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Ethnic-Artistic and Ideological-Aesthetic Traditions in The Formation of Contemporary Interior Design

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Abstract

Introduction. The current demand for natural things is driven by digitalization and globalization, which motivates the development of local identity and cultural characteristics within a country or region. Currently, the field of interior design in China is searching for new conceptual solutions by combining tradition and innovation. The influence of Taoism, Confucianism, and Chan Buddhism, expressed in such fundamental principles as harmony, tranquility, naturalness, and authenticity, has had a tremendous impact on Chinese culture and architecture. Contemporary Chinese designers use the symbolism of Chinese cultural tradition, which is most vividly reflected in the concept of tea houses in China. The aim of the study is to determine the influence of traditional Chinese culture on the formation of the modern interior of a tea house.

Materials and Methods. The research material consists of works and treatises on traditional Chinese philosophy and culture, as well as works by contemporary authors in the field of architecture and design. The following methods are used: comparative and historical-cultural analysis; semiotic analysis, which allows the object to be studied as a system of signs; compositional and ergonomic approaches.

Results. The modern Chinese style in the interior of the tea house corresponds to cultural and spiritual traditions in its compositional basis. The ideological and artistic image in contemporary Chinese art and design reflects the Confucian concept of creating something new based on the old. The various elements of the tea house interior are not only interconnected but also influence each other, which allows for a closer emotional connection between tea house guests and the surrounding space. The use of eco-friendly materials in the interior allows for the reflection of spiritual aspirations in the organization of space in accordance with the historical Chinese view of the world order. The main ways to integrate traditional techniques and elements into a modern interior are direct quotation, stylization, modern Chinese minimalism, and deconstructivism, which allows you to change the scale and perception of the tea house space using asymmetrical shapes and lines.

Discussion and Conclusion. The interior design of Chinese teahouses was influenced by the development of cultural traditions surrounding the tea ceremony. Architectural solutions and interior styles were shaped by rural or urban social environments, reflecting the spirit of the place. The spiritual content of the tea drinking ritual was reflected in the aesthetic perception of tea houses and influenced the formation of traditional interiors, creating a certain holistic composition and philosophical and emotional atmosphere. A comprehensive approach to the development of conceptual ideas is implemented in the modern design of the spatial environment of tea houses based on cultural traditions. The use of elements of traditional culture allows the creation of unique design objects, enriched with new artistic forms that reflect the uniqueness of Chinese culture.

Keywords: interior design, cultural tradition, tea house, Chinese philosophy, culture, tea ceremony

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Этно-художественные и идейно-эстетические традиции в формировании современного дизайна интерьеров

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Аннотация

Введение. Современный спрос на естественные вещи обусловлен цифровизацией и глобализацией, которая мотивирует развитие локальной идентичности, ее культурных особенностей в рамках страны или региона. В настоящее время в области дизайна интерьера в Китае происходит поиск новых концептуальных решений интерьеров путем соединения традиций и инноваций. Влияние даосизма, конфуцианства и чань-буддизма, выражающихся в таких фундаментальных принципах, как гармония, покой, естественность и подлинность, оказало огромное влияние на культуру и архитектуру Китая. Современные китайские дизайнеры используют символику китайской культурной традиции, которая ярче всего отражена в концепции Чайных домов в Китае. Цель исследования – определить влияние традиционной китайской культуры на формирование современного интерьера чайного дома.

Материалы и методы. В качестве материала исследования используются труды и трактаты по традиционной китайской философии и культуре, а также работы современных авторов в области архитектуры и дизайна. Применяется сравнительный и историко-культурный анализ; семиотический анализ, позволяющий изучить объект как систему знаков; композиционный и эргономический подходы.

