

Exploring the Path and the Role of Yi Ethnic Clothing in Rural Revitalization

Huimin Wang¹, Jianfu Zhao²

¹College of Art, Southwest Minzu University, Chengdu, China

²Chengdu College of University of Electronic Science and Technology of China, Chengdu, China

Abstract: *This study takes the close relationship between cultural heritage and rural revitalization as its perspective, using Yi ethnic clothing as an example. It explores the role of ethnic clothing in promoting rural revitalization, emphasizing the multidimensional role and significance of traditional culture in rural revitalization. It summarizes theoretical and practical experiences and proposes a new pattern of rural comprehensive revitalization through the protection and innovation of traditional culture.*

Keywords: *Traditional culture; Rural revitalization path; Multidimensional role; Comprehensive revitalization pattern*

1. Introduction

Rural revitalization and cultural heritage are important topics in China's social development, showing a close relationship of mutual integration and mutual support. Particularly, promoting the inheritance and innovative development of rural culture should focus on cultural identity, strengthening and inheriting construction, cultural industry development, and improving the cultural governance system, among other aspects. It is necessary to stimulate both internal and external driving forces for the direction of inheritance and innovative development of rural traditional culture^[1]. This study takes the path of ethnic clothing promoting rural revitalization as an example, exploring the multidimensional role and significance of cultural inheritance in rural revitalization. It analyzes how cultural inheritance and rural revitalization can develop together, aiming for mutual prosperity.

2. The role and significance of ethnic clothing in promoting rural revitalization

2.1 The relationship of mutual prosperity and symbiosis between cultural heritage and rural revitalization

As one of the core elements of rural revitalization, cultural heritage not only continues traditional culture and history but also embodies the unique spirit and values of the countryside, giving rural areas a distinct sense of social identity and cohesion. China's intangible cultural heritage resources are rich, and traditional handicrafts, as one category, contain creative crafting experiences, reflecting rich cultural connotations, unique aesthetic tastes, and superb craftsmanship^[2]. Therefore, the revitalization of traditional crafts and folk skills in cultural heritage involves integrating traditional culture into the modern industrial system, promoting rural economic diversification from traditional agriculture to cultural innovation, industrial innovation, tourism economy, and other diversified directions, providing richer and more powerful support for the comprehensive revitalization of rural areas.

2.2 The importance of ethnic clothing in cultural heritage

Ethnic clothing, through its rich symbolic system, conveys the deep cultural connotations and provides concrete and powerful support for the inheritance and development of traditional culture^[3]. It can play a role in constructing cultural identity through its artistic symbols in the construction of rural revitalization. Ethnic figurative art not only conveys and expresses traditional aesthetic tendencies and aesthetic practices but also integrates ethnic values such as language, moral values, and aesthetic concepts. The cultural connotations, figurative thinking, aesthetic characteristics, and formal beauty rules contained in it have practical significance and multidimensional value^[4]. Therefore, ethnic

clothing is a form of image construction with cultural display, highlighting the importance of cultural heritage in the following aspects:

First, the solemnity and etiquette of form: in diplomatic receptions and festival events, the dignified image of wearing ethnic clothing can reflect respect for foreign guests and also showcase the rural history, culture, and traditional customs.

Second, cultural expression of symbolic significance: the patterns, decorations, and accessories of ethnic clothing carry auspicious symbolic meanings. While conveying local culture and history, it also conveys a vision of friendly diplomatic relations and a better life.

Third, the fusion of tradition and modernity: the design of ethnic clothing often integrates traditional and modern elements. This fusion reflects the progress of rural modernization, conveying to the outside world the innovation, progressiveness, openness, and inclusiveness of rural areas based on traditional culture^[5].

Fourth, cultural self-confidence and autonomy: wearing traditional ethnic clothing demonstrates confidence in local culture. This confidence helps to highlight the uniqueness and autonomy of rural areas in any situation, and also expresses a value and adherence to one's own culture.

