempted to revive their own dressing culture, the hanfu (汉服), or costume of the Han. Some organisations were established, aiming to reintroduce orthodox Chinese clothing culture, for example, the Hanfu Culture Developing Association in Taiwan and Toronto Association for the Revival of Hanfu in Canada.

In fact, the qipao today is very rarely worn in China; several factors might have caused this phenomenon, for example, the design and cutting. The body-hugging silhouette is one of the glamorous features of qipao; however, this character has potentially limited the further popularity of this dress. People always associate the qipao with tall and slim women; therefore, it appears to be designed for women of a specific stature. In fact, the tightly-fitted style must have caused the decline in popularity, as many are unwilling to wear something too tight to show the silhouette. The high slits on the side seem to be enchanting and fascinating; however, this revealing design has prevented the qipao from being popular in most women's daily life. It is sometimes considered indecent to wear this kind of revealing garment for some occasions, not even to mention within the relatively conservative society of China. According to the interviews conducted in this study, some participants seemed to associate the qipao with old China and regarded it as an old-fashioned style. Many indicated that, the qipao had become less welcome in China, amongst the younger generation in particular. Some participants showed their interests in qipao; still, this dress has become rarely worn in China. Moreover, the decline in population of wearing the qipao has furthered the resistance toward putting on this dress; the qipao is not popularly seen or worn in China, to wear it could be odd and considerably embarrassing.

Today, the service industry in China or other Chinese communities, no doubt holds the largest group of people who wear the qipao, as a piece of uniform. From the restaurant waitresses to hotel staff and receptionists, almost all the foreign people who come to visit China will have encountered the uniform qipao, which is worn to present Chineseness. Interestingly, this irresistible contact with the uniform image might have helped to spread the qipao worldwide. However, this association with uniform has depressed the Chinese interest even more. These garments are mass produced with poor quality, and most importantly, they have become the dress code for the symbolic Chinese uniform. This uniform impression has further marginalised the qipao from mainstream fashion, resulting in the decline in its popularity. Moreover, intending to utilise the sexy image, some even attempted to integrate the qipao with the pornographic industry. Undoubtedly, this approach has sullied the image of qipao and caused the disfavour of this dress.

## **Conclusion**

Even though the qipao is not often worn in China, and the debate on its legitimacy as representative of Chinese clothing culture could be going on for years; still, the qipao is the most recognisable costume of China. Having integrated Western fashion within the form of Chinese traditional costume, the qipao has been well combined with trendy and fashionable styles. The further analyses of the features that boosted its prevalence and the factors which potentially caused its decline in popularity has enabled a better understanding of the qipao and the dressing culture in modern China.

### ***4.3 Comparison of the Shuitianyi and Qipao***

The qipao is a typical example that demonstrates the integration of Chinese style and modern design. Moreover, it is a relatively explored subject amongst all Chinese costumes. The shuitianyi is a rarely studied subject; the investigation into qipao resulted in some suggestions relating to the disappearance of this dressing style.

The qipao originated from the Manchurian's costume; after the alteration in style, it has largely become known as a representative Chinese piece. To represent the clothing culture and tradition of the Manchurians, the continuance of wearing this costume is secured within this ethnic minority. Regardless of the fact that, the qipao is experiencing a huge decline in popularity in modern China, still, it is worn as a traditional costume, closely associated with the Manchurian culture. However, the shuitianyi was a style that was once popular during a specific historical period; without the long-lasting group of people to wear it, the disappearance is understandable. As a fashionable style which reflected the social phenomenon of its cultural and historical background, once the context changed, the demise in popularity was predictable.

After the conquest of mainland China, the costume of the Manchurians became the formal clothing of the imperial Qing; hence, the references and records of the original model of qipao are better preserved. Moreover, the end of the Qing dynasty was just about a century ago, existing information and even real pieces of Qing costume is comparably easy to collect. Therefore, the study of Qing costume is relatively common; further, to refer to the Qing style for inspiration is more frequent in fashion design. To review the shuitianyi, it was a style prevalent amongst the ordinary people; therefore, the historical references of it were rare which has resulted in the lack of exploration and study. As the information about it has

been demonstrated to be little, the consequent outcome of remaining unknown is to be expected.

Moreover, after the fall of the Qing dynasty, the qipao was listed in the clothing regulation as one of the formal costumes for women; with official protection from the Republican government, this regulation must have helped the continuance of qipao. As Gao Chunming suggested in the interview, the clothing regulation in 1929 was closely related to the continuation of the qipao culture. Yet, the shuitianyi was an informal and rather complex style, its continuing popularity became ever harder.

In China, the traditional costumes of the ethnic minority are still worn, however, limited to specific groups of people in certain regions. Apart from the ethnic costumes, the traditional clothing culture has experienced a great loss in modern China. The qipao originated from an ethnic costume and also the historical clothing of the Qing; nevertheless, its integration with modern style has been the essential key that has kept the qipao culture alive and further established it as a recognisable symbol of Chineseness. Some features of qipao have always been integrated with modern fashion, for example, the collar and high slit design; these details could be altered in style, still, it is easy to capture the intended sensation of qipao design. As a dressing style featuring a field-like structure composed of patchwork, the lack of recognisable outline design of the shuitianyi along with the complexity of its construction might have caused its relatively easier disappearance from clothing culture.

## Chapter Five: Practical Work

The shuitianyi was a popular historical dressing style, featuring the application of patchwork; the interesting composition made of various fabrics and textiles made the shuitianyi special and unique in comparison with other Chinese historical costumes. Nevertheless, this dressing style has become largely unknown due to the lack of imagery and literary references. This research intended to re-explore and re-introduce the shuitianyi; further, to produce a series of practical works based on the theoretical study, intending to demonstrate the integration of historical subject and modern fashion. Inspired by the shuitianyi, the patchwork design became the theme of this series of work; further, other sources were drawn on for creation, for instance, Rococo costume and Art Deco style. Skirt supports of the eighteenth century had enabled a comparatively spacious structure to display the fine textile and exquisite design in detail (Fig. 94 and 95); the conspicuous silhouette had inspired the experiments on outline design of this collection. Further, the modern and chic style of Art Deco appeared to be relevant to the theme of this creation (Fig. 96). Moreover, its historical and cultural background of exoticism and orientalism had further inspired the production of this series of works, evidenced in simple silhouette design and material choice.



Fig. 94 Panniers, 1750, collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Costume Institute



Fig. 95 Dress, 1740s, collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Costume Institute



Fig. 96 Dress, designed by Jeanne Paquin for the Paris exhibition, 1925, collection of the V&A Museum

### ***5.1 Design Process and Experiments***

#### **Patchwork**

The designs produced aimed to reintroduce the studied subject within the form of current fashion. Taking inspiration from the shuitianyi, patchwork design has become the theme of this creation. In terms of shuitianyi, it refers to the religious costume and also a fashionable dressing style prevalent in the Ming and Qing dynasties of China. The vivid visual impression of fashionable shuitianyi inspired the experiments in material combination; further, the religious shuitianyi had impacted on the compositional structure of the new patchwork designs. In examining the religious shuitianyi, it seemed to be more focussed on the regularity in composition and the framed-like structure became symbolic (Fig. 97). The further experiments on patchwork structure had enabled different materials to be

combined in an unconventional way; this method of composing work was introduced within the production process. The framed patchwork was generated from a series of experiments on material and structure, featuring frame-like reconstructed texture. This style of patchwork was composed of two sections, the inserted patch and a frame-like restructured fabric. The design of the frame helped to focus on the patches inside; further, the combination of the inserted patch and outside frame has demonstrated a new approach to integrate diverse materials together (Fig. 98).



Fig. 97 Anonymous, painting, 1345, an example of the religious shuitianyi, collection of the British Museum



Fig. 98 A sample of the framed patchwork

Either with the shuitianyi or other Chinese styles of patchwork, the lack of three-dimensional structures was obvious; it was intended to add the three-dimensional feature to this new patchwork design. Utilising specific designs, for example geometric patterns and patchwork print, some fabrics were used to create the visual illusion; several samples were made to reconstruct the composition and make the work structurally three-dimensional.



Employing the basic stitching technique, the seam between the inserted patch and the frame was purposely widened, which had enabled the three-dimensional effect resulted from the turned out revers (Fig. 99).

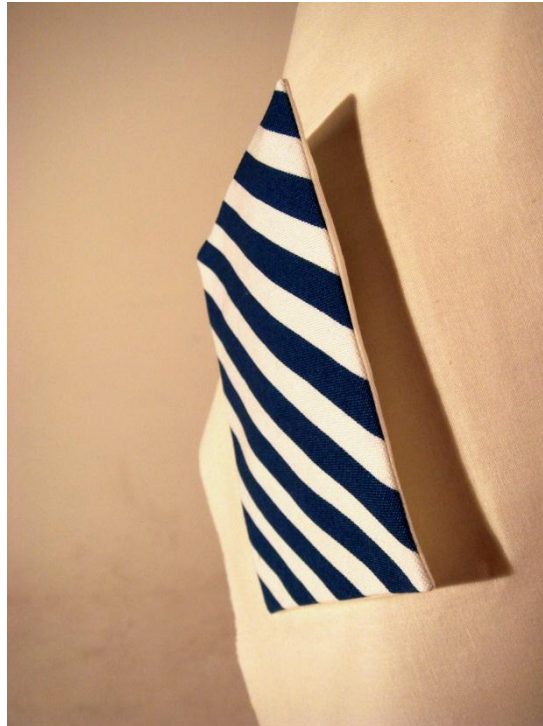


Fig. 99 Patchwork design with 3D effect

The combination of plastics and fabrics could be interesting, as some patterns of specific fabrics were found transformable through the heat of ironing; the plastics could be coloured, patterned and even structurally altered on the originally smooth surface. Furthermore, to visually imitate patchwork, new pattern was transformed and embedded in the plastics composed of different fabrics and each patch was overlapped with an unfinished edge. This patchy and irregular style appeared to be un-accomplishable through the traditional technique of making patchwork; the re-patterned patchwork, reconstructed of blurred dividing lines was visually like collage art. A layer of regularly patched textile was placed underneath the patterned plastics; to utilise the transparency of plastics, the combination of

regular patchwork and irregular patchy pattern had made this work further interesting in detail (Fig. 100). To add designed texture to the plastics, the flexibility of elastic net was applied; utilising the heat of pressed iron, the meshed pattern was integrated with the plastic layer, aiming to produce the three-dimensional effect through the change in textural density (Fig. 101). To further use the imitational look of patchwork, the print placed underneath the structured plastics featured patchwork-like design. To combine with structured plastic, corduroy was used to make the frame for the design; the regular striped texture of corduroy was purposely integrated with irregular meshed pattern of the plastics, aiming to make this patchwork rich in textural composition (Fig. 102).



Fig. 100 The plastic patchwork design



Fig. 101 Detail of the added texture on the surface of plastics

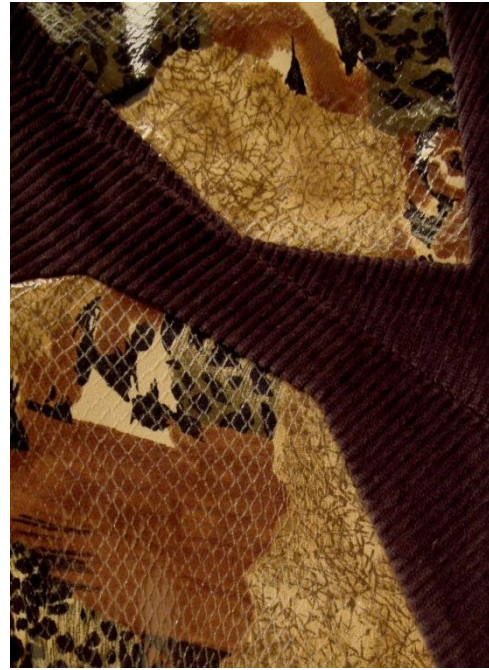


Fig. 102 The combination of textured plastics and corduroy

Acute angles would cause difficulty in making the fabric frame because of the tangled texture; inspired by the curve design of Rococo style, the originally sharp angle was replaced by a curve, which abated the difficulty in technical process and preserved the sensation of geometric figure (Fig. 103). According to different styles of patchwork and material, this experimental way of shaping frames was sometimes applied to replace the ordinary geometrically shaped frame. To further develop the structure of this framed patchwork, the inspiration was taken from image of religious shuitianyi; unlike the former method of making patchwork, several patches were placed into the pre-made frame to compose the design. The incipient boundary between each individual framed patchwork was broken, which reduced some unnecessary weight and enabled further variety in terms of composition (Fig. 104).



Fig. 103 Example of curved geometric figure



Fig. 104 Experiment on the structure of framed patchwork

The shuitianyi was structurally like a paddy field; inspired by this imagery association, the layered patchwork was originated by imitating a terraced field, the symbolic rural scenery of China. To imitate the structure, several layers of fabrics were tiered up to form the inserted design of patchwork (Fig. 105). To further develop this concept, an attempt was made to pile up the layers not horizontally but vertically; new patchwork was made based on the layer of pre-made patchwork (Fig. 106). This new approach to combine layers resulted in the change in structure; a further attempt was made, aiming to enable the composition to become structurally three-dimensional. It was intended to widen the seam of the added patch, in order to turn out the hidden revers; this technique had structurally separated each layer of patches and made this style of patchwork distinct from the traditional one (Fig. 107). This method of making patchwork enabled diverse fabrics to be further combined; the process of production is complicated, yet, the complex combination in both material and structure made the design rich in variation and composition. Furthermore, the idea of



adding new patches on the other had potentially solved the technical difficulty in applying the acute angle on framed patchwork design. The added patch was carefully arranged, aiming to cut and cover the original tangled texture caused by the sharp angle (Fig. 108).



Fig. 105 Sample of layered patchwork



Fig. 106 Experiment on the structure and combination of layered patchwork



Fig. 107 Example of restructured patchwork



Fig. 108 Sample of patchwork composition

## Outline design

Chinese historical costume has long been criticised for the lack of variety; the alteration in style was more obvious in Western costume. The conspicuous silhouette like the Rococo costume was sought for inspiration, aiming to utilise the eye-catching structure to display new patchwork design. To develop the idea of skirt support and pannier (see Fig. 94), an attempt was made to integrate the underneath support with a fabric layer, aiming to reduce the extra structure, however, keeping the designed outline. Chinese traditional or historical costume was made of two flat patterns; intending to develop this technique and further integrate it with the idea of underneath support, some samples were made to experiment on the structure (Fig. 109). Like the old way of making clothing, two flat geometric patterns were stitched together; nevertheless, the additional stitching on each angle had radically changed the structure. To emphasise the designed shape and three-dimensional feature, boning was placed in accordance with the ordered extra stitching, to support the geometrically reconstructed outline. To utilise the restructured outline, the first design of this collection was produced to display the new style of patchwork (see Fig. 135).



Fig. 109 Experiment on the outline structure

Inspired by the first design, a ready-to-wear collection of eight garments was produced; to present the patchwork design, yet, utilise a different approach, it was aimed to keep the outline design simple and sensible for wearing. Inspired by the modern and chic style of Art Deco, the clothing design was simple and elegant. A sample dress was made as the model for the ready-to-wear collection (Fig. 110); the outline and silhouette was kept, however, the length would be altered according to different clothing design. To correspond to its Chinese theme, this dress was relatively conservative in terms of style, such as the incorporation of a high neckline in the design.



Fig. 110 Sample dress for the collection

The plastic patchwork was composed of the plastics and a layer of fabric; in order to better present its feature, it was necessary to keep the design flat. The patchwork was placed below the breast line, which was the relatively flat section on the dress; it was designed longer in length, to further coordinate the combination of patchwork and its simple silhouette (Fig. 111). Because of the lengthened design, the side slits were unavoidably

added to release the basic movement, such as walking. Two dresses were made in this style, to integrate with the plastic patchwork.