Результаты исследования. Современный китайский стиль в интерьере чайного дома отвечает культурным и духовным традициям в своей композиционной основе. Идейно-художественный образ в современной практике искусства и дизайна Китая отражает конфуцианскую концепцию о создании нового с опорой на старое. Различные элементы интерьера чайного дома не только взаимосвязаны, но и находятся под влиянием друг на друга, что позволяет сделать эмоциональную связь между гостями чайных домов и окружающим пространством более тесной. Экологические материалы в интерьере позволяют отразить духовные стремления в организации пространства в соответствии с историческим китайским представлением мироустройства. Основные способы интеграции в современный интерьер традиционных приемов и элементов: прямое цитирование, стилизация, современный китайский минимализм, прием деконструктивизма, позволяющий изменить масштаб и восприятие пространства чайного дома с помощью ассиметричных форм и линий.

Обсуждение и заключение. Формирование интерьеров чайных домов Китая происходило под влиянием развития культурных традиций чайной церемонии. Архитектурные решения и стиль интерьеров складывались под воздействием сельского или городского социального окружения, отражая дух места. Духовное наполнение ритуала чаепития отразилось в эстетическом восприятии чайных домов и повлияло на формирование традиционных интерьеров, создающих определенную целостную композицию и философско-эмоциональную атмосферу. Комплексный подход в разработке концептуальной идеи осуществляется во время современного проектирования предметно-пространственной среды чайных домов на основе культурных традиций. Применение элементов традиционной культуры позволяет создавать уникальные объекты дизайна, обогащенные новыми художественными формами, отражающими своеобразие культуры Китая.

Ключевые слова: дизайн интерьера, культурная традиция, чайный домик, философия Китая, культура, чайная церемония

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Introduction. In today's world, interior design in China is searching for new conceptual solutions by combining tradition and innovation. In Chinese history, the tea house was a unique cultural object that played an important role in social and cultural life. In his research, O.I. Genisaretsky notes: "... design culture consists of three components: an ecological basis (the value-significant component of the object-spatial environment), a conceptual basis (the creative component of the object-spatial environment), and an axiological basis (the tangible, conceivable, and perceptible components of the object-spatial environment)" [1].

Contemporary Chinese designers incorporate symbols of Chinese cultural codes into their projects, which are reflected in the concept of traditional tea houses in China, depending on the archetypal elements of a particular Chinese province. In modern design, there is an intensive search for conceptual ideas based on Chinese traditions and the use of modern

materials and technologies. In solving creative tasks for designers, tradition becomes the main starting point in the design of modern tea houses. As Sinologist S.A. Arutyunov notes, “Every tradition was once an innovation, every innovation has a chance to become a tradition, and it is precisely in the ability to assimilate innovations that the vitality and adaptive flexibility of tradition lie” [2].

As part of our research, it is necessary to consider the role of Chinese cultural traditions in the design of modern interiors of Chinese teahouses, which shape the national character and originality of new creative solutions. Harmony in Chinese tradition is based on a philosophical understanding of being and the organic connection between the spiritual and the material, where the functional essence of an interior object is considered in its symbolic and traditional aspects. A Chinese tea house is a philosophy expressed in wood and stone. Its architecture is not designed to impress with luxury, but to create the ideal environment for achieving harmony, purity, peace, and reverence – the key virtues of the “Way of Tea.”

Materials and Methods. The research material includes works and treatises on traditional Chinese philosophy and culture, as well as works by contemporary authors in the field of architecture and design. Various methods of analysis are applied to the information. Comparative and historical-cultural analysis involves studying the genesis of an object, its prototypes, and its evolution in history, art, and culture. Semiotic analysis studies an object as a system of signs. System analysis allows us to consider the project as a holistic system consisting of interconnected elements (for example, the interior as a system of zones, furniture, lighting, and communications). The study and construction of formal relationships between the elements of the project: balance, rhythm, contrast, nuance, proportion, scale – provides compositional analysis. An ergonomic approach is used to study the interaction between people and objects/environments from an anthropometric perspective to ensure comfort, safety, and efficiency. Color analysis is used to study color theory, symbolism, psychological impact, harmonious combinations, and to understand atmosphere and accents.

