

THE DEVELOPMENT AND OPTIMIZATION PATH OF THE COSTUME CULTURE OF THE YAO NATIONALITY IN LIANNAN

HuiLing Zhang, AiLun Cai*, JunLing Zhou

College of Fine Arts, Guangdong Polytechnic Normal University, Guangzhou 510260, Guangdong, China.

*Corresponding Author: AiLun Cai

Abstract: As an important material carrier of Yao culture, Liannan Yao costumes, with their unique patterns, colorful color matching and exquisite and complicated production technology, not only highlight the Yao people's excellent artistic creativity and unique aesthetic concepts, but also carry the profound national cultural connotation. Based on the field survey of Youling ancient village, museum and other places in Liannan Yao Autonomous County, Qingyuan City, Guangdong Province, this paper systematically combs the pattern characteristics and evolution of Paiyao and Guoshan Yao costumes by using the methods of cultural traceability and logical analysis. The study found that although clothing patterns contain rich natural images and national narrative, they are facing realistic challenges in the process of modernization, such as the loss of connotation and the lack of innovation power. Starting from the underlying logic of inheritance and development, this paper proposes a set of multi-dimensional optimization paths. It aims to provide theoretical support for the creative transformation of the Costume Culture of the Yao nationality in Liannan, and boost the industrialization development and Rural Revitalization of intangible cultural heritage in contemporary society.

Keywords: Liannan Yao nationality; Yao culture; Costume culture; Optimize path

1 INTRODUCTION

Liannan Yao, as a unique minority group living in Liannan Yao Autonomous County, Qingyuan City, Guangdong Province, has cultivated a dazzling Costume Culture in the long-term production, life and historical evolution. As an important material carrier of Yao culture, Liannan Yao costumes are famous for their unique patterns, gorgeous color matching and exquisite embroidery technology. They are not only treasures in China's intangible cultural heritage[1], but also symbols of national identity and aesthetic concepts. Whether it is the eight row Yao costumes with different styles and different styles, or the Guoshan Yao costumes with exquisite workmanship and flowers in flowers, they vividly show the Yao people's respect for nature and their yearning for a better life. However, with the acceleration of the modernization process, this traditional art is facing many challenges in the inheritance and development, such as the loss of pattern connotation, insufficient protection and single innovation path. Based on the on-the-spot investigation of Youling ancient village, museum and other places, in-depth excavation of the historical roots and artistic value of clothing patterns will not only help protect this national treasure, but also inject new momentum into the local economy through cultural and tourism integration and industrial innovation. This paper aims to comprehensively analyze the development status of the Costume Culture of the Yao nationality in Liannan, explore its multiple values in the historical, artistic and economic levels, and propose targeted optimization paths combined with modern technical means such as Artificial Intelligence Generated Content (AIGC), in order to achieve the creative transformation and innovative development of the Costume Culture of the Yao nationality in Liannan.

2 CHARACTERISTICS OF YAO COSTUMES

As a profound cultural phenomenon, clothing is a concentrated reflection of specific social background, historical experience and national spirit. Yao costumes are not only the material carrier of the aesthetic concepts, religious beliefs and life customs handed down from generation to generation by the Yao people, but also an important medium for the inheritance of Yao history and culture and a symbol of national identity[2]. In Liannan area, Costume Culture covers a wide range of daily clothes, decorations and headwear, and is mainly divided into two systems: Paiyao and Guoshan Yao. Paiyao costumes have their own characteristics due to the regional differences of the "eight rows", which jointly build the unique visual language of Paiyao. Guoshanyao clothing is good at exquisite cross stitch technology, showing the artistic beauty of "flower in flower". These clothing elements develop in the continuous integration and variation, forming a Costume Culture language with both unity and regional independence.

