

TRADITIONAL MOTIVES IN CHINESE FASHION DESIGN:
 ENGLISH RESEARCH SPACE

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Problem statement. Modern Chinese fashion industry has long traditions. It differs in its own understanding of style, beauty and has its particular features in a suit construction, decorative and accessory program. Usage of folk motifs accompanies almost all spheres of social and cultural life of modern China, where the desire for roots and national identity is an important part of economic and industrial strategy positioning of the country in the world markets. Fashion industry is not an exception, it is oriented not only on a commercial component but it also has peculiar artistic and aesthetic line. For the Chinese manufacturer it is important to understand and use traditional heritage in aesthetics, express folk and traditional elements in art, design and everyday life.

The theme offered by us is considered in works of authors from China in some aspects, working in Eastern Europe and directly observing the field of contacts of Chinese fashion design with the East European fashion design. Therefore, there is a clear need to understand conclusions of specialists who observe the problem from a different point of view.

The purpose of the research work is to investigate the main theoretical and practical directions of features' analysis of Chinese folk costume usage in fashion design.

Research methods are based on the usage of a complex approach to the object of research, the unity of historical and empirical approaches, comparative study of scientific, art and cultural literature on problems of modern fashion and design.

Presentation of main material. Despite its deep traditions modern Chinese fashion design has relatively few corporate brands of its own, which are connected with traditional artistic values, as the main aesthetic ground. Sharon Hang is a scientist from Hong Kong, he emphasizes that this is a feature of Chinese understanding of the essence of fashion clothes as a massive and elite product at the same time. He accentuates that Chinese brands in modern fashion industry can not and should not be sold as "coffee at Starbucks", because they should become standardized in this case and deliberately lose their uniqueness [4, p. 479].

This is the reason for answer to question that is stressed by John Balmer. He wonders why such an ancient civilization as China has a "small number of brands of corporate heritage," especially compared with such significantly smaller countries like France, Britain, Italy and Japan [1, p. 197].

It should be emphasized that determined trends attract interest of fashion design researchers, not only in terms of costume construction, style, design and collection formation, but in such narrow fashion industry forms as fashion-illustration. For example,

researchers from Hong Kong Polytechnic University singled out several stages of fashion art development in China in terms of fashion-illustration evolution. Their opinions are largely similar to our vision of the problem in its broader artistic context. So, scientists believe that the initial stage was dominated by the "Copying of the West" trend, which manifested itself in the "reduction of national symbolism" and traditional view on a folk costume. Artists and designers "had neither time nor enthusiasm for learning, understanding and thorough clarification of the question that affects traditional art and design," the only "viable option seemed to follow Western trends, and often it was a 'blind' way" [2, p. 234–235].

In future the tendency of "reproduction from the tradition" became the dominant trend. The traditional style was not very popular in real life. It was not widely studied and propagated. However, at this stage, the period of "infiltration of new stylistic elements and forms" from Chinese traditional clothing started. However, in general, all that remained in art and design reproduced only a small part of the national heritage, from which designers borrowed only selective and chaotic elements [2, p. 234–235].

Scientists believe the symbiosis of Chinese and European styles to be the third trend. It became possible due to "increased degree of Western style acceptance." This tendency was both positive and negative. For example, further combination of traditional Chinese experience with European forms and stylistic solutions became very positive. Increased simplicity of suit image and appearance of "surface formalism" were negative factors [2, p. 234–235].

Authors place emphasis on two conclusions while answering the question about significance of tradition and consideration of the problem of traditional Chinese aesthetics usage in fashion design.

First of all, from their point of view, traditions should not be perceived as something from the past, which is necessarily obsolete and outdated. In particular, in the context of art and design, traditional features give the artist "infinity of aesthetic inspiration", acting as "suppliers of linearity, proportions, demarcation, layout, adjustment, colour and texture." They significantly affect the choice of objects and their symbolic meaning in clothing. Cultural heritage represents accumulated experience and a set of ready solutions of our predecessors concerning problems of visual beauty, functions, techniques, clothing and its importance in society.

