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CHINESE TRADITIONAL PATTERNS AND TOTEM CULTURE IN MODERN CLOTHING DESIGN

The purpose: explain the concept of totem in traditional Chinese patterns, and introduce representative totem elements and their implication. Analyze the traditional Chinese patterns that appear in modern clothing design.

Methodology. A systematic approach was used in this research to project contemporary modern clothing design: history-analytical, literary-analytical, morphological, and comparative analysis of the creative primary source, associative means of its adaptation to the actual fashion trends. The methodology of the research is based on the systematic analysis of the design projects using elements of traditional patterns in China.

Results. Studies have shown that not all widely used traditional Chinese patterns are totems, and totems are patterns with more symbolic meaning. Several representative traditional Chinese patterns are displayed. The cultural connotation of Chinese style patterns widely used in modern clothing design is revealed, and the innovative methods of patterns are also considered.

The scientific novelty of this research lies in its compilation of prior studies, which help differentiate between traditional Chinese patterns and totems. Additionally, the study introduces the concepts of totem worship, reproductive worship, and soul worship that are embedded within these patterns. Practical recommendations for integrating traditional Chinese patterns into modern clothing design are also provided.

Practical significance. of this study lies in its potential application to the practice of incorporating Chinese traditional patterns into contemporary clothing design. By understanding the cultural heritage and totemic elements within these patterns, designers can create innovative and culturally rich fashion pieces that pay homage to China's rich artistic history.

Keywords: clothing design; traditional Chinese patterns; fashion; cultural heritage; textile; totem culture; Chinese style; innovation.

Introduction. Patterns hold significant importance in the realm of decorative arts. Even in ancient times, when writing systems did not yet exist, patterns were already being utilized to chronicle various aspects of human life. In the modern era, patterns have become a prominent expression of national and regional styles, drawing inspiration from cultural themes and symbols. Hence, there arises a necessity to delve into distinctive patterns, colors, and aesthetics derived from diverse cultures. Chinese totems, serving as symbolic representatives of Chinese groups, possess profound cultural, spiritual, and symbolic meanings. It is valuable to find the connection with Chinese totems in exploring the development and changes of traditional Chinese patterns.

Analysis of previous researches. As justified in the article by Pashkevich et al. [1],

designers around the world are actively using decor in their fashion collections. At the same time, images of bionic objects are actively used in the design of modern clothes, as shown in the article [2]. Many domestic experts and scholars have done related work on the study of traditional Chinese textile patterns.

The History of Ancient Chinese Dyeing and Weaving Patterns discusses the history of the development and evolution of Chinese dyeing and weaving patterns from the Neolithic period to the Qing Dynasty for thousands of years. Focusing on the analysis of the patterns of each era in terms of shape and color, and in connection with the political, economic, and cultural backgrounds of each period, an in-depth explanation of the formation style and aesthetic characteristics of dyeing and weaving patterns [3].

The Collection of Essays on Chinese Weaving and Embroidery Costumes covers five aspects: weaving flowers, Kesi, embroidery, clothing, and weaving and embroidery patterns. This book plays an important role in the study of Chinese weaving and embroidery [4].

In addition to sorting out and summarizing historical materials, the reasons behind historical phenomena are also the focus of research, especially the analysis of the symbolic meaning and cultural connotation of patterns.

The early ones such as the Cultural Decipherment of Chinese Primitive Art Symbols mainly focused on witchcraft, reproductive worship, and ancestor worship in primitive society, combined with many petroglyphs, and conducted cultural analysis from the perspective of semiotics [5].

The Chinese Totem Culture introduced the colorful, peculiar and interesting totem culture phenomena of ancient and modern Chinese ethnic groups, discussed the influence of totem culture on Chinese culture, and also introduced the connection between Chinese totem and world totem [6].

The word Totem was originally a native concept of the Ojibwa Indians in North America, and it appeared in the travel notes of British businessmen at the end of the 18th century [7]. From 1869 to 1870, John Ferguson McLennan first explained totem and totemism as an academic concept in his book *The worship of Animals and Plants*.

Yan Yun Xiang [8] presents three fundamental components pertaining to clan totems:

1. The adoption of a self-derived surname derived from an animal, plant, or inanimate object.

2. The ownership of an emblematic image by a particular clan, often regarded as an ancestral or sibling figure.

3. The existence of taboos specific to each clan, encompassing restrictions on intermarriage, dietary practices, and other customs.