Fifth, creating a festive atmosphere: during festivals and major events, traditional ethnic clothing can create a friendly and pleasant atmosphere, allowing visitors and guests to feel the friendliness of the rural area.

Sixth, constructing an external image: through the comprehensive use of visual, formal, and symbolic meanings, helping rural areas construct an external image. This image is not only the inheritance of traditional culture but also the expression of modernization in contemporary rural areas, injecting unique cultural connotations into diplomatic activities or traditional cultural performances.

2.3 The significance of ethnic clothing in rural revitalization

Promoting traditional and excellent craftsmanship is to promote rural culture. Inheriting excellent craftsmanship is to inherit the diversity of national culture, and it is to guard the revitalization of traditional culture^[6]. Ethnic clothing serves as a significant cultural representation through visual, formal, and symbolic elements, especially in festive activities and diplomatic receptions. Therefore, ethnic clothing plays the following roles in supporting rural revitalization. Firstly, it serves as a carrier of cultural symbols and symbolic meanings. The unique design, patterns, colors, and other elements not only reflect various aspects of ethnic culture, history, and religion but also help individuals construct and display their self-identity, traditional values, and social identity. Wearing traditional ethnic clothing can make residents feel closely connected to specific groups and cultural traditions, thereby creating a sense of belonging in society. Secondly, as a localized artistic presentation, it helps build a unique image for local rural areas. Residents wearing ethnic clothing in traditional festivals, events, and diplomatic receptions to inherit and promote local rural-specific clothing culture can establish a unique identity for the village in society, attracting external attention and recognition, and promoting the dissemination and display of tourism images with unique rural charm. Lastly, wearing traditional ethnic clothing is an expression of confidence in local culture. This approach not only helps rural residents build cultural confidence, enabling them to actively participate in the inheritance and innovation of traditional culture but also increases villagers' cohesion through a sense of identity, benefiting community unity.

2.4 The multifaceted role of ethnic clothing in promoting rural revitalization

Ethnic clothing is an important part of rural culture and plays a significant role in promoting rural revitalization. For example, in the dynamic protection of traditional ethnic clothing culture, it involves the inheritance, production, and wearing of ethnic clothing and crafts^[7]. Ethnic clothing contributes to the promotion of rural history, folklore, craftsmanship, and other cultural elements, preventing the loss of traditional handicrafts. In terms of economic development, ethnic clothing can become an important element in shaping rural brands. By creating a unique and identifiable ethnic clothing brand, it forms an industry chain from textiles, design, production to sales, increasing employment opportunities and stimulating rural economic vitality. At the level of social cohesion and identity, the communal wearing and participation in the inheritance and production of clothing create a sense of community among villagers, enhancing social cohesion. In terms of education and cultural dissemination, ethnic clothing, as a cultural symbol, can help the younger generation better understand, accept, and inherit traditional

culture. In the expression of art and creativity, injecting artistic and creative elements into design and production can make clothing more aesthetically valuable. All these provide rich resources and lasting momentum for the comprehensive revitalization of rural areas.

3. Analysis of the rural revitalization path using the branding of Yi ethnic clothing as an example

3.1 Basic overview of Yi ethnic clothing

The Yi ethnic group is one of the largest and most culturally rich ethnic groups in China, with a widespread population in the southwest region. The traditional clothing of the Yi people has developed over thousands of years, characterized by its exquisite materials, intricate techniques, and diverse uses. Yi clothing is categorized into six major types based on the six dialect areas and regions where the Yi people reside: Daxiulongshan, Western Yunnan, Central Yunnan, Southeastern Yunnan, Northeastern Yunnan, and Northwestern Guizhou. While Yi clothing varies across regions, it shares some common features, such as three main collar styles (round collar, right lapel, and overlapping lapel), strip-shaped embroidery on collar, cuffs, lapels, and trouser legs, and decorative items like jade pendants, purses, or sickle-shaped ornaments at the waist. Women's clothing includes waistbands, bellybands, long skirts, pleated skirts, and embroidered shoes^[8].

