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**СЕМИОТИЧЕСКАЯ КОГНИТИВНОСТЬ И ИНКЛЮЗИВНОСТЬ В
ДИЗАЙНЕ КИТАЙСКОЙ ОДЕЖДЫ
SEMIOTIC COGNITION AND INCLUSIVITY IN CHINESE CLOTHING
DESIGN**

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Аннотация. Статья посвящена анализу взаимодействия семиотической когнитивности и инклюзивности в современном дизайне китайской одежды. Исследуется, как глубокие культурные коды традиционного костюма воспринимаются и осмысливаются потребителями. На примере современных дизайнеров показано, как дизайн становится медиатором между традиционным наследием и ценностями.

Abstract. The article is devoted to the analysis of the interaction of semiotic cognition and inclusivity in modern Chinese clothing design. It explores how the deep cultural codes of traditional costume are perceived and interpreted by consumers. Using the example of modern designers, it is shown how the design.

Ключевые слова: семиотика, дизайн, китайская одежда, культурный код, традиционные символы.

Keywords: semiotics, design, Chinese clothing, cultural code, traditional symbols.

As Chinese culture gains global traction, the fashion industry faces the challenge of communicating traditional symbols to a diverse audience. The purpose of this paper is to analyze how modern Chinese clothing design incorporates semiotic principles and inclusive practices to bridge this gap. To achieve this, the study sets out to: decode the semiotics of traditional Chinese garment signs; identify

cognitive barriers to their cross-cultural perception; and evaluate the inclusivity efforts of current Chinese brands.

This research explores how modern Chinese clothing design incorporates traditional cultural codes. It specifically investigates the semiotic tools and design approaches that make these traditional symbols and forms understandable and inclusive for a wide variety of consumers. Using semiotic, comparative, and visual analysis of both academic literature and the work of current designers, the study concludes that the key to unlocking new meanings and practices in fashion lies at the intersection of semiotic cognition – our process of interpreting signs –and inclusive design principles.

A traditional Chinese garment functions as a meaningful text, articulated through its cut, color, material, ornamentation, and accessories. This text is structured by an inherent grammar (the rules for combining its components) and syntax (the sequential logic of how it is read or understood). The main types of signs are shown in table 1. A person decodes these signs and creates an impression of another person.

Table 1. The main types of signs

Index signs	Material	Social status was directly encoded in the material; silk denoted the elite, and coarse fabrics identified the ordinary people.
	Colour	The colors carried philosophical weight as well—dark tones embodied maturity and power, whereas light tones suggested youth and naivety.
	The cut	The era, region, and pivotal moments in an individual's life were all encoded in the garment's construction—in the shape of its collar, the length of its sleeves, and the details it included or omitted.
Signs- icons	The ornament	The garments feature representations of animals imbued with meaning. For instance, the dragon on imperial robes serves as an icon of a mythical beast, but its specific depiction already conveys a symbolic message
	A silhouette of the suit	The iconic S-silhouette of the qipao gracefully follows the contours of the female body. In doing so, it emphasizes natural lines and projects an image of elegance and femininity.
	Gender	It transitions into a deconstructive style, no longer bound by gender. Traditional symbols such as the phoenix or peony are thus reinterpreted and appear in garments designed for a unisex market.
Signs- symbols	Colour	Every color carries specific connotations within the cultural framework: yellow evokes the emperor and the center of the universe; red brings to mind fortune and wealth; white speaks of loss and mourning.
	The ornament	Zoomorphic and plant motifs, being iconic in form, function as symbols in meaning: dragon – imperial power, strength, luck, crane – longevity and wisdom, bat – happiness, peony – wealth and nobility, pine – longevity and endurance
	Numbers	The number of dragons, the number of folds or buttons are symbolic: the five-headed dragon is exclusively an imperial symbol, whereas officials could wear dragons with fewer claws.
	Qipao	In the modern context, the qipao itself functions as a symbol of Chinese culture in general, Chinese femininity and national identity.

