

MODERNIZING TRADITION: TIGER MOTIFS IN CHU ART INDUSTRIES

MODERNIZANDO A TRADIÇÃO: MOTIVOS DE TIGRES NA CHU ART INDUSTRIES

Article received on: 8/25/2025

Article accepted on: 10/24/2025

Guo Tingting *

*Mahasarakham University (MSU), Mahasarakham, Thailand
wojiushiwogxm@163.com

Vuthipong Roadkasamsri*

*Mahasarakham University (MSU), Mahasarakham, Thailand
Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-3765-4840>
vuthipong.r@msu.ac.th

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest

Abstract

This study examines the modernization of tiger motifs in Chu art and their integration into Henan's cultural and creative industries. Using a mixed-methods approach—combining cultural-historical analysis, case studies, and design-based research—it explores the symbolic resonance of the tiger in traditional Chinese culture and its contemporary reinterpretation in design, branding, and regional development. The research demonstrates that the tiger, historically associated with strength, protection, and fortune, remains a potent cultural asset in sectors such as fashion, gaming, and museum merchandising. The study introduces the Tradition-to-Innovation (T2I) model, a framework for adapting cultural motifs to modern creative contexts while preserving their heritage value. Economic and policy analysis highlights how Chu tiger iconography can strengthen cultural branding and contribute to Henan's creative economy, aligning with national strategies for cultural revitalization. By bridging tradition and innovation, this research provides both theoretical insights and practical strategies. It offers designers, cultural institutions, and policymakers a model for transforming heritage motifs into intellectual property, demonstrating how cultural preservation can coexist with innovation. The findings demonstrate the potential for tiger motifs to enhance regional identity, drive creative industries, and support sustainable cultural development.

Keywords: Chu Art. Cultural Symbolism. Tiger Imagery. Creative Industries. Traditional IP Modernization.

Resumo

Este estudo examina a modernização dos motivos do tigre na arte Chu e sua integração nas indústrias culturais e criativas de Henan. Utilizando uma abordagem de métodos mistos — combinando análise histórico-cultural, estudos de caso e pesquisa baseada em design —, ele explora a ressonância simbólica do tigre na cultura tradicional chinesa e sua reinterpretação contemporânea no design, na marca e no desenvolvimento regional. A pesquisa demonstra que o tigre, historicamente associado à força, proteção e fortuna, continua sendo um poderoso ativo cultural em setores como moda, jogos e merchandising de museus. O estudo apresenta o modelo Tradição para Inovação (T2I), uma estrutura para adaptar motivos culturais a contextos criativos modernos, preservando seu valor patrimonial. A análise econômica e política destaca como a iconografia do tigre Chu pode fortalecer a marca cultural e contribuir para a economia criativa de Henan, alinhando-se às estratégias nacionais de revitalização cultural. Ao unir tradição e inovação, esta pesquisa fornece insights teóricos e estratégias práticas. Ela oferece a designers, instituições culturais e formuladores de políticas um modelo para transformar motivos patrimoniais em propriedade intelectual, demonstrando como a preservação cultural pode coexistir com a inovação. Os resultados demonstram o potencial dos motivos do tigre para reforçar a identidade regional, impulsionar as indústrias criativas e apoiar o desenvolvimento cultural sustentável.

Palavras-chave: Arte Chu. Simbolismo Cultural. Imagens do Tigre. Indústrias Criativas. Modernização da Propriedade Intelectual Tradicional.



1 INTRODUCTION

Henan Province—long a core region of Chinese civilization—has intensified the integration of its cultural heritage into cultural and creative industries (CCI) as part of national development strategies (Guo, 2013; Chunqing, 2013; Song, Cheong, Wang, & Li, 2020; Qiang & Majid, 2024). Among its most distinctive resources are tiger motifs from Chu art (Warring States–Han), historically linked with protection, strength, and ritual authority (Zhang, 2022; Yang, 2023; Yin, 2023). These motifs, deeply embedded in visual and spiritual traditions, offer high transferability to contemporary design and branding.

This study examines the symbolic and visual dimensions of Chu tiger motifs, analyzes their transformation within modern creative industries, and develops a design-driven framework for their modernization. We define IP modernization as the process of translating heritage motifs into protected, marketable assets across fashion, digital media, and museum merchandising. Using cultural-historical analysis, case studies, and design-based research (DBR), the paper introduces a Tradition-to-Innovation (T2I) model that balances cultural integrity with market relevance. Our contributions include (1) a theorized motif-to-market pathway, (2) empirical cases in Henan’s creative economy, and (3) policy-relevant insights for cultural branding.

The next section reviews scholarship on Chu symbolism, cultural IP modernization, and regional creative industries to establish the theoretical foundation for this analysis.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Cultural symbolism in Chu Art

Chu art, originating from the Warring States period, is recognized for its symbolic vocabulary reflecting nature, mythology, and social values (Wang, 2014; Tang, 2015; Ho, 2019). The tiger, among its most enduring motifs, signifies power, protection, and ferocity. Williams (2012) and Welch (2013) note that Chu tiger motifs frequently bridged natural and spiritual realms, embodying divine authority and ancestral reverence. We emphasize the tiger over other Chu motifs (e.g., serpent, phoenix) because of its cross-

media prevalence and ritual-protective semantics, which make it highly adaptable for modern branding.

2.2 Contemporary relevance of Chu Art

In contemporary design, Chu motifs—especially the tiger—have been revitalized within the framework of cultural preservation and creative industries. Studies highlight the role of traditional symbols in reinforcing identity and authenticity in consumer markets (Abbas, Muhammad, & Al-Saeed, 2021; Bihari, 2023; Song, Prompongsaton, & Kotchapakdee, 2024; Piddubna & Kornyska, 2025). Integrating tiger imagery into fashion, branding, and digital design increases resonance with culturally oriented consumers (Johnsson, 2012; Santos, 2012; Rindell & Santos, 2021; Dam, Hartmann, & Brunk, 2024; He, Xiang, & Wang, 2024). However, few studies focus on Henan-specific pipelines (museum collections → designers → retail) or on motif-level adaptation, leaving a gap in scholarship.