Indeed, based on this definition, a totem holds a significance beyond being a mere pattern widely adopted by an ethnic group. It carries symbolic meaning and cultural connotations specific to that particular ethnic group.

Chen J. J. [9] posits that the concept of the Four Symbols (also known as the Four Guardians) originated from the totem worship of ancient Chinese ethnic groups. This conclusion is drawn from the cross-referencing of various texts, including the *Shan Hai Jing*, *Historical Records*, *Book of Rites*, and *Zuo Zhuan*. According to Chen Jiujin, the Eastern Dragon has its roots in the dragon worship of the Dongyi people, the Western White Tiger stems from the tiger worship of the Xiqiang people, the Southern Vermilion Bird originated from bird totem worship among the Shaohao and Nanbarbarian people, and the Northern Xuanwu traces its origins back to the snake totem worship of the Xia people.

Guan C. Y. [10] contends that totem cultures are also prevalent in the traditional costumes of various ethnic minorities in China. For instance, the Nu nationality incorporates totems such as tigers, bears, snakes, and peaks. The Manchu totems include crows, wild boars, fish, and wolves. The Dai nationality features totems like oxen, dragons, lions, and tigers. The Ewenki totems consist of bears, eagles, mountains, and more. Similarly, the Lisu totems encompass tigers, birds, teak trees, boats, and others. The Yi ethnic group incorporates over 50 different totems, including tigers, sheep, birds, monkeys, snakes, dragons, banyan trees, bamboo, and gourds.

Liu C. G. [11] believes that there are also many totem cultures in the costumes of ethnic minorities in China. For example, the totems of the Nu nationality include tiger, bear, snake, peak, etc., the totems of the Manchu include crow, wild boar, fish, wolf, etc., the totems of the Dai nationality include ox, dragon, lion, tiger, etc., and the totems of the Ewenki include bear, Eagles, mountains, etc., Lisu totems include tigers, birds, teak, boats, etc., Yi

totems include tigers, sheep, birds, monkeys, snakes, dragons, banyan trees, bamboo, gourds, etc. More than 50 kinds.

Wang D. K. [12] mentioned in his master's degree thesis that Chinese clothing patterns pay attention to the combination of form and meaning, and apply all the best wishes for life to patterns, and design patterns with deep meanings through metaphors, puns, homonyms, and symbols. He believes that in modern design, with the development of textile technology, clothing patterns can be redesigned more abundantly, such as using techniques such as shirring and weaving to three-dimensional flat patterns, bringing novel design effects.

The relationship between traditional Chinese patterns and totems needs to be further clarified, and the method of integrating traditional patterns into modern clothing design also needs to be explored.

Statement of the problem. Pattern design has assumed a pivotal role in contemporary clothing design, playing a significant part in shaping modern fashion aesthetics. Within the global fashion sphere, designers often seek inspiration from diverse national cultures, using fashion as a creative platform for exploring new ideas and experimenting with cultural elements. However, the integration of cross-cultural elements sometimes results in inappropriate usage, leading to instances of cultural appropriation. The widespread reach of social media platforms has further intensified the visibility of cultural elements in fashion, exacerbating the rapid dissemination of misappropriated content. Therefore, it becomes crucial to address the issue of cultural appropriation within the industry.

To ensure the respectful and proper utilization of traditional Chinese patterns and totems, it is essential to recognize their authentic origins. This necessitates a thorough understanding of the sources and cultural significance associated with these elements before incorporating them into designs.

Additionally, it is important to explore innovative methods of application while considering the deeper meanings and symbolism behind the utilization of these patterns and totems.

Results of the research. These contents all reflect the awe of early humans to the natural world, because they cannot scientifically explain various natural phenomena, and changes in the natural environment will directly affect people's survival. Therefore, materials are extracted from nature for artistic expression, such as animal patterns, plant patterns, human patterns, water patterns, lightning patterns, etc., hoping to obtain the corresponding natural power or protection. The ancients also made many sacrificial ritual vessels, held rich sacrificial activities, and prayed for the blessing of heaven.

For example, Grosse [13] believes that most of the decorative arts of primitive peoples and our present are drawn from nature, which is an imitation of natural forms. The difference is that the decorative arts of civilized nations are drawn from plants, while primitive The decorative arts of the United States are exclusively based on human and animal forms, the change from animal decoration to plant decoration is really a symbol of an important progress in the history of culture—a symbol of the change from hunting to farming.