Secondly, scientists emphasize natural character of traditional experience that is typical for modern Chinese fashion designers. An artist or designer often does not need to explain reasons for one or another artistic solution, because it is inherited in combina-

tion with the artist's tradition and individual visual experience [2, p. 237]. Consequently, unique aesthetics is formed on the edge of the old and the new. It can be expressed both in modern and traditional artistic language.

The development and evolution of the Chinese style of clothing causes a lot of considerations among fashion designers. According to Ning Zhang, speaking about key features that distinguish a Western-style suit from Chinese traditional one, it's worth emphasizing the flatness of formal constructive structure of the Chinese costume in general. Its greatest feature lies in the nature of separate functioning of elements and so-called features of side opening. The latter feature, in turn, affects crossed construction of the collar, which is outlined and accentuates the upper part of the costume.

In the historical context, with the advent of Manchurian and Mongolian dynasties in Chinese artistic space, traditional costume changed a little, going beyond artistic and aesthetic core of the Han culture. However, the integration into the general Chinese culture of minorities and ethnic groups only diversified the character of the Chinese costume. Traditional costume had an ensemble meaning.

The second feature of tradition in the design of a modern Chinese costume is that some elements of this kind are too difficult to wear, and therefore they are not suitable for usage in everyday social events [8, p. 199].

In modern research space, Chinese fashion designers distinguish two trends (Tan and Hanfu) in which styling of traditional Chinese costume is developed. They are considered to be key historical styles that provide opportunities for modern innovation and modernization of the "Chinese style" itself [ibid.].

Ning Zhang's opinions on the integration of fashion trends ordering in a suit with traditional artistic ideas in the "Chinese style" are extremely interesting in the context of our research. Today, many designers consider it necessary to accelerate integration of not only general philosophy of traditional costume to modern one, but stylization of individual elements that are considered by designers as "fashionable", "trendy", etc. In this sense, scientists identify several trends in contemporary clothing design with traditional design solutions in Chinese style.

Firstly, in a man's suit, this is so-called Men's collar design (collar-stand), which was especially liked by designers in a man's coat. As Ning Zhang emphasizes, regardless of whether it's traditional Tan-style or Hanfu, open type of this element is emphasized in design and acts as transformation element of traditional costume in modern one. At the same time, both European and Asian experts recognize the belonging of this element to the Chinese tradition and emphasize its "entirely Chinese style" and "extraordinary trend".

Secondly, according to the scientist's opinion, the important element of recognition of the traditional Chinese outline in a man's suit is the collocation of men's trousers from broad narrow (so-called restrained Chinese model) to boomers that are between business and sports style [8, p. 200]. It should be

noted that both trends are considered by designers primarily in brand mass clothing, but obviously have some usage examples in haute couture segment.

Thirdly, researchers consider the usage of a dress in "cheongsam" style as an important tendency of "chineseization" of a female image. Recognition of its appearance as a Chinese traditional dress, doesn't give rise to doubts for a long time. Some researchers are inclined to consider the popularity of this type of dress in the world fashion as "a key breakthrough for clothing in Chinese style combining fashionable elements with traditional ones." To date, there are two main cheongsam types: with sleeves and without sleeves. However, both of them rely on traditional cut and express archaic values of the Chinese culture of women's costume.

According to Ning Zhang, Cheongsam has become an icon of Chinese women's clothing over the last decades, which has prompted designers to introduce it actively to various modern fashion profiles. In particular, the scientist emphasizes the there are two most typical tendencies in the modeling of cheongsam form: "I-shaped" and "S-shaped", which are aimed at understanding of different properties of the female figure.

In turn, such attention to the "waist design" allowed artists to focus on ornamentation and decoration of the dress cloth. In traditional version, this type of women's dress did not have too distinctive jewelry and accessories, mainly offering "different options for choosing a scarf" for decoration. Modernization has led to design of additional decorative elements in decoration, primarily it was fabric. After all, in accordance with traditional requirements, cheongsam should be an "individual dress". It should not only emphasize the body lines, but also express the essence of the woman. The researcher emphasizes: "Reformed cheongsam combines artistic temperament with the element of life" [8, p. 201].