2.1 Paiyao Clothing

The formation of Paiyao costumes is closely related to their unique settlement history and geographical distribution. Due to geographical differences in history, Liannan Paiyao formed a famous "eight Pai" pattern, which is mainly divided into two categories: the East three Pai and the west five Pai, namely junliao Pai, Hengkeng Pai, huoshao Pai, Nangang Pai, Dazhang Pai, Youling Pai, Majian Pai and libadong Pai. The evolution of clothing is essentially the common product of geographical environment and ethnic social structure. In the long-term evolution of these Paiyao groups

distributed in different mountains, their costumes show the characteristics of "harmony but difference" in style structure, color application and pattern arrangement. For example, it pursues gorgeous collocation in color, and records the national narrative through exquisite production technology in pattern. Although the details between the rows are different, the core logic is consistent: through highly ceremonial clothing, exquisite flower bags, silver collars and other decorations, it reflects the Yao people's ultimate pursuit of beauty and deep respect for the root of traditional culture (Figure 1). This Costume Culture has become an indispensable symbol in the social life of Paiyao, which is not only the expression of individual aesthetic consciousness, but also an important link to strengthen the identity of Pai group.



Figure 1 Guangdong Liannan Paiyao Craft (Photographed on the Spot by the Author)

2.2 Guoshanyao Clothing

Guoshanyao clothing is famous for its exquisite embroidery technology and highly abstract visual language (Figure 2). The core process of cross stitch is to transform various complex image patterns, and skillfully use the form of "flowers in flowers", so that the clothing presents a multi-level and refined decorative effect. In terms of composition logic, guoshanyao clothing shows rigorous geometric aesthetics. Its patterns are mostly based on basic geometric shapes such as circles, squares, rectangles and triangles (Figure 3). Through cross stitch embroidery patterns and methods such as superposition and subtraction [3], concrete natural scenes are transformed into abstract cultural symbols. These patterns not only cover natural scenes such as the sun moon pattern, mountain and river pattern, but also vivid animal and plant images such as fish pattern, ox horn pattern, horse head pattern, bird pattern, pine tree pattern and dragon horn pattern. This technique of expression not only enhances the visual tension of clothing, but also profoundly reflects the unique understanding and aesthetic expression of the Guoshan Yao people on the nature of the universe, national totem and life force in their migratory life.



Figure 2 Embroidered Piece of Modern Guoshan Yao Suspender



Figure 3 Modern Guoshan Yao Flower Leggings

Note: Guangdong Liannan Guoshan Yao Costumes (Photographed by the Author)

3 THE VALUE OF THE COSTUME CULTURE OF THE YAO NATIONALITY IN LIANNAN

Yao costumes are a product of the combination of emotion and beauty, reflecting the persistent and real value of life[4]. Liannan Yao costumes culture is formed in the continuity of history and local cultural and geographical conditions. Its artistic style has the provisions of history and culture, is a dynamic development law, and reflects the exchange and integration of national culture. Its clothing has been developing in the continuous integration and variation, with the characteristics of unity, regionality and relative independence, and has formed a distinctive Costume Culture language [5].

The history of the Costume Culture of the Yao nationality in Liannan can be traced back to the ancient times, when the ancestors of the Yao nationality gradually formed a Costume Culture suitable for their own geographical environment and production mode in the long-term production and life. Liannan Yao Autonomous County was established on January 25th, 1953. The Yao nationality is distributed in the mountainous area accounting for 88% of the county's area, while the Han nationality is distributed in Sanjiang Town, Zhaigang town and other places, all of which are plain and hilly areas, accounting for 12% of the county's area[6]. With the passage of time, Yao costumes have experienced the development process from simple to complex, from practical to aesthetic value. The cultural characteristics of costumes are mainly reflected in their rich patterns and unique embroidery technology.