The modernization case of Yi ethnic clothing in this article represents the typical characteristics of Yi clothing in Liangshan Prefecture. Therefore, based on the literature review, the characteristics and typical patterns of Yi clothing in 17 counties of Liangshan, such as Xichang City, Huili City, and Butuo County, are summarized in Table 1^[9].

Table 1. Characteristics and typical patterns of Yi clothing in Liangshan

Clothing styles	Styles and characteristics of male and female clothing	Dress region	Colors	Typical patterns
Yino-style	Men's hairstyles are mostly "Zier," also known as "Tianpusa." The upper garment is tight-fitting, often in black or blue, with deliberate embroidery on both sleeves and the chest. The front is right-lapel and narrow-sleeved. The trousers are characterized by their wide legs, with the widest reaching up to 170 centimeters.	Meigu, Mabian, Ganluo, Leibo, Zhaojue, Jinyang, and other places.	Red, yellow, black, white, cyan.	Animal patterns: cattle, sheep, chicken, crab, etc. Plant patterns: fern bud leaf pattern, sugarcane pineapple pattern, sunflower pattern, etc. Geometric patterns: vortex pattern, wave pattern,
	Unmarried girls wear rectangular headscarves made of several layers of folded blue cloth on their heads, pressing down on their braids. Married women wear headscarves with more layers. After giving birth, women switch to wearing lotus-shaped soft caps. Women's upper garments are divided into jackets, shirts, and vests. Young women's upper garments are mainly decorated with fine strip coil patterns, with embroidery and appliqué as decorations. Middle-aged women wear jackets with wide blue borders on the collars and cuffs, embellished with embedded fine stripes in red, yellow, and green. Elderly clothing is primarily loose and comfortable, with wide and loose sleeves, bordered with blue cloth. Both young and old wear jackets with right lapels and pleated long skirts. Young girls wear skirts in two sections, and after reaching adulthood, they undergo a skirt-changing ceremony and switch to wearing three-section adult skirts. The top section serves as the waistband, the middle section is tube-shaped, and the bottom section is often pleated.			
Shengzha-style	Men's underwear is mostly white cloth jackets; outerwear has a right-lapel front with a low collar,	Xide, Yuexi, Mianning,		

	<p>often made of blue or green fabric. The shoulder pads are heavily decorated and worn by middle-aged men at gatherings and markets, and are also used as shoulder pads during labor.</p> <p>Young men's outerwear is tight-fitting with narrow sleeves, and the shoulders, lapels, and hems are decorated with several rows of fine teeth-patterned flowers in contrasting colors.</p> <p>Middle-aged and elderly men's outerwear is divided into front-lapel and right-lapel styles, both of which are relatively large and not decorated with flowers. The buttons are relatively large.</p> <p>Compared to the Inuit-style, men's trousers are narrower, with a width of 100 centimeters.</p>	Xichang, Muli, Zhaojue, Yanyuan, Dechang, Jinyang, Yanbian, Jiulong, Shimian, Luding, etc.		<p>rainbow pattern, sun and moon pattern, star pattern, etc.</p> <p>Object patterns: fire sickle pattern, grid pattern, stone step pattern, tusi seal pattern, etc.</p>
Suodi -style	<p>Men grow their hair on the crown, wrap it with a headscarf, but do not tie it into a hero's knot. They prefer short upper garments that do not extend past the navel, often adorned with multiple rows of densely packed long silver buttons, and wear finely crafted sheepskin "chawal" draped over their shoulders. Their trousers have very small cuffs, a large waist, and a wide crotch, giving them the appearance of horse-riding pants.</p>	Butuo, Puge, Jinyang, Ningnan, Huili, Dechang, Xichang, Huidong, Zhaojue, Yanyuan, etc.		
	<p>Young girls wear felt hats made from yak hair, while young women wear blue cloth headscarves with embroidered edges, folded and erected at the forehead.</p> <p>Women's attire often consists of a short-sleeved outer garment with a large lapel, which is short and does not extend past the navel. Skirts are mostly woven from wool, thick in texture, with pleats only at the hem, and the skirt body is either unpleated or lightly pleated. They also wear a small-sleeved felt cloak.</p>			
* Table 1 is compiled based on literature such as 'Research on the Traditional Clothing Art Characteristics and Modernization Inheritance of Yi Ethnic Group in Liangshan'.				