Where traditional fashion once created signs for an idealized body, inclusive design rewrites the code. It introduces a semiotics of accessibility – magnetic fasteners become a gesture of care – and embraces a wider definition of the human form. Adaptive clothing no longer speaks of illness; it communicates through style and innovation. Instructions fade away, replaced by intuitive forms and tactile clues like embossed logos that guide without words. Minimalism, modularity, and a restrained palette grant versatility, while magnetic closures, adjustable details, and virtual fitting turn the very concept of care into functional, beautiful design. The most significant elements of the Chinese folk costume are shown in Figure 1 [1].



Figure 1. The most significant elements of Chinese folk costume

A striking example of the «new Chinese style» is the band «密扇MUKZIN». Transforming classic subjects into bold, inclusive forms, they built a dialogue with culture and created a new dimension of oriental design. MISHAN rethinks archetypes: the «Female Knight» collection combines strength and tenderness beyond gender, and the «Han Era of Manchurian Feasts» uses the «White Rabbit» candy as a symbol of cultural exchange between East and West [2].

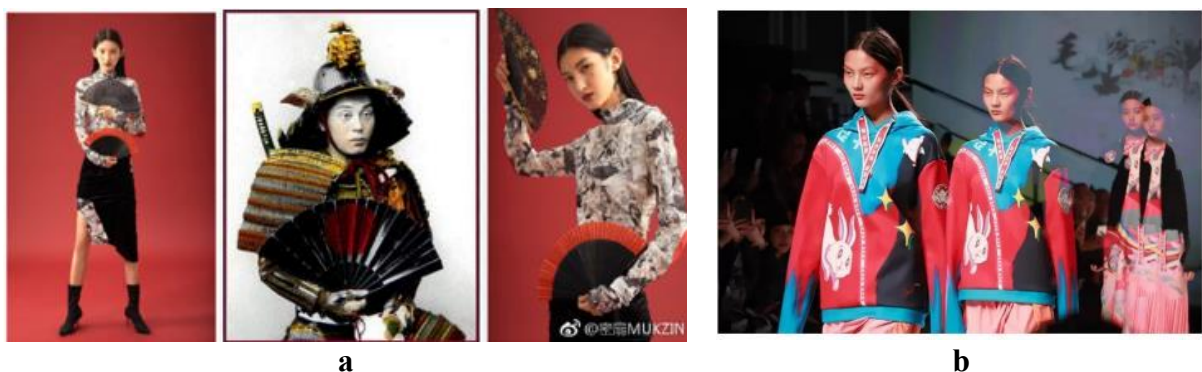


Figure 2. The series «The Female Knight» (a) and the series «The Era of the Han Manchurian Feasts» (b) by the band «密扇MUKZIN»

Designers Guo Pei and Huishan Zhang are experimenting with silhouettes and adapting traditional embroidery techniques to modern shapes. Guo Pei revives disappearing crafts (suzhou embroidery, porcelain mosaic), turning the Chinese philosophy of enlightenment into the symbolism of they collections [3].



Figure 3. The image of the Da Jin (2005) Guo Pei collection based on the Suzhou school of embroidery and porcelain mosaic (b), the image of Guo Pei for singer Riana (2015) (c)

Huishan Zhang translated traditional Chinese aesthetics into the language of modern minimalism in the spring of 2020. The result is elegant feminine silhouettes made of light fabrics with pastel shades, where embroidery and stand-up collars become accents rather than quotes [4]. The Qipao has gone from a symbol of hierarchy (loose closed cut, ankle-length, wide trousers, fig.4, a) to the embodiment of female independence (fig. 4, b).



Figure 4. Traditional qipao or cheongsam (a) and models from the Huishan Zhang Spring 2020 collection (b)

The transformation began in the 1920s with a fitted silhouette, bold length and slits. In modern times, it has become a sign of the renewed image of the Chinese woman – strong and free. Spontaneous inclusivity of youth fashion: hanfu elements are cognitively processed through a combination with casual clothes (sneakers, jeans) into a personal style where tradition finds a new meaning.

As a result, it can be concluded that the inclusive design of Chinese clothing today is not a simplification, but a complication, since the designer must define a semiotic code, adapt it through a size range, materials, and recode the visual language for cognitive and cultural inclusivity, making deep culture open to dialogue

with a wide variety of consumers [5-7]. Thus, clothing today is not just a reflection of the past, but an active participant in the dialogue between heritage and the emerging society of new opportunities.

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