Results. To create new artistic images in the interiors of modern tea houses, designers use the so-called *technique of stylistic interpretations* with special traditional symbols formed by centuries of Chinese culture. The works of the Chinese philosopher Zhuang Zi reflect the essence of the harmonious coexistence of man and nature, corresponding to the Taoist understanding of being. According to Taoist teachings, spiritual improvement takes place in the process of studying “things created by nature” in order to obtain “things created by man.” This teaching is at the core of traditional Chinese culture [3].

The tea house designs of interest to our study are from contemporary Chinese designers, the analysis of which will provide answers to the research goals and objectives.

Take for instance XinHeYe tea house, designed by Qicang Design studio in Ningbo. According to the designers’ concept, the project is inspired by tea ceremony rituals and the rhythm of the changing seasons, offering a retreat from the chaos of the city. The interior is made of natural materials in warm tones, which form the palette of the space to create the peaceful atmosphere of a tea house. A system of sliding and folding doors connects the interior with the surrounding landscape. The changing seasons are marked by floral installations and carefully selected tea rituals that emphasize the passage of time: from spring cherry blossoms to winter snow. The tea house reflects the natural cycles of life, creating an ever-evolving story in accordance with the Taoist concept of the ever-flowing world as a unity of opposites [4].

The modern Tea House project in Shanghai is an interesting case study. Architects and designers from Archi-Union’s studio have created a harmonious space between the interior and exterior, where the landscape becomes part of the interior space thanks to a maximally open glass wall with access to the garden, expressing concern for the environment. The traditional layout of functional areas in the room includes not only a tea ceremony hall on the first floor, but also a relaxation area with a library on the second floor, which corresponds to the traditional functional distribution of rooms in tea houses, taking into account the social needs of visitors [5].

During the design process, all trees on the site were preserved, and a hole was made for one of them, which corresponds to the Chinese idea of harmony between nature and man: minimal interference with the environment. This modern technique in a simple space allowed architects to gain new impressions of spatial perception. The unusual shape of the hexagonal ornate staircase is perceived as a striking sculptural art object in the space of the tea house. The smoothly flowing passageway around the staircase was created using modern design technologies and allowed the functional areas to be combined into an expressive linear and complex form [6]. In their project, the designers harmoniously combined traditional techniques for creating a tea house with new design technologies and materials. The modern Chinese style in the interior of the tea house can be identified by the traditional rules in the compositional basis of the interior, which forms an artistic image that reflects the principle of balance and harmony of Confucian philosophy [7].

According to Chinese philosopher Li Zehou, “Traditional culture is an integral part of historical existence. And the use of traditions in contemporary art and design reflects the Confucian concept of creating something new based on the old” [8]. The modern language of design is represented in the close interconnection between architecture and design, which combine traditional Chinese aesthetics. An example of this is the floating house in the bamboo courtyard in Shixiao Garden in Yangzhou. Chinese architect Sun Wei developed the following concept for his project: “The bamboo courtyard

is an example of the HWCD design philosophy, which encompasses the fundamentals of traditional Chinese gardens and fits into the natural environment”¹.

To create a sense of depth, bamboo was placed vertically in the interior, and rows of bamboo sticks were arranged along the paths on the lake, forming asymmetrical corridors. The inner courtyard is a traditional structure of pavilions facing inward on a square plan, creating an internal landscape area of the building. According to the architects' concept, the panoramic view of the surrounding landscape and the lake is provided by the fragmented interior spaces of the entire building, located along the perimeter. Variations of several bodies and voids create the cubic shape of the entire bamboo courtyard. The night lighting of the tea house emphasizes the verticality of the object. The harmony between the architectural structure and nature corresponds to the Taoist principles in Chinese culture. Traditional natural materials such as bamboo and brick illustrate the sustainable sensory connection between humans and the environment. The bamboo courtyard provides a suitable setting for tea drinking, emphasizing the fundamental importance of design and architecture. This project illustrates the traditional connection between humans and nature in Chinese culture [9, 10].