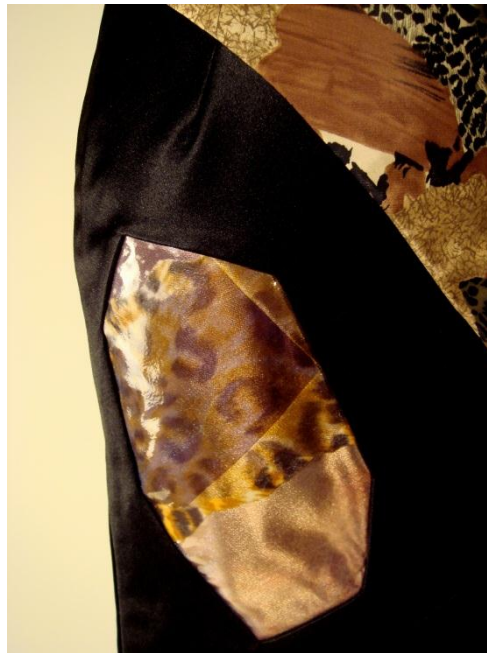


Fig. 111 Plastic patchwork applied on garment one

Made of patchwork, an oversized collar was added on the simple dress, intending to help the focus on composed design. The dress was shortened in length in order to give the prominence to an oversized addition on the shoulders. The patchwork design applied featured a three-dimensional quality (Fig. 112); in order to reveal the hidden revers, it was intended to utilise the higher position on body, like the shoulders, to display this style of design. Moreover, the idea of placing ornamental design on the shoulders was, in fact, associated with the Chinese theme; even though this addition tended to make the dress more modern and contemporary, in terms of the outline shape. The yunjian (雲肩) was a typical and often seen ornament in Chinese women's costume (see Fig. 75), prevalent in the Ming and Qing; it was a cape-like addition which completed an outfit for formal occasions in particular. The yunjian was an iconic piece of costume which would indicate the Chineseness



like the qipao. Three dresses were made in this style, aiming to utilise the addition to highlight patchwork design (Fig. 113).

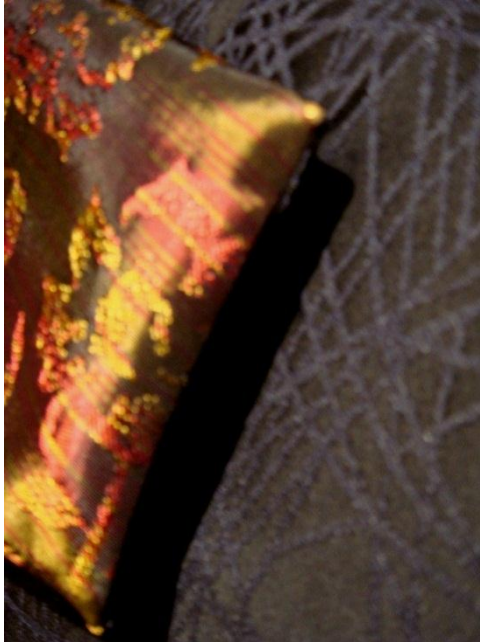


Fig. 112 The patchwork style intended to be applied on this series of dress



Fig. 113 The sample of clothing design, featuring a cape-like geometric addition

The outline of the first design was developed from Chinese traditional pattern making technique; through reconstruction of the originally flat structure, this work had become structurally three-dimensional. To utilise the restructured design, the minimised version was integrated with the simple dress form, aiming to emphasise the applied patchwork. The geometrically shaped addition appeared to be the perfect platform for the display of layered patchwork design, because of the three-dimensional structure. Further, the inside boning had enabled the support of intended shape and structure, not only the added design but also the layered patchwork. Three dresses were made in this style, aiming to utilise the restructured addition to display the layered patchwork design (Fig. 114).



Fig. 114 Dress designed with geometric hem

### **Material**

The integration of various materials had become one of the key features that made patchwork design interesting and rich in variation. The aim of this series of production was to present the combination of Chinese theme and modern design; therefore, the choice of material was simply made to reflect the subject of this creation. In terms of style and outline design, this series of work appeared to be more modern and even Western, in comparison with the stereotypical impression of Chinese clothing. Hence, some materials and fabrics of a Chinese style were picked out, to create the association with its Chinese theme, further, to balance the style of this series of work. Some symbolic Chinese fabrics were applied, such as brocade and silk (Fig. 115); further, specific colours, such as gold and red, were used to reinforce the Chinese-inspired design (Fig. 116). Some specific pattern design has always signified Chineseness, for example, dragon, bamboo, pagoda and some particular kinds of flowers; some symbolic pattern was used in this collection, aiming to indicate the Chinese theme (Fig. 117).

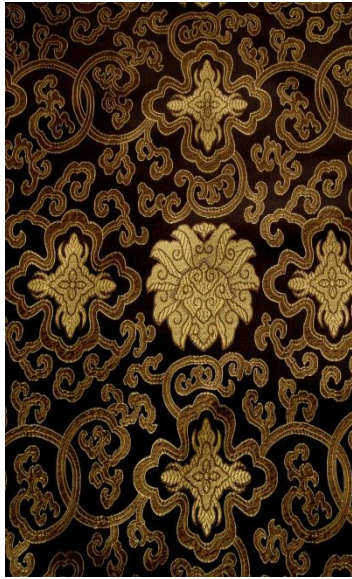


Fig. 115 The brocade material



Fig. 116 Golden floral design



Fig. 117 Symbolic pattern design

To imitate the structure of patchwork, checked fabric was applied (Fig. 118); furthermore, real patched textile was used to identify the patchwork theme. Featuring exotic pattern design, a patchy style of print was picked out because of the association with Art Deco style, also, for an irregular patchwork sensation (Fig. 119). To utilise its original print without adding extra weight on the work, this fabric was used to make the dress and patchwork design.



Fig. 118 Patchwork-like fabric



Fig. 119 Exotic and patchy style of print

The plastics would probably be the most modern material that was applied in this series of work. Aiming to present a new style of patchwork, the plastic material was re-designed to be integrated with the selected fabrics. However, it was intended to preserve the shiny feature, as it seemed to be associated with Chinese symbolic fabric to a certain extent, because of the common character of shine. Moreover, lacquer-like material is one of the themes which has long been associated with Chinese traditional handcraft; hence, the feature of the plastics that reflected lustre as the light changed further linked the plastics with Chinese polished lacquerware. The plastic material was chosen because it would induce a perception of the contemporary; however, this little link of the sheen feature had associated the plastics with Chinese themed material, which had kept the work from being absolutely modern and contemporary.

## **Conclusion**

Incorporating Chinese cultural sources in this creation, the integration of Chinese theme and modern design was intended to be presented. Generated from a series of experiments, the framed patchwork design has allowed various materials to be combined in an unusual style. To utilise the eye-catching restructured outline, the first design was made to display this new style of patchwork, further; it had inspired a collection of garments. Garments were designed to better present and integrate with different styles of patchwork, in which various materials and techniques were applied to take on a new look of this experimental design.

## **5.2 Collection**

To reflect the theoretical study, a series of works were produced to further embody the integration that this research aimed to demonstrate. To re-introduce the studied subject, the shuitianyi, within the form of contemporary design, a fashion collection was produced, including an initial design statement and a series of ready-to-wear garments. Inspired by the shuitianyi, a new approach to patchwork was generated from a series of experiments; introduced within this collection, it was aimed to offer a relatively broader perception of patchwork design.

### **First Design**

The first design featured a three-dimensional structure; intending to utilise the eye-catching outline to further focus on the applied patchwork (see Fig. 135). The initial concept of making this work was to show the experimental patchwork design, which was inspired by Chinese historical shuitianyi. As a design statement, this initial work was made not only to demonstrate the new patchwork design, but also to inspire the production of the ready-to-wear collection.

The outline design of this work was inspired by the conspicuous skirt support of Rococo costume; the delicate and fine designed textile was well displayed, in coordination with the structured support underneath (see Fig. 95). Reviewing Chinese historical costumes, the lack of variation in forms was likely to originate from the application of flat pattern making technique. Two octagonal shaped fabrics were stitch together to compose this work; the extra stitching on each angle had made this design structurally three-dimensional. The rod was placed alongside the extra stitching, to further emphasise the restructured silhouette.



Moreover, this geometrically restructured design was foldable, which had made this work more convenient to store, convey and display. It could be stretched out to gain the extra space for displaying patchwork design, simultaneously, it could be folded to reduce the unnecessary space while storing or conveying. In terms of mobility, this work was relatively more sensible due to the application of novel structure and supporting material, in comparison with the historical skirt support or the pannier. However, this work was not physically wearable because of the weight cause by the huge amount of cutting and re-stitching, furthermore, the size of this design was too big, in consideration of wear-ability in modern life.

To use the conspicuously restructured outline, the applied patchwork design was well displayed. It was made of several patches and each individual piece was composed of the framed patchwork. The layered structure was inspired by the terraced field, one representative of the rural scenery of China; two pieces of soft fabric were chosen to compose the inserted patchwork. One was patterned with retro floral design featuring a bicolored print, and the other was more abstract, however, it was chosen because of the resemblance to Chinese ink and wash painting (Fig. 120). The bi-coloured print added a patchwork sensation to this selected fabric (Fig. 121), and this feature was used to enrich the variation in composition. Further, the Rococo style had not only inspired the outline design, but also affected the choice of material. Because of the floral and bow design of the embroidered fabric that was used as the frame to compose this work, this fabric had further associations with Rococo style of design (Fig. 122).



Fig. 120 Fabric for the first design (1)



Fig. 121 Fabric for the first design (2)



Fig. 122 Fabric for the first design (3)

Both the Western and Chinese resources had inspired the creation of this work; the first design was made to demonstrate the restructured idea of making garment and in order to present the framed patchwork. The outline was developed from Chinese traditional pattern making technique, which had potentially limited the variation in style for over centuries. This new method had enabled the fundamental alteration in structure, from two-dimensional to three-dimensional. The conspicuous shape had, no doubt, helped the display of patchwork; however, the wear-ability issue had risen. Hence, the following production of ready-to-wear collection was made to show a new approach of patchwork design, and simultaneously, to take the wear-ability into consideration based on today's living.

### **Ready-to-wear collection**

Taking the inspiration from the modern and chic style of Art Deco fashion, the silhouette of these garments was very simple. Instead of using the conspicuous shape like the first design, a new attempt was made to utilise a simple chic outline to help focus on the patchwork



design. According to different styles of patchwork, some alteration was made in style, such as length, intending to better present the individual feature; additional pieces were applied, aiming to further highlight patchwork design.

### *Garment 1 and 2*

To take the character of plastics into consideration, the composed work was kept flat to avoid the potential creases; therefore, the patchwork section was designed on the lower part of dress to avoid the pleats. Aiming to better integrate with the natural body shape and further embellish women's figure, the cutting that separated the patchwork section from the main dress was slightly curved. Furthermore, the integration with women's natural silhouette had enabled further emphasis on the applied patchwork. To better achieve the proportion of these garments, the length was designed longer to reach the calves; therefore, additional slits on both sides were designed to ease the basic movement.

As plastic material is generally employed and associated with contemporary design, the use of plastics had added a modern sensation to these two garments. By utilising the heat of ironing, pattern or texture could be transformed from specific fabrics or textiles into the plastics. Using the proper material and cooperating with right pressed heat, the clear plastic material was able to be patterned, coloured and even restructured. Intending to combine the plastic layer with other fabrics, to compose the design, the transparent feature was purposely kept.

Composed of three different fabrics, the new pattern was transformed into the plastic layer of garment one. The fabrics were overlapped and caused the change in transmittance, and again, this interesting transition was viewable because of the transparent characteristic of

the plastics. The irregular patchy sensation was originated; it was aimed to combine this layer of patchy style with another fabric featuring ordinary patchwork. The composition of patchwork design of garment one was considerably complicated, as two styles of patchwork made of diverse materials were integrated together to make this work (Fig. 123). The fabric surrounding the composed design was simple and plain; like the frame used to emphasise the work, this black frame made of fabric had helped the focus on the composed patchwork inside. Apart from the patchwork section, the print of garment one featured exoticism inspired by Art Deco style, in which the patchy sensation had simultaneously associated this fabric with the creative subject of patchwork. Furthermore, to utilise the patchiness of this print, it was later applied to make the patchwork design of garment two.

The fabric chosen to make the dress of garment two featured floral design; because of the pattern and colour scheme, this fabric seemed to be associated with an old Chinese impression. The patchwork design of garment two was composed of the exotic print and a layer of plastics. Because of the patterned texture, the surface of plastics was changed from smooth into uneven. An elastic net was used to pattern the plastics; the flexibility was utilised, aiming to present a three-dimensional sensation through the expansion and contraction. It was aimed to pattern the plastics with texture only and the original silver colour was purposely removed after the ironing. Intending to clarify the restructured surface, the plastic material was kept clear and highly transparent. To add the three-dimensional effect, the restructured plastic layer was combined with the print, which had enriched this composed design, in terms of visual and tactile sensation. Furthermore, corduroy was chosen to make the frame because of the striped pattern; the regularly

striped frame was integrated with the irregularly structured plastics, aiming to make the patchwork more interesting in composition (Fig. 124).



Fig. 123 Patchwork and fabric combination of garment one



Fig. 124 Patchwork and fabric combination of garment two

Aiming to reduce the weight and thickness, the transformable feature of plastics was utilised. The inserted design of garment one was composed of two layers, the plastics and patched textile. The fabric was thin and light due to the mechanical pre-patched up process; the transformed pattern had delivered the designed patchiness without adding extra weight to the work. Composed of two layers, still, the patchwork design of garment two was considerably thin and light. The patchy print was utilised to correspond to the theme of patchwork, and the added plastic layer was originally weighted less; this combination improved wear-ability.

#### *Garment 3, 4 and 5*

Two patterns were stitched together to make this cape-like addition; without the extra stitching along each angle, this geometrically shaped piece was structurally flat. The

patchwork design was applied on this additional design, aiming to utilise the oversized outline to highlight the work. To utilise the proportion of dress, it was aimed to shorten the length, in order to make the oversized collar more obvious. The collar or cape was almost half the size of the dress; this disproportionate design had made the added collar immediately conspicuous, aiming to draw the attention to the patchwork. The inserted patch was designed bigger than the frame, intending to make the revers stand out from the original flat surface. However, this three-dimensional feature was not obvious, hence, the right position was important to present this style of patchwork design. The oversized collar design had helped the focus on this additional piece; to utilise the natural platform on the shoulders, the hidden revers had become more obvious because of a gap (Fig. 125).



Fig. 125 The 3D effect

The fabric used to make garment three was the same print as that chosen to make garment two; however, the colour difference had made these two fabrics look dissimilar to each other. Because of the colour scheme, the sheen feature of this fabric had become more

obvious in garment three; this lively golden print seemed to be more Chinese due to the reflected luxurious sensation. Aiming to reflect the theme of Chinese-inspired design, the fabrics used to compose the patchwork were overtly featured of Chineseness, from material to detailed pattern design (Fig. 126).



Fig. 126 Fabrics chosen for garment three

A silky black fabric was chosen for garment four; the partly transparent pattern was further utilised to enrich the composition. To be integrated with this fabric, a print was used to replace the ordinary lining, which is always plain; later, these two fabrics were pre-stitched together to make the dress of garment four (Fig. 127). This print was patterned with geometric composition, and this organic pattern was partly viewable because the covered fabric was partly transparent. To be associated with the traditional textile of Chinese ethnic minority, grey fabric was chosen to make the frame of this patchwork design. Further, to make the inserted patch, a green textile-like material was applied because its visual sensation was similar to the traditional bamboo weaving of China. It was aimed to utilise the original pattern of these two fabrics to enrich the composition of this patchwork design (Fig. 128).





