

## Article

# The Application of Huaiyang Mud Dog Auspicious Patterns in Cultural and Creative Design: A Semiotic Approach

Jing Li <sup>1</sup> and Nurul Azlen binti Hanifah <sup>1,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> City University of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, 50000 Malaysia

\* Correspondence: Nurul Azlen binti Hanifah, City University of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, 50000 Malaysia

**Abstract:** This paper aims to address the problem of superficial application of Huaiyang Mud Dog cultural and creative products, sort out the cultural connotations of its auspicious patterns, and use semiotic research methods to extract core visual symbols such as shapes, colors, and patterns from the material, cultural, and spiritual dimensions. It is found that there are problems such as repetitive shapes, color accumulation, and weakened implications of patterns in the existing Mud Dog cultural and creative market. This paper proposes design methods that simplify and reconstruct shapes, innovate and adapt colors, and deconstruct and reassemble patterns. Promote the dynamic inheritance of the intangible cultural heritage of the dog, transform auspicious patterns into cultural and creative visual symbols that fit modern aesthetics, and meet consumers' spiritual and cultural needs.

**Keywords:** Huaiyang Mud Dog; auspicious patterns; semiotic analysis; cultural and creative design; visual symbol extraction; intangible cultural heritage

## 1. Semiotics and an Overview of Huaiyang Mud Dog Auspicious Patterns

### 1.1. Overview of Semiotics

#### 1.1.1. Semiotic Concepts

Semiotics encompasses both linguistic and non-linguistic branches, focusing on the structural rules by which symbols are generated, the mechanisms through which they are disseminated, and the logic guiding their interpretation. As a discipline, semiotics provides a systematic framework for analyzing how symbols function across cultural, social, and artistic domains. These symbols may serve as tools for cultural refinement and inheritance, while also constructing communicative bridges among different subjects and audiences. [1]

In contemporary design practice, the reinterpretation of traditional symbols is increasingly prominent. For instance, cultural and creative products such as the dragon-pattern stationery series from the Palace Museum reinterpret the traditional longwen symbol and transform it into visual elements suitable for notebooks, bookmarks, and accessories. Although the media and materials have shifted to modern forms, the symbolic association with prosperity, grandeur, and authority continues, illustrating the capacity of semiotic transformation to activate traditional imagery in new contexts. Such examples demonstrate how auspicious symbols achieve cultural continuity through design adaptation.

#### 1.1.2. Design Semiotics

Design semiotics applies semiotic theory to design practice, examining the function, meaning, and communicative mechanism of symbols within design activities. Its central task is to promote effective communication between a design work and its audience by

Published: 06 December 2025



**Copyright:** © 2025 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

manipulating the recognizability, universality, limitations, and particularity of selected symbols [2].

Design semiotics emphasizes the semantic relationship between the signifier and the signified, exploring the multiplicity of meanings that symbols can generate under specific cultural and contextual conditions. In practical application, symbol usage in design may be divided into three principal forms: symbolic (based on convention), associative (based on logical or experiential correlation), and iconic (based on morphological similarity). These forms create multilayered communication channels that influence how audiences perceive, interpret, and respond to design outputs [3].

Further, design semiotics concerns itself with the structure and context of symbolic systems-how symbols acquire, shift, or lose meaning when embedded in particular social environments. This theoretical framework aids designers in expressing culturally accurate messages and responding to social needs through precise symbolic communication. Within the contemporary design environment, the discipline serves as a methodological guide that bridges theoretical understanding with the practical requirements of cultural expression [4].

## *1.2. Overview of the Auspicious Patterns of Huaiyang Mud Dog*

### *1.2.1. Subject Classification of Huaiyang Mud Dog Auspicious Patterns*

The Huaiyang ni gou, a distinctive folk art form originating from the Huaiyang area of Henan Province, displays a variety of auspicious patterns rich in symbolic connotations. These patterns carry deep cultural meanings and reflect longstanding folk beliefs. Based on their expressive forms and symbolic intentions, the themes of auspicious patterns may be categorized into four major types:

#### *1) Auspicious and Festive Themes*

These patterns often express wishes for fertility, family prosperity, and good fortune. Through figures such as the mother-child monkey or the two-headed dog, they convey prayers for flourishing descendants and thriving households. These visual motifs not only serve decorative purposes but also represent cultural values related to family continuity and life reproduction. They reveal a worldview shaped by early reproductive worship and an emphasis on generational inheritance.