The works of architect Wang Shu, in which he used *the technique of ecological minimalism* as a fundamental design principle, are of interest to our study. The tea house built by Wang Shu on the shore of a pond in Xiangshan, where space and nature exist in harmonious unity: “Interiors where every element is part of a closed ecosystem. Partitions made of pressed plant fibers naturally regulate humidity and purify the air. Furniture made from recycled materials not only minimizes its environmental footprint; it creates a new aesthetic where sustainability becomes a source of beauty. One of the conceptual spaces even features a system where indoor plants are integrated into architectural elements in such a way that the boundary between the interior and living nature is virtually erased”². Wang Shu's work belongs to contemporary design trends – *symbiotic architecture and biophilic design* – combined with traditional Chinese tea house culture.

Let's consider the main ways of integrating traditional techniques and elements into modern interiors using the example of various tea house interiors in China. The first method of integration is *direct quotation*, i. e. copying and reproducing interior elements and decorative and applied art objects, paintings, and calligraphy associated with tea ceremonies and the interiors of traditional teahouses, in accordance with Chinese cultural traditions. This method is represented in the design concept of the Lao She Teahouse. It is one of the best traditional tea houses. The unusual atmosphere, wooden corridor windows, Chinese hardwood furniture, exquisite porcelain bowls, and various palace lanterns hanging on the walls all radiate the bright colors of Beijing. Lao She Tea House has inherited and preserved the charm of Beijing-style tea houses in both form and function, corresponding to the method of direct quotation in the concept of interior space.

The next method of integrating traditional techniques and objects of Chinese tea culture into the modern interior of tea houses is *stylization*. This method is considered one of the most common in modern tea house interiors in China. “Stylization changes the appearance of the original image in accordance with modern aesthetic demands, providing an author's interpretation and creative rethinking of images in traditional culture” [11]. Innovative transformations in stylization bring changes to the external appearance of objects, giving them new creative interpretations.

Stylization brings changes on a material level, achieving the visual appeal of a new cultural object. The interior of the tea house in Zhujiyajiao is an example of a more moderate approach to interior design, the use of individual decorative and applied art objects, and the rejection of excessive object saturation in the interior. Here we see that individual interior items are presented in a stylized form and have acquired new functions in place of traditional ones. The color scheme of the modern tea house is associated with the traditional Chinese color palette.

At the same time, it should be noted that all items in the interior of modern teahouses have retained features of traditional Chinese culture, remaining bearers of this culture. Along with new methods in solving conceptual ideas in environmental design, a new approach to designing spatial solutions has emerged: *modern Chinese minimalism*. It does not attempt to copy traditional forms, but it does not reject its roots either. Instead, it engages in a dialogue with tradition [12]. Furniture silhouettes that refer to the Ming dynasty but are made of innovative materials. Spatial solutions inspired by traditional gardens but reimagined for the modern lifestyle. Color palettes that originate in classical Chinese painting but are interpreted through the prism of contemporary color theory. This creates minimalism with a distinct “accent”: universal in its functionality but unique in its cultural expression.

Xue Binghua achieved a harmonious blend of tradition and modernity in his tea house project³. The tea house is called Qulanyuan, meaning “Courtyard of the Curved Corridor.” The uninhabited hutong was reconstructed with the aim of preserving as many elements and layouts from the Qing dynasty as possible, and a modern curved glass corridor was added. Antique tableware is used in the tea ceremonies at Qulanyuan, and the interior space is used as a gallery and art venue, in accordance with the functional characteristics of traditional Chinese tea houses.

The project of a modern tea house in Shenzhen, developed by EK Design Bureau, is of interest to our research. The

¹ URL: <https://ru.pinterest.com/pin/24488391717498958/?ysclid=mevbsbtizj962042210> (accessed: 12.10.2025).

² URL: <https://www.gazetametro.ru/articles/evoljutsija-kitajskogo-minimalizma-novyie-tendentsii-na-vystavke-v-guanchzhou-ciff-2025-23-04-2025?ysclid=mjbq3m4uro16709049> (accessed: 12.10.2025).