Mei X. L. [14] asserts that ancestor worship constitutes a form of primitive religion, centered around the veneration of deceased ancestors' spirits and seeking their protection. It encompasses totem worship, reproductive worship, and soul worship. According to Mei X. L., the selection of specific animals and plants as totems by particular clans is directly influenced by several factors. These factors include the extent to which the chosen animal or plant can satisfy the basic survival needs of humans, the regional context of the animal or plant, and potentially serendipitous or mysterious connections.

During the initial stage, ancestral totems consisted of intuitive, concrete, and practical animals and plants (such as bears, wolves, sheep, etc.). Over time, these totem objects gradually transformed into abstract, comprehensive, and imaginary forms (such as dragons, phoenixes, etc.). This shift reflects an advancement in human cognitive realms, as individuals began shifting their focus from the tangible objects in their immediate surroundings to the realm of imagination and consciousness.

In traditional Chinese patterns, totem is an important part. As a symbol of the clan, it is widely used in architecture, utensils, clothing, accessories and other carriers, and has a rich presentation. But not widely used patterns can be called totems.

Zhao G. H. [15] suggests that ancient civilizations employed various patterns that were inherently associated with reproductive worship. For instance, the fish pattern was initially used as a symbolic representation of the vulva. Over time, the symbolism of fish expanded to include depictions of women, spousal relationships, and lovers, becoming a ubiquitous symbol in social life. However, it should be noted that the fish pattern itself does not serve as a Chinese totem. Similarly, plant patterns also gained symbolic significance related to the vulva due to the resemblance between the shape of petals and leaves and that of the vulva. The cyclic nature of blooming, fruit-bearing, and abundant foliage represented robust reproductive capabilities and was venerated as a prayer for personal fertility.

In early human civilizations, survival and reproduction were crucial aspects of life. Consequently, early patterns reflected the ancestral desire for bountiful harvests and increased offspring. For instance, the round shape of the frog (or toad) pattern bears resemblance to a pregnant woman's belly. Frogs lay numerous eggs, symbolizing their strong reproductive abilities. The frog (or toad) pattern incorporates many small black dots to

represent eggs, conveying the ancestral wish for a large number of children.

The worship of the pregnant womb evolved from the veneration of the external genitalia, known as the vulva, indicating a deepened understanding of women and the reproductive process. Observing the cyclic nature of the moon, which aligns with women's menstrual cycles, people established a connection between women and the moon. The concept of a moon deity in the form of a god frog (or toad) emerged, capable of changing its size and overseeing reproduction. This association led to the emergence of figures such as the moon goddess Chang'e and the rabbit in the moon, derived from the Chinese words "Chang'e" (嫦娥) and "rabbit" (兔), which sound similar to "toad" (蟾蜍). These images, including the moon, Chang'e, rabbits, and toads, continue to be widely used as design elements, although their significance has shifted from reproductive worship to symbols of the Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival.

Throughout history, the original meanings of many clan totems have gradually diminished as they spread and became more widely used patterns among later generations. These totems transformed into common motifs that lost their specific totemic significance. Similarly, numerous patterns have also undergone a shift in their original symbolic meaning and have expanded to encompass broader connotations.

There are two main factors contributing to these developments. Firstly, as human understanding of the world deepened over time, many previously unexplained phenomena and enigmatic concepts were elucidated, reducing the reliance on totems. Secondly, humans have consistently created new narratives and cultural content throughout history, enriching the conscious realm with a greater variety of meanings and interpretations. These developments have endowed material elements, including patterns, with multiple layers of connotation.

In conjunction with the desire for an improved life and driven by aesthetic enjoyment, auspicious patterns have rapidly evolved and gained widespread popularity. These patterns reflect a fusion of cultural, aesthetic, and symbolic elements, appealing to individuals seeking both visual beauty and positive associations.

From a cultural perspective, the cultivation of plants and domestication of animals played a pivotal role in the emergence of human civilization. This period is referred to as the "food production revolution" in academic circles. The transition from a hunting and gathering lifestyle to productive agriculture and animal husbandry marked the first significant revolution in human society, often referred to as the "agricultural revolution." During this phase, humans developed a heightened awareness of their relationship with animals, plants, and natural phenomena. Key concerns revolved around achieving abundant crop yields and ensuring the health and productivity of livestock. Faced with the unpredictability of natural forces, humans naturally turned to non-physical entities, such as gods, attributing them with the power to manipulate nature. The totemic images of various clans assumed this role. For instance, dragons were believed to control thunder, lightning, wind, and rain, while phoenixes were associated with fire. Deified totems often possessed characteristics that differentiated them from ordinary humans, animals, and plants. Dragons and phoenixes, for example, amalgamated various animal attributes, resulting in fantastical and unrealistic beings. This imagery added an air of mystery and enhanced the conviction that these totems possessed supernatural powers.