#### *2) Play-like Story Themes*

These patterns draw from traditional operas, classic tales, or well-known legends. Works inspired by narratives such as Xiyao Ji or Bai She Zhuan recreate familiar storylines through clay sculpture, showcasing both artistic creativity and moral teaching. These themes carry profound educational significance, transmitting values such as loyalty, filiality, courage, and justice while fulfilling the entertainment function inherent in folk art.

#### *3) Real-life Themes*

Such patterns depict everyday scenes involving labor, agriculture, fishing, hunting, or common animals and plants. Through realistic or exaggerated forms, they transform elements of daily life into symbolic expressions. These motifs portray the production activities and living conditions of local residents while illustrating their affection for nature and life. They demonstrate the deep integration of folk art with daily experience [5].

#### *4) Supernatural or Mythical Themes*

These patterns are inspired by myths, ancient beliefs, and religious imagination, featuring mysterious creatures such as the human-faced beast or the nine-headed bird. Often related to early totem beliefs and reproductive worship, these motifs reflect reverence for natural forces and contemplation of life origins [6]. The vivid and exaggerated imagery of the ni gou materializes the supernatural, functioning as a medium through which spiritual beliefs enter tangible form.

### 1.2.2. Implications of Huaiyang Mud Dog Auspicious Patterns

The auspicious patterns of the ni gou embody profound cultural meaning, with implications extending across various symbolic dimensions. Their significance can be analyzed from four main perspectives: reproductive worship, blessings of good fortune, totemic belief, and life aspirations.

#### 1) Reproductive Worship

Many auspicious patterns are closely related to beliefs concerning reproduction. Motifs such as the mother-child monkey or two-headed dog express a desire for life continuity, often through exaggerated depictions of reproductive features or dependent mother-child imagery. These symbols not only echo ancient reproductive worship but also articulate people's wishes for family prosperity. Abstract forms such as spirals or wave-like patterns may also be interpreted as derived reproductive symbols.

#### 2) Prayers for Fortune and Auspiciousness

Blessings and auspicious meanings are central to many ni gou patterns. Themes such as qilin songzi or long feng cheng xiang communicate hopes for good luck, peace, and harmonious life. Color usage in the ni gou carries symbolic significance as well. The traditional color scheme featuring a dark base with five contrasting colors embodies an aesthetic deeply rooted in local customs and strengthens the auspicious theme by emphasizing the interplay between colors [7].

#### 3) Totemic Beliefs

Strange and mythical figures appearing in the design of the ni gou, including the human-faced beast and the nine-headed bird, reflect early totemic beliefs. These motifs express reverence for mysterious natural forces and the aspiration for harmonious coexistence between humans and nature. By materializing the totem image, the ni gou serves as an important cultural medium that preserves ancient symbolic systems.

#### 4) Visions of Daily Life

Many auspicious patterns are grounded in scenes of daily labor and ordinary creatures. Through vivid representation, these motifs express admiration for hard work, abundance, and peaceful living. Such imagery demonstrates how folk art transforms everyday experiences into symbolically rich visual forms that articulate the hope for a prosperous and harmonious life.

### 1.3. Research Gap

Although previous scholarship has addressed the aesthetic characteristics of Huaiyang ni gou patterns, existing studies have seldom examined the semiotic structure underlying these auspicious motifs or explored their potential in contemporary design innovation. Current literature therefore offers limited insight into how these symbols may be systematically decoded and reactivated in cultural and creative contexts.

This study seeks to bridge this gap by extracting and interpreting the visual symbols embedded in ni gou auspicious patterns through semiotic methodologies. The aim is to enhance their communicative effectiveness, expand their cultural expressiveness, and stimulate interest-particularly among younger audiences-in the transmission of this intangible cultural heritage.