Fig. 127 Two layers of fabric



Fig. 128 Patchwork design and fabrics

The checked fabric used to make the dress of garment five was visually like Chinese old textile. Moreover, it was intended to utilise this patchwork-like pattern to further associate this work with its original theme of Chinese shuitianyi. To make the added collar, the framed patchwork was composed of two fabrics; patterned with a curve composition, the dark purple fabric was combined with another fabric featuring golden floral design interwoven with the hidden stripes. Because of the shiny feature of material, the floral design and the applied colour scheme, the fabric used to make the inserted patch seemed to be more Chinese (Fig. 129).

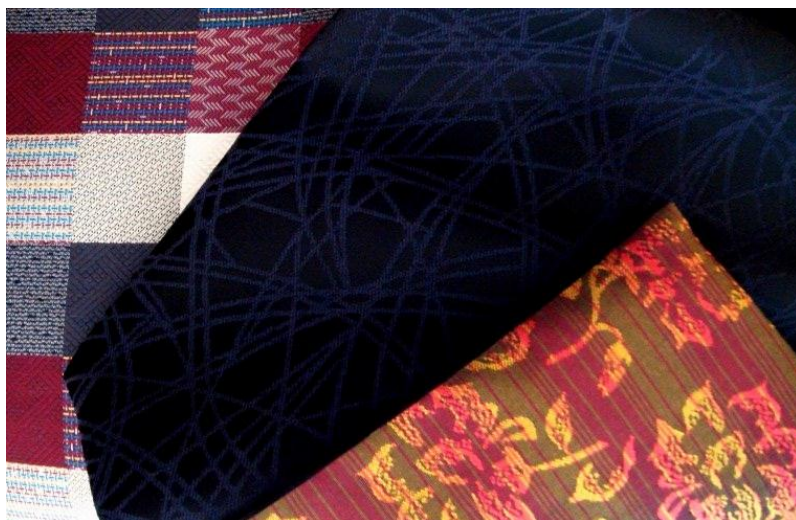


Fig. 129 Fabrics of garment five

### *Garment 6, 7 and 8*

Attempting to highlight patchwork design, a geometric hem was added in garment six, seven and eight. Developed from the restructured outline of the first design, this addition was structurally three-dimensional. The added geometric hem was made of patchwork, featuring a layered combination; because of the three-dimensional structure, the feature of this style of patchwork was well-presented on the reconstructed addition.

The added hem of garments six was made of the remaining pieces of the first design; these fabrics were cut from each angle of the octagonal patterns, aiming to structurally change the work. Due to the geometric shape and composed fabrics, this additional design appeared to be less Chinese; therefore, symbolic Chinese fabric was used to make the dress, aiming to balance the work and further correspond to its original theme (Fig. 130).

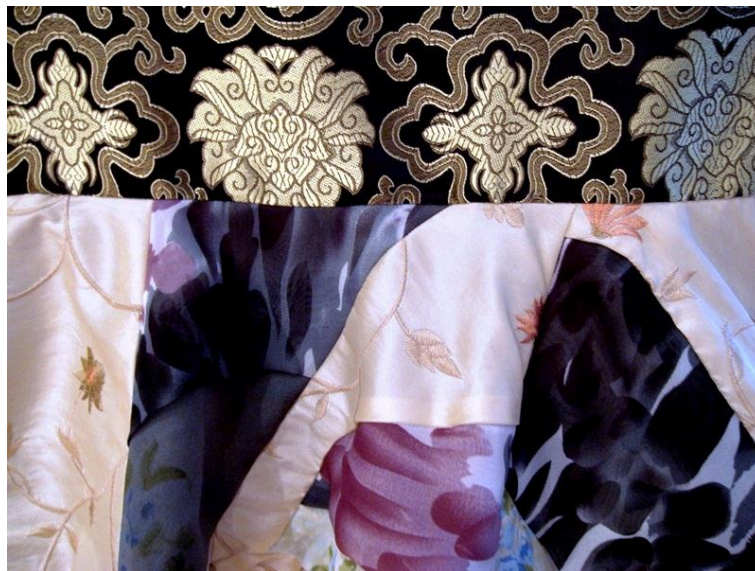


Fig. 130 Colour and fabric combination of garment six

To further develop the idea of layered patchwork, a new approach to combine different fabrics was introduced in garment seven and eight. Originated from imitating the structure of a terraced field, new patches were added on the pre-made patchwork, aiming to make



the work structurally three-dimensional. The patchwork of garment seven seemed to be more Chinese because of the composition. Some symbolic pattern design and fabrics were chosen to indicate the Chineseness, for example, the floral design and brocade material; intending to add a modern sensation to this garment, the fabric used to make this dress was relatively more European or international style (Fig. 131).

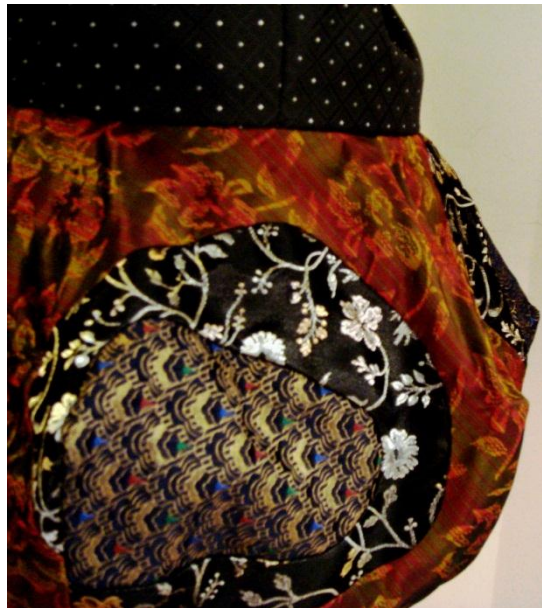


Fig. 131 Patchwork and fabric combination of garment seven

Still, the patchwork was slightly different between garment seven and eight; the alteration in method of piling up the patches had originated in a difference in structure. To utilise the hidden revers, the three-dimensional feature of patchwork design was further emphasised in garment eight. To turn out the revers had structurally lifted the new added patch from its original layer; moreover, this new approach to make patchwork had radically changed the structure, from two-dimensional to three-dimensional. The red shiny fabric used to make the dress featured a Chinese pattern; however, the interwoven stripe design had made this fabric slightly different from the traditional one. To enrich the composition, the striped

pattern was utilised to further integrate with the checked fabric, which was used to make the geometric hem. Three fabrics were combined to form the added hem; apart from the black fabric, the other two fabrics appeared to be less Chinese; however, these two were visually associated with some traditional textile of Chinese ethnic minority. Three layers of fabric were piled up to make this design; therefore, this patchwork was more complex in structure and also material (Fig. 132).



Fig. 132 Restructured patchwork and fabric combination of garment eight

Like the first design, the geometric addition was made to display new patchwork design; however, the minimised piece added on these three garments had further integrated the initial idea with modern fashion and made the work more sensible for wearing. This layered patchwork had demonstrated a new approach to combine the various materials; further, the experimental method of making patchwork had enabled the fabrics to be integrated in a three-dimensional way.

## **Conclusion**

This collection was made to echo the aim of this research, further its production enabled the intended integration to be demonstrated in a material form. A new attitude toward patchwork was introduced in this collection; this new approach allowed various materials to be integrated in a novel way. Chinese symbolic material was used, however, in a rather unconventional way; differentiated from its original impression, the fabrics were given a fresh look through the process of de-construction and re-construction. Intending to further explore Chinese dressing culture and its association with costume heritage, some interviews were conducted. The research benefited from this embodied outcome that encouraged the participants to further expand upon the designed topics, these interviews subsequently generated some valuable data, including the perception of Chineseness in fashion and views about the intended integration.



Fig. 133 Exhibition (1)



Fig. 134 Exhibition (2)





Fig. 135 The First Design



Fig. 136 Garment One

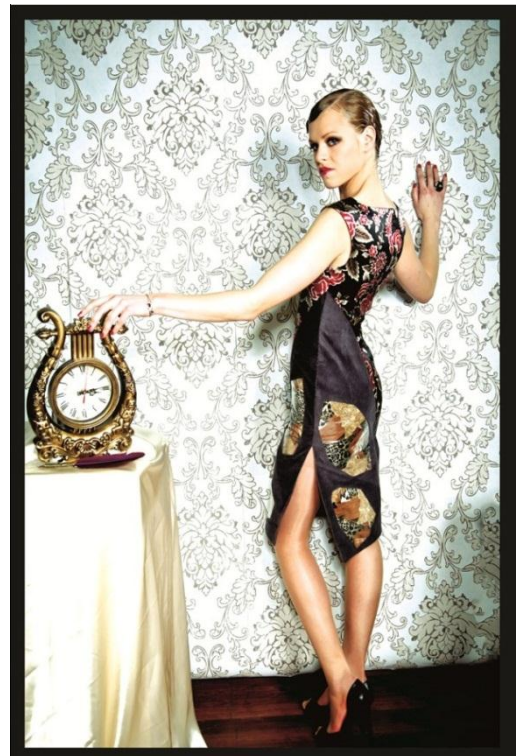


Fig. 137 Garment Two



Fig. 138 Garment Three



Fig. 139 Garment Four



Fig. 140 Garment Five





Fig. 141 Garment Six



Fig. 142 Garment Seven



Fig. 143 Garment Eight



## **Chapter Six: Material Outcome and Reflection**

In this chapter, reflection on the practical work and a further discussion of some relevant subjects will be systematically analysed, as an approach to understand the themes that this study aimed to explore. The exhibition was a vehicle which was considered beneficial for the conduct of interviews, intending to collect information related to the topic of this study and reactions to it.

### ***6.1 Exhibition***

A public exhibition was held in the Foyer of Birmingham Institute of Art and Design, from 8<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> of March 2011 (see Fig. 133 and Fig. 134), aiming to display the practical work and further demonstrate the relationship between the practical and the theoretical research. This study aimed to investigate the shuitianyi which has now largely become unknown. Through the embodied outcome of a collection, it was aimed to re-introduce the shuitianyi within the form of modern fashion.

Further, this exhibition offered a closer contact with real work, which was particularly beneficial for the interviews. The conduct of interviews was intended to understand people's views about the work and their perception of Chineseness in fashion. Moreover, some interviews were conducted in the exhibition place, which encouraged the participants to develop the conversation, to further draw upon their instant perceptions in the interviews. Qualitative interviews have always allowed the participants to be relatively free to talk the topics they feel important and relevant (Lodico et al., 2010, pp. 124-125).

The initial design statement and a collection of eight ready-to-wear garments were on display; aiming to demonstrate the integration of Chinese style and modern design. The

exhibition has always been an important vehicle to better understand the work; particularly for showing patchwork, a closer contact with the complicatedly composed work was considered essential. This framed patchwork was an experimental way of combining the diverse materials, in which, a huge amount of cutting and stitching was involved to complete certain looks. The structure of this style of patchwork was much more complex than the traditional one; however, this exhibition had enabled closer observation of the designs in detail.

A photo shoot of this ready-to-wear collection was undertaken and completed beforehand; intending to show the look of how these garments would fit the body, these images were displayed alongside the work. The inspirational 1920s and Art Deco fashion became the theme of the styling, including make-up, hair and accessories (Fig. 144). The cultural fusion of the time made the 1920s fascinating; moreover, this theme had great impact on this series of works, including the choice of material and silhouette. To further develop this idea, the theme of styling originated from the integration of Art Deco style and the old-Shanghai fashion of qipao. With a real model wearing the garments, these images helped to show the integration between human body and garments; moreover, the exhibited garments enabled the further understanding of the work in detail. Therefore, the interconnection between images and the displayed work was indispensable to better demonstrate the intended integration.



Fig. 144 The styling for photo shoots

The main purpose of having this exhibition was to show the practical work and demonstrate the potential for the integration of Chinese historical style with modern fashion. This platform had encouraged the audience to have a close look at the work; furthermore, this exhibition was associated with the conducting of interviews, aiming to collect the related data more efficiently. One participant could easily have a different opinion to another about the same work, caused by the various provided media, for example, images of photo shoot and the exhibited work. Some interviews were undertaken after the exhibition; however, it was quite obvious that people seemed to be more sensitive and responsive to the real work. Greater interactivity could be had at the actual exhibiting place; for example, the participants could touch and feel the work, see the real colour and material combination, compare the design and look at the small difference in detail. To collect the relevant data, the interviews were conducted as one important method in this study. The exhibition had been further interconnected with the interviews, aiming to encourage and develop the

discussion. The role of this exhibition was more than the vehicle that displayed work and design ideas; it was further utilised to benefit the data collection.

## **6.2 Interviews**

To understand people's reflection on the practical work and to further discuss some subjects that it was intended to explore, for instance, cultural identity and clothing, a group of selected people were interviewed. Intending to understand the participants' reflection on Chinese-inspired fashion, the embodied outcome of a collection enabled further investigation. Aiming to understand people's views of Chineseness in fashion and their opinions about this series of work, several topics were set to be discussed.

Through the exhibition and interviews, some valuable data was generated, for instance, the perception of Chineseness and clothing design, the impression of Chinese qipao and views about the integration in this collection. Before the interviews, all the participants visited the exhibition, in order to have a better understanding of the work. Further, some interviews were conducted in the exhibition place, which allowed the participants to have closer contact with the work during the course of interviews; this approach seemed to be more efficient in data collection, as the embodied outcome appeared to enable the conversation to be developed further. Interviews with Amy Twigger Holroyd, Zhao Man, Marlene Little, Lee Meng-Hua, Yada Chavalkul, Wang Yanyan and Feng Yixin were conducted in the exhibition place. Yet, interview with Jasbir Kaur, Ho Chen-Han, Olga Deribo, Luo Tianran, Yuan Yu-Ning and Zoë Millman were conducted elsewhere; photos taken from the exhibition and images from the photo shoot were used to indicate each work. Participants

like Amy, Man, Meng-Hua, Tianran, Yixin and Yu-Ning heard a presentation about this work before the interviews; hence, they also had a basic understanding about this research.

## **Theme 1: Perception of Chineseness**

### *1.1.1 Symbolic fabric and material*

The theme of Chineseness has long been familiar to the fashion world; in fact, it has been regularly used as the theme on the stage season after season. Many have always associated Chineseness with symbolic fabrics, including material, colour and pattern design; these were the initial and definite guide to the Chinese theme. Moreover, some specific forms and styles would also remind people of the Chineseness, such as the qipao and Mao suit. These interviews have demonstrated that, the fabric was the key which enabled the participants to associate the Chinese theme with this collection. Several features were pointed out to be particularly Chinese, for example, the sheen and luxurious textiles, golden colour, symbolic Chinese pattern and specific floral design. For instance, Yada is a PhD student, and she thought garment three and six looked very Chinese, mainly because of the application of symbolic Chinese fabrics.

### *1.1.2 Proportion and position of fabric*

Amy is a PhD student whose research is closely related to fashion; apart from the characteristics listed above, she also mentioned that the proportion of employing Chinese fabric would influence her perception of Chineseness. According to Amy, garment six looked more Chinese to her due to the use of symbolic fabric; furthermore, the proportion was also crucial to deliver the Chineseness, as this dress was largely covered by this specific fabric. Garment seven was probably the best example to explain how influential the proportion

could be, in terms of expressing the Chineseness. This dress was made of more Western or international style of fabric, people tended to regard this garment as less Chinese and more modern or Western. In fact, the patchwork was composed of three typical Chinese fabrics (see Fig. 131); however, the Chineseness was hidden because of the position and the proportion. Yet, benefiting from the exhibition, some participants were encouraged to look at the work more closely. Marlene is a tutor of textile design; through the closer observation of each work, she had noticed the Chinese-featured fabrics composed on the added design of garment seven. Olga is an interior design student who also took part in the photo shoot as the model; she thought that the position of applying Chinese material was crucial to express the initial Chineseness. She took garment six to explain this further; she would only look at the upper part of this dress before she noticed the added hem. Even though the addition was quite modern, she still thought this dress looked more Chinese because of the first impression of Chineseness, delivered through the main fabric.