2.3 Cultural industries and regional development

China's creative industries have expanded rapidly, driven by policy and consumer demand (Zhang, 2015; Lu, 2017; Zhang, Jia, & Bae, 2021). Henan, aligning with national strategies, has promoted cultural branding that incorporates traditional symbols such as the Chu tiger (Sun, 2019; Zhou, Hu, Wei, & Ji, 2024). Policy tools relevant to motif commercialization include dedicated CCI funds, designer-museum incubators, and strengthened IP frameworks. Nevertheless, studies note the absence of robust methodologies to transform heritage motifs into commercially viable assets (Nelson, Duxbury, & Murray, 2012; Lerro, Schiuma, & Manfredi, 2022; Gohoungodji & Amara, 2023).

2.4 IP modernization and design methodology

“IP modernization” describes the translation of cultural motifs into commercial intellectual property (Hu, Li, Chi, Wang, & Khan, 2024; Ma & Guo, 2024; Wang & Zhang, 2024; Wang, Li, Ruan, Zhang, & Li, 2024). We operate it as a process of (1)

semantic extraction, (2) visual simplification, (3) product integration, and (4) market/legal protection. Scholars argue that successful adaptation requires balancing cultural authenticity with innovation (Keane, 2013; Tian, 2021; Jingcheng, Lei, & Tongjing, 2023). This study applies a design-based approach to modernizing Chu tiger motifs, aligning heritage values with Henan's cultural and economic development goals.

2.5 Research gap

While Chu Art's symbolic dimensions have been documented (Schroeder et al., 2015; Tang, 2015; Joyeux-Prunel, 2019; Hillenbrand, 2020), the motif-level modernization of tiger imagery within Henan's creative industries is underexplored. Broader studies on cultural industries in China address heritage and branding but rarely engage Henan's distinctive resources or validate design pathways through DBR prototypes. No research to date has specified how Chu motifs can be systematically recontextualized, tested with stakeholders, and aligned with provincial policy frameworks. This study addresses that gap.

2.6 Research objectives

This research aims to:

1. Examine the cultural-historical significance of the tiger in Chu art.
2. Analyze its transformation in contemporary creative industries.
3. Develop a design methodology for intellectual property (IP) modernization.
4. Evaluate its contribution to Henan's cultural and economic development.

To meet these aims, the study triangulates cultural-historical analysis, case studies, and DBR prototyping with stakeholder feedback, ensuring cultural sensitivity and market relevance.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

This research employs a qualitative multi-method approach that incorporates cultural-historical analysis, case studies, and design-based research (DBR). This methodology facilitates the exploration of the symbolic, artistic, and economic aspects of Chu tiger themes while directly confronting the four study objectives. Each objective is associated with specific procedures for data collecting and analysis.

3.2 Data sources

The dataset integrated three complementary sources of evidence, each illuminating different dimensions of the modernization process. First, design documentation—including mood boards, exploratory sketches, and iterative prototypes—captured the creative trajectory of translating traditional Chu tiger motifs into contemporary design contexts. Second, stakeholder feedback was collected through semi-structured interviews, surveys, and user testing with designers, cultural experts, policymakers, and consumer groups, providing diverse perspectives on cultural meaning, emotional resonance, and market viability. Finally, designer reflection journals offered process-based narratives that revealed the challenges, adaptations, and decision-making moments that shaped the design journey. Taken together, these sources produced a rich, multilayered dataset that balanced symbolic interpretation with practical application, ensuring both cultural depth and contemporary relevance in the study's findings. These sources were deliberately combined to capture the interplay between cultural symbolism, creative practice, and consumer reception, thereby strengthening the study's validity and practical relevance.

3.3 Objective-specific methods

To address the research objectives, the study employed a set of complementary methods tailored to each area of inquiry. For Objective 1, a cultural-historical analysis was carried out through an extensive literature review, iconographic study, and close

visual examination of artifacts and classical texts, drawing on museum archives and authoritative scholarly sources. Objective 2 focused on case studies and design analysis of *Guochao* (国潮) brands such as Li-Ning and Tencent, which offered an overview of how tiger motifs are reinterpreted in contemporary fashion, branding, and digital media. Objective 3 applied a design-based research (DBR) approach, implementing iterative cycles of prototype creation, testing, and refinement. Design documentation, stakeholder feedback, and designer reflection journals supported this process, balancing cultural authenticity with creative innovation. Finally, Objective 4 examined the broader policy and economic context through a review of cultural policy documents, regional economic reports, and case evaluations to assess the potential of Chu motifs to contribute to Henan's creative industries. Together, these methods created a coherent framework that not only addressed each research objective but also informed the development of the Tradition-to-Innovation (T2I) model, ensuring that cultural heritage was systematically connected to contemporary creative practice and economic application.

3.4 Data analysis

An iterative process analysis was employed to trace how tiger motifs were adapted across successive development cycles. Stakeholder and user feedback were examined thematically, focusing on dimensions of cultural recognition, emotional engagement, and commercial viability. The synthesized findings informed the construction of the Tradition-to-Innovation (T2I) Model, providing a replicable framework for cultural IP modernization.