### 1.4. Research Purpose

This paper centers on the cultural and creative transformation of ni gou auspicious patterns using semiotics as the primary methodological foundation. The research objectives are threefold.

First, the study undertakes a systematic analysis of the symbol composition of ni gou patterns, clarifying the relationship between the signifier-shape, color, and motifs-and the signified-blessings, memories, and cultural meanings. Through this, the paper establishes a genealogical interpretive framework for understanding visual symbols within this form of intangible cultural heritage.

Second, it addresses current issues in cultural and creative design, such as misuse of traditional motifs and distortion of cultural semantics. The paper proposes a practical path for applying semiotic theory to design: symbol extraction, semantic translation, and design adaptation.

Finally, the study aims to provide theoretical support and methodological guidance for revitalizing intangible cultural heritage visual symbols in contemporary contexts. By doing so, it seeks to facilitate the precise communication of the cultural value of ni gou motifs and offer a replicable research model applicable to similar heritage-based design practices.

### *1.5. Implications and Contributions*

The significance of this study lies in both theoretical and practical dimensions. Theoretically, it deepens the understanding of intangible cultural heritage symbols by analyzing the signifier-signified relationship, symbolic lineage, and embedded cultural meanings of ni gou auspicious patterns. This contributes to filling the gap in systematic studies on the semiotization of such heritage motifs and enriches the semiotic research paradigm within the broader field of heritage protection.

Practically, the study constructs an applicable design pathway-symbol extraction, semantic reconstruction, and design transformation-to support cultural and creative development. This approach enhances cultural distinctiveness, avoids homogenization, and increases cultural recognition and added value in creative products. By promoting the transformation of the Huaiyang ni gou from traditional craftsmanship into contemporary cultural goods, the study contributes to the living inheritance of intangible cultural heritage and provides a reference model for integrating heritage elements into cultural and creative design.

## **2. Analysis of the Correlation between Semiotics and the Auspicious Patterns of Huaiyang Mud Dogs**

### *2.1. Semiotic Classification Analysis of the Auspicious Patterns of Huaiyang Mud Dogs*

#### **2.1.1. Classification Based on Peircean Semiotics**

Based on Peirce's symbolic classification, the auspicious patterns of Huaiyang Mud Dogs can be divided into likeness symbols, indicative symbols, and conventional (canonical) symbols. This classification helps clarify how symbolic meaning is constructed and transmitted, and further reveals the internal cultural logic embedded within these patterns.

At the level of likeness symbols, many Mud Dog patterns visually resemble actual animals or mythological creatures, thus establishing meaning through similarity of form. For example, *Monkey Head Swallow* integrates a monkey's head with a swallow's body, visually evoking mythological imagination and early totemic beliefs. Its exaggerated silhouette and distinct facial features transform a surreal imagined creature into a tangible symbolic form. Through this resemblance, viewers can associate the image with ancestral worship practices and ancient cosmological concepts, highlighting the role of likeness symbols in bridging imagery and cultural memory.

As shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2, this figurative creature visually embodies ancestral imagination.



**Figure 1.** Monkey Head Swallow.



**Figure 2.** "Amulet symbol - Geometric pattern.

#### 2.1.2. Indicative Symbolic Features

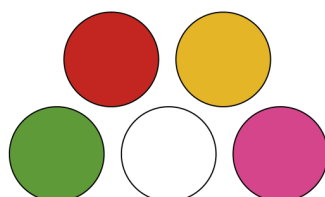
Indicative symbols in the Mud Dog tradition are expressed mainly through color logic and compositional cues. The traditional Mud Dog uses a black background, a color associated in cultural context with depth, mystery, and the primordial state of the universe. Upon this base, five key colors-green, white, red, yellow, and peach-are applied as dotted accents.

Among these, red indicates vitality and renewal of life, symbolizing wishes for family prosperity and population growth. When these colors interact with patterns such as reproductive symbols or mythic animal shapes, the combination forms an indicative system that points toward cultural values including fertility, continuity, and harmony.

As shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4, the distribution and mixture of five colors reinforce these indicative meanings.



**Figure 3.** Nine Sons Carrying.

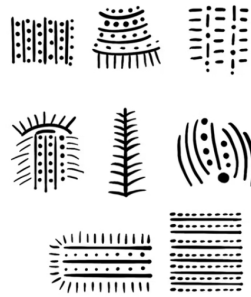


**Figure 4.** Color Map of the Mud Dog.

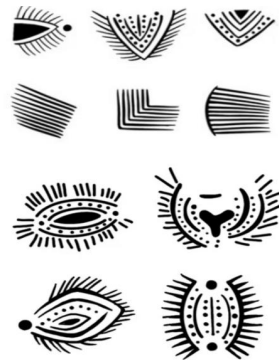
### 2.1.3. Conventional (Canonical) Symbolic Forms

Conventional symbols refer to those whose meanings are shaped through long-term cultural consensus. In Huaiyang Mud Dogs, patterns such as rope motifs, basket motifs, spiral elements, or triangular reproductive symbols originate from early reproductive worship systems and have been continuously preserved.

For example, the rope pattern, shown in Figure 5, symbolizes the ancient practice of knot-tying for recordkeeping or ritual purposes. Over generations, this motif no longer merely references rope as an object but has become a cultural shorthand for continuity, cyclical time, and reproduction. Similarly, the triangle pattern, shown in Figure 6, is widely regarded as a stylized form of female reproductive symbolism, reflecting long-standing collective beliefs.



**Figure 5.** Rope Pattern Figure.



**Figure 6.** Triangle Pattern, Female Yin Pattern.

### 2.1.4. Summary Table of Mud Dog Auspicious Patterns

As shown in Table 1, the visual symbols of the Huaiyang Mud Dog can be categorized by their formal characteristics and philosophical foundations. This classification highlights the deep structural connections between pattern forms and their cultural meaning systems.

**Table 1.** A Column of Auspicious Patterns and Symbols for the Mud Dog.

Patterns	Formal characteristics	Philosophical Foundations
Sunline	Radiation	Celestial worship
Female genital lines	Middle vertical line	Reproductive worship
Eight Trigrams Pattern	Superimposed lines	Fu Xi drawing hexagrams
Rope pattern	Interlaced lines	Knot-tying notes
Hoof print pattern	Arrangement	Remnants of the fishing and hunting civilization
Floral patterns	Deformation	Agricultural culture symbols

Geometric patterns	Regular arrangement	Witchcraft divination symbols
--------------------	---------------------	-------------------------------

Through this systematic semiotic analysis, the auspicious patterns of the Huaiyang Mud Dog can be understood not merely as decorative ornaments but as a symbolic system shaped by ancient cosmology, life worship, and social memory. This view provides both theoretical grounding and cultural depth for contemporary inheritance and innovative design.

## 2.2. Feasibility Analysis of Applying Huaiyang Mud Dog Auspicious Patterns in Cultural and Creative Design

### 2.2.1. Cultural Value and Symbolic Depth

The auspicious patterns of Huaiyang Mud Dogs contain multilayered cultural connotations, including reproductive worship, totem beliefs, protection symbolism, and blessing implications. These rich symbolic narratives align well with cultural and creative products that emphasize emotional identity and cultural storytelling.

Patterns such as "human-face-animal-body" or "fish-bird hybrids" reflect folk beliefs in protection, prosperity, and harmony. Their symbolic flexibility allows them to be adapted into modern forms such as decorative motifs, brand emblems, or narrative illustrations. As cultural and creative consumers increasingly seek products with cultural identity, these symbolic resources can effectively support cultural resonance and value recognition.

### 2.2.2. Expanding Market Demand

The cultural and creative market in recent years has shown a marked preference for personalized, culturally meaningful, and story-driven products. Younger consumer groups, in particular, demonstrate strong acceptance of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) cultural products.