### *1.1.3 Other fabrics*

Meng-Hua is a PhD student, who is studying in fashion and once worked as a fashion designer for several years; apart from all the typical Chinese fabrics, she thought one of the fabrics used to make the inserted patch of first design was Chinese (see Fig. 120). This purple, white and black fabric had somehow reminded her of the old Chinese ink and wash painting; in fact, this fabric seemed to be rather abstract, therefore, people could have very different views about it. Meng-Hua was the only participant who tended to associate this fabric with a Chinese sensation; yet, this association was the exact reason why this fabric was chosen to make the patchwork. Zoë is a PhD student who knows the Western arts and design well; she viewed the work from a different angle and attempted to associate it with

some design eras of the West. She found the Chinese fabrics applied in this collection had somehow reminded her of Chinese qipao. Many thought the outline of these garments looked like the qipao; however, Zoë tended to associate the material with the qipao, instead of the outline silhouette. The fabrics featuring shiny material and satin effect were often used to make the qipao; therefore, this material impression might have made Zoë associate the fabric with a certain style of garment. She later indicated that, the fabric used to make the first design appeared to be Chinese to her, because of the embroidery (see Fig. 122). She attempted to associate this textile with the traditional fine needlework of China, as the exquisite embroidery has long been one of the iconic features of Chinese material. Zoë thought garment three looked quite Chinese to her; the floral print had reminded her of the Oriental hit in the nineteenth century, and she later tended to associate this floral pattern with 1950s European design. The black dress of garment four seemed to be more Chinese to Zoë; she picked out the shiny sensation and associated this feature with Chinese material (see Fig. 127).

### *1.2 The qipao silhouette*

Apart from the material and fabric, the outline design of the ready-to-wear collection also seemed to be Chinese for some participants. Chen-Han is a student of MA fashion promotion; she thought garment one and two looked like the qipao because of the fitted design in the breast and waist. Jasbir is a tutor of MA fashion and textile design who knows this area fairly well; she had associated these eight garments with Chinese qipao because of the fitted outline. She took garment six as an example and indicated that, even the symbolic qipao elements, such as the mandarin collar and high slits, were not applied, still, this dress reminded her of the qipao because of the body-hugging silhouette. Man is a student of MA



fashion promotion; she particularly pointed out that the outline of garment six, seven and eight looked like the qipao, however, not the traditional qipao but the reformed one. She further drew in the accessories to make a comparison between her perception of reformed qipao and the original one. She thought the traditional qipao seemed to be limited to specific kind of jewellery, such as jade and pearl; however, the reformed design could go with a wider range of jewellery and accessories. Because of the slim look, Marlene also associated the silhouette with Chinese qipao, the top part in particular. Meng-Hua had picked out the slit design on garment one and two, and related this detail with qipao. Tianran is an MPhil student who is more familiar with Chinese arts and cultural history because of his educational background; he thought the outline of these garments, excluding garment three, four and five, looked like the qipao because of the tightened waist and fitted design. He regarded garment six, seven and eight as the transformed version of qipao because of the addition on the hem. Moreover, he had also associated garment three, four and five with Chinese clothing, yet, not the qipao but costume of the Qing dynasty. Yanyan is a PhD student who is also familiar with Chinese arts and culture; she found that some garments looked like the original qipao because of the silhouette, the long dresses in particular. Yixin is an MA student who studied fashion styling; he thought the longer dresses looked more like qipao, due to the shape, length and the feature of one-piece design. Yu-Ning is an MA fashion promotion student who also took part in the photo shoot as the make-up artist; she thought the silhouette of these garments looked like the qipao. Some classic features, such as tightened waist and the emphasised hip line, were found in garment one, two, six, seven and eight. In terms of cutting, Yu-Ning indicated that, the uncut hem and the proportion between the waist and hips had associated garment three, four and five with the qipao.

### *1.3 The styling of photo shoots*

Inspired by the 1920s and old-Shanghai fashion, the styling designed for the photo shoots was chic and elegant (see Fig. 144). Jasbir thought the styling, including make-up, hair and accessories, was chic, sleek and Chinese, which had added the perception of Chineseness to the work. Furthermore, Zoë also indicated that the hair style of photo shoots had reminded her of Chinese style, however, not the current style, but the 1920s or 1930s.

### *1.4 Patchwork design*

Some participants tended to associate the patchwork design with a Chinese theme, as they had attended the presentation about this research. Amy thought the patchwork was, in fact, very modern and contemporary; however, because she knew the inspiration was taken from the shuitianyi, she could then see the connection. According to Yixin, he thought the entire collection and patchwork design seemed to be more modern and contemporary; however, because of the presentation, he could then associate the patchwork theme with the original inspiration of shuitianyi.

### *1.5 The added collar design*

Moreover, the added collar also delivered the Chinese sensation to Tianran; somehow, he had associated this addition with historical costume of the Qing. He said that the collar design did not look like the Qing's costume; however, he had related these two together based on his intuition. Olga also said that the collar of garment three had reminded her of the costume of the Chinese dragon dance, due to the colourful combination.

### 1.6 Others

Some specific garments had reminded people of Chinese symbolic scenes and traditions, such as festivals. Because of the added collar, Olga thought garment three looked like the costume of dragon dance that she once saw in London Chinatown. However, while referring to the dragon dance, she did not mention garment four or five which were made in exactly the same style with additional collar design; this might suggest that, the Chinese sensation seemed to have originated from the composed design, featuring of vivid and colourful composition (Fig. 145), rather than the outline shape. Olga also thought garment six was very Chinese; this garment had reminded her of some dresses she saw in Chinese movies. Moreover, the impression of the series of oversized collar designs had reminded Tianran of Chinese traditional calligraphy.



Fig. 145 Patchwork of garment three

### *1.7 Conclusion*

The fabrics and materials were essential for delivering the Chineseness; garment three and six seemed to be more Chinese to most of the participants (see Fig. 138 and Fig. 141), because of the fabrics, including pattern design and colour scheme. Features like sheen and luxurious sensation would also deliver the Chineseness. Many thought garment three was very Chinese, even though the geometric collar design had added a contemporary look to this dress; still, the colourful patchwork composed of Chinese symbolic fabrics had signified the Chineseness to them. Garment six appeared to be more Chinese mainly because of the gold and black fabric, patterned with typical Chinese design. This fabric was covering the largest section of this dress, which had further emphasised the Chinese sensation. The position of applying this specific fabric had become essential to deliver the impression of Chineseness; people tended to look at the upper section before they noticed the added hem on the bottom. The Chinese fabrics would certainly indicate Chineseness, however, the proportion and position of applying the material was considerably important in creating the perception of Chineseness. Further, many associated the collection with qipao because of the slim look, even without the typical qipao features, such as high collar and frogs design. This finding has suggested a much wider perception of qipao, which enabled the design and creation to break the stereotyped bounds. Styling has always indicated the specific intended theme; some participants tended to associate the look with 1920s and old Chinese fashion of 1920s or 1930s. Moreover, many regarded the patchwork as modern and contemporary design due to the application of unconventional technique; still, some associated it with the original shuitianyi, as they knew this study through the presentation.

## **Theme 2: Patchwork**

Taking inspiration from the shuitianyi, this series of works was produced to show a new approach to patchwork design. Further, the structural approach differentiated this style of patchwork from the traditional one. It was aimed to introduce this new patchwork design within this collection, intending to integrate this experimental patchwork with modern clothing design.

### *2.1 New and modern*

The participants tended to think the patchwork design was more modern and contemporary; however, some were aware of the historical connection with the shuitianyi because of the presentation beforehand. Amy could only catch the patchwork sensation, but could not fit these designs into the Western patchwork rules that she was familiar with. Hence, she thought this type of patchwork was rather experimental and contemporary, which was new to her. Jasbir thought the patchwork design was very interesting and different from the others that she had seen before. She regarded it as an innovative way of piecing together various fabrics rather than patchwork, as it did not look like the typical patchwork she knew before. Man thought the patchwork design was extremely novel. Marlene thought the patchwork was very contemporary; because of her own expertise, she paid more attention to the technique and detail. Olga thought this style of patchwork was novel and seemed special to her; she especially liked the design feature of three-dimensional structure. Yanyan said the design looked very new and more like an innovation in patchwork. She liked the contrast between the colours and materials in particular; in spite of knowing the historical inspiration, she thought the patchwork design was more modern and contemporary. Because of the combination of various materials, Yu-Ning thought the patchwork design was

new and interesting; in terms of composition, this new attempt to make patchwork had differentiated this collection from the traditional version of patchwork.

## *2.2 Historical shuitianyi*

Because of the presentation about this research, many participants understood the relationship between patchwork design and the shuitianyi. However, Tianran seemed to be the only participant who knew more about this dressing style and had seen the images many years ago. He already had the stereotype of shuitianyi in mind, and tried to compare the original impression with the patchwork design of this collection. Tianran liked the design idea of shuitianyi, however, he thought the patchwork theme was not as obvious as he would expect. He took garment four as an example and thought the patchwork theme was not obvious, because of the partial application of patches. He had further indicated that, the shuitianyi was visually powerful and memorable because of patchwork; nevertheless, the patchwork sensation of this series of work appeared to be less obvious as it was applied only partially on clothing.

## *2.3 The plastic material*

The integration of various materials and fabrics made the patchwork unique and fascinating; the new method of making this framed patchwork had enabled diverse materials to be further integrated. The plastic patchwork was applied on garment one and two, aiming to integrate the modern material with historical inspired design. Man thought garment two was special and characterful because of the shine of plastic material (see Fig. 124). Due to the different approach to make patchwork, the lustre of the plastics was more obvious on garment two as compared to garment one. Meng-Hua thought the idea of using the plastics

was interesting and she particularly liked the patchwork design of garment one (see Fig. 100). She further indicated that the intention of combining the re-patterned plastics with the real patchwork was a good method, which had potentially reduced the visual conflict between different fabrics and enabled the diverse materials to be better integrated. However, according to Yanyan, she did not like garment two because of the plastics. She thought the silhouette of this dress was still charming, yet, the application of plastic material appeared to be strange to her.

#### *2.4 Restructured technique*

Because of the understanding of making patchwork, Marlene took garment three as an example; she thought the patchwork was interesting, as more layers of fabrics were integrated to enrich the work, structurally and materially. Meng-Hua was interested in the applied technique; she further pointed out that this style of patchwork looked more three-dimensional, which was different from the traditional Chinese one she had seen before. In terms of patchwork, Olga liked the restructured design used on garment eight (see Fig. 107); she thought this work was well made with good quality. She liked the colour and fabric combination and she thought this three-dimensional look was unusual, which had further differentiated it from the other work in this collection.

#### *2.5 Garment seven and eight*

Many made comparison of the patchwork design between garment seven and eight, as these two were visually alike due to the similarity in technique. Jasbir did not see much difference between these two designs, however, she preferred garment seven because the fabric and colour combination worked better for her (see Fig. 131). She further indicated



that the flat structure was perhaps more wearable than the three-dimensional patchwork applied on garment eight. Marlene liked the colour and fabric combination of garment seven; however, she preferred the restructured design of garment eight, she thought the technique had structurally transformed this design from two-dimensional to three-dimensional (see Fig. 132). Yanyan liked the composed addition of garment eight; she thought it was new and the contrast between different fabrics was attractive to her.

### *2.6 Outline design*

The first design was made of patchwork, it was intended to utilise the eye-catching outline to highlight the composed design (see Fig. 135). According to Yixin, he was attracted to this work initially because of the conspicuous three-dimensional structure; he later looked at the work in detail and thought the patchwork was exquisite and well-made in terms of quality. The silhouette of the ready-to-wear collection was simple; some alteration was made in style, in order to better present the characteristic of each patchwork design. The intention of adding the oversized collar or cape was to draw the initial attention to this section, where the patchwork design was purposely applied. Meng-Hua knew it from the presentation and thought this idea seemed to be a good attempt to emphasise the patchwork. In order to show the composed design, Meng-Hua thought the position was essential, as the lower part of the garment was likely to be inconspicuous, in comparison with the upper part. She thought this addition was interesting and simultaneously fashionable, as the cape design was quite in trend. Made of patchwork, the geometric hem of garment six, seven and eight was aimed to utilise the restructured feature to highlight the design. However, the performance turned out to be rather opposite to the expectation. According to Marlene, it was much harder to notice the patchwork, as it was added on the bottom; Meng-Hua also

thought that the lower position was unnoticeable, and the combined design was more likely to be regarded as the original print or pattern. Tianran thought the patchwork on the hem was not noticeable, and was inconspicuous compared with the image of shuitianyi. According to Zoë, she did not notice that the added hem of garment seven was actually composed of various fabrics. Even though she liked the colour and fabric combination, however, it might be the position, proportion or the scale of the patchwork, which caused less attention at the beginning.

### *2.7 Patchwork sensation*

In terms of patchwork sensation, some designs seemed to be more obvious than the others for varied reasons. The partition of patchwork applied on garment one and two was the same; however, due to the difference in fabrics, some tended to think that the patchwork of garment two was more straightforward. Because the striped texture of corduroy was going in different directions, Amy thought the patchwork sensation was more clear and familiar to her. Marlene also thought that the patchwork sensation more obviously showed because of the corduroy. To utilise the regular pattern of corduroy, the patchwork sensation was more clearly presented, as the fabric was bias cut and then re-pieced back to make this work (Fig. 146). According to Yada, the design applied on garment four was more patchwork-like than the others; she thought it might be related to the location where this work was displayed in the exhibition. She mentioned that the garment was exhibited in the middle of the path and it might have had helped the extra attention to this garment and patchwork. To compare garment four with five, Yada thought the colour contrast between the inserted patch (green, red and black) and the background frame (grey with white stripes) was clearer, which had further emphasised the patched composition (Fig. 147). Nevertheless, she did not like this

work in spite of the fact that the patchwork sensation was most obvious for her; she thought the patches were too big in size and too equal in composition. Zoë tended to think the patchwork applied on garment four was obvious; nevertheless, it appeared to be the rudimentary way of patching to her. The patches seemed to be detachable on the collar, and this specific look had reminded her of the way that working people used to patch up their clothes.



Fig. 146 Patchwork of garment two



Fig. 147 Patchwork of garment four

## *2.8 Conclusion*

According to the participants, the different approach to combining various fabrics and materials had made the patchwork design new and modern. The new method had enabled various materials to be further integrated, many found the colour and fabric combination was interesting and different from what they have seen before. Many thought the patchwork was new even though they understood the original inspiration of the historical shuitianyi. Like the traditional costume, the typical patchwork of China was flat in structure;

hence, an attempt was made to reconstruct the design and make it become three-dimensional. The outline was designed to better integrate with varied styles of patchwork; yet, the reflection of the added hem was very different from the original intention. It was designed to attract attention to the patchwork, however, it was added at the lower part of garment, people tended to notice only the outline, but not the detailed design. This framed patchwork had enabled the materials to be combined in an unconventional way; this had added value to this series of work, in terms of innovation. As the theme of this production, the patchwork itself had demonstrated the intention of integrating an old Chinese theme with contemporary design.