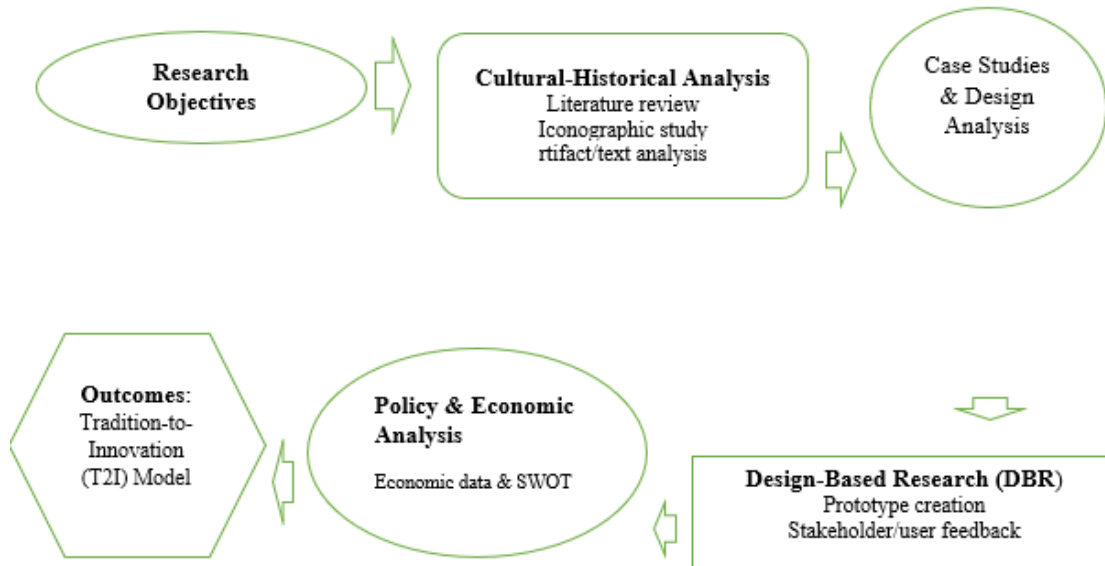
3.4.1 Cross-methodological integration

Analytic rigor was ensured through triangulation across historical, design, and economic perspectives. Coding consistency was maintained using a shared NVivo codebook, enabling coherence across datasets. Qualitative insights were systematically integrated with quantitative trend data to generate a holistic account of tiger motif modernization. Reliability and validity were reinforced through construct and historical checks in iconographic studies, alongside ecological and process validity within the design-based research (DBR) cycles. The overall research process, integrating cultural-

historical analysis, case studies, DBR, and policy/economic analysis, is summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Integrated research Process for Tiger Motif Modernization



By integrating cultural-historical analysis, case studies, design-based research, and policy/economic evaluation, the methodology provided a multi-layered framework that directly addressed the four research objectives. This systematic approach ensured that symbolic interpretations, design practices, and economic assessments were coherently aligned, laying the groundwork for the results presented in the following section.

4 RESULTS OF THE STUDY

This study investigated the cultural and economic significance of tiger motifs in Chu art and their transformation within Henan's contemporary creative industries. The research addressed four objectives: (1) to examine the cultural-historical significance of the tiger in Chu art; (2) to analyze its transformation in contemporary creative industries; (3) to develop a design methodology for intellectual property (IP) modernization; and (4) to evaluate its contribution to Henan's cultural and economic development.

4.1 Cultural and historical significance of tiger motifs in Chu Art

Findings confirm that tiger imagery has occupied a central position in Chinese art and cultural identity. Evidence from classical texts, museum collections, and material culture consistently portrays the tiger as a guardian, protector, and symbol of authority (Chang, 2009; Luo & Song, 2019; Larrivé-Bass, 2023).

Figure 2

Tiger Motifs from the Chu Dynasty

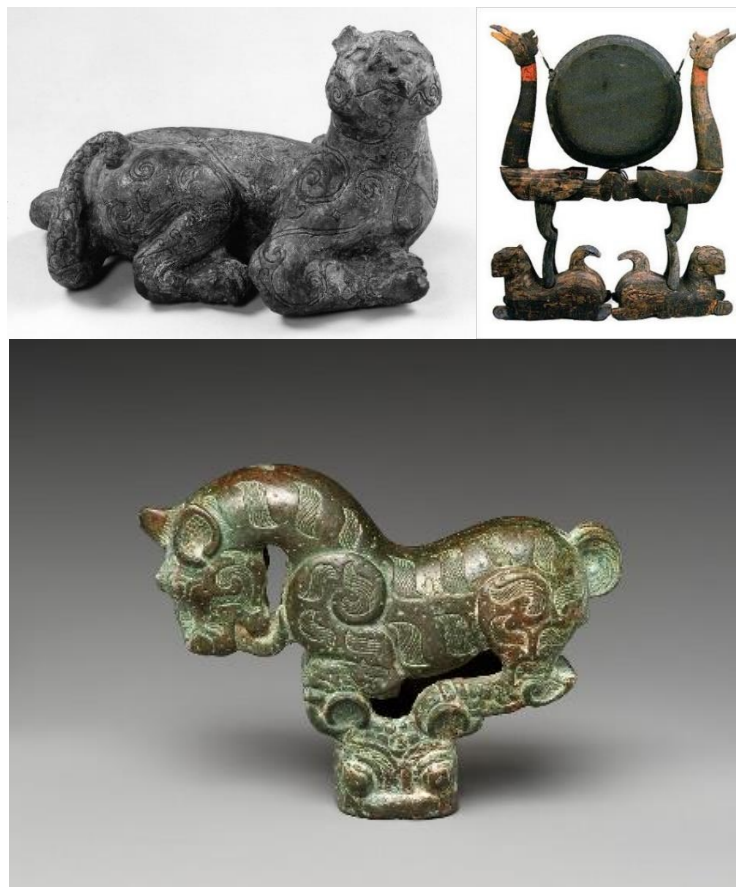


Figure 2 illustrates tiger motifs from the Chu Dynasty, demonstrating artistic diversity and symbolic importance among regional objects. The photos feature a bronze finial shaped like a tiger (6th–5th century BCE), a reclining tiger sculpture (4th–3rd century BCE), and objects from the Warring States period, illustrating the tiger's significance as a ritual and protective emblem in Chu visual culture.

In Chu art specifically, tiger motifs appear across bronze ritual vessels, ceramics, wooden carvings, and folk paintings, underscoring their spiritual and protective roles

(Chen & Ryan, 2020; Wang, 2021; Yi, 2025). Soldiers carried tiger talismans as protective charms (Jalais, 2018; Guziejko, 2022), and the motif endured in artifacts from Neolithic jade carvings to Tang dynasty bronzes (Dervin, 2022). These results confirm the tiger's longstanding role as a cultural emblem of strength, protection, and resilience, deeply embedded in Chu visual culture and Chinese cosmology.

4.2 Transformation of Chu motifs in contemporary creative industries

The second objective focused on how Chu tiger motifs are reinterpreted in modern design and branding. Case studies reveal three successful pathways:

- Li-Ning's "Wu Dao" Collection: Reinterpreted Chu bronze tiger patterns into streetwear aesthetics, resonating strongly with youth markets during Lunar New Year campaigns.
- Tencent's *Honor of Kings*: Embedded tiger symbolism in digital characters and merchandise, extending its cultural resonance through gamification and IP derivatives.
- Henan Museum Products: Collaborated with local designers to produce scarves, tote bags, and bookmarks featuring tiger imagery, reinforcing regional identity.

