

INTERPRETATION OF CHINESE OFFICIALS' RANKS BY  
THE INSIGNIAS FOUND ON MANDARIN SQUARES

by 500

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requirements for the degree

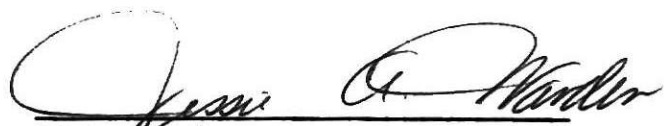
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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

No other country in the world except China has prescribed such strict regulations of costumes for her officials. There were three methods by which rank and position were indicated in costume. First, there was the type of symbolism described, i. e. the use of specified motifs varying in style, placement, and quantity according to the wearer's rank. Secondly, there were five different colours used for certain garments--black, white, yellow, red and green represented the five elements: water, metal, earth, fire and wood. Yellow was the central colour representing the earth, the center of the universe dominated by the Emperor as the Imperial colour. Thirdly, there were certain types of decoration worn on the crown of the hat which were important in indicating rank (Scott, 5).

The purpose of this study is to analyze mandarin squares, a part of a historical collection, stored in the Department of Clothing, Textiles, and Interior Design, at Kansas State University. "Mandarin squares are the woven or embroidered plaques which served as badges of rank on the robes of Chinese officials from the early Ming to the end of the Ch'ing Dynasty (1391-1912)" (Cammann, 2, p. 71). The bird or animal on the mandarin square represents the insignia of an official. Birds or animals, flowers, trees, and more abstract

motifs also were displayed on the mandarin squares. The principle behind the use of such symbols was that they were considered to give the virtues or good omens they represented upon the wearers.

In recent years, many people have been developing collections of mandarin squares. The mandarin squares have been collected for their workmanship as fine textiles. The problems of their origin, use, development and historical implications have been neglected by the scholars (Cammann, 2). Any art works should not be appreciated by their workmanship only, they should be understood thoroughly. Thus, it is useful that the related information about the mandarin squares is reviewed and more knowledge is gained by the public.

The writer hopes from this study that people will be able to get some idea about social and cultural aspects of the last two dynasties of old China and to enjoy more when they see the mandarin squares or other Chinese art works.

## CHAPTER II

### OBJECTIVES AND PROCEDURES

The twofold objectives are: (1) to learn the origin, use, development, historical implications and embroidery techniques of the mandarin squares; and (2) to develop a technique of chronology by which a person can interpret the insignia found on the mandarin square. In order to accomplish these objectives, the following procedures were followed: (1) Related references about the mandarin squares were reviewed. (2) Eight mandarin squares that have been collected by the Department of Clothing, Textiles, and Interior Design were studied. (3) Every example was analyzed in detail, including when and how it was used, the design, fabric, stitches, colours and yarn used.

### CHAPTER III

#### ORIGIN AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Mandarin squares did not form part of the official costume at the beginning of the Ming Dynasty. The usage of squares for insignia of rank started in 1391, twenty-three years after the founding of the dynasty when laws were passed that prescribed that the court and ceremonial costumes were to follow the ancient patterns of Sung and T'ang, but everyday dress was to consist of full cut robes of red fabrics, displaying woven or embroidered rectangular patterns generally called p'u-tzu (Cammann, 2). It was the only innovation to the Chinese costume made by the Ming, who seem to have been impressed by features of the court costume of the Mongols, the people of the preceding (Yuan) dynasty. The Mongols had worn a large square of floral decoration on the breast and back of their robes (Scott, 5). In Ming, the regulations specified that the squares of the civil officials were to have different species of birds, and those for the nobles and military, various animals. The birds were intended to symbolize the literary elegance, and the animals the fierce courage, of their respective wearers (Cammann, 2).

The squares worn by the Ming extended unbroken across the front and back of the robe, from one side seam to the other (except when woven directly into the robe, in which case front and back were bisected by a central seam) (Cammann, 2).

Dukes, marquises, sons-in-law of the Emperor, and earls wore the ch'i-lin, a beast with a dragon's head and a stag's body, the noblest form of animal creation (Morgan, 3), or pai-tse, a white lion-like creature; civil officials of the first and second ranks, white crane or golden pheasant; third and fourth ranks, peacock or wild goose; fifth rank, silver pheasant; sixth and seventh ranks, egret or mandarin duck; eighth and ninth ranks, and unclassified officials, oriole, quail, or paradise flycatcher. Officials of the Censorate were to wear a strange animal called a hsieh-chai; military officers of the first and second ranks, the lion; third and fourth ranks, tiger and leopard; fifth rank, bear; sixth and seventh ranks, tiger-cat; and the eighth and ninth ranks, "rhinoceros," or sea horse. The right to wear robes with these insignia had to be bestowed by the Emperor. An official could not automatically adopt the robe appropriate to his rank. The official, after being granted the right to wear the robe with his particular insignia, had to have it made for himself. No doubt, there were many variations in Ming (Ch'ing) insignia because they were made by different artisans in various parts of China. Two adjoining ranks of civil officials were assigned two separate birds, and two adjoining grades of military officers, two different animals. An official of the lower rank could not wear the badge of the higher, but an official of the higher rank could wear the badge of the lower. The desire for personal prestige was very strong, however, and within a century after the regulations were issued, ambitious officials began to flaunt themselves by wearing the robes of higher ranks. When the Emperor became aware of this disobedience in 1527, the officials were ordered

to wear the badge conforming to their own rank. At the same time the laws for insignia were reissued, requiring one species of bird for each civil rank. The regulations for military officers remained unchanged. From this time the regulations for insignia seem to have continued unchanged until the fall of the dynasty in 1644 (Cammann, 2).

"The most tantalizing gap in the Ming records is the lack of any reference to insignia for the wives of officials. However, Ming ancestral portraits show that the wife wore a square of her husband's rank--as was the custom in the following dynasty." (Cammann, 2, p. 79)

Unlike the Ming, the Manchus, people of the succeeding (Ch'ing) dynasty, made a complete break with the traditional Chinese costume. Their costume consisted of a waisted robe--slightly shorter than the robes of Ming officials--with cuffed tight sleeves, and with skirt split, front and rear, for riding easily. Over the robe, on all special occasions, a short fabric or fur riding jacket was worn. On May 14, 1652, the Manchus decreed court robes of certain patterns and materials for each rank and announced that for their ordinary dress, the lesser nobles and civil and military officials (of both races) should wear riding jackets with embroidered squares over their Manchu-style robes, particularly when they entered their yamens or visited their superiors (Cammann, 2).

The squares worn by the Manchus were smaller than those of the Ming and were fastened to their riding jackets. As the jackets opened down the front, the square on the chest had to be split, while the rear one was made in one piece. Because Ch'ing squares were worn on outer jackets, they came

to be known among collectors as "coat-squares," an expression that would scarcely be applicable to the Ming insignia which formed part of the actual robe (Cammann, 2).

The regulations of the first Ch'ing coat-squares followed the Ming laws of 1527 with a few minor changes. The lesser nobles who formerly wore a ch'i-lin or Pai-tse now were assigned either the ch'i-lin or a facing four-clawed dragon (mang). At the same time the quail was given to the eighth rank civil officials, and the paradise flycatcher, the ninth; while the oriole was discontinued, since unclassed officials in this dynasty wore the insignia of the ninth rank, thus removing the necessity for having a tenth form of bird (Cammann, 2).