Thus, Chinese classical elements of decoration "integrated Chinese classical culture to modern civilization", which in turn combines stylistic traits of traditional Chinese clothes with modern fashion.

It should be emphasized that, according to researchers' general point of view, clothing design in Chinese style came out of stagnation completely and it is at the forefront of the world's most fashionable trends. Based mainly on ethnic costumes, fashion design of the Chinese style acquires new qualities and features that are presented both in the sphere of a mass product and in the field of haute couture [8, p. 202].

Thinking about the peculiarity of the traditional environment in the field of fashion design, the researcher uses the term "fashion system". From his point of view, this is a description of the relationship between costume production, consumption and artistic service. For a better understanding of this phenomenon, Tim Lindgren uses the category of "legitimization" of a suit by which he demonstrates how traditional elements are selected for their further introduction into fashion industry. In the triangle, production – consumption – design, the main role can not belong to any element of the system, but the weight of artistic component is

unique. With regard to the Chinese style, fashion design is responsible for destruction of “European-centered” modern fashion and its desire to work out traditional Chinese “language” of the cut, shape, design and decoration of clothing. Although the scientist admits that cultural traditions still have a weak influence on commercial practice [6, p. 4–5].

Researchers of the joint Sino-European project consider the problem of combining traditional elements with modern elements in Chinese fashion design in another perspective. Scientists believe that questions of “globalization and modernization” of fashion market should be considered at the bottom of trends’ analysis of modern costume design. Fashion market has provoked several conflicts between traditions of consumption and aesthetic expression and rapid advancement of modernization in recent years [9, p. 69]. According to authors’ opinion it is the modernization of the trend that led to modernization of the appearance of “suit in the Chinese style”, which under the influence of artistic and aesthetic “dictation” of world brands began to change. So, mutual interaction of branding becomes a special feature of modern fashion design in China with respect to brand trademarks and the most famous fashion houses. Authors regard it as a peculiar feature of artistic properties of a suit depending on the social group and the target audience of consumers. This leads to the fact that designers are trying to “equate” the costume in Chinese style to popular and famous European designs. Of course, this leads to its modernization and creates a situation where “popular becomes more in demand than traditional (old-fashioned)” [9, p. 73].

The topic of our study relates to the extensive publication of Shaoyang Hu, devoted to the analysis of modern elements in costume design of the Hanfu style (under elements authors understand aspects of stylistics, structure of clothing, ornamentation of fabrics, etc.) [3]. Investigating regularities of combining the stylistics of traditional Chinese costume with modernist tendencies that serve as a “source of modern fashion,” scientists emphasize special nature of Chinese traditional design. From their point of view, this special nature is manifested in the following ways: 1) absence of too strict requirements for costume details, in parallel with the regulation of general appearance and structure (“free creation without fixed requirements for the specification”); 2) absence of utilitarianism and diversification, which, on the contrary, are features of modern European fashion [3, p. 89].

Evidently, from the very beginning the space of traditional fashion design is considered by authors as quite possible for transformation and modification.

As a characteristic trend in the study of Chinese fashion design, one should consider works that compare distinctive features of the development of Chinese and European fashion design.

So, Italian researcher S. Segre, investigating features of the interaction between Italian and Chinese design in the direction of *Prêt à porter*, emphasizes that traditions in formation of design proposals arises primarily as a “sphere of cultural production”,

at the same time as “a model of culture and consumption”. Haute couture provokes certain trends in aesthetic possibilities of the Chinese costume, which in turn become a reality in the field of mass and brand production. It is in this way that the transformation of traditional Chinese art phenomena into aesthetics of “European costume for Chinese designs” takes place. Therefore, according to scientist’s opinion, designers are trying to move to the personalization of fashion, looking for a distinct aesthetics of so-called a small brand that may be understandable for many national consumers (both Italian and Chinese) [7, p. 54].