A visual trend analysis further showed that traditional forms—such as stylized bronze tigers—are increasingly abstracted into flat, vectorized icons or playful mascots for digital and consumer contexts. Despite stylistic changes, the core symbolic meanings of strength, fortune, and protection remain intact. These findings highlight the adaptability of Chu motifs for contemporary creative industries while maintaining cultural continuity.

4.3 Design methodology for IP modernization

The third objective produced the Tradition-to-Innovation (T2I) Model, a design methodology tested through iterative prototype development.

4.3.1 The prototypes

The T2I Model outlines six replicable steps: cultural symbol identification, meaning extraction, visual simplification, product integration, audience testing, and finalization/cultural certification. This model demonstrates a structured, culturally sensitive pathway for modernizing heritage motifs as viable creative assets.

Figure 3

Prototypes Reconstructing Tiger Motif from the Chu Dynasty (c. 1030–223 BCE)



In the figure, the prototypes were developed in response to the described concept and draw upon authentic artistic sources, integrating elements from both traditional and contemporary visual cultures:

4.4 Chu bronze motif

These designs come from the old Chu culture during the Warring States period and are known for their lively, abstract shapes of animals—usually tigers—shown in balanced, spiral patterns. The line art in the sketches reflects these stylistic features. Relevant references include K.C. Chang's *Art and Ritual in Early Chinese Bronze Culture* and artifacts from the Hubei Provincial Museum.

4.5 Traditional chinese calligraphy

The tote bag and pin designs incorporate Chinese characters in seal and clerical scripts, commonly seen in ancient inscriptions. This approach references the aesthetic principles outlined in Yu Ho's *Chinese Calligraphy: An Introduction to Its Aesthetic and Technique*.

4.6 Contemporary digital illustration

The digital stickers adopt a "Kawaii"-influenced style, popular on platforms such as WeChat and LINE, merging traditional tiger symbolism with modern digital aesthetics. Visual reference points include the LINE Creators Market, Tencent's WeChat sticker guidelines, and works by contemporary East Asian digital illustrators on platforms like Behance and Dribbble.

The prototypes underwent two iterative design cycles incorporating feedback from designers, cultural scholars, and target users. Initial feedback indicated that the designs were overly abstract and lacked a clear connection to traditional symbolism. In response, the second iteration integrated calligraphic elements, traditional color schemes (e.g., cinnabar red, bronze, and green), and Chu-era design patterns to enhance cultural resonance and visual appeal.

To ensure these prototype designs were both culturally resonant and market-relevant, stakeholder evaluation was conducted to assess their recognition, emotional impact, and commercial potential.

4.6.1 Stakeholder feedback and evaluation

Feedback was collected from key stakeholders, including local designers, cultural policy advisors, and university students—representing a segment of the creative consumer market—to assess the cultural relevance and commercial potential of the prototypes.

Findings indicated a high level of cultural recognition, with participants readily identifying the tiger symbolism and expressing appreciation for its historical roots. The designs also elicited positive emotional responses, with many respondents reporting a sense of cultural pride. Additionally, there was strong market interest, particularly in relation to cultural tourism and lifestyle-oriented consumer markets.

Insights from stakeholder feedback not only validated the cultural significance of the prototypes but also informed the refinement of a structured methodology, leading to the development of the Tradition-to-Innovation (T2I) Model. This model consolidates the iterative design process into a replicable framework, offering practical guidance for future applications of cultural IP modernization.

4.6.2 Proposed "Tradition-to-Innovation" design model

Through the iterative design process, the study developed a replicable design methodology, termed the "Tradition-to-Innovation" (T2I) Model, structured as follows.

Table 1*Tradition-to-Innovation" (T2I) Model*

Step	Description
Cultural Symbol Identification	Select culturally rich, locally resonant symbols, such as the tiger, that have deep historical and cultural significance.
Meaning Extraction	Analyze the symbolic and historical meanings of the chosen symbol through scholarly research and visual analysis.
Visual Simplification	Modernize the symbol by simplifying and adapting it for use across various media, using design tools and contemporary aesthetic preferences.
Product Integration	Integrate the modernized symbol into commercially viable product types, such as fashion, souvenirs, digital content, or interactive media.
Audience Testing and Feedback	Conduct participatory feedback sessions with target audiences to refine and enhance the design based on user responses.
Finalization and Cultural Certification	Finalize the design ensuring it aligns with cultural heritage values and is certified by cultural institutions or local heritage bodies.

The T2I Model provides a strategic framework for integrating traditional cultural symbols into contemporary creative industries, balancing cultural authenticity with market relevance. The design-based research process demonstrates that a structured, iterative, and culturally sensitive approach can effectively modernize symbols like the Chu tiger. As a practical blueprint, the T2I Model supports designers, cultural institutions, and policymakers in aligning innovation with heritage preservation within the creative sector.

4.7 Contribution to Henan's cultural and economic development

The fourth objective evaluated the broader economic and policy dimensions. Policy analysis revealed strong governmental support for cultural IP modernization through initiatives like the Henan Cultural Development Plan (2021–2025) and Creative China. These frameworks provide funding, infrastructure, and IP protection for heritage-based innovation.

Economic data show rapid growth: Henan's creative industries expanded 14.6% in 2022, with cultural tourism up 38% in 2023. Museum-based cultural products generated ¥600 million in revenue (Henan Provincial Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Tiger motifs, with their high cultural recognition, were identified as especially valuable for festival branding, fashion, gaming, and digital media.

A SWOT analysis highlights strengths such as heritage richness and government backing, alongside risks like cultural dilution and IP infringement. Strategic pathways

include developing cultural-design incubators, enhancing IP systems, leveraging tiger motifs in international branding, and expanding into digital/virtual formats such as AR, NFTs, and online storytelling, as shown below.

Table 2

A SWOT analysis

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rich cultural heritage with strong visual identity • Government support and funding • High public recognition of symbols like the tiger
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited design infrastructure in some rural areas • Risk of superficial commercialization or cultural dilution • Inconsistent IP management and brand strategy
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding cultural tourism and museum retail • Collaborations between museums, designers, and tech platforms • Development of digital/virtual IPs (AR, NFTs, games)
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversaturation of cultural motifs in commercial markets • Global competition in cultural IP • Copyright/IP infringement concerns

The results show that contemporary creative industries can successfully reinterpret tiger motifs from Chu art, which hold enduring symbolic power. By applying the T2I Model and aligning with supportive cultural policies, these motifs contribute both to heritage preservation and to Henan's economic diversification. The study confirms the feasibility of balancing cultural authenticity with innovation, positioning Chu motifs as drivers of sustainable cultural and creative development.