Huaiyang Mud Dog patterns, with their vibrant colors and expressive modeling, stand out from mainstream minimalist aesthetics. Their auspicious implications make them suitable for festive gifts, cultural souvenirs, home decoration, and creative accessories, thus providing multiple commercial application scenarios and opportunities for market segmentation.

### 2.2.3. Technical Adaptability and Material Diversity

The structural clarity and symbolic regularity of Mud Dog patterns make them highly suitable for modern manufacturing processes. Once digitized into vector graphics or 3D models, these patterns can be applied across:

- 1) printing and digital textile processes
- 2) laser engraving and laser cutting
- 3) 3D printing and molding
- 4) embroidery and appliqué techniques
- 5) metal, ceramic, wood, and resin surfaces

This high adaptability not only reduces the technical threshold for cultural and creative transformation but also supports diverse industrial applications, enabling cost-effective mass production without losing artistic character.

### 2.2.4. High Communication Potential with Digital Media

With the expansion of digital cultural marketing, symbolic elements such as "intangible cultural heritage + auspicious culture" carry strong communicative potential. Mud Dog patterns can be integrated into:

- 1) AR animation for interactive cultural displays
- 2) short-video platforms for storytelling marketing

- 3) mobile games or digital stickers
- 4) online exhibitions and virtual museums

Such digital adaptation enhances interactivity and familiarity, forming a communication loop of "cultural dissemination → cultural identity → product consumption". This mechanism strengthens both cultural influence and commercial sustainability.

#### 2.2.5. Summary Table of Feasibility Dimensions

As shown in Table 2, the auspicious patterns of Huaiyang Mud Dogs possess feasibility across cultural, market, technological, and communication dimensions, offering a solid foundation for cultural and creative innovation.

**Table 2.** Feasibility Analysis of Applying the Auspicious Patterns of the Mud Dog to the Design of Cultural and Creative Products.

Rich in cultural connotations	Increased market demand	Diverse forms of presentation	Strong communicability
Reproductive worship	Personalized products	A wide range of applications	AR
Tuteng worship	Products with cultural attributes	3D printing	Digital media
Auspicious implications	Consumer segmentation	Printing, engraving, embroidery	Cultural marketing
Folk beliefs	The market share of culture and tourism has increased	Laser engraving	Cultural characteristics are obvious

### 3. Decorative Features of the Huaiyang Mud Dog Auspicious Pattern from the Perspective of Semiotics

From a semiotic perspective, the decorative characteristics of the Huaiyang Mud Dog can be examined across three dimensions: shape features, color features, and formal language features. These dimensions reveal how traditional cultural codes are embedded within the Mud Dog's visual system and how such symbols continue to influence modern aesthetic cognition and design practices.

#### 3.1. Shape Features

The shapes of Huaiyang Mud Dogs are predominantly derived from animal imagery, including monkeys, dogs, birds, and other symbolic creatures. Their bodies tend to be exaggerated in proportion, with simplified outlines and rhythmic compositions that produce a strong symbolic presence. This stylistic approach originates from ancient totemic worship and early symbolic systems that emphasized fertility, protection, and auspiciousness. Over time, these symbolic intentions were transformed visually into patterns such as spirals, waves, or circular curves, which subtly echo reproductive imagery and convey blessings of life continuation.

The shapes are characterized by smooth lines, compact structures, and strong dynamic tension, giving the Mud Dogs a distinctive stylistic identity rooted in regional folk aesthetics. Their highly recognizable silhouettes create a vivid visual impact. In contemporary cultural-creative products, these shape features are often reinterpreted and adapted. Popular items such as "Immediately Sealing the Monkey" or "Crown on Crown" integrate symbolic animals like horses, monkeys, and roosters, transforming traditional auspicious meanings into modern design language that appeals to current consumer preferences. This demonstrates how the visual logic of the Mud Dog's shapes continues to facilitate symbolic expression in modern contexts.