Among the various Chinese totems, the dragon and phoenix are undoubtedly the most famous. In the early stages of primitive society, the dragon and phoenix had simple and abstract forms. For example, the jade dragon of the Hongshan culture had a "C" shape, a clearly defined head, long and curved mane,

and no limbs or horns. The phoenix pattern first appeared during the Shang Dynasty, primarily seen in bronze decorations. Even at that time, the images of the dragon and phoenix exhibited characteristics of their prototype creatures, such as crocodiles, snakes, swallows, eagles, and doves [16].

During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the dragon and phoenix became symbols of imperial power. In the Qing Dynasty, the dragon pattern had an enlarged head with pronounced eyes, scattered beard and hair, and a sense of upward momentum. Dragons were depicted in various forms, including sitting dragons, ascending dragons, subduing dragons, coiling dragons, walking dragons, running dragons, and group dragons. The phoenix pattern exhibited more intricate details and pursued decorative aesthetics. Traditional Chinese dragon and phoenix patterns are highly symbolic, and have undergone a transformation from abstraction to concreteness and then to abstraction. They also have profound meanings, especially as auspicious patterns. Dragon and phoenix are often regarded as representatives of men and women. In Chinese, "dragon and phoenix bring prosperity" means love, sweet life and happiness, and "dragon and phoenix among people" are used to describe people's superior abilities. In modern clothing design, the dragon and phoenix are widely utilized as elements of Chinese style, both within China and internationally.

In the realm of pattern design for clothing, historical techniques have predominantly included weaving, embroidery, dyeing, and painting. These traditional methods have laid the foundation for innovation in modern clothing design. There are three primary avenues for innovation in pattern design.

The first involves innovating the form or shape of the patterns. By blending traditional pattern content with modern art styles, designers can create novel and captivating design effects. This fusion of traditional and

contemporary elements can result in unique and visually striking patterns.

The second avenue of innovation lies in the use of color. Traditional Chinese patterns often have preferred color combinations. For example, the dragon and phoenix pattern typically incorporates gold and red, bamboo patterns tend to feature green hues, and tiger patterns often incorporate brown and yellow tones. However, modern design can break free from these traditional color schemes and explore alternative colors for artistic expression. This departure from the realistic style allows for more creative and imaginative use of color in pattern design.

Technological advancements have also played a significant role in pattern design innovation. With the development of science and technology, new techniques such as digital printing, toothbrush embroidery, towel embroidery, flocking, foaming, lettering film, embossing, and laser cutting have emerged. These innovative technologies provide designers with a wider range of possibilities for expressing patterns on clothing.

In the realm of advanced customization and high-end ready-to-wear fashion, patterns are often manifested through intricate and time-consuming manual embroidery and beading. These labor-intensive techniques add a touch of luxury and craftsmanship to the garments. Conversely, in mass-produced clothing, patterns are typically presented through printing and machine embroidery, sometimes complemented by a smaller amount of beading.

Ultimately, good design often involves incorporating at least one of these innovations – whether it's exploring new forms or shapes, experimenting with colors, or leveraging advancements in technology and craftsmanship to create visually appealing and unique patterns on clothing.

MUKZIN, a Chinese brand known for its modern designs incorporating Chinese elements, has gained popularity among young people. The brand's Fall 2022 design theme,

Astrology Park, sounds intriguing (Fig. 1). By incorporating traditional Chinese animal patterns such as the dragon, phoenix, tiger, unicorn, deer, crane, butterfly, and swallow, and combining them with the painting style of Chinese New Year pictures, MUKZIN has created a visually impactful collection. The use of printing techniques allows these elements to be presented on the clothing in a vibrant and expressive manner (Fig. 2). The incorporation of these traditional Chinese animal patterns adds a cultural depth to the designs. The dragon and phoenix, for example, hold significant symbolism in Chinese culture, representing power, prosperity, and harmony. The tiger symbolizes strength and courage, while the crane is associated with longevity and grace. By featuring these animals in their designs, MUKZIN not only pays homage to Chinese heritage but also creates a unique visual impact.