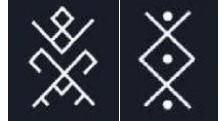
The Costume Culture of the Yao nationality in Liannan has many values. Historically, it is an important carrier of human history and culture. The evolution and development of clothing provides a path to explore the Yao people's lifestyle, openness, cultural literacy, aesthetic concepts and historical changes. Its patterns contain rich historical information and are the key material materials for the study of Yao's history and culture. In terms of artistic value, Yao costumes are famous for their exquisite patterns, unique embroidery techniques and rich colors. As a traditional intangible cultural heritage process, Yao embroidery integrates all natural things into their costumes, forming a unique artistic style. In 2009, Liannan Yao clothing embroidery was listed in the provincial intangible cultural heritage list. Its protection and inheritance are valued. Its artistic value not only lies in its beautiful appearance, but also reflects the pursuit of internal culture and aesthetics. In terms of economic value. Costume Culture condenses the Yao people and reflects the economic and social development. In the rural revitalization, intangible cultural heritage is the trend to promote the integration of culture and tourism. Liannan Yao costumes are an important part of Yao culture and have become an important local tourism resource. Peripheral products can be developed to attract tourists with the help of streaming media promotion and promote local economic development.

4 CHARACTERISTICS OF CLOTHING PATTERNS OF THE YAO NATIONALITY IN LIANNAN

As an important part of Yao culture, graphic patterns are closely related to the formation and development, customs and habits, moral concepts, religious beliefs, and aesthetic interests of the Yao nationality. It is of great significance to study the culture of the dress patterns of the Yao nationality in Liannan. Most of the patterns and patterns on clothing come from all things in nature, such as mountains, rivers, sun, moon, stars, flowers, birds, fish and insects, etc. clothes are mostly sewn with monochrome cloth as the base cloth, and then embroidered with colored silk thread on the cloth for decoration. Most of these patterns and patterns are embroidered on the most eye-catching parts and the most easily worn parts of the clothes, which not only enhances the patience of the clothes, plays a protective role, but also enhances the decoration of the clothes, and plays a role of beauty[6]. These patterns are not only beautiful and generous, but also far-reaching, reflecting the positive and optimistic life attitude of the Yao people, and conveying their aesthetic hobbies, life interests, intelligence and pursuit of a better life. Yearning[7]. The specific types, characteristics and implications of graphics and patterns are shown in the table 1.

Table 1 Classification of Typical Patterns and Cultural Connotations of Liannan Yao Costumes

Pattern type	Characteristic	Moral	Representative pattern graphics
Geometric pattern	Common examples include triangle, circle, thunder pattern, cloud pattern and so on. Through the moving combination of points, lines and surfaces, the shape is concise and vivid, rich in changes, and increases the visual effect	Reflect the observation and understanding of nature; Trust things to express feelings and borrow things to convey meanings	
Natural scene pattern	Including the sun, moon, stars, mountains, rivers, etc., with embroidery, batik and other processes, the natural scene is integrated into a unique style; For example, the sun, moon and stars are round and radial,	It reflects the worship and awe of nature, the sun, moon and stars imply the yearning for the exploration of the universe, and	

Pattern type	Characteristic	Moral	Representative pattern graphics
	and mountains and rivers are expressed in smooth lines and rich colors	mountains and rivers show the magnificence and mystery of nature	
Animal image pattern	There are fish patterns, ox horn patterns, etc., which are created by means of "homophonic and symbolic" techniques, and embroidered with animal images, or copied or exaggerated	It means yearning for a better life. For example, the fish pattern means rich harvest, the ox horn pattern means strength and courage, and the Dragon horn pattern means auspiciousness and mystery	
Plant image pattern	Bold color, harmonious and unified, with plant characteristics as the theme. For example, pine pattern implies toughness and longevity. Through embroidery and batik processes, it is often combined with geometric patterns, using two-way and four-way continuous composition methods	Express the reverence and love for nature, collect the achievements of artistic creation, and reflect the rich traditional culture, life interest and aesthetic concept	

5 CHALLENGES AND OPTIMIZATION PATH OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COSTUME CULTURE OF THE YAO NATIONALITY IN LIANNAN