At the start of the next reign (K'ang-hsi) in 1662, the first military rank used the ch'i-lin, while (Chinese) dukes, marquises, earls, and sons-in-law of first degree princes used the facing four-clawed dragon, exclusively. Two years later the Court further proclaimed that military officers of the third rank be assigned the leopard, and those of the fourth rank, the tiger. These changes may have been made because the imperial nobles of the eleventh degree, who were required to wear tiger squares, objected to wearing squares of the fourth rank, while their sons (nobles of the twelfth degree) wore those of the third rank. In such a case, the officials, not the nobles, would have been forced to make a change. Finally, in the third decade of the Ch'ing-lung reign (in 1759), the seventh rank officials were commanded to join the eighth in wearing the "rhinoceros," while only the sixth rank retained the tiger-cat (Cammann, 2).

Conforming to Manchu custom, the wives of Ch'ing officials were required to wear ceremonial robes identical to those of their husbands, and after the use of squares was prescribed in 1652 they were required to wear those of their husband's rank. At first these women's squares were exactly like those of their husband; but sometime in the mid-eighteenth century, the custom arose of having the bird or animal on the wife's badge face in the opposite direction from that of her husband. Thus, when they sat together in state--the wife on her husband's left--the birds or animals would be facing each other (Cammann, 2).

As to the rest of the family, the laws of 1652 decreed that mothers and fathers of (Chinese) dukes, marquises, earls, and officials great and small should wear clothing (including squares) conforming to the rank of their son. The sons of the above-mentioned nobles or officials and their daughters who had not yet married could, however, wear neither the hat ornament nor the square although the rest of their attire complied with the regulations for their father's rank. Sons who had already left home (in other words, taken office) were required to wear the dress conforming to their own rank (Cammann, 2).

The Ch'ing officials were still responsible for having their own squares made, and this is undoubtedly responsible for the fact that the Emperors of China found it necessary to issue repeated decrees telling what each rank should or should not wear. In the Ch'ing period the usurping of higher insignia by lower ranks was more serious than it had been in Ming. Beginning in the late eighteenth century, the procuring of office by purchase instead of by passing the arduous civil service examinations resulted in the more wide-



spread wearing of squares and had a profound effect on the decline of the dynasty. This decadent practice had been condoned since the founding of the dynasty, but it did not become an organized evil until the Ch'ien-lung period, when tables of prices for the various ranks were first issued by the Court. With this decree, the sale of insignia gradually increased during the first half of the nineteenth century. Finally, in the 1860's, when the widespread destruction caused by the T'ai-p'ing Rebellion decreased the revenue from taxes, and foreign indemnities further depleted the treasury, the Ch'ing government came to depend on such sales as a definite source of revenue. There was a reform movement to stem this tide of corruption at the close of the century, but it was too late (Cammann, 2).

Undoubtedly this practice, even more than the proximity in time, accounts for the relatively large number of late Ch'ing squares which have survived to pass into people's collections. It seems probably, too, that the ease with which one could buy a promotion led many officials of this period to adopt the custom of wearing appliqued birds on their squares, so that they might change the insignia as they rose in rank without having to go to the expense of replacing the whole square (Cammann, 2).

The purchase of insignia almost invariably involved those of civil ranks, for the military positions were prized by the Manchus and were not allowed to pass to the Chinese. When the Revolutionary spirit swept over China in 1912, the Manchu officials and petty officers, faced with instant death if they were recognized, hastened to burn their insignia along with other marks of identifi-

cation. This may account for the scarcity of military insignia at the present time. Conversely, one of the reasons for the survival of civil squares in such quantity is the fact that most of the civil positions were held by the Chinese, many of whom threw in their lot with the anti-dynastic movement and thus preserved their property intact (Cammann, 2).

The dukes, marquises, and earls, mentioned in the preceding sections, were created nobles for their personal merit, and their titles were seldom hereditary. At the same time there was a large class of nobles by birth who belonged to the Imperial Household. These nobles by birth also wore merit badges but of different form and with different symbols.

In the Ming period the insignia for members of the Imperial family were woven or embroidered in gold directly on the fabric before the robe was made up. Both front and back of each robe were made in two pieces with half the insignia on each. When joined together, each of these badges was bisected by a central seam. After 1528, nobles by merit and a few of the most distinguished civil officials were allowed to wear blue robes (instead of the usual red) on which their insignia were woven directly (Cammann, 2).

The badges of the highest ranks of nobles were circular in form; those for lesser nobles, rectangular. These lesser nobles wore animals woven in gold on red robes as follows: sons of second degree princes, together with first and second degree Imperial nobles, wore the lion; third and fourth degree Imperial nobles wore tiger and leopard; fifth degree Imperial nobles wore a bear; and those of the sixth degree, a tiger cat (Cammann, 2).

During the Ch'ing period, the laws of 1652 also provided that the highest nobles should wear identifying jackets over their ordinary robes as all officials did. Those ranking below the dukes, nobles of the ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth degrees, wore squares with the ch'i-lin, lion, leopard, and tiger, respectively, like those for the highest military officials. Dukes and those nobles ranking above them wore medallions with dragons (Cammann, 2).

When the use of p'u-fu, or jacket with insignia, was first prescribed, early in the Ch'ing dynasty, it was understood that this was only to be worn with ordinary dress. On ceremonial occasions the jewelled hat-spike and belt ornaments were considered sufficient for the identification. In time, however, the officials adopted the custom of wearing the p'u-fu with formal dress as well, and by the Ch'ien-lung period all but the highest nobles had followed suit (Cammann, 2).

## CHAPTER IV

### STYLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

In the earliest Ming squares two birds were depicted in flight against a gold background, which is cut by attenuated cloud streamers in bright colours. In later Ming squares, it became the fashion to represent one bird perched on a rock or branch, while the other was shown flying down from above as before. There were additional flowering plants at the sides (lotus with waterfowl and peonies with land birds) filling out the composition and helping to produce effects of somewhat idealized realism. Toward the end of the dynasty, the backgrounds became more and more cluttered with extraneous details; magic jewels were scattered on the rocks, on the waves, in the foreground. In late Ming, only single birds appeared on the squares. These types of squares for the most part retained the flowering plants and the general appearance of natural surroundings. Nearly all of the earlier Ming squares that have survived happen to be done in k'o-ssu (silk tapestry). The embroidered squares were more common in late Ming (Cammann, 2).

In contrast to the Ming squares, those of early Ch'ing are almost all embroidered. Apparently, during the Manchus invasion, the silk industry received a severe blow in the sack of Yangchow and other southern manufacturing cities. Either this, with the resulting high cost of woven silk products, or the fact that woven silk appears to have been an imperial monopoly with its

use restricted to the highest nobles, would account for the virtual disappearance of k'o-ssu squares. Later in the nineteenth century, the k'o-ssu squares did return (Cammann, 2).

The early Ch'ing squares adopted the solitary bird of late Ming, but it was rendered in a stiff and awkward fashion. Often, too, the bird was strangely contorted to form a circular medallion in the center of the square. As further departure from the naturalism of late Ming, the "land" in the foreground became smaller and smaller until it was merely a boulder jutting from the "sea" to serve as a perch for the bird or animal. The lucky gems were displayed in the waves at each side of the central rock, giving greater balance to the whole design (Cammann, 2).

