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PATTERN DESIGN CHARACTERISTICS OF ANCIENT CHINESE TEXTILES

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Abstract. Purpose. This paper aims to explore the style characteristics of ancient Chinese textile patterns in different periods, representative pattern types, and analyze their design rules to guide modern design practice.

Methodology. This study mainly adopts the literature analysis method to analyze academic articles and textile cases, outlines the artistic characteristics of ancient Chinese patterns on the clothes and interior textile in seven periods, and summarizes the model of its pattern composition through a typological method.

Results. Ancient Chinese patterns are mainly geometric, animal and plant. Pre-Qin patterns were mainly simple geometric, and later evolved into complex natural patterns. Han Dynasty patterns yearned for the world of immortals, and later periods incorporated Buddhist and Central Asian elements. Sui and Tang Dynasty patterns were inclusive, especially circular patterns. The Song Dynasty was more inclined to exquisite aesthetics. Ming Dynasty patterns were complex and full, and Qing Dynasty favored auspicious patterns. Patterns are arranged freely, in pairs, in fours and symmetrically, with various frame structures. Studying these ancient patterns can illuminate Chinese culture and provide inspiration for modern design, proving the eternal value of historical aesthetics.

Scientific novelty. For the first time, the patterns of symmetry in ancient Chinese textile patterns were revealed and the rules of their composition were systematized, which is of great importance for promoting the inheritance of traditional culture and the innovative application of traditional patterns.

Practical significance. This study contains information support for clothing designers, interior designers, graphic designers regarding the design of modern products using traditional patterns by means of digital technologies.

Keywords: textile, fashion design, pattern, graphic design, interior design, Chinese culture, cultural heritage, symmetry, symbolism, digital technology, composition, aesthetics, design characteristics, dynastic periods.

INTRODUCTION

Recent scholarship on ancient Chinese textiles has increasingly focused on analyzing patterns through a multidisciplinary lens, combining art historical methods with archaeological

findings, technological analysis, and social-cultural interpretations. Researchers have been utilizing advanced imaging techniques and digital databases to examine surviving textiles, reconstruct weaving techniques, and trace the

evolution of motifs across different periods and regions.

ANALYSIS OF RECENT RESEARCH

The reproduction and preservation of historical materials is an important task in research. The book of Miao and Wang [17] records and reproduces 300 patterns carefully drawn and designed by pattern designers in the 1970s. The subject classification of patterns is also a research area worthy of attention. The Beauty of Chinese Patterns series of books are divided into two parts: Animals and Plants, drawn by a professional team [11, 12].

There are relevant research contents on patterns of every period in ancient China, and there are many perspectives. Li [15] believes that in the pre-Qin period, a comprehensive decorative expression based on a totem was developed, which was integrated with clan totems. Zhang [30] divided the clouds of the Han Dynasty into two categories, including cirrus clouds that are shaped like ears of wheat and flowers, and long clouds that are shaped like belts and mountains. Zhang [29] proposed that under the influence of foreign cultures, new frame forms appeared in dyeing and weaving patterns, including battlement frames, frame frames, arc frames and round nest frames.

In recent years, there has been growing interest in specific patterns in textile. For example, Shang [18] found that lion pattern style was influenced by Buddhism and Zoroastrianism, combined with the influence of Chinese traditional culture and art, forming a unique auspicious pattern. Yang and Liu [26] systematically summarizes and defines the style characteristics of Qiulu pattern. Su [20] concluded that there were a large number of linked beads and round nests in Tang Dynasty silk fabrics. The skeletons were filled with pairs of animals, most of which had the characteristics of the Sogdian region in Central Asia. Zhong [32] split a Baoxianghua pattern into eight layers of structure, breaking down its process from simple to complex, showing the changes of natural flowers and plants in the process of decoration and craftsmanship. Sun and Zhang [21] summarized the formation of the "lotus pond scene" pattern. It has experienced the evolution from early Buddhist painting elements to flower and bird painting themes and then to decorative patterns. Huang [13] traced the development and changes of the boy pattern in ancient China, emphasizing that the pattern evolved from the Buddhist "transformed boy" to the folk decorative pattern of "continuous birth of sons" with auspicious meanings.