### **Theme 3: The integration**

#### *3.1 Traditional and contemporary*

The practical work was made to demonstrate the integration of Chinese historical costumes and contemporary women's fashion. Many thought this series of work seemed to be more modern, however, some still found the Chineseness was obvious. Because of the outline and shape, Amy thought the first design and the geometric hem looked more contemporary to her. She thought the silhouette of the ready-to-wear collection looked like the classic Western shape; therefore, she said it was an integration of Western shape and Chinese materials. According to Chen-Han, the outline of these garments looked more traditional, and some additional designs had made the work more modern. Jasbir thought this was a modern collection, in which the material and silhouette was nicely balanced. She later took garment three, four and five as the examples; in these designs she saw the twist of Chinese style and modern interpretation. Jasbir thought the cape design had made these dresses more modern; however, the styling was quite Eastern chic, which had signalled the Chinese

sensation to her. Meng-Hua found that the material and outline of these garments seemed to be more traditional; however, some extra design was modern and fashionable, such as the cape-like design and the restructured outline of the first design. Man thought the form and shape of the collection was more traditional and Chinese; however, the geometric hem and collar, and most importantly the patchwork design, had made the work modern and contemporary. Yanyan thought the work tended to be more modern during the course of design development; she later indicated that, the patches which were composed of various materials and fabrics had made the entire collection further modern. Yixin thought the collection was new and modern, still, the historical or traditional theme was delivered, mostly through the material; he regarded this collection as a combination of tradition and novelty. The retro design was more traditional to Yu-Ning, for example, the floral pattern and longer design in length; still, the geometric collar and hem, and the patchwork design had added a contemporary sensation to this collection. Zoë took the first design as an example, she thought the outline shape was very contemporary, yet, the embroidered fabric was quite Chinese and again the patches seemed to be very modern to her.

### *3.2 Chinese and Japanese*

Furthermore, some tended to see the combination of Chinese and Japanese in the work. Man thought some Japanese elements had been integrated in this collection, for example, the red and golden floral pattern of garment eight (see Fig. 116) and the silhouette of added collar design, which reminded her of Japanese kimono. The extended shoulder design had suggested the Chinese or Japanese style to Marlene; however, Zoë thought the cap sleeves and the slash neckline design was particularly Western. According to Olga, garment one had

somehow reminded her of Japanese geisha; she thought it might be because of the colours or the way they were combined.

### *3.3 Mix of styles*

Because of her own knowledge of the Western styles, Zoë also found some interesting era mix in the work. She thought the floral print of garment three was Chinese; however, she also saw the Western influence on the shift dress and the almost 80s style of cape design (see Fig. 138). The tartan material used to make the patchwork of garment four was very Scottish or Irish, but the main dress looked more Chinese to her because of the sheen; this dress was later integrated with the old Chinese fashion, the 1920s or 1930s, because of the styling of photo shoots (see Fig. 139). Based on the shape, she thought the patches of the first design appeared to be quite futuristic (Fig. 148); she further associated these patches with the image of the lava lamp, which was particularly popular in the 1960s.



Fig. 148 Patchwork of the first design

### *3.4 Conclusion*

Because of the restructured shape, many found the first design very contemporary and modern; some added pieces also appeared to be more modern. Yet, the application of symbolic Chinese fabrics had drawn back the traditional theme; in some designs, it was a combination of Chinese fabric and modern outline. Many associated the outline of these garments with qipao and it tended to be more traditional to them. However, with the additional collar and hem, the garments tended to be contemporary. For many participants, it was a combination of modern outline, Chinese fabrics and traditional silhouette. Some also referred to the patchwork, and thought it was the newest element amongst all; they thought the new patchwork was well combined with the traditional silhouette of qipao.

### **Theme 4: Cultural identity and clothing**

Clothing is an important part of forming a person's cultural or national identity; yet, the relationship between Chinese dressing style and cultural tradition has become unclear. In terms of cultural identity, some remain obvious while the others might seem to be blurred. This study aimed to further investigate Chinese dressing culture, aiming to examine the role of traditional or historical costumes in today's China.

#### *4.1 Examples*

Amy thought the kilt is very Scottish as they were the only people who wore it. She also mentioned that tartan was always used to signify Scottishness, which had been backed up by the real Scottish. Kimono also reminded her of Japanese culture as it seemed to be related to their tradition in clothing; she thought the cheongsam (or qipao) was the garment she would immediately link with Chinese dress. Chen-Han thought many would associate



kimono with Japan; she further indicated that it was normal and often seen that someone would wear the kimono in Japan. Jasbir thought the qipao was exotic and very Chinese to her, and she also owned a few pieces of qipao. Because the qipao was very close to traditional clothing, it seemed to be timeless for her. Jasbir associated the sari with Indian culture and drew her own experience of wearing this traditional clothing. She would always wear the traditional yet fashionable Indian dress to attend some family events or special occasions, such as the wedding. Jasbir further indicated that the women in India did still wear the sari very often. She also mentioned that, the kimono had reminded her of Japanese costume and culture. Man thought the qipao was the representative garment of China; she further indicated that, not only the qipao but other similar styles based on it would remind people of China, including Chinese people. Meng-Hua thought the qipao was the symbolic Chinese garment in women's fashion, and she also regarded the kimono as Japanese iconic clothing. Meng-Hua further suggested that, the kimono was kept alive because people in Japan continued wearing it; they always had the right circumstance to wear the kimono, such as traditional occasions or events. Tianran also indicated that, the qipao was symbolic Chinese dress, but rarely worn in China. Yada thought the qipao was the representative clothing of China; she said that some people would wear the qipao or garments in qipao style to attend Chinese events in Thailand. Yanyan also regarded the qipao as the symbolic Chinese dress; however, she said that the qipao was no longer ordinarily worn in China, even in Shanghai, the birth place of modern qipao. According to Yixin, he thought the qipao might be very Chinese for the foreigners; however, many Chinese, the younger generation in particular, might think this style was out-of-date and would not be willing to wear it any more.

## *4.2 Conclusion*

Clothing is one important factor that forms someone's cultural identity; the dress code of some cultures or nations appears to be more noticeable, for example, Japanese kimono and Indian sari. The tourist industry must have promoted tartans and kilt as representative of Scottishness; however, the support from Scottish people is the key to how this culture is kept alive. The kimono is also globally recognisable as Japanese dressing culture; people have always associated it with Japanese tradition and heritage, as it is still regularly worn on traditional occasions and formal events. Indian women also keep the sari alive and wear it for daily life. The qipao has long been regarded as representative of Chinese clothing; nevertheless, the qipao is no longer popularly worn in China, or within other Chinese cultural communities, such as Hong Kong and Taiwan. In comparison with Japanese kimono, the qipao appears to be less associated with traditional occasions or ceremonies; further, the lack of right circumstance to wear the qipao must have caused the decline in popularity. This phenomenon is noteworthy, that the actual wearing population is essential to keep a dressing culture alive.

### **Theme 5: Chinese dressing culture**

The cultural distinctiveness in clothing has become unclear in Chinese dressing culture; even a symbolic piece like the qipao, is experiencing a serious decline in popularity. To further investigate this phenomenon, the examination of qipao culture generated some relevant information that enabled a better understanding of the clothing culture in today's China.

### *5.1 The qipao*

As many participants indicated, the qipao was no doubt, the symbolic and representative dress of China; however, the population wearing this dress had largely declined in China and also other Chinese cultural communities. According to Chen-Han, she thought the qipao belonged to the older generation, as no one in her family would wear the qipao, except her grandmother. She thought it was odd to wear it in the street; however, in Taiwan, it was often worn as costume, for the wedding photo shoot in particular. Man liked the qipao very much, however, she did not wear it very often; she thought the qipao was limited to specific women who were slim and tall. She suggested that, the mass-produced qipao might have caused the decline in wearing, as they were poorly made and designed. She further indicated that, to wear the qipao was not comfortable due to the tight fitting; to take comfortableness into consideration, people tended to prefer casual and sport wear in China. According to Tianran, he said that the qipao was mostly seen and worn by waitresses in China; unlike the exquisite qipao he saw in the movies, the uniform qipao was poorly manufactured with bad quality. This depressed image might have made the qipao less welcome amongst the Chinese, as many have associated the qipao with the poorly made uniform of the service industry in China. Yanyan also pointed out that the qipao was rarely worn in China; she also saw her grandmother wearing the qipao. However, unlike Chen-Han, who seemed to have an old-fashioned impression of the qipao due to the older generation; the earlier contact with the qipao had made Yanyan regard it as a very pretty and feminine piece. According to Yanyan, the qipao was still worn in the traditional wedding and some special ceremonies in China. She further indicated that, the qipao was largely worn as the uniform in the service industry, such as restaurant and hotel. She suggested that the cheap

valuation of the uniform qipao could have made the bad impression of this dress, especially for the younger generation, who have never come in to contact with the real qipao. Yanyan thought that there was a potential market for Chinese traditional clothing, even the qipao was no longer ordinarily worn in China; however, the brands that specialised in Chinese traditional style still existed in modern China. Yixin indicated that, many in Shanghai would much prefer the Western fashion, but not the qipao, as it was generally associated with old China. He once visited some tailor-made boutique in Shanghai; according to the tailors, the major purchase of qipao was from the celebrities and wealthy women. The exquisitely made qipao was very expensive in Shanghai, therefore, few people could afford this expense; furthermore, even the people who purchased the tailored qipao, they would wear it only for special occasions or events. In terms of affordability, the real qipao was definitely not for mass consumption, no doubt, the population was declining. Furthermore, from the wearability point of view, this body-hugging dress was not practical for modern daily life, which had caused the loss of popularity. Yixin suggested that, the uniform of qipao must have had a bad impact on people's perception of this dress, which had furthered the difficulty in acceptance of the qipao. Yu-Ning is from Taiwan, and she thought the Chinese people still liked the qipao but they might think that to wear this dress was odd as no one else in the street was wearing it. Hence, she suggested that the re-designed qipao promoted by the big brands in particular, would encourage the Chinese to wear qipao.

### *5.2 Louis Vuitton's spring 2011 collection and qipao*

Luxurious brands from the West, such as Chanel, Louis Vuitton and Prada, have attempted to reintegrate the qipao with contemporary style, which have given a fresh look to this traditional clothing. During the course of interviews, many seemed to be aware of Louis

Vuitton's new collection designed by Marc Jacob; some intended to share their perception of this modern reinterpretation of qipao (Fig. 149 and Fig. 150). Therefore, this collection was taken as an example, aiming to further develop the intended topic about Chinese dressing culture and the qipao.



Fig. 149 Louis Vuitton Spring/ Summer 2011



Fig. 150 Louis Vuitton Spring/ Summer 2011

Man thought Chinese people would like to buy LV's new design; she suggested that, Chinese basically liked the qipao, but the silhouetted limitation had kept many women away from it. Tianran did not actually see the design from LV; however, he believed that the designer must have added new element to the dress. He thought that both design and brand were essential to the success in selling new qipao to the Chinese. Nevertheless, he suggested that a luxurious brand like LV might be the main factor that caused the potential sale in China. Yixin did not think the LV's new qipao could have a huge success in China. In fact, he thought the Chinese people would repel it simply because of the Chineseness was so obvious in this

collection. Furthermore, Yu-Ning assumed that LV's new qipao collection would be successful in China, because it was re-designed and promoted by a well-known brand.

### *5.3 Japanese kimono as an example*

Many took Japanese kimono as an example and further compared it with the qipao. Chen-Han suggested that, to wear the kimono in Japan seemed to be perfectly normal; however, the situation of wearing the qipao in China or Taiwan was more likely to be the opposite. Meng-Hua thought that the association with traditional occasions and events was one of the keys that kept the kimono alive in Japanese dressing culture. However, there are fewer opportunities to wear the qipao in either China or Taiwan; doubtless, this had resulted in the loss of popularity and population wearing the qipao.

### *5.4 Western influence*

Meng-Hua had worked in fashion industry for few years, including one year in Beijing. She thought the Western style was still influential on Chinese fashion and dressing style. However, she also noticed that, the foreigners had somehow reintroduced Chinese clothing to the real Chinese. The Western impact on Chinese fashion appeared to end up with two extremes; Chinese people had accepted and even pursued the Western style, and simultaneously, Chineseness had always come back to fashion and become popular amongst the Chinese, yet, promoted by the Western designers and brands mostly. Yu-Ning thought Chinese clothing was deeply influenced by the West; she further suggested that, the Chinese dressing style was a combination of Japanese and Western. She was aware that Chineseness had become quite popular on the international fashion stage; however, she thought the phenomenon was odd, as the Chinese people tended to rediscover and retrieve

their own style through the Western brands. Nevertheless, the Western style had long been accepted and regarded as the mainstream fashion in China and also other Chinese cultural communities.

### *5.5 Conclusion*

The qipao culture is experiencing a significant decline in China. Many outside the Chinese cultural communities might always think the qipao is the representative of Chinese clothing; yet, many Chinese regard it as a piece that belongs to the older generation, particularly the younger generation. Many think the qipao is out-of-date and unfashionable; further, to wear a qipao has become odd in China, as no other people would dress in that style. Moreover, the largest group of people wearing the qipao is in the service industry, for example, waitress and hotel receptionist; this association with service industry has further stimulated the marginalisation of the qipao. The quality of qipao has raised another issue that made the situation even worse; it is generally mass produced with poor quality, resulting in a bad impression of this originally elegant dress. Moreover, the exquisitely made qipao is good in quality, yet, it is too expensive so the majority of people could not afford it. The semi-structured interview is more flexible, this had allowed the participants to draw the information that they felt relevant; some took LV's qipao collection as the example, which demonstrated the modern interpretation of qipao. Some thought that, the right design would definitely change people's perception of the old qipao and encourage Chinese to wear this dress. Yet, some suggested that the qipao had long been associated with old China; therefore, the same silhouette with added new elements would not change the perception of it being unfashionable. According to these interviews, the contemporary interpretation of old qipao was likely to bring it back to fashion and become popular in China; moreover, a



luxurious brand like LV appeared to be important because of the design and branding. Some participants tended to compare the qipao with kimono, and they suggested that, the lack of right place and time to wear the qipao in China had caused the loss of popularity. These interviews had indicated the actual phenomenon of qipao's role in modern China; the lack of interaction between costume heritage and dressing culture has become obvious. Furthermore, some information had suggested that, new design would be essential to re-introduce the old style to fashion, as an approach to present the distinct elements in clothing design.

## **Conclusion**

Led by the chosen topics, the conducting of the interviews generated some information relevant to this study, including people's perception of Chineseness in fashion, views about the intended integration and the new approach to making patchwork design. The material sensation appeared to be crucial to signifying a Chinese-theme in clothing design. Symbolic fabrics like silk and brocade, specific pattern designs such as pagoda and dragon, have long been associated with Chinese-inspired subjects; furthermore, other visual and material impressions have always signalled the hint of Chineseness, for example, the sheen of material, luxurious and silk-like fabrics and satin effects. Benefiting from the material outcome, it was apparent that the proportion and position of applying symbolic fabrics have become essential to prompting a sensation of Chineseness.

Doubtless, the qipao has long been the signifier of Chinese dress, hence, its silhouette along with detailed designs such as high collar and side slits have become globally recognised features of Chinese style. Many participants associated the outline clothing design of this collection with Chinese qipao, even though the most expected features were not applied,

for example, frogs in the front and the qipao collar. The slim look and body-hugging silhouette seemed to remind people of the qipao; furthermore, the employment of Chinese representative fabrics was essential to deliver this certain association. Without the application of stereotyped elements like the Mandarin collar, a much broader perception of integrating Chinese qipao with contemporary women's fashion was suggested, yet, the use of corresponding materials would be indisputably important.

Inspired by the shuitianyi, patchwork design became the theme of this collection, aiming to demonstrate a new approach to combining diverse fabrics and materials. The composition was different from conventional patchwork, therefore, many thought this style of work was new and contemporary; furthermore, the process of de-constructing and re-constructing had made this framed patchwork structurally become three-dimensional. In consideration of the issue of wear-ability caused by this complicated design construction, patchwork was partially applied on the ready-to-wear garments; however, the partial application made the patchwork theme less obvious for some participants. To emphasise the patchwork sensation, the enhancement of colour contrast between each patch appeared to be effective; moreover, the utilisation of geometric composition was likely to inspire the impression of traditional and typical patchwork. Sometimes, the combination of various materials could cause an inharmonious effect in the patchwork; however, the method of integrating a coloured and patterned plastic layer with another layer of patchwork eased the potential visual conflict.