By the late seventeenth century, the presence of a sun disk in an upper corner, toward which the bird or animal is staring, made a prominent identification of the Ch'ing squares. "Possibly the creature regarding the sun was intended to symbolize the official looking up to his Emperor" (Cammann, 2, p. 98).

"The most common type of early Ch'ing square has a wide border in which paired scrolls in gold are set off by couched peacock feathers, while the background is of laid gold thread, broken into irregular masses to avoid producing excessive glare" (Cammann, 2, p. 99). The bird, sun disk, and jewels among the waves were rendered in contrasting colours to stand out against the background; and the rock, like the border, was in peacock feathers. "The decoration of the Peacock's Feather was granted for meritorious services, and also

obtainable by purchase, or as a reward for contributing to charity. These feathers had either three, two, or a single 'eye,' or circular marking, according to the grade conferred (Williams, 6, p. 314).

During the great sophistication toward the close of the K'and-hsi reign, the squares were displayed in a new way which were characteristic of Yung-cheng and early Ch'ien-lung periods. These squares while still large were quite functional as a badge of rank with more subdued backgrounds of soft gold silk, very narrow borders, and the symbols of rank emphasized (as they should be) (Cammann, 2).

For a brief period there was a return to naturalism, and the bird or animal which was much smaller was displayed in a setting of trees and flowers; even the jewels were abandoned entirely. Then a period of sudden degeneration followed, and from this time the square may be said to have lost its primary purpose as a badge of rank; it became merely a highly decorative plaque that provided a place for wearing lucky symbols which might bring fortune to the wearer. The jewels returned and were joined by the bats, at first two or three, then the traditional five, often dangling some of the lucky gems on slender ribbons. Then lucky plants appeared, such as the pine and the sacred fungus (ling-chih), symbols of longevity, later to be joined by the peony plant and peach tree, which in time came to be integral parts of the background of nearly all squares (Cammann, 2).

At first these lucky symbols were used sparingly and stayed at the base and sides of the square, but gradually, although the area of squares themselves

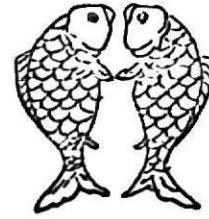
was not increased, more and more symbols were crowded into the background to such an extent that the bird or animal was reduced to a tiny cramped figure of little service in identifying the insignia at a distance. In extreme examples the eight Buddhist symbols--the fish, conch, vase, endless knot, wheel, lotus, royal canopy, and state umbrella, (See Plate I ) the eight symbols of the Taoist Immortals--the magic fan, bamboo rattle, lotus, castanets, sword, gourd and crutch, and flower basket, (See Plate II) and the lucky jewels and possibly the four attributes of the scholar--books, scroll paintings, lute, and chessboard were all found on one square. There seems to have been no established convention for the eight Buddhist symbols' representation on the squares, but the fish and conch were commonly shown in the upper waves, sometimes accompanied by the vase and endless knot, while the wheel and lotus, royal canopy and state umbrella took their places in the sky. The eight symbols of Taoist Immortals also commonly occurred in pairs. The most frequently used combination showed the magic fan with the bamboo rattle, the lotus with the castanets, the sword with the gourd and crutch, and the flute with the flower basket. As this was also a time of great moral as well as political corruption, various artful dodges were practiced in making the lesser birds look as much as possible like those for the higher ranks (Cammann, 2).

The late Ch'ing horror vacui, or dislike for blank undecorated spaces in their works of art, produced other elements which still further cluttered the already full squares (Williams, 6). During the nineteenth century, the space at the bottom of the square, where there used to be the waves, was occupied

PLATE I. EIGHT BUDDHIST SYMBOLS



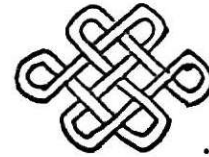
The Conch



The Fish



The Vase



The Endless Knot



The Lotus



The Wheel



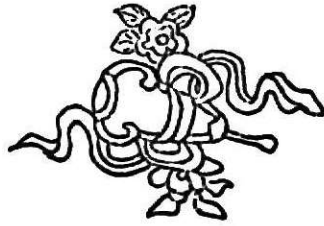
The Royal Canopy



The State Umbrella



PLATE II. EIGHT SYMBOLS OF TAOIST IMMORTALS



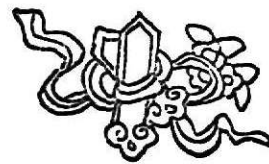
The Magic Fan



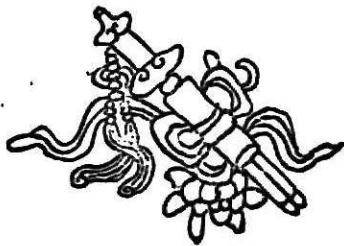
The Bamboo Rattle



The Lotus



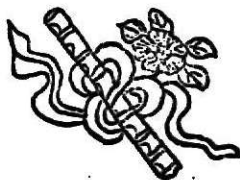
The Castanets



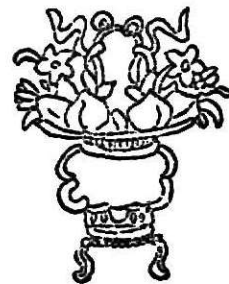
The Sword



The Gourd and Crutch



The Flute



The Flower Basket

by slanted lines, known as li-shui, to represent the deep sea. The background of the squares was further ornamented by all-over diaper patterns of linked lozenges or vine tendrills, or was filled with couched gold threads in horizontal lines--not broken up as in the early Ch'ing squares. There was even a revival of couched peacock feathers for the background. At this time k'o-ssu for squares reappeared. Details were added with the brush instead of being woven with the design, and the dyes used tended to be rather harsh or flat. Off-shades of orange, green, and purple came into the designs on squares with the introduction of aniline dyes from the West after 1860 (Cammann, 2).

During the course of the nineteenth century, another kind of symbol, pictured puns or rebuses, also played a part in the decoration of the squares. The punning objects were frequently shown, usually in the waves, or just above them in the lower half of the square (Cammann, 2).

Finally, even the borders, which since the middle of the Ch'ien-lung period had usually consisted of a simple key-fret pattern couched in gold, fell victim to the urge for elaboration. A common design was a simple rinceau, or vine pattern, with small flowers at intervals. Another, more symbolic, was formed of stylized dragons flanking a flaming pearl or a small shou (longevity) medallion on each side. Other symbolic motifs, bats, lucky coins, and shou characters (both square and round) also appeared in endless repetition in the border. A design of alternate bats and shou symbols was a particular favorite at the turn of the century (Cammann, 2).

The last distinctive Ch'ing style of squares characterized by extreme

simplicity was a belated reaction against the decadence expressed in over-elaborate squares. These squares, very popular in the early years of the twentieth century, showed the bird or animal soaring toward the sun through a cloud-filled sky. The background lacked both rocks and waves, and any lucky symbols were restricted to a very simple border. Some of the last of this type of square have the eight Buddhist symbols arranged in a circle about the central figure because the desire for luck was still very strong (Cammann, 2).