Another noteworthy collaboration by MUKZIN is their partnership with meticulous painting master Li Xiaoming and contemporary artist Tian Ziqian for their new Chinese style series. In this garment, the traditional frog pattern is reimagined by integrating the interesting shape of a skateboard, thus infusing elements of the new era into the traditional design (Fig. 3). This innovative approach adds a contemporary touch to the traditional pattern, enhancing the overall fashion-forward aesthetic of the clothing.

Furthermore, it's interesting to learn that MUKZIN incorporates simple style design, black and white color contrast, and prominent pattern designs in some of their clothing (Fig. 4, Fig. 5). This combination creates a sophisticated and refined look, highlighting the intricacy and beauty of the patterns.

MUKZIN's ability to blend traditional Chinese elements with modern design techniques and collaborations demonstrates their commitment to pushing the boundaries of fashion and creating visually captivating collections that resonate with young people.



Fig. 1. Fall 2022 design theme.
Brand MUKZIN, China [17]



Fig. 2. Women's clothing with Chinese traditional patterns.
Brand MUKZIN, China [18]



Fig. 3. Women's clothing with frog pattern.
Brand MUKZIN, China [19]



Fig. 4. Women's clothing with orchids: a – whole look; b – embroidery and beading details. Brand MUKZIN, China [20]



Fig. 5. Women's clothing with phoenix: a – whole look; b – embroidery and beading details. Brand MUKZIN, China [21]



Fig. 6. Women's clothing with dragon: a – whole look; b – embroidery details. Brand Ysimo-X, China [22]

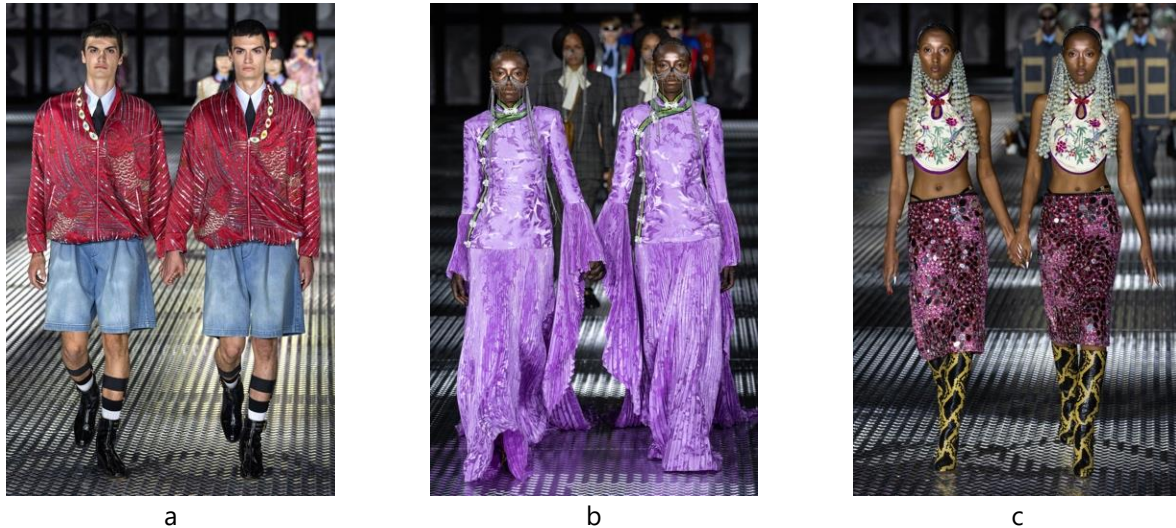


Fig. 7. Clothing with Chinese traditional patterns: a – Jacket with Chinese koi pattern; b – Dress with peony pattern; c – Bellyband with flower and bird pattern. Brand Gucci, Italy [23]

Ysimo-X, a Chinese brand, is known for its innovative designs that incorporate traditional Chinese patterns. As shown in Fig. 6, the designer simplifies the dragon's body shape and creates a contrast between the concrete representation of the dragon's head and the more abstract representation of its body. By depicting the dragon flying amidst the stars, the pattern symbolizes its role as a guardian and defender of the country. Incorporating the story of Hua Mulan adds depth to the design by connecting it to the guardian connotation associated with the dragon totem.

Gucci, on the other hand, is an Italian fashion brand that incorporates Chinese elements into its designs. The jacket in the picture features a traditional Chinese koi pattern, which is a symbol of good luck (Fig. 7, a). The use of peony jacquard fabric, along with the stand collar and slanted lapel style reminiscent of the Chinese cheongsam, enhances the Chinese aesthetic. Peony, as China's national flower, represents auspiciousness and wealth (Fig. 7, b). The combination of bright purple color and pleating technique gives the garment a modern touch.