To further examine the integration that the participants saw in this collection, they generally picked out traditional and Chinese themes from the use of fabrics and materials; further, some associated the outline garment design with the qipao because of the slim silhouette.

Because of the restructured outline, many thought the first design was very contemporary, further, added pieces like geometric collar and hem appeared to be more modern; moreover, many regarded the patchwork design as the newest feature in this collection, as the diverse materials were integrated through an unusual and unconventional approach. Some thought the outline of clothing design seemed to be very Western yet some associated it with qipao, however, the application of restructured hem and geometric cape-like design had added modern sensation to these ordinary dresses. The use of traditional and typical fabrics had reinforced the Chinese theme; as many suggested the Chinese material, additional pieces and experimental style of patchwork seemed to be nicely balanced and integrated within this fashion collection.

The material outcome of this research was beneficial for the conduct of these interviews; the relevant topics were set to be discussed which generated some valuable information and further enabled a better understanding of the Chinese dressing culture. Moreover, some findings and suggestions resulting from these interviews will be particularly useful for future theme-related creation and design activity, for example, the broader reinterpretation of qipao design, the utilisation of representative fabrics and the attention to the proportion and position of the applied materials.

## Chapter Seven: Conclusion

The lack of interaction between historical costumes and mainstream fashion is obvious in today's China; having been aware of this phenomenon, this research aimed to demonstrate the potential for integrating Chinese style with contemporary fashion. The consciousness of Chineseness on stage is limited to a few styles, such as the qipao and Mao suit; regardless of the rich costume heritage for inspiration, other forms are largely unknown to the fashion world. This study has further explored the shuitianyi, aiming to capture the features of this dressing style and reintroduce it within the form of current fashion. To embody the concept in a material outcome, a series of work was produced, which enabled the further exploration of some subjects relevant to this study, for example, the dressing culture in China and perception of Chineseness in fashion. Moreover, the fashion industry is relatively young, yet, constantly developing in China; it is crucial that it finds its own distinct character, in order to survive in this extremely competitive market. Through this research, it has been proposed to manifest and encourage design and production integrating China's own cultural heritage with modern fashion design.

### **The shuitianyi**

Featuring a patchwork composition, the shuitianyi was a fashionable style that was once prevalent in the Ming and Qing dynasties; later, it has just disappeared from Chinese dressing culture with little information left about it. In terms of shuitianyi, it refers to two forms of clothing in China; therefore, some academic authorities applied the references of Buddhist costume to imply the origin of fashionable style of the shuitianyi. However, the relationship between these two kinds of shuitianyi is still uncertain; the use of unsure

information can always be misleading and cause further mistaken perception of the shuitianyi. Moreover, some confined it to a specific style, such as robe, dress or gown; however, further investigation has indicated that it was actually a style featuring a patchwork composition, yet, with no association with any forms of clothing. According to the depiction in some classical novels of Chinese Qing, such as *Lulinwaishi* (儒林外史) and the *Hunglouloumeng* (紅樓夢), the shuitian style was used to make a vest and also a cloak. Further, the shuitianyi has long been regarded as a style or costume unique to women; however, new findings have indicated that, it was also popularly worn by men in the late Ming era. This suggestion was based on the depiction of shuitianyi in *Shangyuan dengcai tu* (上元燈彩圖), an old painting of the Ming dynasty (see Fig. 68 and Fig. 69). The investigation into this specific painting manifested the popularity of shuitianyi in late Ming, further, its prevalence amongst men's costume. Moreover, this evidenced the arguments for a clearer definition of shuitianyi; without the bound of any forms of clothing, not even a gender-specific style, the shuitianyi was used to depict a dressing style featured of field-like structure, composed of various patches.

The figure paintings in *Yanqinyiqing* (燕寢怡情) have long been the only imagery references of shuitianyi. Many attempted to define this style of clothing based on these images, yet, this has resulted in a relatively limited perception of the shuitianyi, as it was depicted in certain styles, such as a robe and long vest. Furthermore, an irregular patchy style of a gown was depicted in this album; therefore, many tended to imply and regard this style as the example of irregular shuitianyi (see Fig. 70 and Fig. 71). Many suggested that, the composed structure of shuitianyi was developed from regular to irregular; further, this irregular style has become the representative of shuitianyi for years. To indicate the association with

Chinese heritage, the image of shuitianyi was sometimes used as signifier in today's China, for example, the tourist advertisement of historical town, the Cicheng (慈城) (see Fig. 81). With regard to the illustrated shuitianyi of irregular composition, doubtless, this advertised image has reinforced the impression of the irregular style of shuitianyi. Nevertheless, with no further references to evidence this so-called, the irregular shuitianyi, its popularity or even existence has become doubtful; new images found during this research have demonstrated the prevalence of shuitianyi, yet, featured of regularly patched style. Moreover, some replicas of shuitianyi had been made and displayed as the example of the costume culture of the Ming, for example, a show of Chinese historical costume held in Berlin in 2001 (see Fig. 78); nevertheless, most of these pieces were reproduced based on the illustration of irregular gown depicted in the Yanqinyiqing. The well-meaning purpose of reintroducing costume heritage was obvious, yet, the uncertain impression of shuitianyi must have been further fixed. Furthermore, being aware of the general association with this uncertain style of shuitianyi, this study clarifies that, the once popular shuitianyi instead featured a field-like structure, which was regularly cut and patched as all the reliable evidence has suggested.

Based on the survey of historical literature and new imagery findings, a new definition of shuitianyi had been made in this study, which will contribute to the knowledge of this dressing style. To explain the popularity of shuitianyi, the investigation into historical background of late Ming has enabled a relatively comprehensive understanding of this style, and further associated its appearance with the specific cultural environment of late Ming. Further, the emergence and popularity of shuitianyi has corresponded to its unique social and cultural background; more precisely, it was a product of the extremely diversified

culture of late Ming. In clothing, the ordinary people were constantly looking for diversity, variety, sumptuousness and even transgression in social class. Made of patches, the comparatively rich and varied appearance in terms of material and patchwork structure explained the prevalence of shuitianyi; further, as a fashionable piece, its popularity reflected the social and cultural circumstances of the time to a certain extent. Even though the historical description of commoners costume was generally limited; yet, the investigation into dressing culture of the ordinary people has offered the perception of material culture and social phenomenon within a relatively real and natural form. The change in style was continuous and the prevalence of shuitianyi indicated a different attitude toward fashion. New aesthetic awareness was revealed through the de-structuring and re-structuring process of making the shuitianyi, which made this dressing style distinct from the other Chinese costumes. To take the clothing aesthetics into consideration, a comparatively sophisticated consciousness of material composition was required to make the shuitianyi; consisting of multiple elements, including colour and pattern combinations, structure of patchwork and choice of textile and fabrics, the production of shuitianyi was far more complicated than a piece made of a single material.

### **Practical work**

A series of works were produced, aiming to reintroduce the shuitianyi within this fashion collection. The material outcome had demonstrated the intended integration; moreover, it allowed further investigation into the relevant subjects that this study proposed to explore, including the dressing culture in today's China. Theoretical study provided the principal sources for this production, evidenced from outline design to detailed patterns; simultaneously, the embodied outcome reflected the theoretical study and further enabled



the examination into the potential for integrating Chinese style with contemporary fashion. Having been aware of the lack of three-dimensional features in Chinese costume, an attempt was made to develop the original flat structure into a three-dimensional outline; further, it was aimed to add three-dimensional sensation to the Chinese-inspired collection, ranging from clothing design to patchwork production.

The conduct of interviews enabled a further understanding of the general perception of Chineseness in fashion; according to the participants, the sheen and symbolic material, such as silk and brocade would always signify Chineseness, regardless of the outline style of clothing design. Traditionally and regularly, Chinese clothing was made of complete fabric or textile; in terms of Chineseness, many give the fine and luxurious impression of Chinese material. Further, a piece composed of patches like the shuitianyi was comparatively rare; it inspired further experiments in patchwork design, and aimed to enable diverse materials to be integrated. Like the traditional impression of Chinese clothing, patchwork has always been flatly composed through traditional techniques; attempting to integrate the three-dimensional feature with patchwork design, a series of experiments on material and structure were undertaken. It impacted on the choice of fabrics and patterns; furthermore, structural alterations composed of various materials were introduced in this collection, demonstrating a new approach to making patchwork. In spite of the original inspiration of historical style, the experimental approach made the production more contemporary, as it allowed different materials to be combined in an unconventional way. According to the participants, patchwork design was the key that made this series of work look unique and modern.

To refer to the Western costume for inspiration, the skirt support of Rococo clothing had great impact on the first design. The attitude toward costume outline and exquisite design in textile had inspired the production of reconstructed work; intending to utilise the eye-catching silhouette to present the new style of patchwork. The first design was produced as design statement, which further inspired the creation of a ready-to-wear collection of eight garments. Through literature search and review, the notable cultural integration of the early twentieth century had been inspirational for this collection; Art Deco style had further become one of the sources of inspiration. Several features of Art Deco fashion were similar to the intended themes, including fusions of different cultural styles; the influences were shown in chic and simple clothing design, choice of fabrics and also the styling design for the photo shoot of this collection.

An exhibition was held, which offered the opportunity to evidence this study through a material outcome. Further, it was particularly beneficial to the conduct of interviews, as it enabled the participants to have a closer observation of real work. The interviews with a group of selected people generated some valuable data for this study, including their views about the practical work and integrations they saw in this collection. Furthermore, some participants were from a Chinese cultural background, and they were encouraged to discuss the issues of Chinese cultural identity in clothing and the perception of qipao in today's China. The planned topics were discussed and the embodied outcome as a collection inspired the participants to further discuss some issues that they felt relevant to this study, such as their views about other designers' reinterpretation of Chinese qipao on the fashion stage. These interviews generated some important data, including opinions about this study

and perception of intended integration; further, it enabled a better understanding of current dressing culture in China.

### **Chinese cultural identity and clothing**

The influential role that China now plays in the global economy, and in world politics, seems to be stimulating a cultural renaissance within the country. China is experiencing a cultural awakening in recent years, there is a momentum to re-discover and further preserve China's cultural distinctiveness. However the dissociation between cultural heritage and clothing has become increasingly obvious in today's China. An extensive westernisation or internationalisation in dressing style has made the cultural identity even more unclear. As one of the ancient civilisations, China is known for its long and rich heritage; the integration of Han and other ethnic groups has made Chinese culture complex, rich and varied. This fusion of various cultural traditions, a long yet rich history, and the later westernisation has made Chineseness or what signifies Chineseness harder to define.

Within the field of clothing and fashion design, Chineseness has always been associated with specific materials such as silk, and some dress styles like the qipao and Mao suit. Some things seem to be more permanently employed to signal Chinese style and theme, for example, the use of symbolic fabric and pattern; nevertheless, the perception of Chineseness changes and identification often depends upon the social and cultural context. For example, the darker colours, blue and grey in particular, were once the colour scheme of a Chinese style, they corresponded to the spirit of Cultural Revolution; however, these colours no longer necessarily remind people of Chineseness as the atmosphere has completely changed in today's China.

Reflecting upon the Chinese philosophy and attitude toward clothing, simpler and less complicated compositions in both material and structure have long been one of the recognisable features of Chinese traditional or historical clothing. Styles like the shuitianyi were rarely seen in Chinese costume history; further, as a style it broke through the stereotypical material combinations and demonstrated a new aesthetic in clothing. Nevertheless, the shuitianyi still corresponded with the traditional concept of a harmonious balance in clothing, even though this was achieved through a different and rather unusual approach.

In contrast to the shuitianyi or the Mao suit, colours like red and gold which have firmly and regularly been associated with cultural traditions, such as Chinese New Year, appear to be long-lasting signifiers of Chineseness. Throughout history the perception of Chineseness must have altered all the time, however, items or elements that are closely integrated with Chinese cultural traditions seem to be much steadier signifiers. In this study, the term Chineseness was applied to refer to certain styles which represent or inspire a Chinese sensation, yet, it might vary in the future, corresponding to the potential change in cultural and social environment.

### **Contribution**

This research makes a contribution to the knowledge of shuitianyi, as many misleading descriptions were found throughout the course of this research. Based on new imagery findings and a literary study of the cultural and historical background of shuitianyi, some suggestions have been made, including the facts that potentially caused its prevalence and disappearance. Some attempted to integrate the image of shuitianyi with Chinese cultural tradition, as indicated in chapter four; yet, the uncertain style of shuitianyi has highlighted

the argument against the representative form of shuitianyi. To further clarify this confusing impression of shuitianyi, this study has sought evidence of the certain style that was once prevalent in the Ming and Qing dynasties as a fashionable look. Inspired by the shuitianyi, a series of works was produced to demonstrate the intended integration; and a new approach to making patchwork was introduced within this collection, aiming to reintegrate the historical theme with modern clothing design.

The case study of qipao formed an essential part of this research; comparisons between this dress and shuitianyi were made, which offered some suggestions for the disappearance of shuitianyi in China. Furthermore, the investigation into this specific item generated some important information, which allowed a better understanding of clothing culture in today's China. The qipao has long been regarded as representative of Chinese costume culture, yet, it is experiencing a notable decline in popularity within Chinese cultural communities. After the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911, some significant political changes in mainland China had great impact on the qipao culture, including the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). The investigation into its development and history has offered a relatively comprehensive understanding of Chinese clothing culture that this study aimed to examine.

For any further investigation of the dressing culture in modern China, the lack of connection with its own cultural heritage is obvious. China is experiencing a rapid change, economically and culturally; the extreme internationalisation in clothing has resulted in the dissociation of modern Chinese fashion with China's costume heritage. Many in China or within Chinese cultural communities are aware of this phenomenon and are aiming to preserve their distinctiveness in clothing through different approaches. Further, the fashion industry is still

developing in China; to integrate its cultural distinctiveness with modern design seems to be essential for future success. The material outcome of this study had demonstrated that the integration of historical Chinese style and contemporary fashion is, through research, possible; as an example, this collection has offered a potential approach for creation. Moreover, the interviews generated some important information, for example, the perception of Chineseness in fashion and general views about the integration of traditional themes and contemporary design, which is considered beneficial to theme-related creation.

In recent years, the cultural renaissance is obvious in China, ranging from pop culture to clothing design; moreover, this cultural awakening is likely to encourage the further exploration of cultural study, including costume heritage. In comparison with the well-documented costume history of the West, the subject of Chinese historical costume is relatively less explored; no doubt, the existing resource could be little and cause difficulty in conducting research. However this research has potentially offered a model for the conduct of related subjects of study, for instance, an approach to finding new image references from various sources, including museums and auction houses.

### **Reflection and recommendation**

Intending to find new references of the shuitianyi, field trips were made to China and Taiwan; costume books seemed few in numbers, even in some major libraries like the National Library of China in Beijing and the National Central Library in Taipei. Further, these books appear to be short of primary researched content, as the same materials could be found in most of them, which had simultaneously included the mistaken information about shuitianyi and potentially the description of other costumes. Gao Chunming is a researcher and also the principal author of Chinese costume books; the interview with him had enabled

the understanding of some issues within this field of study. According to Gao, the phenomenon of plagiarism was rather common in costume books; he further drew on his own experience and indicated that, one of his books was once plagiarised and re-published by someone who has worked in this speciality for years. To a certain extent, this information explained the lack of references and further demonstrated the difficulty in conducting this relevant research.

This study aimed to find new image references to support the further study of shuitianyi. As indicated in chapter two, the system of online collection preview is not functional in most museums in China; therefore, to search for potential images through the official website was difficult. In some published books about Chinese old paintings, few images seemed likely to have the relevant depictions of shuitianyi; contacts were made with some museums and private organisations, for example, Wuhan Museum in China, boguzhai (博古齋) in Shanghai and Guanxian Art Gallery in Taiwan, yet, hardly any information was provided. Furthermore, some even provided mistaken or misleading information, for example, the incorrect date and place of exhibition, this kind of negative and relatively close-minded attitude toward information and research-related support had made the conduct of the research even harder. Moreover, some appeared to be unaware of their collections, not to mention the research support they could possibly provide. It was very difficult to get information from museums in China, as it seemed information was not available to the public for various reasons. Even when knowing the specific object that it was intended to look for, still, no further information was provided; also even if the object was on display, the description is often very basic and little.