3.2 The modernization of Yi ethnic clothing

The characteristics and patterns of Yi ethnic clothing not only reflect the intrinsic value of Yi clothing, but also embody the ancestral belief of the Yi people in 'respecting heaven, fearing heaven, and venerating nature.' Currently, more and more designers are paying attention to the development and inheritance of traditional ethnic clothing. They are integrating modern and fashionable elements into traditional ethnic clothing, continuously innovating in the selection of styles and fabrics. This is not only a dynamic protection of the inheritance of ethnic clothing culture, but also a representation of the normalization, internationalization, and new normality of ethnic clothing.



* Fig. 1 from <https://www.seansuen.com>

Fig. 1 SEAN SUEN's 2023 autumn/winter collection

SEAN SUEN is a men's fashion brand founded by Chinese designer Sean Suen in 2012. He skillfully integrates elements from Yi ethnic clothing culture such as hero belts, Chai Er Wa (a type of traditional Yi cloth), woolen capes, tassels, and silver ornaments into modern fashion designs. In the 2023 autumn and winter collection as shown in Figure 1, the inspiration comes from the Daliangshan area, integrating elements like the traditional Yi "pimao" for warmth and the "tuta" worn diagonally for carrying weapons from ancient times, reinterpreting them with contemporary fashion tailoring techniques. Additionally, Yi silver chest ornaments and necklaces are incorporated into the designs. The collection aims to use the collision of silver bells and the swinging of ritual bells reminiscent of mountains to evoke the long cry of living beings, striking directly at the heart^[10].



* Fig. 2 from RED: 199361439.

Fig. 2 WENLEI

'WENLEI' was established in 2022, with the founder WENWEN hailing from Daliangshan. The brand conveys the profound meaning of gathering small streams into rivers and seas. WENLEI combines the beauty of intangible cultural heritage with modern fashion (Figure 2), exploring and inheriting Eastern traditional culture while bringing Chinese intangible cultural heritage, specifically Yi traditional clothing, to the Western fashion world. Its design incorporates elements of Daliangshan's woolen shawl and Cha'erwa, Dianxi's short kang, and Chuxiong's chicken crown hat, integrating features from multiple regions. While adhering to the Yi people's traditional preference for black, the brand also incorporates the vibrant colors of Huayao Yi, cleverly breaking the heaviness of black fashion. In terms of materials, natural materials such as wool are used to convey a sense of simplicity, primitiveness, and handmade beauty in the design.