4.8 Overall results synthesis

The findings fit with the four research objectives. The cultural-historical analysis validated the persistent symbolic significance of tiger themes in Chu art, while contemporary case studies and visual trend analysis demonstrated their versatility in modern design and branding. The establishment of the Tradition-to-Innovation (T2I) Model offered a systematic approach for reinterpreting these patterns as legitimate intellectual property, substantiated by prototype testing and stakeholder input. The policy assessment and economic study confirmed the larger importance of tiger motifs in enhancing Henan's cultural branding and creative economy. These results demonstrate how Chu tiger imagery serves as both a cultural foundation and a dynamic resource for

innovation, providing a clear connection between heritage preservation and the development of creative industries.

The findings indicate that Chu tiger motifs have profound cultural and historical importance while also being applicable to modern creative sectors. The Tradition-to-Innovation (T2I) Model provides a pragmatic approach for transforming these patterns into valuable intellectual property. Alongside supportive legislative frameworks, these findings underscore the capacity of tiger iconography to connect cultural heritage and economic innovation in Henan. This study explores the broader theoretical, practical, and policy implications of these discoveries, emphasizing how the modernization of Chu tiger motifs connects cultural heritage with innovations in the creative industry.

5 DISCUSSION

This study conducted a comprehensive analysis of the symbolic, historical, and economic significance of tiger motifs in Chu art and their evolution within Henan's creative industries. The results demonstrate that carefully updated cultural symbols can function as effective tools for heritage preservation and economic advancement. The discourse underscores ramifications for philosophy, practice, and policy.

5.1 Recontextualization of traditional symbolism

The study reveals that tiger images, integral to the visual and spiritual vocabulary of Chu art, maintain considerable symbolic significance in modern cultural awareness. Their endurance across several media—from bronze ritual containers to digital illustrations—highlights adaptability and lasting significance. This affirms the perspective that cultural history serves as a renewable resource in contemporary creative endeavors (Keane, 2013; Tian, 2021).

Design is essential in this recontextualization. Designers serve as cultural intermediaries, interpreting historical symbols into formats that resonate with modern consumer values. Through the use of visual abstraction, symbolic reinterpretation, and narrative contextualization, they facilitate the temporal and contextual movement of motifs like the tiger, thereby advancing existing research on cultural translation and branding (Rindell & Santos, 2021; Dam, Hartmann, & Brunk, 2024).

5.2 Commercial viability of cultural symbols

The incorporation of Chu -Tiger themes into branded items, spanning fashion to digital gaming, exemplifies a paradigm of cultural entrepreneurship grounded in symbolic heritage. Findings show that intangible cultural assets, when combined with user-centered design and robust intellectual property (IP) strategies, can achieve strong market performance (Wang & Zhang, 2024; Ma & Guo, 2024). Data from Henan Museum goods sales, along with insights from Li-Ning and Tencent, illustrates customer demand for products that integrate visual allure with cultural identity.

Henan's strategic branding of tiger motifs mirrors global trends in place-based cultural branding, akin to methodologies observed in Scandinavia, Southeast Asia, and Africa (Lerro, Schiuma, & Manfredi, 2022; Gohoungodji & Amara, 2023). These instances demonstrate that localized and market-oriented cultural symbols confer a competitive advantage in the creative economy.

5.3 Design methodology and framework contributions

The "Tradition-to-Innovation" (T2I) model established in this study constitutes a methodological advancement in heritage-based design. Centered on historical study, design iteration, stakeholder participation, and commercial alignment, it offers a reproducible framework for the modernization of cultural motifs. The T2I paradigm prioritizes dynamic involvement via design thinking, co-creation, and iterative prototyping, in contrast to traditional preservation methods that concentrate on documentation.

The validation using design-based research (DBR) emphasizes its practical applicability. Stakeholder feedback loops guarantee cultural sensitivity and market relevance, indicating that the T2I model may be modified by cultural institutions, governments, and creative firms to effectively connect tradition with innovation.

Table 3*Academic vs. Applied Implications of the Study*

Dimension	Academic / Theoretical Contribution	Applied / Policy Contribution
Cultural Significance	Demonstrates the enduring semiotic and symbolic relevance of Chu tiger motifs across historical and contemporary contexts.	Validates tiger motifs as recognizable and emotionally resonant assets for cultural branding and tourism.
Design Methodology	Introduces the <i>Tradition-to-Innovation (T2I) Model</i> as a theoretical framework linking cultural heritage with design-based research.	Provides a step-by-step methodology for designers, museums, and creative enterprises to modernize traditional motifs into viable products.
Creative Industries	Expands scholarship on cultural IP modernization by showing how symbolic motifs traverse time and consumer contexts.	Offers practical insights into integrating tiger imagery into fashion, gaming, and museum merchandise to meet consumer demand.
Policy Alignment	Contributes to heritage and innovation studies by situating Chu motifs within national and regional cultural development frameworks.	Supports Henan's <i>Cultural Development Plan (2021–2025)</i> and the <i>Creative China</i> initiative with concrete strategies for IP protection and commercialization.
Future Directions	Suggests cross-cultural, semiotic, and longitudinal studies for advancing theory on cultural symbol adaptation.	Recommends cultural-design incubators, IP systems, and digital applications (AR/VR, NFTs) for economic scaling.

5.4 Cultural policy implications

The research indicates a significant correlation between Henan's regional cultural development strategies and the commercialization of Chu themes. Initiatives like the Henan Cultural Development Plan (2021–2025) and the formation of cultural-creative clusters create a conducive environment for heritage-based innovation. However, obstacles persist in institutional coordination, intellectual property management, and commercial scalability.

The study advocates for governmental frameworks that facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration, strengthen intellectual property protection, and promote cultural-design incubators. These ideas correspond with the national Creative China plan and serve as a paradigm for other provinces aiming to modernize cultural heritage while preserving cultural integrity.

6 CONCLUSION

6.1 Conclusion of the study

This study analyzed the cultural and economic importance of tiger motifs in Chu art and their evolution within Henan's creative sectors. Four principal conclusions arise.