Doubtless, the support from museums is considered crucial, particularly to cultural study; yet, museums in China appear to be less helpful, from the functionality of their online collection to the attitude toward offering information and other research-related assistance. As indicated in chapter two, a well-developed and research-related system like the British Museum is beneficial for the conduct of research. Therefore, to further develop a good research-related system in China is very important, as it would allow the growth of cultural studies conducted in China. Following the turbulent history of China in the twentieth century and the powerful influences of internationalisation, this research outcome contributes to raising the awareness of Chinese cultural heritage, which is beginning to be revived in today's China.




## **Conclusion**



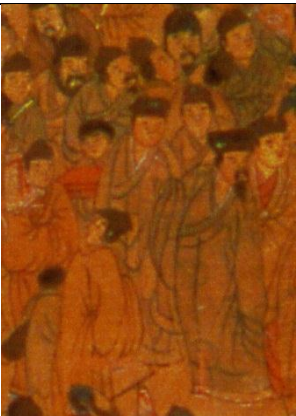
Through this research, more references and explanations about shuitianyi have been found, including the nature of its style, popularity and disappearance, related cultural and social phenomenon and the prevailing attitudes toward material and clothing aesthetic through the process of de-constructing and re-constructing. The material outcome of a fashion collection has demonstrated the intended integration; further, stimulating the interviews, the embodied production has allowed the investigation into Chinese clothing culture that this study aimed to explore. The dissociation between costume heritage and mainstream fashion is rather obvious in today's China. The potential for integrating Chinese style with contemporary fashion has been manifested through the material outcome of this research; simultaneously, the difficulty in conducting cultural-related study in China has been demonstrated in this study. This research was mainly conducted in the UK; yet, several field trips to China were considered essential for data collection. Even if the intended subject was



Chinese historical dressing style, the resource and support for cultural research was little and limited in China. Conducting this study in different locations offered the opportunity to experience varied research-related environments, including library facilities, museum systems and other potential sources. Chinese costume heritage has much more to offer for inspiration, yet, the relatively unexplored field of Chinese costume study has limited its potential. To develop a supportive research-related system in China is crucial to enable the conduct of relevant research that will benefit China's growing fashion industry. Most importantly, the contribution made to our knowledge of costume will preserve Chinese clothing heritage and stop it from becoming largely or increasingly unknown.

## **Appendix 1: References of Shuitianyi and Relevant Clothing**

<p>Depiction of the pianyi (偏衣) in the Zuozhuan (左傳), about 660 B.C.E.</p>	<p>Spring and Autumn period (春秋: 770-476 B.C.E.)</p>
<div style="text-align: center;">  <p><i>Coloured wooden figurine</i></p> </div>	<p>Warring States period (戰國: 476-221 B.C.E.)</p>
<div style="text-align: center;">  <p><i>Early example of patchwork, made of various silk materials</i></p> </div>	<p>Late 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century, the Tang dynasty (唐: 618-907)</p>
<div style="text-align: center;">  <p><i>Li Gonglin (李公麟), "The 18 Luohan Crossing the Sea" (detail), example of religious shuitianyi</i></p> </div>	<p>Artist: Li Gonglin (1049-1106), Northern Song Dynasty (北宋: 960-1127)</p>

 <p><b>Anonymous artist, painting, the common style of religious shuitianyi</b></p>	<p><b>1345, the Yuan dynasty (元: 1271-1368)</b></p>
 <p><b>Zhao Xiulu (趙修祿), the Xiyuan yaji tu (西園雅集圖) (detail)</b></p>	<p><b>1614, Wanli Period (萬曆: 1573-1620) of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644)</b></p>
 <p><b>Anonymous artist, the Shangyuan dengcai tu (上元燈彩圖) (detail)</b></p>	<p><b>Wanli to Tianqi (天啟: 1620-1627) of late Ming</b></p>
<p><b>Literary depiction of the shuitianyi in the Xiangqingouji (閒情偶寄), by Li Yu (李漁)</b></p>	<p><b>1671, Kangxi period (康熙: 1662-1722) of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911)</b></p>



*Anonymous artist, woodcut print*

Kangxi period of the Qing

Depiction in Chinese classic novels:  
Lulinwaishi (儒林外史)  
Hunglouloumeng (紅樓夢)

Kangxi to Qianlong (乾隆: 1736-1795) of  
mid Qing



*Anonymous artist, figure paintings in the  
Yanqinyiqing (燕寝怡情) (detail)*

Before or during the Qianlong period



*Anonymous artist, erotic painting (detail)*

19<sup>th</sup> century of late Qing

## ***Appendix 2: Sources of Data***

### **Field Trip to China and Taiwan in 2009**

**The Palace Museum in Beijing**  
**Museum of Ethnic Costumes at Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology**  
**National Library of China in Beijing**  
**Shanghai Museum**  
**Shanghai Textile and Costume Museum, Donghua (東華) University**  
**Metersbonwe (美特斯邦威) Costume Museum**  
**Shanghai Library**  
**National Museum of History in Taipei**  
**National Palace Museum in Taipei**  
**Library at National Palace Museum in Taipei**  
**National Central Library in Taipei**  
**Cultural Centre Library in Kaohsiung**

### **Field Trip to China and Taiwan in 2010**

**Shanghai Arts Institute**  
**Interview with Gao Chunming (高春明) on 23<sup>rd</sup> of November in Shanghai**  
**Interview with Huang Nengfu (黃能馥) on 26<sup>th</sup> of November in Beijing**  
**Interview with Lin Li-Yuen (林麗月) on 7<sup>th</sup> of December in Taipei**

### **Field Trip to China and Taiwan in 2011**

**National Museum of China in Beijing**  
**Interview with Wang Cheng-Hua (王正華) on 23<sup>rd</sup> of May in Taipei**  
**Interview with Wu Jen-Shu (巫仁恕) on 23<sup>rd</sup> of May in Taipei**

### **Museums in the UK**

**The British Museum: General visit on 23<sup>rd</sup> of August 2010**  
**Appointment for Specific Objects on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of February 2011**

**The V&A Museum: General visit on 23<sup>rd</sup> of August 2010**  
**Visited “Quilt 1700-2010” Exhibition on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2010**  
**Visited “Imperial Chinese Robes” Exhibition on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2011**

### **Appendix 3: Excerpt from Interview with Gao Chunming 23/11/2010**

Q: Perception of the shuitianyi

A: It was prevalent amongst women in the Ming and Qing dynasties. It was once composed of fabrics shaped in squares and rectangles. After some time, with beautification, it incorporated other figures, such as triangles and polygons; the arrangement of colour and material reflected aesthetic tastes.

I think the popularity of shuitianyi was related to the cultural and social background of the late Ming period, particularly the rebellious psychology...especially the wealthy people, while they had enough money, they would want to express their richness in many ways, including clothing. The shuitianyi was rich in variation, for example, the colour could be plain or vivid, the pattern design and also the size of patches could always be changed. I think it (the popularity) was because of the economic development and the change in fashion and attitude...

Q: The religious shuitianyi and fashionable shuitianyi

A: I believe that the regularly patched shuitianyi was more related to the religious costume...even though I have not found any literary reference, I still think there is a relationship between these two kinds of shuitianyi.

Q: The rarity of information about the shuitianyi

A: It was not a formal costume and it was a kind of unusual and strange clothing...not only the shuitianyi, there is limited evidence of other normal costume worn by women in the Ming, for example, the xiapei (霞帔), which had various styles and only some are depicted in paintings, not to mention an unusual clothing like the shuitianyi.

Q: The disappearance

A: Going out of fashion happened to all sorts of costumes, especially those that did not have support from society or government...taking qipao as an example, it was once a strange and brave costume developed from the Manchurian's clothing...some still wear it today, I think the clothing regulation in 1929 was the key, as it made the qipao become the formal costume for women and established its status as national costume.

I think the implication of incompleteness (shuitianyi's structure) might be taboo...Chinese prefer complete...Through my research, I think the shuitianyi must have disappeared for several reasons; the lack of support from society or government, such as formal regulation, changing tastes in fashion and also the implication of incompleteness.

Q: Museum and research

A: According to my experience, my research is closely related to museums. I have studied Chinese costume for 36 years and I spent plenty of time in museums around the world. The knowledge solely from published books can result in a narrower vision...some comprehensive museums always have relatively thorough collections...

Q: The existing reference of Chinese historical costume

A: Most costume references were from the depictions in paintings, sculpture or in the tombs...Most of the records of costume are about the imperial families and formal clothing, the depiction of ordinary people's styles is rare...moreover, costume was not a specialised subject in ancient China...in recent years, some researchers even plagiarised and copied others' books... repetition and similar content can be found in many published books about historical costumes...

## **Appendix 4: Interview with Jasbir Kaur 16/03/11**

Q: Do you see the Chinese inspiration in the garments and design?

A: Yes, probably because of the silhouette and the fabric. Because I think traditionally when we think of Chinese dress, we think of the qipao. (Do you think the silhouette is similar to the qipao?) Yes, because it's quite fitted and I think there's an association that is made between the fabric, kind of Chinese brocade fabric, and figure hugging silhouette. (Garment 6) From here it looks quite traditional (the top of dress) and then this kind of three dimensional trim is what makes it different from the qipao. There aren't the usual collar or fastening but even though that's not there (typical qipao element), it still reminds me of the (qipao)...

I think its mostly because of the fabric, and I think in that image (garment 6), the styling is quite sleek as well which probably adds to it.

Q: What's your opinion about the patchwork design in these garments?

A: I think it's really interesting. I think it's different from what's around at the moment; I think that, there is potential in it to be successful because it doesn't resemble anything that is out there at the moment, if you're talking about fashion, fashion terms. When I think of patchwork, in terms of patchwork, I think of a craft, a traditional technique that is done by a particular type of person, so I wouldn't necessarily say that's patchwork; I just think that's an innovative way of piecing together various fabrics, in order to create this work.

The cape idea, that's quite nice. These I wouldn't necessarily say that they resemble anything that I have really seen before, but I would say that's patchwork.

(Garment 2) I wouldn't label it as patchwork. I would say it's probably an innovation of that, because when we think of patchwork, we think of quilt and in this country and in a place like America; in the west, we think of patchwork to do with quilt and the traditional technique, and various formulations of creating patchwork, like triangle shapes all put together, or stripes of fabric all joined together to create a big piece. And this doesn't resemble that traditional form of what we imagine to be patchwork.

Q: Do you see the integration of historical or traditional Chinese inspiration and modern fashion?

A: I think this is quite a modern collection. I think they're quite classic silhouettes and that allows the fabric to really speak, it achieves a nice balance, I would say, of the material and the silhouette. One doesn't really detract from the other I think they work well together.

I do see signs of traditional Chinese dress, like I said it reminds me of the qipao and the figure hugging and form, and even the long split, and the sleeves being the size they are.



Q: Do you still see the silhouette of qipao in these big collar dresses?

A: No, I can see various parts, when you see the cape,...they seem to just be a modern interpretation of...collar, cape or something, so not in that, but the styling is quite interesting, the red shoes, the little sign, that's kind of a signal to me, that's China red. And even the make-up and the hair styling, it's quite sleek and Eastern. There's a hint of traditional dress and then there are twists that make it look very modern.

Q: In this series of work, what makes you feel modern?

A: When you walk around the exhibition, there are pieces that you can imagine yourself wearing or you would like to buy. It is the little kind of cape idea, and that piece (long dress with geometric hem) I think that's quite exclusive, that gives a different edge to what else is out of there at the moment. But I still think it's functional, I think you can still wear it. Because that's quite ordinary, that just tips it over into something else. I think if it didn't have that, it wouldn't be anything special. (Geometric hem) It adds value to what is probably quite an ordinary easy to make slit dress, but that unusual addition, and in fact, its got interesting fabric and form that adds something extra to it.

Q: Which one or two is your favourite garments?

A: (Garment 7 & 8) These are interesting, but if I have to pick one, I probably would pick that one (garment 7).

Q: What do you think of these two patchwork design (applied on garment 7 & 8)?

A: (Garment 7) I prefer the flatter (patchwork), because I think it works better for me, it's just my preference. But I don't think there is much difference between the size of that... trim of patchwork, and the size of that, you can see it's (garment 8) a little bit more voluminous, but I think that's (garment 7) probably a bit more ...and wearable perhaps.

Q: Which one or two would do you dislike (including the first design)?

A: (First design) It's the least.

I think aesthetically the others, for me, are just aesthetically more pleasing, and I think they are flattering, I think it is unusable. I think this is perhaps, I think something doesn't quite work on it. Because it sort of sits on quite a strange place on the bust, just flares out, in a way, I think it might work better in this collar idea being a bit more string line to contrast the volume you had going on, it almost seems like it's over the top, everything is just huge about it, I think it could have been a little bit more controlled around the neck-line, it might have worked a little bit better. Aesthetically I think it just doesn't work for me, and I think the others are more consumable, that (first design) I see as a statement, an art statement, but the others I think are ready to wear.

Q: Chineseness in fashion?

A: I own a couple of qipao tops that I wear, and I also have a qipao that I got in Bangkok, and it was made in a traditional Chinese silk boutique, and all three of those, one is red, China red silk, that's the qipao, and the other two are quite kind of, they have Chinese inspired print on them, but they are in a modern interpretation of that. All three of them, those pieces I think are exotic to me, because they are inspired by a place in the world that is unfamiliar to me and it's different from most around me all the time. I have had those pieces for years, and I wear them, every year I wear them at particular times a year, and they are never dead to me, so I think because they are modelled on a traditional dress form, they don't tend to ever go out of style, and I think that's the value in them, and I think that's what appeals to me about them. So I think they are pieces that, one I think feels exotic to me, two I think they are timeless because they are very close to a traditional dress form, and a traditional dress form I think just goes on and on.

Q: What do you think is Chineseness in fashion?

A: The fabric, the styling, even the make-up and hair.

I think there are two forms of Chineseness in fashion, I think there is one is very beautiful, elegant, feminine, figure hugging, and the fabric and styling actually indicates those, that it's from that part of world. And then, there is the Mao suit that everybody wore, and I think that has also inspired fashion designers and collections, but it is more of a working uniform, but it's still inspirational to people, I think those are two extremes of what I think is Chineseness in fashion.

Q: Can you give me some examples of clothing representing certain cultural identity?

A: The qipao in China, the sari in India, the hijab in the Middle East, probably various forms of dress from very different communities, like Amish dress in America which is very traditional..., and then the sarong from places like Thailand and so on. I would say there are really traditional forms of dress that are still in some way or another worn today and then of course the historical courses from various decades of European fashion.

Q: Why would you think qipao is very Chinese or represents Chinese cultural identity?

A: I think a lot of it, it's fed to us through the media and film, and just representation that we get through various forms of media, and I think that is literally how most of us are informed about the qipao. (When you asked me traditional forms of Chinese dress I am aware of) That is what I would associate with China.

Q: Your view about modern Chinese people, like the students here, and their dressing style?

A: I think that it's going through China itself, it's going through a huge development in terms of fashion, education, being informed by what there is. I see lots of Chinese students being

very interested in brands, luxurious brands, and I understand that to a degree. And then, when you think about how long the Chinese population has been exposed to Western fashion, you really understand why luxurious brands appeal, because that's the epitome of what fashion represents in the Western world, it's the highest level of what fashion represents in the world. And then it's quite interesting that a lot of Chinese students are interested in brands like Top Shop, H&M and Zara, which is consumable fashion for us, that we have had for many years, but to them, it's quite new, and they really want to understand how it works and how it compares to the Chinese market, and to them as consumers...their appearance, and to adopt that model for China. And also there are a couple of students who are interested in actually promoting Chinese labels and brands and new designers, which I think is great. I am just really interested to see how it develops because I think that so much of the Western fashion world just wants to trade in the Chinese market to make money out of it, and they all want knowledge, and I think that this group of students represents that knowledge.