### 3.2. Colour Features

The color usage in Huaiyang Mud Dogs is dominated by black, green, white, red, yellow, and peach pink, resulting in strong contrast and decorative intensity. Black is commonly applied as the base color, evoking mystery, solemnity, and the symbolic cosmology associated with early ritual practices. Red is highly significant within the Mud Dog's color system, often representing vitality, renewal, and the continuation of life, thereby reinforcing themes of reproduction and blessings. Yellow conveys connotations of harvest, abundance, and natural harmony, expressing the aspiration for a prosperous and fulfilling life.

From a semiotic viewpoint, these colors function as visual codes that guide the viewer's interpretation. Each hue carries symbolic meaning beyond its aesthetic function. The pairing of red and black, for example, strengthens visual hierarchy while also amplifying ritualistic connotations, creating an artistic atmosphere that blends mystery with celebration. Through the deliberate combination of contrasting colors, the Mud Dog achieves both expressive richness and symbolic depth, ensuring that its cultural implications are conveyed intuitively to the viewer.

### 3.3. Formal Language Features

The formal language of Huaiyang Mud Dog decoration consists primarily of geometric motifs such as feminine patterns, spiral forms, wave lines, and dot arrangements. These motifs exhibit a high degree of symbolic abstraction and are derived from early cultural perceptions of nature, fertility, and life. The feminine pattern, for instance, is an abstract reinterpretation of female reproductive imagery and reflects the ancient reverence for maternal lineage within early clan societies. Such patterns highlight the symbolic emphasis placed on life and continuation.

The arrangement of motifs typically follows principles of symmetry, repetition, and balanced composition, producing rhythmic and visually cohesive décor. The simplicity of these geometric forms expresses both the essence of early artistic language and the practical aesthetic of folk craftsmanship. Moreover, some stylistic elements echo techniques found in traditional crafts such as paper-cutting or embroidery, where repetitive patterns and symbolic shapes form narrative imagery. This integration enriches the visual repertoire of the Mud Dog and allows symbolic meaning to be embedded within accessible, expressive patterns.

Through this formal language system, the Mud Dog communicates cultural narratives in a concise but profound manner. The patterns serve not only decorative purposes but also semiotic functions, linking visual motifs with cultural concepts such as fertility, protection, and auspiciousness. As a result, the Mud Dog's decorative vocabulary becomes a medium through which regional identity and traditional values are preserved and transmitted.

## 4. The Application and Value of the Auspicious Patterns of Huaiyang Mud Dogs in Cultural and Creative Design from the Perspective of Semiotics

From a semiotic perspective, the auspicious patterns of Huaiyang Mud Dogs offer a rich symbolic system that can be adapted into contemporary cultural and creative design. Their shape, color, and pattern form a symbolic language that continues to evolve and expand in modern contexts, providing cultural depth and expressive value for diverse product categories.

### 4.1. Application Forms of Mud Dog Auspicious Patterns in Cultural and Creative Design

From the semiotic viewpoint, the application of Huaiyang Mud Dog auspicious patterns in cultural and creative design primarily manifests through the reinterpretation of traditional symbols using modern design concepts. This approach preserves cultural heritage while infusing products with contemporary aesthetic and emotional value [8].

#### 4.1.1. Modernization of Symbolic Forms

The iconic shapes of Huaiyang Mud Dogs are largely derived from highly symbolic animal imagery. Their exaggerated forms, rhythmic structures, and abstract qualities create distinctive visual symbols. In cultural and creative design, these symbolic forms are often simplified, reconstructed, or stylized to better align with modern visual language. When such forms are integrated into product lines such as stationery, textiles, or home décor, they retain the expressive spirit of the original art while enhancing product recognition and emotional appeal. This transformation allows traditional culture to be translated into new design idioms, broadening the symbolic expressiveness of the Mud Dog.

#### 4.1.2. Emotional Expression Through Color

The color system of Huaiyang Mud Dogs—dominated by black, red, yellow, green, and white—plays an important semiotic role. In cultural and creative design, these color symbols are reinterpreted to convey emotional and thematic meanings appropriate to the product context. For example, black evokes solemnity and can be applied to high-end cultural goods; red conveys vitality and auspiciousness, suiting festive souvenirs; yellow symbolizes harvest and nature, fitting environmentally themed products. Through recombining these color symbols, designers can embed cultural emotions and symbolic associations into modern products while enhancing visual appeal.