Contemporary with the reformed type was a group of semi-reformed squares produced in quantity. They consisted of a simple border, li-shui and rock, with a relatively plain sky that usually had an all-over diaper pattern containing conventionalized shou characters, which were revealed only on close inspection. Space was left for an appliqued bird (usually embroidered) and for the sun which could be applied in the right or left corner, depending on the sex of the wearer (Cammann, 2).

Not all of the late Ch'ing squares were of these relatively simplified types, for the older styles continued and became more and more garish and ornate. Frequently they had the bird or animal, sea, sun, and symbols, all embroidered in gold or silver thread with slightly differences in colour tones achieved by using threads of contrasting colours to secure the heavier metallic thread (Cammann, 2).

## CHAPTER V

### THE BIRDS AND ANIMALS USED ON THE SQUARE

Aside from the greater or lesser stylization at various periods and a gradual reduction in size, the ways of representing birds and animals did not differ very much from one period to another, with the few exceptions noted below. The birds were all drawn from examples in nature; and although their colouring was often altered to a greater or lesser degree at the whim of the makers of the squares, they each had a distinctive shape reasonably characteristic of their prototypes, which makes recognition fairly simple even with the late Ch'ing squares in gold or silver on which the bird was generally rendered in monochrome (Cammann, 2).

The crane was depicted on the squares as a white bird with a predominantly black head touched with scarlet, a black patch on its long neck, and usually a few black plumes at the base of its wings and on its short tail. The crane because of its reputedly great age has long been known as a symbol of longevity, and the early Ch'ing makers of squares sometimes called attention to this by placing in the bird's mouth a peach of immortality or a sprig of fungus (Cammann, 2).

The Manchurian, or "golden" pheasant, was represented as a vividly-coloured bird with blue crest and wing covers, yellow head and neck, green body and upper legs, and red lower legs and beak. Its most distinctive feature

was the tail, composed of two straight parallel plumes lightly barred in black. Examples from early Ch'ing, however, sometimes show three or more wavy tail feathers recognizable by the bars (Cammann, 2).

The peacock can be recognized by a small feather atop its head and a spreading green tail, each plume of which has the characteristic "eye." This bird was an emblem of beauty and dignity (Williams, 6).

The wild goose usually was shown as having light tan or mustard colour on upper head, wing covers and back, with the front of its neck and its breast in a lighter hue. It often had a black (or grey) patch under its chin, and its upper head and back nearly always was shaded with paired comma-marks in black. The makers generally endeavored to have the bird's head somewhat rectangular, like that of an actual goose; but they seldom copied nature sufficiently to give it webbed feet (Cammann, 2).

The silver pheasant was depicted on Ming squares as a white bird with dark blue or green crest and two to five long, slender tail plumes springing from shorter ones at the base. The Ch'ing type is less natural looking, though perhaps more decorative. Usually the latter was shown as all white with five widely separated, scalloped tail plumes, a feature which serves to distinguish it unmistakably from the other (Manchurian) pheasant (Cammann, 2).

The egret is a white bird with a very short tail, a prominent crest feather (which is sometimes blue in late Ch'ing examples), and light green, or yellow bill and legs (Cammann, 2).

The mandarin duck is brilliantly coloured with blue as the predominating

hue. It usually had a red bill and legs, a yellowish neck formed of long narrow feathers in two tiers, a blue back with its feathers in a scale pattern, particoloured wings, and a short blue tail, all the feathers of which are gathered in a wedge-shaped mass curving upward at the end (Cammann, 2). The mandarin duck is an emblem of conjugal fidelity (Williams, 6).

The quail is a round, dumpy bird having short wings and practically no tail. It was depicted usually as dull brown or mustard-coloured with a slightly lighter breast; the broad feathers on its back were generally bisected by a white mid-rib (Cammann, 2).

The paradise flycatcher was represented on Ming squares as a white bird with a prominent crest and two long, sweeping tail plumes. In the Ch'ing, these feathers were further conventionalized by being broadened at the extremities and marked near the end with a large blue or yellow dot while the crest was either worked in blue or given a dot of the same colour as that on the tail (Cammann, 2).

The oriole is the most difficult bird to describe in any detail because of the lack of examples. "The cuts in Ming books show a small, long-tailed bird with no prominent distinguishing features" (Cammann, 2, p. 106). Two examples of the Ch'ing show a yellow bird with its back, wing-covers, and tail lightly marked with black.

Unlike the birds, the animals were chosen, with few exceptions, from a group of mythical creatures out of Chinese folklore with scarcely any resemblance to natural prototypes.

The ch'i-lin is often miscalled a unicorn by Western writers. It is a composite beast with a dragon's head, the body of a stag covered with large blue or green scales, and a bushy "lion's tail" (Cammann, 2, p. 108). It stood for grandeur, longevity and wise administration (Morgan, 3).

The pai-tse, a white, lion-like creature, is usually described in Chinese mythology as having a single horn; but on Ming squares it had two. The makers of squares often rendered its appearance more weird by using different colours such as red, blue, and green for the mane and bushy tail. Sometimes it is also shown as having a cluster of rough scales on shoulder and flank. Its use was discontinued after the fall of the Ming dynasty, and it never appeared on Ch'ing squares (Cammann, 2).

The hsieh-chai is a fabulous white monster, greatly resembling the pai-tse but having only one horn. As it was believed to be able to distinguish right from wrong and to have a propensity for goring the wicked, it was symbolically very appropriate on the squares of the Censors, who were employed to investigate and report on any breach in the honesty and integrity of other officials (Cammann, 2).

The lion is known in China through Buddhist tradition. On late Ch'ing squares it resembles the "snow lion" of Tibetan Buddhist art, a large, white animal with green, curly mane, back crest, and bushy tail; but in earlier examples the body is often blue. It was the symbol of valour (Cammann, 2).

The tiger and leopard were mentioned together in early Ming regulations as though there may have remained some ancient belief that the tiger was the

male and the leopard the female of a single species. The tiger was frequently distinguished by having the character for prince (王) on its brow, while the leopard often had a circular star made by radiating lines on its forehead (Cammann, 2). The tiger represented the incarnation of courage and fierceness. The leopard was the emblem of bravery and martial ferocity (Williams, 6).

The tiger cat was shown as a yellowish, catlike beast with white chest and no particularly distinctive markings (Cammann, 2).

The bear was quite unlike its natural prototype, being blue with green mane and bushy tail. Sometimes it also had white paws trimmed in red. It was symbolic of bravery and fierceness (Cammann, 2).

The "rhinoceros" was shown on the squares as a lightly-built cowlike creature with a large horn at the back of its head, curling forward between the ears. It had a long, thin tail and the characteristic flame wisps wreathing skyward.

The sea horse is actually a legendary horse of the sea and examples of this animal are extremely rare (Cammann, 2).



## CHAPTER VI

### THE SYMBOLS MOST COMMONLY FOUND ON THE SQUARE

The basic symbolism on the squares consisted of the symbolic representation of the Universe--Land, Sea, and Sky, indicated by the rocks, waves, and clouds--and the animals or birds used as symbols of rank. In time, the squares came to be literally crowded with extraneous symbols expressing wishes for happiness, particularly in terms of wealth and longevity (Cammann, 2).