The clothing of ethnic minorities was also given attention. Liu [16] focuses on the clothing patterns of the ancient northern ethnic minority regimes in China, the Liao, Xia and Jin dynasties. The most distinctive of these is the spring water and autumn mountain pattern, which is a display of hunting and life scenes. Starting from field research, data verification and image analysis, Wang and Cai [24] summarized and analyzed the types and characteristics of geometric patterns on Ming Dynasty textiles, and found that the geometric patterns on Ming Dynasty textiles mainly include three types: large-scale compound geometric fill patterns, medium-sized geometric fill patterns, and small-scale geometric patterns.

Yuan et al. [27] analyzed the symbolic attributes and characteristics of the patterns of the Qing Dynasty court costumes from the perspective of the symbolization process, indicative behavior and systematization of the patterns of the Qing Dynasty court costumes.

Interdisciplinary research is a new direction. A recent study by Deng & Jia [8] concluded that the patterns of traditional Chinese clothing have distinct stylized characteristics, and the pattern layout and composition reflect a significant order and law. Zhang and Li [31] vectorized and digitized the pattern images and established a Badayun pattern library. The selection of Badayun pattern materials, the free selection and matching of skeleton models and colors were realized, and the new Badayun pattern was fitted and generated; finally, the modern application communication platform model of the Badayun App was constructed.

The reviewed literature demonstrates a vibrant and growing field of study dedicated to ancient Chinese textile patterns. Recent scholarship has moved beyond purely aesthetic considerations, delving into the social, cultural, and technological contexts of these patterns.

PURPOSE

This paper aims to explore the style characteristics of ancient Chinese textile patterns in different periods, representative pattern types, and analyze their design rules to guide modern design practice.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The evolution of patterns on ancient Chinese textiles is a fascinating journey through time, reflecting the intricate interplay of cultural shifts, artistic trends, and historical developments. To illuminate this evolution, we categorize these patterns according to seven distinct stages, each representing a key era in China's

rich history. From the Pre-Qin to the Qing dynasty (c. 2070 BC to 1912 AD), let's delve into the unique characteristics of each stage and witness the transformational journey of Chinese textile design. The studied samples are presented in Table 1.

1. Design characteristics of textile patterns in different periods

Most cases of ancient Chinese textiles belong to unearthed objects, which come from various noble tombs, and a small amount from folk collections. Therefore, these cases show the highest technological level in almost every period of ancient China, reflecting the textile technology, printing and dyeing technology and embroidery level at that time. We can also spy on the aesthetic taste of the aristocracy at that time, find its cultural connotation and symbolic significance from various pattern elements, and summarize some rules of pattern design from the perspective of design.

1) The pre-Qin period

The decorative style of the Shang and Zhou dynasties was ferocious, mysterious and static. Its main patterns include band patterns, thunder patterns, rectangular patterns, gluttonous patterns and other animal patterns. The geometric patterns in the pre-Qin period also showed a process of change from simplicity to complexity, from the basic uniform arrangement of rhombus patterns to the later stages of variant geometric composite animal and human figure patterns, and their themes also changed from abstract to concrete. Its pattern theme reflects the concepts of totem worship and celestial body worship.

Brocade is restricted by its technological conditions, and the pattern composition is in a relatively static and symmetrical state. The design features are composed of geometric patterns such as rhombus, square, and composite rhombus to form the skeleton, and the space is filled with animal and human patterns by dividing the space (Sample 2).

2) The Qin and Han Dynasties

The most representative textiles from this period appeared in the Mawangdui Han Tomb that was excavated in 1972. More than 200 pieces of silk and linen fabrics and clothing were unearthed from the tomb, which are of high research value. The most representative pattern among them is undoubtedly the cloud pattern.

For example, this piece of silk fabric unearthed from the Mawangdui Han Tomb has swirling patterns embroidered with colorful threads (Sample 7). The bamboo slips unearthed from the tomb that record the funerary objects refer to this kind of silk fabric as Chengyun embroidery, which also indirectly confirms that the

main body of the pattern is cloud pattern, implying the desire to ascend to heaven by riding on the clouds and soaring into the sky.

Curly lines are one of the earliest geometric patterns. They often appeared in the form of shading in the decoration of pre-Qin bronzes. The graceful curves are easily associated with many moving and imaginary objects in nature, such as flowing water, flames, smoke, and of course clouds. Therefore, cloud patterns are sometimes indistinguishable from water ripples, and therefore there are patterns such as cloud patterns, swirl patterns, and fire patterns that are all presented in scrolling.

3) Three Kingdoms, Two Jins, Southern and Northern Dynasties

During the Three Kingdoms, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, the layout of patterns was very orderly. Many animal patterns appear in textiles, showing a symmetrical beauty. And in the whole fabric, the elements are used more intensively, leaving little room for it, making it more gorgeous.