* Fig. 3 from <https://www.baidu.com>

Fig. 3 Soft Mountains

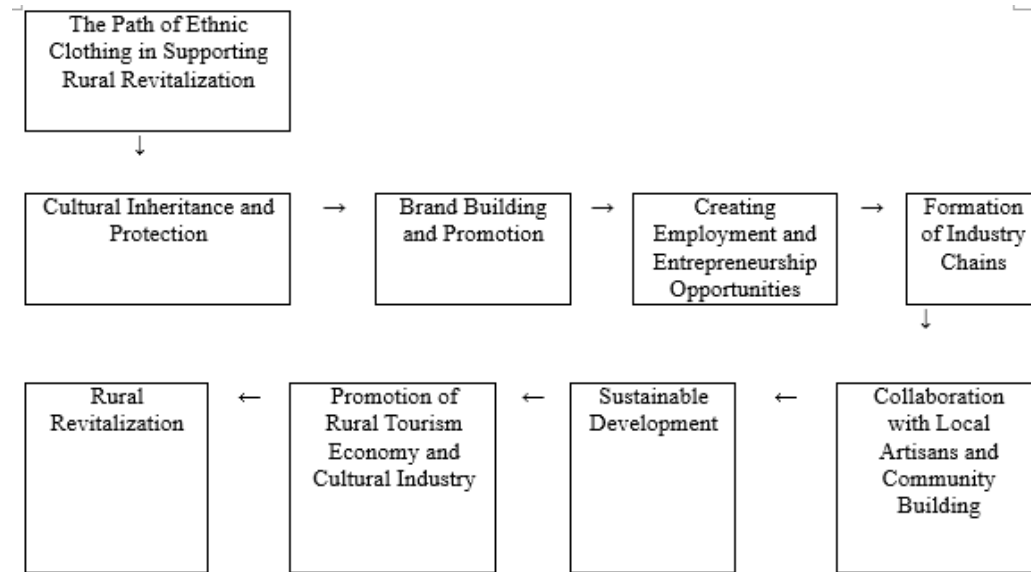
Soft Mountains, a brand from the Yi ethnic group in Yunnan (Figure 3), Soft Mountains collaborates directly with skilled craftsmen from the mountainous regions of southwestern China, innovating designs in a fashionable and contemporary manner. This approach gives traditional craftsmanship a new language to express concepts of sustainable development, conscious consumption, and slow fashion. Soft Mountains uses the technique of spinning and twisting silver threads to create simple spherical and semi-arc shapes, showcasing a three-dimensional and elegant style without losing the delicacy of handmade craftsmanship. The brand also transforms the dotted patterns seen on Yi girls' silver headgear into raised dots on their circular earrings, reflecting a design concept that is simple yet sophisticated.

4. Analysis of the Path of Yi Ethnic Clothing to Promote Rural Revitalization

Based on the comparative study of relevant cases, the path of using Yi ethnic clothing branding as an example to promote rural revitalization is illustrated in Figure 4. The analysis of the role of Yi ethnic clothing in promoting rural revitalization can be approached from several aspects. First, cultural inheritance and protection: Yi ethnic clothing is an important part of Yi traditional culture. By emphasizing, inheriting, and protecting Yi ethnic clothing, traditional culture can be promoted, rural characteristics can be publicized, and valuable cultural symbols with unique local features such as clothing patterns, textile techniques, and characteristic handicrafts can be passed down through clothing and industry. Secondly, cultural inheritance and protection will attract more attention from researchers and designers. It usually involves brand establishment and promotion through artistic empowerment. By developing Yi ethnic clothing with design innovation on the basis of inheritance, integrating modern fashion elements and styles, the clothing can not only preserve traditional cultural features but also meet the aesthetic needs of modern people. At the same time, effective promotion and publicity can be carried out after the brand is established, participating in cultural exhibitions, fashion weeks, and other activities, creating a brand image, promoting the Yi ethnic clothing brand to the international market, actively participating in international cooperation and cultural exchanges. This helps to enhance the brand's international influence, broaden sales channels, and promote rural opening up, attracting more consumers and industry professionals to focus on ethnic culture and local handicrafts.

In addition, the establishment of a brand will bring more entrepreneurial and employment opportunities to local rural areas, training local residents to become tailors, embroiderers, and so on, thus increasing employment rates and improving the economic conditions of rural residents. At the same time, it will also promote the formation of rural industrial chains. For example, in the process of branding Yi ethnic clothing, some series insist on using Yi ethnic characteristic materials and craftsmanship. These special natural materials and craftsmanship can only be completed by local masters. The brand establishes a complete industrial chain through cooperation with these excellent craftsmen, ultimately forming a positive and effective closed loop, including establishing community cooperation mechanisms, cultivating local talents, and promoting the co-construction of rural communities, thereby forming a concerted effort for rural revitalization. All of these actively and effectively promote the sustainable development of rural areas from culture to economy and promote the prosperity of rural tourism. Through these paths, the branding of Yi ethnic clothing can be said to be an important engine for rural revitalization, not only promoting the inheritance and development of

local culture but also creating economic value, thus contributing to the comprehensive revitalization of rural areas.