The auspicious symbols first appeared in the foreground of late Ming squares. These were the lucky jewels, or objects of value, originally depicted in Buddhist carvings and paintings as symbolic offerings to the various deities but by extension of meaning from symbols of wealth as offerings they had come to be superstitiously considered as symbols capable of procuring wealth for people who wore them (Cammann, 2).

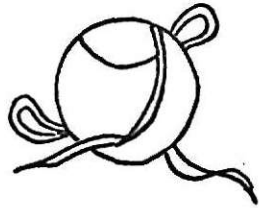
These jewels usually were described under the Chinese term *pa pao*, or "Eight Precious Things." Those most usually encountered on mandarin squares (whether late Ming or Ch'ing) were: a stick of coral, ivory tusks, rhinoceros horns, a sacred pearl, a pair of interlocking gold circlets, a pair of interlocking gold rectangles, a jade musical stone, and a golden swastika. These often were supplemented or replaced by a pierced coin, a pair of scroll paintings, or a rectangle commonly described as a painting or "mirror," a book, a golden wheel, an artemisia leaf, an ingot of silver, and a *ju-i*

scepter, or a jewel shaped like the head of a ju-i (Cammann, 2). (See Plate III.)

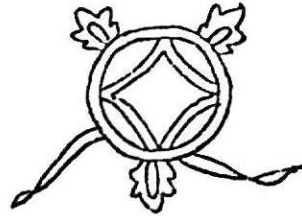
On early Ch'ing squares only one or two of these "precious things" were used, projecting from the waves on each side of the central rock to give balance to the design. During the Ch'ien-lung period bats appeared on the squares, and usually the jewels were dangled by ribbons from the mouths of these flying bats. The bats were symbols of felicity because of a pun on the word for happiness. At first only one or two bats were shown, then five, to symbolize the five forms of happiness (long life, wealth, tranquility, love of virtue, and a happy death to crown a life of accomplishment). As a further development, these five bats, flying in the clouds at the top of the square, were rendered in crimson to express a more elaborate pun; because the characters for "red bat" and those for "vast happiness" are homophonic, by simple substitution, the phrase "red bats attaining the sky" becomes "vast happiness reaching Heaven." The bats retained their popularity throughout the rest of the dynasty but they soon ceased to dangle the lucky jewels which returned to the lower border with their number increased to the original eight, and there they remained throughout the nineteenth century (Cammann, 2).

In the earlier Ch'ien-lung squares, the pine tree of longevity extended up the left side of the square and spread its branches across the top. Then in the later Ch'ien-lung squares, both sides were taken up by lucky plants. The pine was replaced by the peach tree, which since its fruits were emblems of Immortality, was considered even more potent than the pine as a symbol of long life; while on the opposite side was placed a peony plant which was the

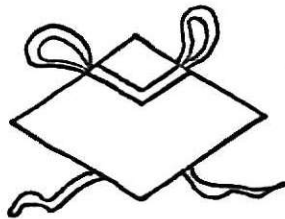
PLATE III. PA PAO OR EIGHT PRECIOUS THINGS



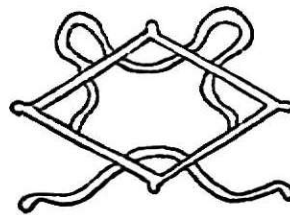
The Pearl



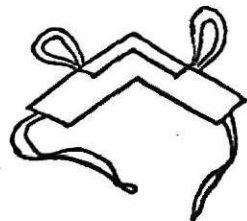
The Pierced Coin



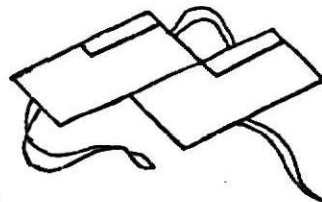
The Painting



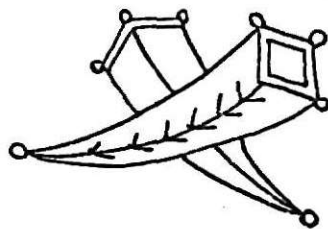
The Lozenge



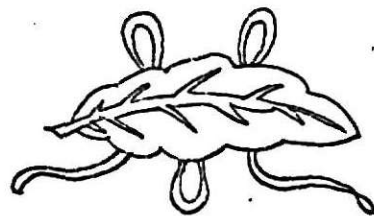
The Musical Stone



The Pair of Books



The Horn



The Leaf of the Artemisia

emblem of riches and honors (Cammann, 2).

The eight Buddhist symbols and the eight symbols of Taoist Immortals had enjoyed a quasi-religious status which they gradually lost, until in the latter part of the eighteenth century they reached their ultimate development as mere lucky emblems, also called "pa pao" in popular parlance (Cammann, 2).

Another popular group at the early nineteenth century was the Four Attributes of the Scholar suggesting the life of contemplation in retirement (Cammann, 2). In the nineteenth century, pictured puns appeared on the squares. The most common of these was the halberd standing upright behind a jade musical stone to express good luck and good fortune. Sometimes the ju-i scepter was added to this combination, as the expression ju-i meaning "as you desire" gave the rebus the additional connotation of "as much luck as one desired." For a similar reason, the ju-i was shown with the scholar's brush and an ingot of silver to mean, "Everything will certainly be as you desire"; while the brush through the hub of a wheel was a punning expression of hope for success (Cammann, 2).

Toward the end of the dynasty an intricate diaper of conventionalized swastikas or shou characters, in place of familiar clouds, filled in the background of the square (Cammann, 2). This has the meaning of a very long life desired for the wearer (Cammann, 2).

## CHAPTER VII

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF EMBROIDERY STITCHES AND WEAVES

Chinese embroidery techniques have developed since the early Han Dynasty (206 B.C. - A.D. 220). Eight different types of stitches including the loop or chain, knot or Peking, couched twist, applique, satin, stem, buttonhole, and quilting stitches evolved during that time. The loop stitch when done with very fine thread is frequently mistaken for the knot stitch, which is also called the seed stitch. The couched-twist embroidery is made by first twisting two silk threads tightly together so that the effect is that of a very fine knobby braid; then, these threads are couched down, sometimes in solid designs and sometimes as outlining for designs embroidered in other stitches (Priest, 4).

Applique embroidery is very common in Chinese needlework. Usually, separate motifs, floral or conventional, are embroidered on canvas or scrim or sometimes on tough paper, which is then cut down to the pattern, leaving the embroidered motifs ready to be applied to any desired surface (Priest, 4). Since the Han Dynasty, the satin stitch has been used constantly by the Chinese in their embroideries, the stem stitch more rarely, and the buttonhole and quilting stitches almost not at all (Priest, 4).

After the Han Dynasty, no new stitches seem to be found until several new ones appear on the textiles of the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties. All of these stitches require a fabric background of gauze, canvas, or a loose plain weave.

They could all be called counted canvas stitches. Two of the best known are the Florentine and Petit-point stitches. The difference in technique is slight; the Florentine stitch is darned on the background in vertical lines and the petit-point at a forty-five degree angle. Another variation of the counted canvas stitch is known as a surface darning stitch. This has not been found as yet on any examples dating earlier than the eighteenth century (Priest, 4).