There is a hexagonal skeleton, which is called turtle skeleton because it resembles the tissue texture on a turtle's back shell. This frame has the style of ancient Greek decorative art and may also be a product of cultural exchanges between China and the West. Turtle backs are sometimes used as elements in textile pattern designs (Sample 3). This pattern is a horizontal frame as a whole, divided into three groups of patterns through dense intervals, and the Chinese character "吉" is also used in the middle to express auspicious meaning.

The curved frame has a ring skeleton, which is a skeleton style composed of rings or ellipses nested inside each other. The anti-wave frame was also popular during this period. It is made up of symmetrical wave curves overlapping each other. The two ends of the anti-wave frame are relatively pointed.

The straight-curved battlement frame is also the most representative frame of this period. It is a "several" shaped low wall piled up layer by layer, combined with column divisions, and has the characteristics of an arched building. It is probably influenced by the architectural style of ancient Rome. What is more popular is to place various animals in the battlement frame, supplemented by curling cloud patterns, which is also an extension of the cloud patterns in the Han Dynasty.

During this period, a relatively rare textile with human figures appeared (Sample 1). Judging from the posture of the figure, it is also possible that he is performing witchcraft rituals.

4) Sui and Tang Dynasties

The Sui and Tang Dynasties were a period of strong national power in China, with prosperous economy, frequent diplomacy, strong national self-confidence, and excellent cultural tolerance. Therefore, the artistic expression of this period was very fusion. The cultures of different regions such as Central Asia, West Asia, and South Asia have influenced the expression of Chinese textile patterns.

First, there are the battlement frame patterns and wave frame patterns that continue the characteristics of the previous period (Sample 6, Sample 8).

Secondly, the pattern aesthetics of this period had a clear preference for circles. Among them, the most distinctive and representative structure is undoubtedly the pearl roundel pattern (Sample 4).

If a complete unit pattern in the fabric is analyzed, the pattern can be classified according to the number of concentric circles formed, the dot size of each layer of beads, the spacing between concentric circles, etc. There are also some pearl roundel patterns that do not form a circle, but are arranged in straight lines or divided into diamond shapes, and some are like a string of beads surrounding the edges of other patterns. Sometimes other elements such as small squares, flowers, etc. are arranged continuously to form a pearl roundel pattern.

The Baoxianghua of the Tang Dynasty is an excellent example of artistic creation (Sample 11). It is the result of human beings' artistic processing of plants. The characteristic of Baoxianghua is that it radiates outward from the center. Baoxianghua is mostly based on the cross pattern. On this basis, it rotates forty-five degrees and then forms eight petals, forming a "米" shape with eight petals, which is more complicated and full [25].

5) The Song Dynasty and Liao, Jin, and Yuan Dynasties

The artistic characteristics of the Song Dynasty developed towards focusing on artistic conception and inner charm, forming a new aesthetic trend, which was also reflected in textile patterns.

Influenced by the realistic style of flower and bird paintings in courtyards, a large number of sketched flowers and birds are used in the decoration of fabrics. However, in order to adapt to the characteristics of fabric production technology and fabric varieties, and to facilitate production and manufacturing, the vivid and natural external shape characteristics and growth movements of flowers and birds are often retained (Sample 5). The flexible posture uses the method of combining lines and surfaces to simplify it into a slightly decorative plane image.

"Flower with broken branches" appears as a painting theme and is also a framing method in Chinese flower-and-bird paintings. That is, instead of painting the entire flower plant, only one or a few twigs are selected to be included in the painting, leaving room for the viewer's imagination and adding more charm. This type of pattern had already appeared in the Tang Dynasty, but it did not become popular until the Song Dynasty. The characteristic of the broken-branch flower pattern is that single flowers or combinations of flowers with flowers, leaves and branches are cut out from life and used as elements to form unit patterns. In the pattern organization composition, the unit patterns maintain intervals or do not form logical connections. After graphic arrangement, the original shape can be maintained or turned to simple condensation [19].

6) Ming Dynasty

The pattern themes are very wide, including flowers, plants, trees, rocks, humming-birds, fish, insects, birds and animals, all can be included in the painting. Especially the themes of local customs, customs and traditional customs are the most special. For example, the most exquisite piece of clothing unearthed from the tomb is the Queen's Baizi (Sample 9). More than ten kinds of embroidery stitches are used, which makes the different patterns have layered changes and is very textured. There are hundreds of children on it, plump, lively and cute. Several of them form a group, playing different games, such as skipping rope, shuttlecock kicking, Cuju, cricket fighting, sky bamboo, etc., which is very life-like. This pattern is the imagination and yearning for the scene of having many children, and it is also an expression of the desire to have many children and be blessed.