However, the picture also showcases a mix of styles that some may find challenging to understand. The combination of the Chinese-style bellyband with flower and bird pattern

embroidery, bamboo motifs, and the overall light and elegant design exudes a strong Chinese influence (Fig. 7, c). However, the pairing of the bellyband with a jeweled skirt and python pattern leather boots may dilute the charm of the Chinese style, creating a mix and match aesthetic that can be difficult for many Chinese individuals to fully appreciate.

In both examples, the use of traditional Chinese patterns and motifs demonstrates how designers incorporate cultural elements into their designs. While Ysimo-X focuses on innovative design based on the dragon pattern and its guardian symbolism, Gucci's incorporation of Chinese elements showcases both admiration for Chinese culture and an exploration of cultural fusion.

Conclusions. Chinese totems encompass a diverse range of elements, including dragons, phoenixes, tigers, snakes, bears, peaks, crows, wild boars, fish, wolves, cows, eagles, mountains, sheep, monkeys, birds, Teak, banyan, bamboo, gourd, and boats. While some of these elements hold significance as totems of specific ethnic minority areas within China, their international recognition and representation as Chinese totems are limited due to their smaller population and lesser influence. The dragon and phoenix remain the most widely recognized and representative Chinese totems.

Furthermore, animal and plant patterns often exhibit similarities across different cultures as they draw inspiration from nature. To capture regional characteristics, these patterns are typically expressed in a relatively fixed form. Dissemination through mass media and other platforms becomes essential in fostering a common understanding of these patterns among a broader audience.

Consequently, there is a need to distill traditional Chinese patterns into representative elements that can be widely used and disseminated. In recent years, China has utilized international events such as the Olympic Games to convey Chinese cultural content to the world, notably through the design of team uniforms, award attire, and opening ceremonies.

Traditional Chinese patterns play a vital role as visual symbols in these contexts. However, when international designers incorporate Chinese elements into their designs, they sometimes struggle to capture the true artistic essence of Chinese style. This challenge is inherent in the process of exporting Chinese culture and its acceptance by others.

Behind the intricate tapestry of traditional Chinese patterns lies the profound accumulation of thousands of years of Chinese traditional culture, embodying rich connotations, unique aesthetics, and significant economic value. It serves as a veritable treasure trove of inspiration for designers, worthy of extensive exploration and utilization in creative endeavors.

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КИТАЙСЬКІ ТРАДИЦІЙНІ ВІЗЕРУНКИ ТА ТОТЕМНА КУЛЬТУРА В СУЧАСНОМУ ДИЗАЙНІ ОДЯГУ

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Мета: обґрунтування концепції тотема в традиційних китайських моделях одягу, узагальнення репрезентативних елементів тотема та їх значення, аналіз традиційних китайських візерунків, які використовуються в сучасному дизайні одягу.

Методологія. У дослідженні застосовано системний підхід до проектування сучасного дизайну одягу: історико-аналітичний, літературно-аналітичний, морфологічний та порівняльний аналіз творчого першоджерела, асоціативних засобів його адаптації до актуальних тенденцій моди. Методологія дослідження базується на системному аналізі дизайн-проектів з використанням елементів традиційних візерунків Китаю.

Результати. Дослідження показали, що не всі широко використовувані традиційні китайські візерунки є тотемами, а тотеми – це візерунки з більш символічним значенням. Наведено декілька типових традиційних китайських візерунків. Розкрита культурна конотація візерунків китайського стилю, які широко використовуються в сучасному дизайні одягу, а також розглянуті інноваційні методи дизайн-проекування одягу з візерунками.

Наукова новизна дослідження полягає в обґрунтуванні відмінностей традиційних китайських візерунків від тотемів. Крім того, дослідження представляє концепції тотемного поклоніння, репродуктивного поклоніння та поклоніння душі, які вбудовані в ці моделі. Також надано практичні рекомендації щодо інтеграції традиційних китайських візерунків у сучасний дизайн одягу.

Практичне значення дослідження полягає в його потенційному застосуванні до практики включення китайських традиційних візерунків у сучасний дизайн одягу. Розуміючи культурну спадщину та тотемічні елементи в цих візерунках, дизайнери можуть створювати інноваційні та культурно багаті модні вироби, які віддають належне багатій художній історії Китаю.

Ключові слова: дизайн одягу; традиційні китайські візерунки; мода; культурна спадщина; текстиль; тотемна культура; китайський стиль; інновації.

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