Every embroidered stitch known to the Chinese can be identified on the mandarin squares, partly because the embroidery is usually more clear-cut and the design more unified than on larger pieces. Besides being done by embroidering, the mandarin squares were also done in k'o-ssu weave. This was the most prized technique and originated in China. The hand loom which was used for k'o-ssu weave was of either the vertical or the horizontal type, the warp threads taking their direction accordingly. The weft threads were rolled on bobbins, one for each colour in the pattern. These weft threads were carried only so far as needed for the various details of the pattern. If the points of juncture of the pattern with the bordering weft colours were extremely small, no attempt was made to connect them; thus, tiny slits were left at the outlines of the pattern. If the points of junction were large, the weaver of Chinese tapestries usually interlocked the two adjoining wefts by looping them through each other at the point of contact. This joining was frequently done in other ways by tapestry weavers of the West by the use of a needle and by still another manipulation of the weft threads, but the result was never so compact as in the method mentioned above and would be much

more noticeable in the fine silk k'o-ssu than it was in woolen tapestry. As a rule, in Chinese tapestry as in Western, the ends of the weft were left hanging on the reverse side, but this was not always the case. Sometimes each end of the weft was wrapped about the warp where it terminated and then trimmed short, so that without a magnifying glass the reverse side of the k'o-ssu could not be distinguished (Priest, 4).

## CHAPTER VIII

### FINDINGS

Since the eight mandarin squares studied belonged to civil officials of the Ch'ing Dynasty (1644-1912), (as would be proved later) the discussion was concentrated on the insignias of Ch'ing civil officials.

Every square has been interpreted in three major ways: (1) when it was used (approximately), (2) how it was used, and (3) how the background and the border were depicted.

There are three possible clues for dating the squares: stylistic and technical changes, alteration of the size of the bird, and symbols used. As is known, the birds in the early Ch'ing squares were larger than those of the later Ch'ing; and greyish, duller dyes were used in the early Ch'ing as compared to harsh aniline dyes in the later Ch'ing. From the early years of Ch'ing to the close of K'ang-hsi reign (1652-1772), dazzling gold backgrounds were preferred. Only one or two lucky jewels were displayed on or in the waves. It became a custom to present the sun disk on the upper corner of the square by the late seventeenth century. During the Yung-cheng and early Ch'ien-lung period (the early and middle eighteenth century), a softer gold background and a very narrow border were preferred. The symbol of rank was emphasized as it should be. A pine tree appeared at the left side of the square. For a brief time in the middle Ch'ien-lung period, there was a



return to naturalism. A much smaller bird was displayed in a setting of trees and flowers; even the jewels disappeared. In the border a simple key-fret pattern couched in gold was the common design at this time. Then in later Ch'ien-lung period (late eighteenth century), the square became merely a highly decorated plaque; jewels returned, dangling by ribbons from the mouths of bats. The jewels also returned to the lower border with their number increased to the original eight. Later the lucky, symbolic plants, such as the pine and the sacred fungus (ling-chih) appeared on the square. Gradually, the size of the bird was reduced as more and more symbols were crowded into the background. This ornate trend continued until the reform movement arose in the late nineteenth century. During the nineteenth century gold thread returned arranged in a less subtle way and li-shui showed up at the bottom of the square. The search for variety also resulted in the return of k'o-ssu for squares, but the weaving technique had degenerated. Details were added with brush, and the dyes used tended to be harsh. The borders fell victim to the urge for elaboration. A design of alternate bats and shou characters was the particular favorite at the turn of the century. In the early years of the twentieth century (to 1912), the older style became more and more garish and ornate and was usually embroidered in gold and silver threads. There were two types of squares developed, reformed and semi-reformed. The reformed was characterized by the extreme simplicity of a background lacking both rock and the "sea." The semi-reformed was characterized by an all-over diaper of swastikas or shou symbols. After the Revolution in 1912 the mandarin

squares were abandoned entirely.

The first regulations of the insignias worn by the civil officials of the Ch'ing Dynasty followed 1527 Ming's law with a few minor changes. Since then, no changes had been made throughout the dynasty. The insignias for nine civil officials were:

RANK	INSIGNIA
First	White crane
Second	Manchurian or golden pheasant
Third	Peacock
Fourth	Wild goose
Fifth	Silver pheasant
Sixth	Egret
Seventh	Mandarin duck
Eighth	Quail
Ninth and unclassified	Paradise flycatcher

#### A. First Example

It is a double square with one piece split in half. This suggests that it was worn on the Ch'ing jacket which was opened down the front. There is no sun disk on the square. This implies that the square was used before the sun disk had become a custom to be presented on the square by the late seventeenth century. The Eight Buddhist Symbols, except the fish and conch projecting from the waves, are scattered on the foreground which followed the style of late Ming squares. The border is very wide--one and one-sixteenth inches--

and the bird is large compared to the other examples. These characteristics indicate that the square was used in the early Ch'ing period.

The square has an insignia of the civil official of the second rank indicated by the Manchurian pheasant which is recognized by two straight parallel barred plumes. It is depicted as a vividly coloured bird with pale blue crest and wing covers, yellow head and neck, white upper legs, and pale coral lower legs and bill. Two distinctive plumes were rendered in white, pale blue and yellow citron barred in blue. There are two shorter red plumes on each side of the two barred plumes. The back is in scalelike patterns. It is an appliqued bird in satin stitch cut out of a brown satin.

The black satin square (11 5/8" x 10 5/8") was embroidered mostly in satin stitch with a few loop stitches. Blue and pale blue clouds and rocks blended with white, yellow citron, green citron and green waves. Flowers at the lower corners were tints of pink and yellow massed together. The turmoil below the waves was indicated by blue-cloud-shaped swirls pressing up from the bottom. Eight Buddhist Symbols were arranged in white, yellow, green, pink, and pale turquoise. The border had a pale honey key-fret pattern with pale turquoise vine-like design at intervals (See Plate IV, a).

#### B. Second Example

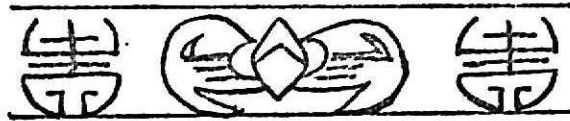
This is a k'o-ssu square with woven-in designs (See Plate IV, b). A design of alternate bats and round shou characters in the border suggests that the square dated at the turn of the nineteenth century.

The appliqued bird is a peacock very easily recognized by a small

PLATE IV: THE BORDER DESIGNS



a. The key-fret pattern with vine at intervals



b. The bat and shou characters



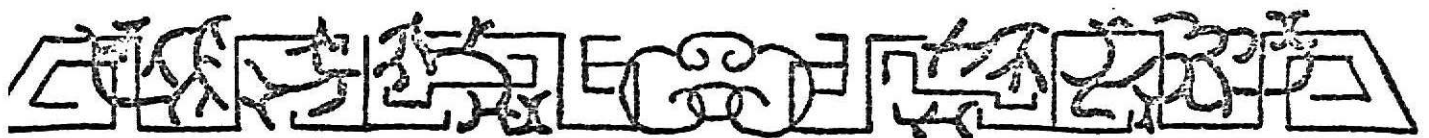
c. The meander



d. The vine pattern with flower at intervals



e. The swastika



f. The key-fret pattern with rinceau at intervals

feather atop its head and a spreading green tail which is composed of plumes with characteristic "eyes." Except for the tail plumes and the peacock's eye rendered in green, the other parts of the peacock's body were couched in gold. The official's badge of the third civil rank was the peacock.