On the other hand, addition is to decorate the simplified pattern with some characteristic and idealized natural images. The main forms of addition can basically be summarized as the addition of the tattoo itself, the addition of different patterns, and the addition to enrich the content of the pattern, or to fill in the gaps in some parts of the pattern, so as to achieve a balance between virtuality and reality [18].

There is an idiom in China called "adding flowers to the brocade", which refers to adding patterns to jacquard fabrics, which is a metaphor for adding beauty to beauty. This kind of textile is also called Tianhua brocade. It appeared in the Song Dynasty and became popular in the Ming and Qing Dynasties.

The basic composition of Tianhua brocade is to use various geometric shapes such as circles, squares, rhombuses, hexagons, and octagons, arranged regularly and staggered to form a richly

varied brocade-style skeleton. The geometric skeleton is filled with patterns such as back patterns, ten thousand characters, ancient coins, and locks; the main geometric skeleton is filled with larger square flowers, making it a kind of main flower with prominent, brocade style and The brocade pattern on the ground is richly varied (Sample 12).

7) Qing Dynasty

In ancient Chinese history, the idea of seeking good fortune and exorcising evil has been popular and expressed on fabrics through patterns.

By the Qing Dynasty, the development of patterns had reached the point where "the picture must be intentional and the meaning must be auspicious". Today, auspicious patterns are an important part of Chinese traditional culture and have become one of the symbols for recognizing the national spirit and national interests [28]. Auspicious patterns are a way to concretize abstract concepts by hiding blessings in patterns. There are several common ways to use them.

First, the pattern that directly expresses blessing with words is the most direct one. The Chinese characters such as "happiness (喜、乐)", "longevity (寿)", "luck (福)" are directly used as pattern elements in the textile design. Secondly, the homophony of Chinese characters is used, that is, the name of the pattern is similar to the pronunciation of the blessing, so the expression of the pattern is connected with the blessing. For example, the Chinese pronunciation of "bottle (瓶)" is the same as "ping (平)", which means safety; the Chinese pronunciation of osmanthus (桂花) is the same as "gui (贵)" which means wealth. As shown in the Sample 10, there are eight red bats in the decoration of interior textile. "Red bat (红蝠)" is homophonic with "Hongfu (洪福)", which means a lot of blessings. Finally, symbolism is used to give animals and plants human qualities.

The combination of pine, bamboo, and plum is called the "Three Friends of Suihan" because pine and bamboo can survive the winter without withering, and plum blossoms can withstand the cold and bloom. This phenomenon is explained anthropomorphically, just like a person who experiences setbacks without being defeated and grows up in difficult situations, which has qualities worthy of admiration. This practice of using the characteristics of animals and plants as a metaphor for human morality is also a manifestation of human beings seeking the connection between themselves and nature in the process of exploring nature.

2. The structural beauty of textile patterns

In modern times, patterns are an important manifestation of national and regional styles. Cultural themes and symbols are a rich

source of inspiration for designers, so it is necessary to explore unique patterns, colors and aesthetics from different cultures [9].

The sign referred to in semiotics must be a double-sided entity of signifier and signified, and should have an expression level and an abstract content level. The expression level is called "symbolic expression" or "symbolic form", also known as "signifier"; The content level is called "symbolic content" or "referenced" [27]. Pattern samples are composed of composition, lines, colors and other signifier components. Its meaning, that is, what it refers to, is the sustenance and expression of a nation's rich cultural connotation and spiritual beliefs.

As a manifestation of social thoughts and concepts at that time, patterns are decorative, symbolic and allegorical. Although the patterns of each period have their own style characteristics, their design rules can be analyzed.