³ VK. URL: https://vk.com/wall-47905050_22076?ysclid=mevzbz4j4y185694481 (accessed: 12.10.2025).

task set before the designers was to literally combine the traditions of a tea house and modernity, represented by Chinese tea culture and *deconstructivist architecture*. According to the authors' concept, this will attract and introduce the modern generation of Chinese to the vast history of traditional tea drinking through modern design and architecture, making tea drinking traditions popular. The designers formulated their task as follows: "We wanted to give young people the opportunity to learn more about tea culture so that they would want to come here and spend time here." The designers creatively reimagined the traditional teahouse, creating a dynamic space in the spirit of deconstructivism with traditional landscapes on the walls. The concept of "deconstruction" can be seen in every detail—from the beams and columns to the bar counter, including traditional elements of Chinese architecture represented by mortise and tenon joints (known as "Sun Mao" construction) and in the warm burgundy and brown tones of the tea itself.

The original space was complex, shaped like a narrow triangle, which made it difficult to plan different areas. In addition, according to feng shui principles, a sharp triangle is considered "negative space." The walls were decorated with almost monochrome panels depicting spring. The solution to the problems of planning and zoning the space in the project was the use of *deconstructivism*, which allowed the scale and perception of the tea house space to be changed using asymmetrical shapes and lines. All of the projects presented feature a modern interpretation of tea house design, which has retained its essence of traditional Chinese culture and has been adapted to modern technologies and requirements.

The results of the study and analysis of contemporary Chinese teahouse designs allow us to draw the following conclusions:

- When designing the physical environment of tea houses, designers take a comprehensive approach to addressing the ethnocultural components of the interior.
- The artistic imagery of interior design solutions reflects a synthesis of contemporary design and traditional Chinese art based on the Confucian concept of creating something new while building on the old.
- The various elements of the tea house interior are not only interconnected, but also influence each other, allowing for a closer connection between tea house guests and the surrounding space, expressing the designer's creative vision.
- Eco-friendly materials in the interior allow spiritual aspirations to be reflected in the organization of space in accordance with the historical Chinese conception of the world order.
- Stylization brings changes to the interior on a material level, achieving the visual appeal of a new object of cultural content.
- Color palettes originate in classical Chinese painting but are realized through the prism of contemporary coloristics.
- Spatial solutions for tea houses by contemporary designers, inspired by traditional gardens but reimagined for the modern lifestyle.

Discussion and Conclusion. When building new tea houses, contemporary Chinese designers and architects successfully incorporate new technologies, combining them with traditions and using natural materials to decorate both the interior and exterior spaces, achieving complete harmony with nature. In designing modern tea house interiors, Chinese designers are actively seeking a harmonious combination of tradition and innovation in the development of new conceptual ideas, identifying this as one of the priority areas in design.

An analysis of contemporary tea house design solutions has identified tradition as the starting point for creative activity. The interior design of Chinese tea houses was influenced by the development of cultural traditions surrounding the tea ceremony. The Chinese tea ceremony is not just a ritual of drinking tea, but a spiritual practice, a miniature model of the ideal world order. Through the simple act of preparing and drinking tea, a person embarks on a journey toward harmony with themselves and others. The philosophical foundation of the Chinese tea ceremony was laid by Lu Yu in his 8th-century "Tea Canon," which combined these principles into the aesthetics of the "Way of Tea."

Architectural solutions and interior styles were influenced by rural or urban social environments, reflecting the spirit of the place. The spiritual content of the tea ceremony was reflected in the aesthetic perception of tea houses and influenced the formation of traditional interiors, creating a certain holistic composition and philosophical and emotional atmosphere. Chinese philosophy (Taoism, Confucianism, and Chan Buddhism) had a profound influence on the architecture of tea houses, making them not just buildings, but the material embodiment of spiritual ideas. This is expressed in harmony with nature; simplicity and asymmetry; symbolic order and rhythm; the unity of internal and external space.

Thus, a comprehensive approach to developing a conceptual idea is implemented in the modern design of the spatial environment of tea houses based on philosophical and cultural traditions. In contemporary teahouse designs, designers have managed to combine the traditions of the teahouse and modernity, represented by Chinese tea culture, implementing the idea of synthesizing aesthetic and natural elements in the formation of a new interior image.

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