The blended blue and pale blue clouds outlined by the metallic thread stand out against the background. The gold, blue and light grey brown slant lines at the bottom of the square serve as the deep sea. The cloud-shaped swirls between the waves and li-shui represent the turmoil, and foams are presented around the rocks. Eight Buddhist Symbols rendered in coral, red, pale green, pale blue and purple are in the scene; the fish and vase on the surface of the "sea," lotus and umbrella just above the "sea," and the conch endless knot, canopy, wheel and vase in the "sky." The shou characters in the border were woven in gold, the bats in white, blue, pale blue and blue purple, or in white, green, and light yellowish green. About six to seven gold threads are used as edging. After looking over this k'o-ssu square, no one would not be amazed and praise the intricate technique of the k'o-ssu weave.

### C. Third Example

A background of all-over linked vine tendrils, the symbols of Taoist Immortals in the "sky," and the li-shui at the bottom give clues that the square was dated in early nineteenth century. The bird in the center is a mandarin duck distinguished by the wedge-shaped tail curving upward at the end. It is the insignia of the seventh rank. Symbols of Taoist Immortals,

the castanets with bamboo tube and rods, the fan with sword, flower basket with flute, the gourd, and the lotus circled about the bird are found on the square. Five bats are soaring in the sky looking down the fish, conch and wheel among the waves, turmoil, deep sea, lucky plants (ling-chih) and the bird. The sun is decorated by coral beads located at the upper left hand corner of the square. The seven-sixteenth inch wide border consists of a simple meander (see Plate IV. c). The entire designs were couched in gold on a black satin ground.

#### D. Fourth Example

This is an example of the over-decorated squares of late nineteenth century. An over-all diaper pattern of linked vine with flowers inside, clouds, symbols, bats and lucky plants gives an over-crowded effect.

The square was made of a black gauze that indicated it was fastened on a summer jacket. Except for li-shui couched in gold and the bird embroidered in petit point stitch, the rest of the designs are done in Florentine stitch. All the symbols were outlined in gold silk and embroidered with shades and tints of blue, green and purple. Ling-chih, the conch and wheel are on the surface of the waves. The magic fan with bamboo rattle, lotus, flower basket and castanets circled about the bird. Peonies were also displayed. The pattern of the border, vine with flowers at intervals (see Plate IV, d) are couched in gold and silver threads. Five bats are rendered in green and moss green. The coral bead sun disk is on the left side.

The symbol of the fifth rank is represented by a silver pheasant, a white

bird with five long wavy tail plumes, blue and light blue crest, red bill and legs and purple chin.

#### E. Fifth Example

A background of a purple shade indicated that the square was woven after 1860 since that was the time the purple dye was introduced from the West. The fact that the return of k'o-ssu for squares in the late nineteenth century also proves this example dated at that time.

The insignia is an egret, a symbol of the civil official of the sixth rank. White was a dominant hue. The outline was drawn in blue. It has a blue crest feather, light green bill and legs, black chin touched with powder red and a very short tail. The bird is rather small.

The border consists of a simple swastika pattern which was done in muslin white thread wrapped with metallic thread (see Plate IV, e). Eight Buddhist Symbols on the white and chrome green waves are drawn with black outlines and painted in blue, red and green. Li-shui is represented by ultramarine blue, sky blue and musline white slant lines. Ling-chih plants are brushed in red and in chrome green. The peonies also are painted in chrome green with black outline, as are the two bats on the top of the square. The sun is on the upper right corner. The "sky" is crowded with various kinds of lucky jewels--the lotus, magic fan, a pair of interlocking rectangles, a pair of interlocking coins, flower basket, gourd and crutch, ju-i and swastika, flute and ivory tusk. Besides these, blue shade clouds and dark marine blue rocks are also on the foreground.



#### F. Sixth Example

The square is a continuing type of the old style of nineteenth century used in the early years of the twentieth century. The bird, sun, symbols, sea, land and the border were couched in gold and silver threads. These metallic threads were secured by contrasting red, rose red and green threads that resulted in different color tones. Thus the sun, Eight Buddhist Symbols, the waves and the paired scrolls in the border appear as though they were couched in red, rose red and green threads. The clouds were formed by laying down long untwisted floss silk threads and then outlining with silver threads, therefore, we see several rows of clouds. The border consists of gold key-fret pattern with paired scrolls in between (see Plate IV, a). The sun is located in the right upper corner which expresses that the square was used by a n official, not by his wife.

The paired black comma marks on the neck and back of this bird and a somewhat rectangular head give us clear clues that it is unmistakably a wild goose, the insignia of the fourth rank civil official.

#### G. Seventh Example

With a relatively plain sky containing an all-over diaper of conventionalized swastikas on the background and the sun disk, the square possesses the characteristics of the semi-reformed type of the early twentieth century. The small sized bird also implies that the square dated in late Ch'ing.

A fifth rank civil official's badge was represented by a silver pheasant which possessed a tail with five widely separated scalloped plumes. The



white bird was outlined in navy blue with red bill and legs and was embroidered in petit point stitch on a muslin white gauze, and then was stitched on the square. The whole designs were done in petit point on a black gauze. The swastika pattern was rendered in pale blue, the waves in white, yellow green and bluish green, foams in tints of apple green and li-shui in tints and shades of blue, yellow, green and purple. Flowers on the four corners were embroidered with pink, pale pink and greenish yellow threads. The sun was on the upper left hand corner. The border was displayed with a pale honey key-fret with aqua rinceau design at intervals (see Plate IV, f). This square is the smallest in size of the eight examples studied.

#### H. Eighth Example

The designs in this square are almost the same as those of the above mentioned square except the latter does not display eight Buddhist symbols and the former has no li-shui. It is also a semi-reformed type square of the early twentieth century. The symbol of the rank was also a silver pheasant, a white bird with red bill and legs, and with five serrated edged plumes. It was embroidered on a muslin white gauze in Florentine stitch.

The white gauze square covered all over by designs in Florentine stitch actually shows a dark blue ground. The border was decorated with yellow key-fret and green rinceau patterns (see Plate IV, f). Swastikas extend all over the background where the sun, clouds, and six of the eight Buddhist symbols, the umbrella, lotus, endless knot, canopy, wheel and vase are displayed. The same flower designs as those of the seventh example occupy

the four corners of the square. The lower part of the square contains green, yellow, yellowish brown and white waves and foams, blue and white swirls and rocks, red lucky plants (ling-chih), the fish and conch. The eight Buddhist symbols are rendered in dark purple, purple, pale purple, green, yellow green and red. The bright colour tones of designs make the square look quite new, unlike the textile made a half century ago.

## CHAPTER IX

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The evolution from the straight functional squares to the great ornate, then to the extremely simple squares was neither accidental nor purposeful, but was the result of definite social and historical influences throughout almost five hundred years of Chinese history.

The eight mandarin squares studied are very easily known as Ch'ing squares since each of six squares has a sun disk that was not presented in Ming squares. Each of the other two double squares has one split piece of square indicating that it was attached on a Ch'ing jacket, not a Ming robe.