The cultural-historical analysis established that tiger motifs are essential to Chinese visual culture, representing strength, protection, and authority throughout many mediums and historical epochs. Their survival highlights their significance as lasting symbols of Chu cosmology and Chinese cultural identity.

Secondly, case studies and trend assessments have shown that Chu tiger themes are versatile within modern creative sectors. Through fashion, gaming, or museum merchandise, these symbols preserve their fundamental meanings while gaining new significance in consumer markets. This work demonstrates the ability of traditional symbols to connect cultural continuity and commercial innovation.

The Tradition-to-Innovation (T2I) Model established in this research provides a systematic approach for the modernization of traditional intellectual property. The concept offers a reproducible framework for designers and cultural institutions aiming to convert heritage symbols into valuable creative assets by merging cultural integrity with visual adaptability, audience relevance, and commercial feasibility.

Ultimately, policy and economic study validated that Chu themes, particularly the tiger, may substantially enhance Henan's cultural and creative economy. Endorsed by regional and national initiatives, these symbols possess the capacity to elevate cultural branding, broaden creative industries, and reinforce Henan's position in China's cultural regeneration.

The study illustrates that the modernization of Chu tiger motifs exhibits the strategic integration of tradition and innovation. By maintaining symbolic authenticity while facilitating commercial utilization, Henan may establish its cultural legacy as both an identity asset and a catalyst for sustainable growth.

6.2 Practical implications

This study provides valuable insights for designers, politicians, and cultural organizations, facilitating the transformation of Chu tiger motifs into catalysts for cultural preservation and economic innovation. The T2I Model provides designers with a pragmatic framework for converting heritage motifs into modern goods that harmonize authenticity with market relevance. The findings bring home the importance of intellectual property protection, cultural-design incubators, and cross-sector collaboration for utilizing heritage in regional development. The study illustrates how cultural institutions, such as museums and historical organizations, can transition from mere preservation to innovation by utilizing cultural symbols to stimulate economic development and enhance public involvement.

6.3 Limitations, delimitations, and future research

This study establishes a basis for comprehending the modernity of Chu tiger themes, but it is constrained by specific restrictions and delimitations that delineate its scope and interpretation. Identifying these boundaries elucidates the study's contributions and guides future research directions.

6.3.1 Limitations

The following subsections outline the key limitations of this study, organized across geographic scope, case selection, methodological boundaries, policy and economic data, and cultural interpretation, each of which frames how the findings should be understood.

- **Geographic Scope:** The analysis concentrated predominantly on Henan Province. Although Chu culture traditionally encompassed wider areas, the findings may not adequately reflect symbolic diversity or commercialization tactics in other parts of China.
- **We selected examples (Li-Ning, Tencent, and Henan Museum) to demonstrate contemporary applications.** These offer significant insights yet

fail to encapsulate the complete diversity of organizations or consumer marketplaces.

- **Methodological Boundaries:** The design-based research (DBR) methodology prioritized prototype creation and stakeholder input within regulated environments. This research did not encompass extensive market testing or longitudinal consumer investigations.
- **Policy and Economic Data:** The policy review depended on official documents and statistical reporting, which may not fully represent implementation challenges or informal cultural norms influencing commercialization.
- **Cultural Interpretation:** The symbolic significances of tiger motifs were derived from artifacts, literature, and expert analyses. Interpretations may exhibit subjectivity, and interdisciplinary approaches could enhance comprehension.

This study establishes a basis for comprehending the modernity of Chu tiger themes, but it is constrained by specific restrictions and delimitations that delineate its scope and interpretation. Identifying these boundaries elucidates the study's contributions and guides future research directions.

6.3.2 Delimitations

The study also applied boundaries to maintain analytical clarity and focus.

- **Symbolic Emphasis:** The research concentrated on tiger motifs in Chu art, excluding other symbols such as serpents or phoenixes.
- **Regional Scope:** Henan Province was selected for its historical and contemporary importance, while other Chu-influenced regions like Hubei and Hunan were not comparatively analyzed.
- **Industry Focus:** Fashion, gaming, and museum merchandising were emphasized as representative creative industries, omitting sectors such as film, architecture, and fine arts.
- **Temporal Frame:** DBR cycles were conducted within a fixed timeframe, emphasizing short-term prototype testing rather than long-term consumer adoption.
- **Policy Analysis:** The review prioritized provincial and national frameworks, excluding localized or community-driven initiatives.

Together, the identified limitations and delimitations define the scope and boundaries of this research, clarifying both its contributions and its constraints; these boundaries, in turn, highlight critical avenues for future investigation and practical application.

6.3.3 Future research directions

Expanding upon these limits, numerous pathways warrant additional investigation. A viable avenue is the

incorporation of Chu motifs into digital heritage applications, including augmented and virtual reality (AR/VR) platforms, gamified environments, and blockchain-based cultural products (NFTs). These approaches may enhance the motifs' significance and accessibility to international audiences while evaluating their adaptability in emerging media. Comparative research presents significant promise; analyzing connections with other cultural symbols—such as dragons in Chinese art or lion patterns in South and Southeast Asia—would enhance comprehension of the evolution and adaptation of symbolism across various cultural economies. Longitudinal evaluation constitutes a significant avenue, as monitoring the enduring implementation of the Tradition-to-Innovation (T2I) Model in product cycles, consumer uptake, and cultural policy would yield empirical proof of its scalability and sustainability. Ultimately, increased focus on community involvement, especially via participatory design with local craftspeople, cultural practitioners, and historical communities, would guarantee that modernization tactics are both socially rooted and culturally genuine.

6.4 Closing reflection

Collectively, these views delineate the study's parameters while establishing it as a foundation for subsequent research. The research highlights that by recognizing its limitations and suggesting specific pathways, Chu tiger motifs—and cultural heritage in general—can persist as vital resources for creative innovation, cultural identity, and sustainable development in the 21st century.