5.1 Development Challenges

In today's information age, the clothing of the Yao people in Liannan still retains its unique charm and has become a symbol of the Yao people's cultural identity and national pride. At the same time, the clothing of the Yao people has also become an important carrier of cultural exchanges. In the process of integration and development, it still faces many challenges, such as the lack of cultural connotation mining restricts its role as a carrier of cultural exchange; The excavation and arrangement of the deep-seated connotation of Yao costume culture is still weak, resulting in insufficient cultural display and difficult to attract tourists' in-depth understanding. The lack of innovative thinking and creative design in the development process leads to serious homogenization of tourism products, which is difficult to attract tourists' interest; Insufficient publicity and promotion limited the promotion of cultural popularity. The inadequate development of the industrial chain has affected the overall economic benefits, and the integrated development of Yao Costume Culture and tourism industry has failed to effectively drive the relevant industrial chains, such as clothing production and handicraft inheritance. In addition, the lack of talent support and policy funding support is also an urgent problem to be solved.

5.2 Optimization Path of Development

The sustainable vitality of the Costume Culture of the Yao nationality in Liannan essentially depends on how to adapt to the modern society through innovative means on the premise of maintaining the national core. The "Opinions on Further Strengthening the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage" in 2021 is the first policy programmatic document on strengthening the protection of intangible cultural heritage issued in the name of the "two offices" in China, which fully reflects the great importance attached by the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping as the core to intangible cultural heritage and the high expectations placed on the protection of intangible cultural heritage [8]. According to the policy guidance, the protection of intangible cultural heritage is no longer a fixed step, but to unswervingly follow the innovation route and realize the symbiosis of tradition and modernity.

5.2.1 Digital inheritance and intelligent construction

Using aigc technology to improve online museums, for example, Guangdong Yao Museum launched an online interactive experience activity in 2022, including 360° online panoramic Museum, online Yao totem interactive game, AR totem interaction and other project contents [9]. People can roam the museum online without leaving home, scanning QR codes or clicking links, which has won a lot of praise. On this basis, it is necessary to build a more

intelligent and immersive way to experience the Costume Culture of Liannan Yao and the history and culture of Yao in the world, open user cloud accounts, establish digital archives, share data in the cloud, accurately push clothing pictures and videos, create a multi sensory experience for passengers, and improve the means of online virtual exhibition. For example, they can see, hear and touch in person, so as to achieve five sense linkage. It is necessary to. Secondly, the intelligent design system of Yao costumes is developed to realize personalized customization. Combining artificial intelligence and image processing technology has improved design efficiency[10]. The Yao characteristic digital patterns and textures are created and applied to the design of clothing, home furnishings, accessories and other products, making Yao costumes more dynamic and diverse, which is easy to spread and meet the personalized needs of consumers, and bringing diverse experiences to tourists.

5.2.2 Activating clothing pattern elements and diversified product development

Visitors can be organized to visit the Yao Museum, observe the Yao costume exhibition and participate in activities such as costume experience production, so that visitors can experience and feel the unique charm of the Yao costume culture. For example, let tourists experience embroidery, an intangible cultural process, understand its patterns, types, composition, colors, processes, materials and other different art forms, and feel the beauty of clothing patterns. Or by inviting designers and artists to innovate and design Yao costumes, combining traditional elements with modern elements, breaking the situation of single color of traditional Yao embroidery, using a variety of modern plain fabrics for splicing design, making Yao embroidery fashionable and international; Or to jointly develop handicraft activities related to Costume Culture, form a complete industrial chain, let the patterns fall to the ground, and develop related Yao clothing souvenirs, handicrafts, etc. for example, some practical and convenient water cups, notebooks, backpacks, and furniture can be designed to meet the shopping needs of tourists and drive the development of the local economy. Finally, a questionnaire survey is conducted to collect and summarize the user experience of visitors, so as to continuously improve and improve it.