* Fig. 4 is organized by the author

Fig. 4 The Role of Ethnic Clothing in Rural Revitalization

5. Conclusion

Through the analysis of the above cases, it can be seen that ethnic clothing plays an undeniable role in rural revitalization. Its unique cultural background and symbolic elements are not only important in the context of cultural heritage but also a powerful engine driving comprehensive rural economic development. Firstly, the branding and industrial development of Yi ethnic clothing provide employment opportunities for local residents. Traditional handicraft skills are effectively inherited, and the younger generation has the opportunity to learn and participate in this traditional industry, providing a sustainable and stable source of income for rural residents. Secondly, through the establishment and promotion of Yi ethnic clothing brands, including participation in cultural festivals and commercial activities, it has successfully attracted the attention of tourists and international fashion magazines and other media. This not only increases the publicity of rural areas and brings opportunities for cultural exchange but also promotes the development of rural tourism, injecting new vitality into rural areas.

However, we must also note some challenges that ethnic clothing may face in aiding rural revitalization, including cultural distortion brought about by commercialization, the authenticity of community participation, and issues of ecological sustainability. Therefore, in future research, it is necessary to gain a deeper understanding of and address these challenges to ensure the comprehensive development of rural revitalization. In conclusion, through an in-depth exploration of the path of Yi ethnic clothing in aiding rural revitalization, it is found that the dynamic inheritance of Yi ethnic clothing as a cultural heritage provides rich resources and more possibilities for rural revitalization. Particularly through the protection and inheritance of traditional culture, and the contribution to increasing villagers' sense of identity and rural cohesion, it can continuously empower the realization of comprehensive rural revitalization.

Acknowledgement

*Fund Project: Exploration and Theoretical Construction of Art Education Practice Paths under the All-Age Friendly Concept, Central University Project

References

- [1] Li Xin. *The Path Selection of Inheritance and Innovation of Traditional Culture under the Perspective of Rural Revitalization*[J]. *Journal of Yanbian Party School*, 2022, 38(05), pp. 58-59.
- [2] Zhang Yue. *Research on Traditional Chinese Handicraft Policies from the Perspective of Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection*[D]. *China Art Research*, 2022, pp. 11-13.
- [3] Wang Xiaojie. *The Influence of Tourism on the Dissemination of Ethnic Clothing Culture: A Case Study of Mongolian Clothing*[J]. *Western Leather*, 2023, 45(16), pp. 69-73.
- [4] An Lizhe. *Functional Interpretation and Resource Transformation of Images and Visual Styles in the Context of Rural Revitalization: A Review of Image and Visual Style Research in Chinese Anthropology of Art in 2020*[J]. *Ethnic Arts Research*, 2021, 02, pp. 11-13.
- [5] Wei Fei. *The Inheritance and Innovation of Ethnic Clothing Culture under the Background of Tourism Development*[J]. *Contemporary Tourism*, 2020, 18(29), pp. 123-135.
- [6] Xiao Pei. *Research on the Inheritance and Development of Stone Forest Sani Embroidery Based on the Strategy of Rural Revitalization*[D]. *Kunming University of Science and Technology*, 2020, pp. 27-29.
- [7] Peng Yao, He Pu, Zhou Simeng. *The Continuation of Yunnan Ethnic Clothing Culture under the Background of Rural Revitalization*[J]. *Industrial Design*, 2022(03), pp. 113-125.
- [8] Zhao Xintu. *Research on the Aesthetic Value of Traditional Yi Ethnic Clothing in Southwest China*[J]. *Clothing and Apparel*, 2022(01), pp. 46-53.
- [9] Liu Xiangjun, Li Ruohui. *Research on the Artistic Characteristics and Modern Inheritance of Traditional Yi Ethnic Clothing in Liangshan*[J]. *Art Research*, 2021(06), pp. 15-23.
- [10] Sun Xiaofeng, SEAN SUEN: <https://www.seansuen.com>.