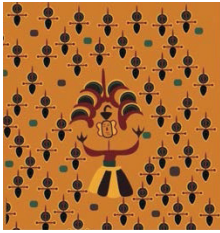






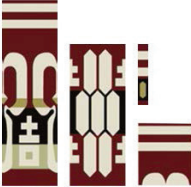

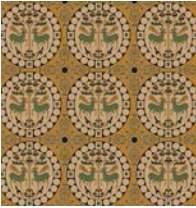

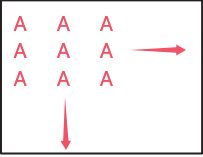


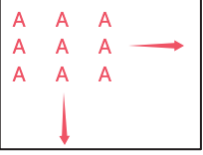


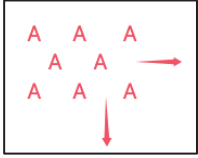
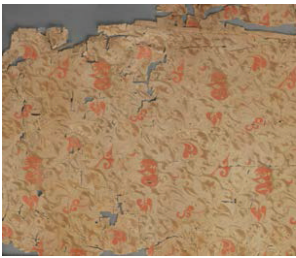

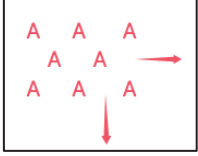
Patterns have the law of formal beauty. Plane patterns are composed of patterns, composition, color, and texture. When discussing textile patterns, the texture content is not discussed because most of the analysis is based on picture materials. In specific textile cases, this is reflected in the use of single or multiple element patterns. Large-area textiles such as clothing usually have patterns covering the entire fabric, so the arrangement patterns can be explored. In order to find a broader compositional pattern in textiles, this article avoids over-refining the individual elements in each case, but instead analyzes the smallest repeating unit formed by the combination of elements, analyzes the arrangement pattern of the unit on the textile, and summarizes the resulting composition (Table 1). When extracting the smallest repeating unit, try not to destroy the integrity of its content. If the smallest repeating unit also has a compositional pattern, it will be shown in the table.

Model 1 is a free-style composition. Although there are repeated elements in the pattern, their arrangement is irregular, as shown in Sample 1.



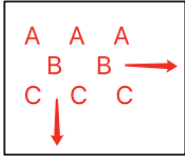


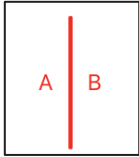


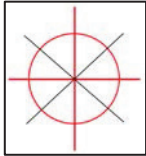

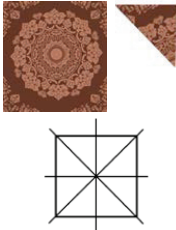


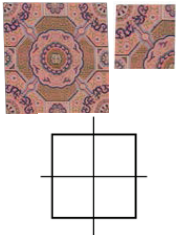
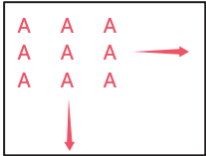
Model 2 is a two-way continuous composition, that is, the elements are repeated regularly in the horizontal or vertical direction. This composition is more common in lace or fabrics with small widths. For example, the several elements in the fabric in Sample 2 maintain the consistency of width and the same repetition interval, so a whole row of patterns can be regarded as a group of elements to observe their arrangement. The elements in Sample 3 are of different sizes and have different repetition intervals, so they need to be split when exploring their arrangement rules.

Table 1

A collection of examples of ancient Chinese textile patterns

Sample No.	Name	Image	Repeating Unit	Composition Model
1	Western Jin, figures and floral pattern [7]			 model 1
2	Textile with stripes and confronted birds [22]			 model 2-1
3	Northern Dynasties, "Ji" character pattern [1]			 model 2-2
4	Tang, paired deer with pearl roundel pattern [6]			 model 3-1
5	Northern Song, scrolling foliage pattern [2]			 model 3-1
6	Tang, paired birds pattern [4]			 model 3-2
7	Fragment of "Cheng Yun" embroidery with brown and yellow paired birds and rhombus pattern (detail) [14]			 model 3-2

Continuation of table 1

Sample No.	Name	Image	Repeating Unit	Composition Model
8	Tang, paired children with wave pattern [5]			 model 3-3
9	Embroidered Hundred Boys robe from the Dingling Tomb of the Ming Dynasty (replica) Photo by Gao Xia			 model 4-1
10	Qing Dynasty, Yellow Satin stool cushion embroidered with chrysanthemum and lotus and bat Photo by Gao Xia			 model 4-2
11	Tang, butterflies around lotus roundel pattern [3]			 model 3-1
12	Qing Dynasty, pink Tianhua brocade (detail) [23]			 model 3-1

Model 3 is a four-way continuous composition, that is, the elements repeat regularly in four directions, up, down, left, and right. This arrangement can be aligned, as shown in Samples 4 and 5. This arrangement can also be dislocated, as shown in Samples 6, 7, 8. Especially Sample 8, there are 3 groups of images in the repeated paired patterns, which are placed dislocated, making the pattern both orderly and varied.