REFERENCES

- Abbas, A. H., Muhammad, O. Y., & Al-Saeed, H. M. (2021). Design identity and heritage revival. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies in Heritage Research*, 4(1), 1–23.
- Bihari, S. (2023). Cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge: Reviving traditions for future generations. In *Sustainable development goals in SAARC countries: Key issues, opportunities and challenges* (Vol. 1, pp. 24–32).
- Chang, K. C. (2009). *Art, myth, and ritual*. Harvard University Press.
- Chen, H., & Ryan, C. (2020). Transforming the museum and meeting visitor requirements: The case of the Shaanxi History Museum. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 18, 100483. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2020.100483>
- Childs-Johnson, E., & Major, J. S. (2023). *Metamorphic imagery in ancient Chinese art and religion*. Routledge.
- Chinese Art Research Group. (2019). Ritual vessels in a fourth-century context. In *Vessels: The object as container* (p. 120).
- Chunqing, Z. (2013). The Longshan culture in central Henan province, c. 2600–1900 BC. In *A companion to Chinese archaeology* (pp. 236–254).
- Dam, C., Hartmann, B. J., & Brunk, K. H. (2024). Marketing the past: A literature review and future directions for researching retro, heritage, nostalgia, and vintage. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 40(9–10), 795–819. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2024.2339454>
- Dervin, F. (2022). *Interculturality in fragments*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-2494-9>
- Gohoungodji, P., & Amara, N. (2023). Art of innovating in the arts: Definitions, determinants, and mode of innovation in creative industries—A systematic review. *Review of Managerial Science*, 17, 2685–2725. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11846-022-00597-7>
- Guo, R. (2013). Henan. In *Regional China: A business and economic handbook* (pp. 130–141). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Guziejko, M. (2022). Revising the tiger: The case of the instrument of Tipu Sultan in the Victoria and Albert Museum and the discussion on contested heritage. *Art of the Orient*, 11, 152–163.
- He, J., Xiang, J., & Wang, J. (2024). Extension of heritage brands and consumer purchase intention with the moderating role of pop culture involvement: An empirical analysis of time-honoured brands in China. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 36(5), 1131–1149. <https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-11-2022-0912>

- He, Q., Tan, G., & Zhang, W. (2025). Residents' perceptions and behaviors regarding the policy of integrating intangible cultural heritages into the tourism industry: Evidence from Dali, China. *Sustainability*, *17*(2), 795. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su17020795>
- Henan Provincial Bureau of Statistics. (2023). *Henan regional economic and cultural industry development report 2023* [In Chinese].
- Hillenbrand, M. (2020). *Negative exposures: Knowing what not to know in contemporary China*. Duke University Press.
- Ho, C. F. S. (2019). *Museum processes in China: The institutional regulation, production and consumption of the art museums in the Greater Pearl River Delta Region*. Amsterdam University Press. <https://www.torrossa.com/it/resources/an/4736762>
- Hu, W., Li, M., Chi, X., Wang, X., & Khan, A. U. (2024). Intangible cultural heritage research in China from the perspective of intellectual property rights based on bibliometrics and knowledge mapping. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, *11*(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-02689-9>
- Jalais, A. (2018). Reworlding the ancient Chinese tiger in the realm of the Asian Anthropocene. *International Communication of Chinese Culture*, *5*(1), 121–144. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40636-017-0084-2>
- Jingcheng, L., Lei, Y., & Tongjing, S. (2023). Design thinking driven digital cultural and creative design: Pattern construction and practice examples. *Frontiers in Art Research*, *5*(11), 9–19. <https://doi.org/10.54691/far.v5i11.4751>
- Johnsson, D. Z. (2012). The branding of traditional cultural expressions: To whose benefit? In P. Drahos & S. Frankel (Eds.), *Indigenous people's innovation: Intellectual property pathways to development* (pp. 147–164). ANU Press.
- Joyeux-Prunel, B. (2019). Art history and the global: Deconstructing the latest canonical narrative. *Journal of Global History*, *14*(3), 413–435. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022819000199>
- Keane, M. (2013). *Creative industries in China: Art, design and media*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Larrivé-Bass, S. (2023). Jade for bones in Hongshan craftsmanship: Human anatomy as the genesis of a prehistoric style. *Arts*, *12*(5), 206. <https://doi.org/10.3390/arts12050206>
- Lerro, A., Schiuma, G., & Manfredi, F. (2022). Entrepreneurial development and digital transformation in creative and cultural industries: Trends, opportunities and challenges. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, *28*(8), 1929–1939. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEER-05-2021-0416>
- Lin, Y., & Zhang, D. (2024). Historical inheritance and folklore memory—Development and innovation of imagery expression in Chinese painting. *Cultura: International Journal of Philosophy of Culture and Axiology*, *21*(1). <https://doi.org/10.2478/cultura-2024-0002>

- Luo, S., & Song, Y. (2019). Exploring the traces of translation and the cultural characteristics of Chu lacquer wares. *IRA-International Journal of Management & Social Sciences*, 15(4), 122–130. <http://research-advances.org/index.php/RAJMSS/article/view/1601>
- Lu, H. (2017, October). Research on the education about development of cultural tourism about Henan Province. In *7th International Conference on Management, Education, Information and Control (MEICI 2017)* (pp. 50–53). Atlantis Press. <https://doi.org/10.2991/meici-17.2017.12>
- Ma, Z., & Guo, Y. (2024). Leveraging intangible cultural heritage resources for advancing China's knowledge-based economy. *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, 15, 12946–12978. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13132-023-01643-9>
- Nelson, R., Duxbury, N., & Murray, C. (2012). Cultural and creative economy strategies for community transformation: Four approaches. In N. Duxbury (Ed.), *The social transformation of rural Canada: New insights into community, culture and citizenship* (pp. 368–386). Memorial University of Newfoundland.
- Peng, W. (2008, November). The analysis to the Chu—art in the international cultural vision. In *2008 9th International Conference on Computer-Aided Industrial Design and Conceptual Design* (pp. 1149–1153). IEEE. <https://doi.org/10.1109/CAIDCD.2008.4730654>
- Piddubna, O., & Kornyska, L. (2025). The revival of ancient artistic techniques in the modern world. *Актуальні питання гуманітарних наук*, 45.
- Qiang, W., & Majid, A. Z. B. A. (2024). Crafting cultural sustainability: Exploring intangible cultural heritage preservation through product design in Henan Nigugu, China. *Pakistan Journal of Life and Social Sciences*, 22(1), 945–959. <https://doi.org/10.57239/PJLSS-2024-22.1.0066>
- Rindell, A., & Santos, F. P. (2021). What makes a corporate heritage brand authentic for consumers? A semiotic approach. *Journal of Brand Management*, 28, 545–558. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41262-021-00243-9>
- Santos, F. P. (2012). The semiotic conception of brand and the traditional marketing view. *Irish Journal of Management*, 32(1), 95–106.
- Schroeder, J., Borgerson, J., & Wu, Z. (2015). A brand culture approach to Chinese cultural heritage brands. *Journal of Brand Management*, 22, 261–279. <https://doi.org/10.1057/bm.2015.3>
- So, J. (1999). Chu art. In W. Watson (Ed.), *Defining Chu: Image and reality in ancient China* (pp. 33–47). The Art Museum, Princeton University.
- Song, G., Prompongsaton, N., & Kotchapakdee, P. (2024). Cultural preservation and revival: Discuss efforts to preserve and revive traditional Miao costume patterns. *Library of Progress—Library Science, Information Technology & Computer*, 44(3).