An author’s suggestion regarding periodization is interesting and useful for the analysis of the topic of our research. The scientist believes that since the early 1990’s, “Orientalism” (essentially a cultural strategy for familiarizing with Chinese style in costume) is gradually shifting to realistic proposals and projects in the European fashion segment. Thus, by the beginning of the 2000s, “traditional Chinese costume has become trendy, it receives a number of artistic reminiscences, and at least in Italy it is ‘cited’ in fabric, elements and structural construction. Representatives of fashion design companies emphasize that throughout the decade, stylistic inspiration and cultural practices from Asia have become so widespread that they have transformed into mainstream, even when retaining their traditional exotica” [7, p. 46].

The article of Chinese writers Lee Hu and Wangfu Ge is devoted to another aspect of the introduction of Chinese fashion design tradition into contemporary European fashion [5]. Scientists have been exploring the segment of women’s urban fashion in China since 1987 and to this day. They express a number of important assumptions for us.

So, in cooperation with European fashion space, which ultimately determined current trends in the usage of traditional Chinese clothing in design, authors distinguish three time intervals: 1) the end of the 1970’s, when the Chinese came to know mass European fashion and awareness of their own tradition and opportunities for further transformation; 2) the beginning of the 1980s – 1990s, when Chinese traditions in fashion design were influenced by “westernization”, and fashion designers tried to monitor closely processes in European fashion industry; 3) the 2000s, when “China began its own path to modern fashion,” there was an awareness of commercial and artistic possibilities for the transformation of traditions, search for new stylistic solutions on the basis of folk costume [5, p. 31].

At the same time, authors emphasize that in certain segments of women’s fashion design (in particular, the design of a finished dress), these trends are somewhat ahead of the overall course of events. For example, the editor of one of fashion magazines noted in 1998: “If you see young people in Beijing or Shanghai wearing clothes that were shown in Paris or Milan yesterday, you should not be surprised ... Today, fashion in China is almost a zero distance from the West” [5, p. 37].

At the same time, in this complex and long-term process, scientists identify several typical trends that are important for solving problems of our

research. We summarize them briefly: 1) promotion of Chinese traditional clothing is mainly due to the Han dynasty culture (Khan's costume), but there are many designers who consider it possible to express traditional aesthetics outside of the title culture (for example, with regard to ethnic groups and minorities); 2) the main "agents" of the representation of Chinese costume are mainly young people born in the 1980s and 1990s, which to some extent influence the limits of transformation of the suit, the possibility of its "westernization" and vice versa – the offering of Asian influences on European fashion; 3) the leading trend in the usage of Chinese style in fashion design is still owned by young independent designers [5, p. 34–36].

The last feature is particularly interesting. According to authors' opinion, there are many young independent designers in China today who sell their works directly to their customers. Their designs combine usage of traditional themes and styles with modern materials and innovations. During the last decade, a large number of young Chinese fashion designers have received master's and doctoral degrees in fashion design abroad and returned to China to develop their own fashionable brands. Some of them are actively involved in the Western fashion system, and most of them bring European and American concepts to Chinese retailers, which further complicates the answer to the question: what is actually Chinese, but what is purely European.

Conclusions: 1. In the English research space a slightly different range of problems is considered. The development and evolution of the Chinese style of clothing causes a lot of considerations in the field of fashion design. So, scientists note that Chinese fashion design, despite its deep traditions, currently has relatively few corporate brands of their own that rely on traditional artistic values, as the main aesthetic ground.

2. In modern research space fashion designers distinguish two trends in which the styling of traditional Chinese costume is developed: Tan and Hanfu. They are considered to be key historical styles that provide opportunities for modern innovation and modernization of the "Chinese style".

3. Researchers draw attention to the fact that traditional Chinese art attached great importance to the form, the transfer of basic relations between man and nature, and this fact greatly complicates perception system of Chinese traditional aesthetics for a wide range of consumers.

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