Model 4 is an axial symmetrical composition, which is mainly based on the premise that the pattern itself is not regular, and forms

a left-right or up-down symmetrical pattern with the central axis as the boundary. In the whole garment, due to the symmetry of the human body, symmetrical pattern design often appears.

In some special cases, the overall arrangement of the pattern forms symmetry, but the specific content of the pattern is different, forming an effect that is both neat and free. As shown in Sample 9, the figures and plant images on the left and right of the clothes are basically symmetrical in position, but the specific elements are very different, maintaining the visual balance and richness of the content. In some geometric patterns,

the design can achieve more symmetrical relationships. The pattern shown in Sample 11 can be divided into eight equal parts, and the adjacent parts are symmetrical in the “米” structure.

By starting from the smallest repeating unit and analyzing its corresponding framework and elements, we can better find the rules and design techniques of element repetition, and thus use this method to design new textile patterns.

CONCLUSIONS

Throughout the 4,000-year history of China, the patterns that have appeared have a wide range of themes. The most frequently appearing pattern themes are geometric patterns, animal patterns, and plant patterns.

Research shows that there was an evolution from early geometric abstractions represented by rhombuses and spirals in the pre-Qin period to the complex naturalistic depictions of plants, animals and landscapes in later dynasties. Han Dynasty patterns yearned for the world of immortals, while the Three Kingdoms, Jin Dynasty, and Northern and Southern Dynasties incorporated Buddhist and Central Asian patterns. During the Sui and Tang dynasties, patterns became international, with circular patterns being particularly prominent. Song Dynasty textiles embodied a refined aesthetic, with a particular preference for plant patterns; Ming Dynasty textiles were characterized by fullness, overlapping patterns, and complex designs; and Qing Dynasty textiles emphasized auspicious meanings.

Pattern composition methods can be summarized into four categories, including free composition, two-party continuous composition, four-party continuous composition and symmetrical composition. The specific frame structures are more diverse, including battlement frames, wave-shaped frames, turtleback frames, and “米” shaped frames.

Exploring the decorative patterns of ancient Chinese textiles is conducive to understanding the culture of this region and nation, and is also conducive to the innovation of modern design. History always brings us countless inspirations.

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АНОТАЦІЯ

Гао Ся, Єжова О. Характеристики дизайну візерунків стародавнього китайського текстилю

Мета. Ця стаття має на меті вивчити стильові характеристики давніх китайських текстильних візерунків у різні періоди, репрезентативні типи візерунків та проаналізувати їх правила дизайну, для впровадження в сучасну практику дизайну.

Методологія. У дослідженні використовується метод аналізу літератури для аналізу наукових статей і текстильних виробів, окреслюються художні характеристики давньокитайських візерунків на одязі та інтер'єрному текстилю у семи періодах історії Китаю, і узагальнені типи симетрії візерунків за допомогою типологічного методу.

Результати. Стародавні китайські візерунки переважно геометричні, тваринні та рослинні. Візерунки до періоду Цінь були в основному простими геометричними, а пізніше перетворилися на складні природні візерунки. Візерунки династії Хань прагнули до світу безсмертних, а пізніші періоди включали буддистські та середньоазійські елементи. Візерунки династій Суй і Тан були комплексними, особливо круглі візерунки. Династія Сун більше тяжіла до вишуканої естетики. Візерунки династії Мін були складними та повними, а династія Цін віддавала перевагу сприятливим візерункам. Візерунки розташовуються вільно, попарно, по четверо і симетрично, з різною каркасною структурою. Структурний аналіз цих стародавніх візерунків сприяє розумінню культурної спадщини Китаю та може бути джерелом натхнення для сучасних дизайнерів при створенні одягу, текстилю, в дизайні інтер'єру та графічному дизайні.

Наукова новизна. Вперше виявлено закономірності симетрії в стародавніх китайських текстильних візерунках і систематизовано правила їх композиції, що має велике значення для сприяння успадкуванню традиційної культури та інноваційного застосування традиційних візерунків.

Практична значущість. Це дослідження містить інформаційне забезпечення для дизайнерів одягу, інтер'єру, графічних дизайнерів щодо дизайну сучасних виробів із застосуванням традиційних візерунків засобами цифрових технологій.

Ключові слова: текстиль, дизайн одягу, візерунок, графічний дизайн, дизайн інтер'єру, китайська культура, культурна спадщина, симетрія, символіка, цифрові технології, композиція, естетика, характеристики дизайну, династичні періоди.

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