Q: Do you see cultural identity through the dressing style of Chinese people?

A: No, because it's very similar to lots of young people's dress here, and I would say I don't think that's uncommon, in lots of different cultures. Because although I dress this way when I come to work, if I have a family function, a wedding to attend or something, then I will wear traditional fashionable Indian dress, so none of my work colleagues necessarily or friends even see me in that form of dress, but I do engage in it.

Because I have to say, relationship with my forms of traditional dress I think they get passed down from generation to generation, some pieces I own...from the 1960s, they are timeless... that item of clothing is still the same. I think most young people from China that are here, and probably in China too, do not wear their traditional dress, but having said that, the difference between China and India is that in India women everyday do still wear the sari...so that's a traditional dress form that continues to be worn. Whereas the qipao, I think maybe it's still worn at traditional family events or celebrations, but I can't see it being worn on the street. I think they are...impractical to be worn every day, but with the sari people are just used to wearing it and it's not seen as being impractical to them, so you see it on the street all the time, so I think that's differences in attitude.

Q: Would you be concerned that Chinese people lose their cultural identity in their clothing?

A: I think that clothing is just one thing amongst many that define your cultural identity, there's language, there's food and there's traditions that all make up your cultural identity. I think that if you lose the clothing that is one thing out of that group of factors, that erode the cultural identity of people. I am very aware of those identifiers, because just from my own experience of my culture, I think I know my language to speak to my mum but my children don't necessarily know the language to that extent,...but I think food is something

that continues, so language and clothing are two that may die out first, but I think food is something that will last a lot longer, because people regularly experience that.

I think a lot of it is to do with the wearability of the clothing, if there was a young fashion designer in China that reinvented the qipao, because you always get Chinese influences, Indian influences, and various global influences in fashion season after season.

But in India, there is a couture industry or fashion industry that is formed by just creating Indian clothes, the silhouette might be a fusion of Indian and Western but essentially, they are clothing for Indian people. The fashion industry is so new in China that we don't see it, we can't see it yet. Whereas in India, they have been through the same experience as China, China has been kind of cut off from everything for many years. Even in India the fashion industry is relatively young, it's only 25 years old, before that there is a culture of home-made, I think if the younger generation of Chinese fashion designers certainly sought to celebrate their culture and young people got involved in that, and then I think something might happen... it needs to become fashionable and fashionable year on year.

The kimono in Japan, that's one of those, that would be on the same level as the sari and qipao, and that's an iconic cultural form of dress.

Q: What makes you think kimono is so symbolic of the Japanese?

A: Media, films, I think most of us become educated about our culture through film,...I think most of it is educated through the media.

## **Appendix 5: Excerpt from Interview with Feng Yixin 17/03/2011**

“Like this one (garment 6)...the one-piece design looks like the qipao style” (Line 3-4)

(Garment 3, 4 & 5) “I don’t think the style looks Chinese, but the fabric does...” (Line 5-6)

“Mainly because of the fabric and style...I can see Chinese form and shape, even though you used other fabrics I can still tell its Chinese feature.” (Line 8-9)

“...your presentation about the shuitianyi...lots of patches in it...and the sensation of your work is similar, using lots of patches...” (Line 9-10)

(Garment 3, 4 & 5) “...the style is in trend, but you used Chinese traditional fabric and pattern...these three are good examples” (Line 18-19)

“When I first saw this (the work) before listening to your presentation, I felt these garments were very new...” (Line 21-22)

“...using traditional details to present the novelty...I think it’s a combination, the form and shape is modern but the root and content is historical.” (Line 22-24)

“I can still see Chineseness but it’s a modern Chineseness.” (Line 27)

(First design) “Because the form and shape is new...3D form is rarely seen and the shape is interesting, it’s not like something I have seen before...for me, something new and never seen will always catch my eyes...and I looked at the details with lots of patchwork, each one was made of many different fabrics...you might be attracted by its form when you look at it distantly, but when you look closely, the details are exquisite.” (Line 29-33)

(Garment 6) “Because I heard your presentation and I thought you want to present Chinese traditional elements...I think this garment is a good example...it has patchwork and it (the patchwork) is the same as that (first design) one...you used Chinese traditional shape...this is a better integration.” (Line 34-36)

(Garment 3) “... at first, I think the style is new...because of the collar...the collar is not only big, it looks 3D...a 3D form and shape, not like the traditional impression of big collar which is 2D and flat...and the patchwork is the key here...mainly because of it is 3D not 2D...the pattern looks Chinese and the colour is new...” (Line 37-40)

“I don’t get this (garment 7), it reminds me of European classic fabric...don’t dislike it, just can’t get this design...” (Line 42-43)

“This year’s LV spring collection was based on Chineseness...the style is qipao and the pattern is similar to yours...using colour trend and applying some brighter colours...using different materials...if the same style used Chinese traditional qipao fabric, it would be recognised as a piece of Chinese qipao...” (Line 46-50)

"I think it is the style (form and shape) and fabric which can reflect specific clothing style or culture." (Line 50-51)

"For the foreigners, Chinese qipao represents Chinese culture...they would think this is the dress Chinese women should wear, very traditional... (Line 53-54)

"...for Chinese, they might think it (qipao) is out-of-date, it is old and worn by people decades ago, it is not a fashionable dress and if I wear it people might laugh at me and think I am vulgar or something..." (Line 55-56)

(In Shanghai) "...in the street basically I can say nobody is wearing it (qipao)..." (Line 58)

"Even though Shanghai is the birthplace of qipao and there should be more people wear it or accept it...but the same reason, people think it is old and if I wear the qipao others would say it was for people decades ago...it is not fashionable and people now like, for example, mini skirt, casual wear, jeans or European brands...would rather buy H&M than a qipao..." (Line 59-62)

"Now in China, people tend to be repelled by historical costumes a little...not because people don't like the style...they just think it is old and unfashionable." (Line 71-73)

"...I think the service industry would have some impacts on Chinese people and customers...for examples, the Chinese restaurants, in the very traditional like hundred years old restaurants, they might wear traditional qipao and even wear the "qitou (official hat for the royal ladies)...they might want to express the culture or something...contrarily, this makes people repelled as the outfit looks ridiculous under such circumstance..." (Line 76-80)

"...their (qipao boutiques) main order is from stars or celebrities...rich women...the wealthy women would order it made-to-measure, but not everyone." (Line 93-94)

"The standard tailored qipao would cost over tens of thousands (RMB, about one thousand pounds), very expensive...and at this price, the common people wouldn't want to buy this kind of qipao..." (Line 95-96)

"...most of them (wealthy women) would wear it to attend the evening banquet or some events, but not for ordinary and daily wear...the practicability of the qipao is low..." (Line 97-99)

"Chinese qipao is very expensive and the common people can't afford it." (Line 99)

"Most young people think it (qipao) is old and they don't want to wear something old...they want to follow the international trend...they would be repelled by something more Chinese and traditional..." (Line 100-101)

## **Appendix 6: Interview with Zoë Millman 24/03/11**

Q: Do you see Chinese inspiration in this series of work according to the images taken from the exhibition?

A: Yes, I can see it (Chinese inspiration) in the fabrics in the textiles. These sorts of flower designs (garment 3), these peonies or roses, they seem very Chinese to me. Also in the cut like this one, I don't know whether it's the same in China, but when you go to a Chinese restaurant here, they have the high collared, shift dresses.

Like this one (garment 6), although I can see a Western element, like the cap sleeves, that's quite sort of like an American housewife. The cap sleeves seem very Western to me and that sort of slash neckline, but then the material seems quite Chinese, but it also reminds me of the high collared dresses (qipao or cheongsam), that shape seems to me very Chinese as well, but with the addition of the hem, that's quite Western to me.

Q: Do you see any other things in these garments that reminds you of Chinese or something traditional?

A: Perhaps the satin effect, the material is quite sort of shiny almost and that again reminds me of those high collared dresses (the qipao), and embroidery...This (garment 3) to me seems very Chinese, with sort of a cape...I think it might be the metallic cape and then the large flowers on the dress...in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Europe, there was a sudden fascination with Oriental...it was all things sort of Chinese and Japanese, they all just sort of lumped it in together, and we called it Japonisme, it was really popular for the Victorian's and this large flower design is very redolent of that era to me, so it's probably not very Chinese, but it's how we would've traditionally seen Chinese dress...very bold print as well, when I first saw these, I thought they were...sort of 1950s designs...I associate these large floral prints with that era.

Q: Do you think this collection is more traditional (Chinese), or more modern look to you?

A: It's a bit of both really, this is sort of, (the collar) the shape of it and the size of it, it reminds me of those...films the women were always very glamorous, they have the capes, they were quite popular at that time, so its sort of that cape effect, but it's more contemporary than that, it's a bit more sort of deconstructive, a bit more fluid, I mean it's not as stiff as that era.

And this is really interesting (first design)... it's like the runway collection, something like this one (garment 7) would be ready to wear...that one looks like you can just wear it, you can probably wear it to work even, but this (first design) is sort of while it's on the runway and then from that they would probably make it smaller and then put it in the shops, this is really interesting, cause this seems very contemporary but going back to the embroidery it is very obvious which to me seems quite Chinese, very fine needlework. These patches are

again very modern; I would say it's a very good combination of traditional styles and more contemporary, sort of contemporary take on traditional styles.

I love the very unusual use of textiles (garment 4), even like the tartan material which is not very Chinese at all, and that's very Scottish or Irish...the shiny skirt, that seems very Chinese to me...and then her hair (photo shoot image) also seems very Chinese, not current, but 1920s or 1930s...

Q: Which one or two would be your favourite according to the exhibition photos?

A: (Garment 3) This one is lovely, I love the colours, it's so bright...that one is very Chinese to me but I can also see the Western influence in that sort of the shift dress and it's almost 80s with that cape...that would probably be my favourite one.

(Garment 7) Also this one, it's very wearable, of all of them this is probably the one I could wear, I could imagine myself wearing...that looks like a very simple dress you could wear to work or you could wear it to go to dinner or something like that, and then with the bottom, (while sitting down and the bottom has been covered by table or something...revealing the whole silhouette and design without covering the bottom part...)...but you have to have really good shoes, probably quite simple shoes actually, so not to clash with the ruff at the bottom.

Q: Which one or two would be your least favourite (according to the exhibition photos)?

A: (First design) I think that's really daring, the big one. I love that collar actually, I was thinking, going back to the runway collection and then the ready-to-wear collection, the collar to me is probably one of the things they would keep definitely, because that's a bit more wearable. I love the material, but it's just, you couldn't wear it outside, on a daily basis. Having said that, without the stand holding it up, it's more draping. It's really impressive, but from a wear-ability point of view, it's probably my least favourite, because I can't really imagine myself wearing it.

(Garment 1) Maybe that one...I can't wear leopard prints, if you were asking me to choose one that I would be least likely to wear that would be probably, apart from this one (first design), it would be this one (garment 1) because I am not a big fan of leopard prints. But having said that, I love the style the cut of it is very pretty and it's very flattering, most women could probably wear that no matter what their body shape, it's not too low (neckline) and it's not too short (skirt length), it's a really nice cut.

Q: Which one or two would be your favourite according to the photo shoot (included the first design)?

A: (Garment 1) This one I originally said was my least favourite, that's a really lovely image.



(Garment 6) My favourite one, I really like this image here, she is sort of lying on the chairs, I like the composition of that...it's like natural, it looks sort of she was resting after the photo shoot.

These photos (photo shoot)...they do justice to the texture of the dresses, the material.

(Garment 3) Again I love this one, that makes the black pop, really nice contrast and also that sort of Chinese fan, but also a little bit Spanish...it's very simple, that one is probably my favourite one.

Q: Which one or two would be your least favourite according to these photo shoot?

A: (First design) It's a shame that you didn't get this one on a model, it would be really interesting to see it on this woman and see how she moves in it, and what it looks like done without the stand. I wouldn't feel comfortable to say that this is my least favourite one because it's not fair really, because they all really benefit from having a real woman in them...

(Garment 4) Possibly this one, because it's very short...I don't feel comfortable wearing really short things anymore. If it sort of came to be there (longer around the knee point) I would be much happier. I'd probably say that one just from a wearability point of view, but at least she's got her chest covered, it's kind of balanced out really. This gold one (garment 3) that was my favourite is very short as well, I wonder why I've said that...maybe it's because on the gold dress (garment 3), it just seems very Chinese to me, maybe I wanted it to look very Chinese, maybe I wanted it to reflect my perception of old fashioned Chinese dress...maybe for me on the black one with the grey collar, the contrast is maybe too strong, with the Chinese dress and then a sort of Scottish collar, maybe I just think that just is too wild.

Q: Any others you don't like?

A: They are all really nice photos...

The checked dress with a black cape (garment 5), this is sort of like the screen start that...and again with a fan, it's very sort of coquettish...it's strange really because it's an odd mixture, it works but it shouldn't work, because these shoes seem very sort of 90s almost...and that really bright pink red, there's a real mixture of eras here, but it all works somehow. Actually this is gorgeous...the contrast between the blue black cape and then the sort of iridescent flower sections, and again, that shouldn't work with the checked dress, but it really does, it looks, it's odd but it works somehow, it's really pretty.

Q: What's your opinion about the patchwork?

A: It almost looks detachable on this one, the black dress with the grey cape (garment 4)...almost like a pocket...it looks like, almost like something hidden...it's not sort of flush

with the grey material, sort of on top, so possibly seems like a more rudimentary way of patching, because it sort of... like an old way of doing it... like the way that working people used to patch up their clothes, very quickly...just sort of lying it on top...

Especially on this one, it seems quite futuristic, reminds me of the way that...like in the 1970s, like on old programmes...what the future was going to be like...it's very American, they would have these, it reminds me like the windows on...futuristic buildings...with that kind of porthole windows, like kind of ship...it's just the shape of it really. The patches on this one are more obvious to me than...

Although actually I didn't even notice those patches on this black dress with the red ruff on the bottom (garment 7)...I didn't realise how many types of materials there were there...it's really unusual, kind of reminds me of 90s club wear...

On the big one (first design), the patches are really obvious, it almost looks quilted...I seem to remember it's quite fragile almost when I was looking at it downstairs...it's quite a thin fabric...I remember when I saw it, it seems quite delicate actually in the flash, when you see it in person...again the patches seem quite futuristic, the shape of them...it reminds me of the lava lamp, they are sort of 1960s...it filled with combination of wax and oil, and then inside, it got all of these blobs of wax...they sort of rise and then fall, so they're constantly moving around the inside of the lamp, these shapes remind me of this lava lamp, these waxy blobs in the lava lamp...it's organic...on this one also, the colours are quite redolent...two different colours, the blobs might be this yellow colour and the liquid might be pink, so they really contrast (the colour)...

It's really interesting because you've got a real mixture of eras, like these shoes...Robert Plant music video with all the women sort of 80s...they all had very short dresses on, and then these like really sexy shoes, they had like black dress and then those bright red shoes, and they would play instruments from the background do sexy dances, and that's why these shoes remind me of it, they (shoes) are like really overtly sexual...from here up, its sort of quite demure and then you've got these really sexy shoes at the bottom.

The small photos (exhibition photos), the print outs, the quality of those are completely different to the photo shoot ones, and you saw the difference between my answers when I saw the photo shoot ones...your idea that actually being in front of them and being able to touch them and also see them in three dimensions is quite important...might be completely different responses, and also the idea about scale as well, because even though they were on the mannequin, I didn't realise how short they were until I saw them on the girl...

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