#### 4.1.3. Symbolic Patterns and Cultural Narrative Construction

The decorative patterns of Huaiyang Mud Dogs—including spiral motifs, wave patterns, dot arrangements, and geometric symbols—carry strong semiotic implications. In cultural and creative design, these motifs are frequently used to construct narrative scenarios that express traditional cultural meanings. For instance, spiral patterns incorporated into packaging design may symbolize cultural continuity, while wave patterns on apparel express harmony with nature. The strategic application of such symbolic patterns enhances the artistic quality of the product and facilitates deeper cultural communication.

### 4.2. *Principles for Applying Mud Dog Auspicious Patterns in Cultural and Creative Design*

The integration of Huaiyang Mud Dog auspicious patterns into cultural and creative design requires adherence to principles such as symbol extraction and reconstruction, the combination of cultural sentiment and functionality, and a balanced relationship between innovation and heritage. These principles ensure that traditional symbols are meaningfully incorporated into modern design while retaining cultural value and market appeal.

#### 4.2.1. Principle of Symbol Extraction and Reconstruction

The Huaiyang Mud Dog's symbolic features—its exaggerated shapes, contrasting colors, and geometric patterns—should be carefully extracted in the design process. During extraction, designers should preserve the most representative cultural codes. When reconstructing symbols, modern design language and contemporary aesthetics should be incorporated to enhance usability and appeal. For instance, transforming traditional spiral motifs into simplified geometric patterns for packaging design maintains symbolic depth while improving modern adaptability.

#### 4.2.2. Principle of Combining Cultural Sentiment with Functionality

Cultural and creative products must balance symbolic expression with functional practicality. When applying Mud Dog patterns, symbolic meaning should be integrated with product use scenarios to enrich product value. For example, incorporating

auspicious patterns into home decoration items conveys well-wishing sentiments while fulfilling everyday aesthetic needs. Likewise, applying symbolic colors in stationery enhances both visual interest and thematic coherence. This combination of cultural sentiment and functionality increases the product's cultural resonance and market viability.

#### 4.2.3. Principle of Balancing Innovation and Inheritance

Innovation must coexist with cultural inheritance. On one hand, modern design techniques-such as digital rendering or cross-industry integration-can revitalize Mud Dog imagery and attract younger audiences. On the other hand, excessive commercialization or distortion must be avoided to maintain cultural authenticity. For example, when developing Mud Dog-themed IP images, designers may adopt modern stylistic elements while preserving the symbolic integrity and artistic characteristics of the original form.

#### 4.3. Application Value of Mud Dog Auspicious Patterns in Cultural and Creative Design

From a semiotic standpoint, the value of Huaiyang Mud Dog auspicious patterns lies in their capacity to undergo modern symbolic transformation, integrate emotional and functional design, stimulate innovative cultural inheritance, and support the sustainable development of intangible cultural heritage. These aspects contribute to forming a new paradigm for contemporary reinterpretation of traditional culture.

##### 4.3.1. Modern Transformation and Dissemination of Cultural Symbols

The exaggerated shapes, vivid colors, and geometric motifs of the Mud Dog constitute a unique symbolic system. In modern design, these symbols are extracted and reconstructed into simplified forms that suit contemporary lifestyles. For instance, abstracted spiral patterns applied to bookmarks or packaging preserve cultural connotations while enhancing modern usability.

As shown in Figure 7, the transformation of symbolic patterns in cultural-creative applications supports broader dissemination among younger audiences, increasing cultural visibility.



**Figure 7.** Henan Huaiyang Mud Dog Intangible Cultural Heritage Creative Design - Bookmark, Schoolbag display application.