- Song, X., Cheong, K. C., Wang, Q., & Li, Y. (2020). Developmental sustainability through heritage preservation: Two Chinese case studies. *Sustainability*, *12*(9), 3705.
- Su, M., Perumal, V., Yusoff, I. S. M., & Tualeka, A. R. (2024). Semiotic examination of the animal-shaped jade artifacts during the Han Dynasty (206 BC–AD 220) in China. *Cultura: International Journal of Philosophy of Culture and Axiology*, *21*(1). <https://doi.org/10.2478/cultura-2024-0003>
- Sun, X. (2019). The cultural economy of Henan Province: Challenges and opportunities in the creative sector. *Journal of Regional Economic Studies*, *8*(1), 33–46. <https://doi.org/10.8765/jres.v8i1.3345>
- Sun, Y. (2022). A study on the application of computer-assisted translation in Henan Museum translation. In *MATEC Web of Conferences* (Vol. 359, p. 01027). EDP Sciences. <https://doi.org/10.1051/mateconf/202235901027>
- Tang, X. (2015). *Visual culture in contemporary China*. Cambridge University Press.
- Teodorescu, A. (2022). Tiger symbolism in the British Raj: Colonialism and animal history of the Indian subcontinent. *The Columbia Journal of Asia*, *1*(2), 66–77.
- Tian, Y. (2021). The cultural interpretation framework: How experienced graphic designers innovate Chinese culture? Case study of six experienced Chinese designers [Unpublished doctoral dissertation].
- Wang, C. H. (2014). A global perspective on eighteenth-century Chinese art and visual culture. *The Art Bulletin*, *96*(4), 379–394. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00043079.2014.916549>
- Wang, M. Y., Li, Y. Q., Ruan, W. Q., Zhang, S. N., & Li, R. (2024). Influencing factors and formation process of cultural inheritance-based innovation at heritage tourism destinations. *Tourism Management*, *100*, 104799. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2023.104799>
- Wang, S. (2021). Marketing strategies of museum culture and creative industry in China. *European Proceedings of Social and Behavioural Sciences*.
- Wang, Y., & Zhang, S. (2024). Research on the innovative design of digital IP images based on the perspective of traditional Chinese medicine culture. In *SHS Web of Conferences* (Vol. 181, p. 01044). EDP Sciences. <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/202418101044>
- Wang, Z., Liu, W., Sun, Z., & Zhao, H. (2024). Understanding the world heritage sites' brand diffusion and formation via social media: A mixed-method study. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *36*(2), 602–631. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-10-2022-1223>
- Welch, P. B. (2013). *Chinese art: A guide to motifs and visual imagery*. Tuttle Publishing.
- Williams, C. A. S. (2012). *Chinese symbolism and art motifs* (4th rev. ed.). Tuttle Publishing.

- Yang, X. (2023). Encountering the nonhuman: Body and ecological thinking in contemporary Chinese literature and visual culture (Doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota). University of Minnesota Digital Conservancy. <https://hdl.handle.net/11299/258697>
- Yi, E. (2025). Thinking through the tiger: Korean cultural identity, space, and time. *Humanities*, 14(2), Article 19. <https://doi.org/10.3390/h14020019>
- Yin, C. (2023). An examination of the symbolic significance and cultural inheritance of intangible cultural heritage in China: A case study of Nantong blue calico (Master's thesis, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore). Nanyang Technological University Repository. <https://dr.ntu.edu.sg>
- Zhang, B. (2015, November). Research on sustainable development of folk culture industry in Henan. In *2015 2nd International Conference on Education, Language, Art and Intercultural Communication (ICELAIC-15)* (pp. 706–709). Atlantis Press. <https://doi.org/10.2991/icelaic-15.2016.181>
- Zhang, B., Jia, T., & Bae, K. H. (2021). A study on the spill-over economic effect analysis of cultural and creative industries in Henan Province, China. *The Journal of the Korea Contents Association*, 21(7), 363–373. <https://doi.org/10.5392/JKCA.2021.21.07.363>
- Zhang, M., Guo, X., Guo, X., & Jolibert, A. (2023). Consumer purchase intention of intangible cultural heritage products (ICHP): Effects of cultural identity, consumer knowledge and manufacture type. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 35(3), 726–744. <https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-11-2021-0885>
- Zhang, S. (2022). The black tiger cult in Anze: A local history of tigers, humans, and gods in late imperial and modern China (Doctoral dissertation, Arizona State University). Arizona State University Repository. <https://keep.lib.asu.edu/items/173702>
- Zhou, J., Hu, T. F., Wei, Z., & Ji, D. (2024). Evaluation of high-quality development level of regional economy and exploration of index obstacle degree: A case study of Henan Province. *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, 1–33. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13132-024-01640-7>
- Zhu, Y., Qi, G., Guo, Y., & Wang, D. (2024). Analysis of decorative paintings in the Dragon and Tiger Hall of Yuzhen Palace: Culture, materials, and technology. *Coatings*, 14(8), 1022. <https://doi.org/10.3390/coatings14081022>

Authors' Contribution

Both authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

How to cite this article (APA)

Tinging, G., & Roadkasamsri, V. (2025). MODERNIZING TRADITION: TIGER MOTIFS IN CHU ART INDUSTRIES. *Veredas Do Direito*, 22(4), e223159. <https://doi.org/10.18623/rvd.v22.n4.3159>