All the ground fabrics of the squares are in dark colors--black, purple, and brown. The exact reason of using dark color fabric for squares is not known. Apparently the designs stand out more easily against a dark colour than on any other colour background.

The embroidery stitches found on these squares are couch, satin, petit point, Florentine, applique and loop stitches. The yarns used are metallic silk threads--silk thread wrapped with gold or silver, untwisted or slightly twisted yarns.

Most of the squares dated between late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, except the first example was in seventeenth century.

Though the time proximity should account for the survival of these late Ch'ing squares, the widespread use of mandarin squares in late Ch'ing also should be noted. Although there was alteration in the size of the bird, the differences are very slight in these eight squares. The size of the bird could not be used as a sole clue for dating. The clues for dating in this study were largely based on the stylistic and technical changes and the symbols used.

The reason that a specific bird was assigned to a certain rank was not known. Every species of bird has its distinctive feature that makes the recognition easy even when it was rendered in gold or depicted in different colours. Except the couched gold mandarin duck in the second example, the petit point stitched silver pheasant in the third example and the k'o-ssu woven egret in the fourth example, the other five birds were appliqued birds.

The symbols of the Universe--Land, Sea, and Sky--indicated by the rocks, waves, and clouds, and the bird are the basic designs in all eight squares. Aside from these symbols, lucky symbols, such as Eight Buddhist Symbols, eight symbols of Taoist Immortals, other precious things, and lucky plants are displayed on the squares.

A border is required to give a sense of completeness, thus the designs used are chiefly key pattern, swastika, vine with flowers, and bats with shou characters.

The colours used in late Ch'ing squares are brighter than those of the early Ch'ing. No particular meanings were implied in the use of different colours which were applied on the squares.

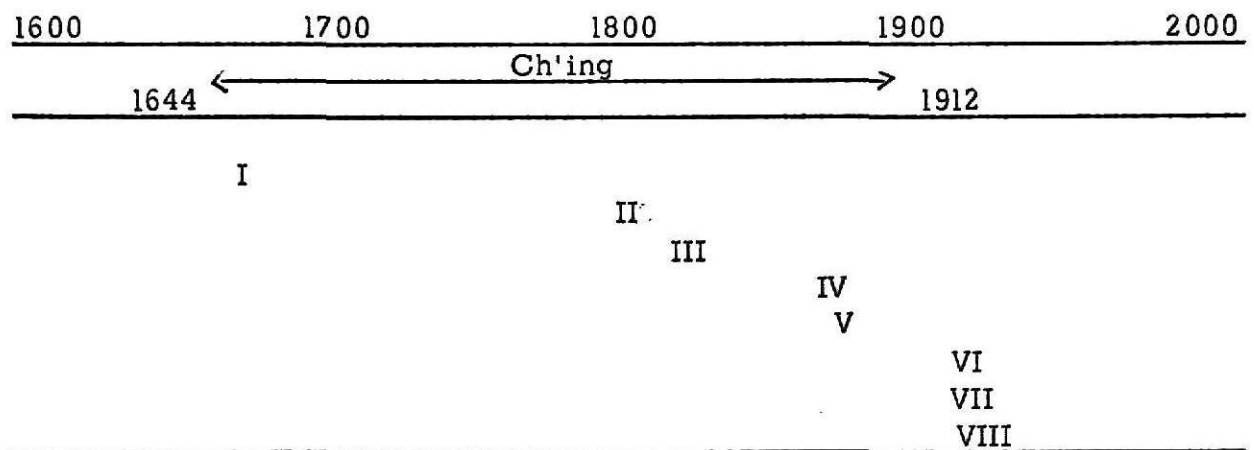
Since the mandarin square is part of officials' costumes it would be a good idea to study those officials' dresses and ways that rank and position were indicated by them--colours and decorations of their dresses. Another possibility is to study the symbolic meanings of designs found on the Chinese textiles for symbolism is the essence of Chinese decoration.

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APPENDIX A. DATES OF THE EIGHT SQUARES WORN DURING THE CH'ING  
DYNASTY

TABLE I. DATES OF THE EIGHT SQUARES  
WORN DURING THE CH'ING DYNASTY





**APPENDIX B. SYMBOLS AND ELEMENTS FOUND ON EACH MANDARIN SQUARE**

TABLE II. FOWL SYMBOLS FOUND ON THE EIGHT SQUARES

[illegible]

TABLE III. BUDDHIST SYMBOLS FOUND ON THE EIGHT SQUARES

Buddhist Symbols	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	Reference Page
The fish	X	x	X		X	X		X	15
The conch	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	15
The vase	X	X			X	X		X	15
The lotus	X	X			X	X		X	15
The endless knot	X	X			X	X		X	15
The wheel	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	15
The royal canopy	X	X			X	X		X	15
The state umbrella	X	X			X	X		X	15

TABLE IV. SYMBOLS OF TAOIST IMMORTALS FOUND ON THE EIGHT SQUARES

Symbols of Taoist Immortals	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	Reference Page
The magic fan			X	X	X				15
The bamboo rattle			X	X					15
The lotus			X	X	X				15
The castanets			X	X					15
The sword			X	X					15
The gourd and crutch			X		X				15
The flute			X		X				15
The flower basket			X	X	X				15

TABLE V. LUCKY JEWELS FOUND ON THE EIGHT SQUARES

Lucky Jewels	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	Reference Page
Interlocking rectangles					X				25
Interlocking coins					X				25
Ju-i					X				25
Swastika					X				25
Ivory tusk					X				25

TABLE VI. BACKGROUND ELEMENTS OF THE EIGHT SQUARES

[illegible]

**APPENDIX C. FABRIC CONSTRUCTION AND APPLIED DESIGNS OF THE EIGHT  
SQUARES**

TABLE VII. FABRIC CONSTRUCTION AND APPLIED DESIGNS  
OF THE EIGHT SQUARES

[illegible]

INTERPRETATION OF CHINESE OFFICIALS' RANKS  
BY THE INSIGNIAS FOUND ON THE MANDARIN SQUARES

by

FLORENCE LI-HWA LEE

B. A. , Chengchi University, 1965

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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The mandarin squares are the woven or embroidered plaques which served as badges of rank on the robes or jackets of Chinese officials from the early Ming to the end of the Ch'ing Dynasty (1391-1912). They were worn on the chest and back. Various birds and animals were assigned for civil and military officials to represent the insignias. Aside from the bird or animal, the clouds, rocks, and waves were the principal elements used on the square, representing the sky, land, and sea. As time went on, the square, losing its original purpose as a badge of rank, was cluttered with lucky symbols and lucky plants and became merely an elaborated decoration to the plain robe or jacket. Also the border had been ornamented more and more. Until the end of the Ch'ing Dynasty reformed type of squares characterized by the extreme simplicity, removed all lucky symbols from the background and displayed only the sun, bird and sky.

The stylistic and technical changes, the alteration of the size of the bird, and the symbols used provided clues for dating the squares. The sun disk, li-shui (the deep sea), and a split front square distinguished squares of the Ch'ing from those of the Ming. The eight squares studied were recognized as Ch'ing civil officials' badges and dated mostly in the late Ch'ing (the late nineteenth and early twentieth century). The embroidery stitches most commonly used on these squares were the satin, couch, petit point, Florentine and applique.