5.2.3 Enhance publicity and inheritance development from all aspects and multiple angles

First of all, we should cultivate their strong sense of national identity and cultural confidence from children and primary schools, pay attention to the inheritance and innovation of Yao Costume Culture, select and cultivate Yao clothing inheritors from childhood, and establish Yao clothing production workshops to promote the inheritance and development of Yao Costume Culture. Secondly, we should pay attention to the publicity and promotion of Yao Costume Culture, and carry out online and offline publicity and promotion activities in cooperation with tourism platforms and media by making promotional videos and releasing tourism strategies, so as to attract more tourists to visit and experience, and improve people's awareness and interest in Yao Costume Culture. Finally, actively strive for policy support and capital investment from the government and relevant departments to introduce talents, hold training courses, invite experts and professors, and improve the professional skills and knowledge level of staff. At the same time, strengthen the stickiness of cooperation with colleges and universities, let intangible cultural heritage enter the campus, the master workshop of our school, and the students who love Yao costumes, cultivate professional talents for the protection and inheritance of culture, provide a strong guarantee for the integration and development of Yao costumes culture, and inject strength into the research and innovation of Liannan Yao costumes culture (Figure 4).

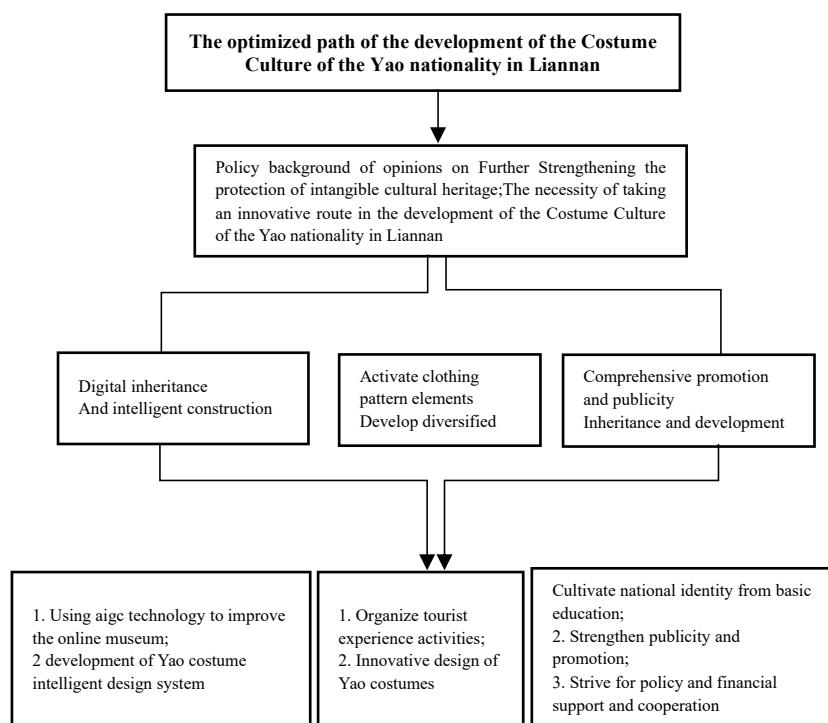


Figure 4 Optimization Path

6 CONCLUSION

The Costume Culture of the Yao people in Liannan is an artistic treasure accumulated by the Yao people in the long historical years, which has significant nationality, social function and profound cultural connotation. These graphic patterns with different styles are not simple visual decoration, but the Yao people condensed them into geometric symbolic language through the abstraction of natural scenes, plant and animal images. This unique narrative method has irreplaceable reference value for the study of Yao prehistoric culture and modern design innovation. Future research should continue to explore the connotation of Liannan Yao culture, and the inheritance and development should break the single static protection mode and turn to the dynamic activation path of deep excavation and industrial integration. Through digital empowerment, intelligent construction and the development of diversified cultural and creative products, traditional patterns are implanted into modern life scenes. This can not only enhance national identity, but also inject cultural momentum into rural revitalization. Only by continuously strengthening the creative transformation of intangible cultural heritage, can Liannan Yao costumes be reborn in the baptism of modern civilization and realize the sustainable inheritance of national culture.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