##### 4.3.2. Unity of Emotional and Functional Values

Mud Dog auspicious patterns communicate traditional emotions such as well-wishing and cultural blessing. When applied to contemporary products-such as home décor, clothing, or office supplies-they gain practical value while conveying cultural sentiment.

As shown in Figure 8 and Figure 9, applying Mud Dog motifs to apparel and everyday objects enriches their cultural dimension without compromising functionality.



**Figure 8.** Clothing display.



**Figure 9.** Office supplies display.

#### 4.3.3. Practice of Balancing Innovation and Inheritance

The application of Mud Dog patterns demonstrates how modern creativity can coexist with traditional symbolic integrity. When designing Mud Dog-themed IP images, modern stylistic elements can be incorporated while preserving symbolic characteristics such as exaggerated shapes and geometric motifs.

As shown in Figure 10, innovative IP designs maintain both contemporary appeal and cultural authenticity.



**Figure 10.** Innovative design of the Mud Dog IP image.

#### 4.3.4. Living Inheritance and Sustainable Development of Intangible Cultural Heritage

By integrating Mud Dog patterns into cultural and creative products, traditional craft heritage is activated within modern social contexts. Products such as picture books and cultural derivatives help narrate the story of the Mud Dog in accessible forms, supporting both cultural transmission and economic development. This approach offers a sustainable model for preserving intangible cultural heritage while adapting it to contemporary markets.

## 5. Conclusion

From a semiotic perspective, the application of Huaiyang Mud Dog auspicious patterns in cultural and creative design not only provides a theoretical foundation for the modern transformation of traditional culture but also offers new pathways for the innovative inheritance and practical dissemination of intangible cultural heritage. Semiotic analysis enables a deeper interpretation of both the external artistic representations and the intrinsic cultural implications of Mud Dog motifs. Through symbolic reconstruction, these patterns become expressions that balance cultural sentiment with contemporary design practicality, allowing traditional imagery to adapt to new contexts without losing its cultural identity. Such analytical work contributes to revitalizing traditional cultural elements and demonstrates clear theoretical and practical value for their integration into modern creative industries.

At the same time, the present study is subject to limitations arising from conceptual boundaries and the lack of extensive market-based empirical testing. Because semiotic methods depend heavily on interpreting relatively static symbols, they may overlook the dynamic transformations that auspicious patterns undergo in contemporary usage. This may result in analyses that remain on the level of visual aesthetics rather than fully accounting for evolving cultural meanings. Furthermore, without support from studies on consumer perception and real-world commercial applications, it remains uncertain whether the modern adaptation of traditional auspicious symbols might risk becoming overly formulaic. Nevertheless, the research still offers constructive insights for the continued study, reinterpretation, and cultural promotion of the Mud Dog tradition, providing a basis for future work to bridge symbolic theory with practical design innovation.

## References

1. Q. Yu, "MMORPG avatars: Representations of escapism in Chinese society based on semiotics of culture," 2021.
2. I. Siregar, "Semiotics analysis in the Betawi traditional wedding" Palang Pintu": The study of semiotics Roland Barthes," *International Journal of Linguistics Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 01-07, 2022.
3. J. Qian, "Constructing Semiotic System: A Study of Traditional Chinese Woodblock New Year Pictures," 2023.
4. W. Jie, "Applied research on semiotics in interior design," 2018.
5. S. I. Hjelm, "Semiotics in product design," *CID*, 2002.
6. D. Han, and L. Cong, "Miao traditional patterns: the origins and design transformation," *Visual Studies*, vol. 38, no. 3-4, pp. 425-432, 2023.
7. J. Li, "Ni Zan and his associates (Doctoral dissertation, University of British Columbia)," 1998.
8. L. Xin, C. Mayusoh, A. Inkuer, and P. Puntien, "Research on the Innovative Development of Huaiyang Mud Dog Souvenirs Based on Narrative Design Theory," *International Journal of Sociologies and Anthropologies Science Reviews*, vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 567-584, 2025. doi: 10.60027/ijsasr.2025.5975

**Disclaimer/Publisher's Note:** The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of SOAP and/or the editor(s). SOAP and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.