FUNDING

This research was funded by: 1) Key Project of the Ministry of Education's Special Project for Outstanding Traditional Chinese Culture (Category A): "Interweaving and Symbiosis: A Study on Architectural Decoration in the Historic Centre of Macau" (Project of the Nishan World Center for Confucian Studies/China Confucius Foundation (23JDTCA010). 2) Guangdong Province Philosophy and Social Sciences Planning Project: "Innovative Application Research on Decorative Patterns of Macau's Historic Buildings from the Perspective of Artificial Intelligence (AI)" (Lingnan Culture Project of the Guangdong Provincial Philosophy and Social Sciences Planning Leading Group Office (GD25LN32). 3) 2024 Guangdong Provincial Higher Education Innovation Team Project (Social Sciences) Platform and Project: "Cultural Heritage and Intelligent Design Innovation Team" (2024WCXTD029). 4) Research Capacity Enhancement Project for the 2022 Doctoral Program Construction Units at Guangdong Polytechnic Normal University (22GPNUZDJS59 and 22GPNUZDJS58). 5) 2020 Provincial First-Class Undergraduate Program of the Ministry of Education (Environmental Design Major), Provincial First-Class Undergraduate Course "Landscape Design Foundation" (991710368). 6) 2021 University-Level Research Project Talent Special Fund of Guangdong Polytechnic Normal University—Research on the Optimization of Public Green Space Layout in Macau (2021SDKYB058). 7) 2025 Provincial Project of College Students' Innovation and Entrepreneurship Training Program of Guangdong Polytechnic Normal University, "Fa cai xin yu - Research Integration of Jewelry Art Therapy and Empowerment of Aesthetic Education in Special Schools" (Project No.: 2025208). 8) Research on the Cultivation of Positive Psychological Qualities and the Innovation of Resilience Education System for College Students in the New Era (25GSSZZ01).

REFERENCES

- [1] Song Y, Huang G, Cui SL. Application of virtual reality and artificial intelligence technology in the virtual display and design innovation of Liannan Yao costumes. *Fangzhi Baogao*, 2024, 43(12): 54-57.
- [2] Li YY, Ma GC. Reflections on the development path of Guangdong Yao tie-dye cultural and creative products under the background of rural revitalization. In Guangdong Provincial Department of Education (Ed.), *Proceedings of the Academic Forum on Art Design for Rural Revitalization*. Beijing Institute of Graphic Communication; Soochow University, 2023(2): 13-27. <https://doi.org/10.26914/c.cnkihy.2023.071852>.
- [3] Zeng QL, Yin N. The crystallization of nation and era: Discussion on the development and application of Yao embroidery creative products. *Journal of Qingyuan Polytechnic*, 2012, 5(02): 56-58.
- [4] Hu LM. Analysis of Yao costumes and their specific cultural connotations. *Journal of Hunan University of Science and Engineering*, 2006(07): 341-343.
- [5] Wu JL. Multi-integration and variation of Yao costume culture. *Zhuangshi*, 2005(04): 103. <https://doi.org/10.16272/j.cnki.cn11-1392/j.2005.04.051>.
- [6] Yu SJ. Cultural connotations of Yao costume patterns. *Journal of Guangxi University for Nationalities*, 1994(01): 38-41.
- [7] Wang P. A study on the characteristics of Atayal textile patterns. *Art Research*, 2023(01): 131-136. DOI: 10.13318/j.cnki.msij.2023.01.021.
- [8] General Office of the CPC Central Committee & General Office of the State Council. Opinions on further strengthening the protection of intangible cultural heritage. *Gazette of the State Council of the People's Republic of China*, 2021(24): 14-17.
- [9] Tang X. Digital technology empowering the development of new quality productive forces of Yao costume culture. *Comparative Study of Cultural Innovation*, 2024, 8(24): 85-89.
- [10] Zhou I, Xie L, Fricker P, Lit K. ConvNeXt-L-Based Recognition of Decorative Patterns in Historical Architecture: A Case Study of Macau. *Buildings*, 2025, 15, 3705. <https://doi.org/10.3390/buildings15203705>.