

ENGLISH TRANSLATION AND DISSEMINATION OF GUANGXI CLOTHING CATEGORY INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

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Abstract: This study examines ethnic minority costumes collected by the Guangxi Zhuang Brocade Museum and Guangxi Ethnic Museum, employing field investigations, document analysis, and artifact authentication to investigate the technical characteristics of textile production, dyeing, embroidery, and craftsmanship in Guangxi's intangible cultural heritage of traditional attire. The research reveals that these costumes serve dual functions as identity markers—both distinguishing ethnic groups and symbolizing internal lineage divisions. Notably, certain techniques and patterns demonstrate cross-cultural integration through borrowing elements from other ethnic traditions. The successful translation of Guangxi's intangible cultural heritage in clothing-related fields will enhance regional branding and amplify the global dissemination of cultural symbols.

Keywords: Guangxi; Clothing; Intangible cultural heritage; English translation; Regional image; Communication

1 INTRODUCTION

The ethnic minority cultures of Guangxi are a microcosm of China's cultural diversity. The 12 indigenous ethnic groups have created a rich and colorful cultural heritage and ethnic symbols throughout their historical development and evolution. According to statistics, Guangxi boasts 70 national-level representative projects of intangible cultural heritage and 1,115 autonomous region-level representative projects, covering ten major categories: folk literature, traditional music, traditional dance, traditional drama, quyi, traditional sports, games and acrobatics, traditional fine arts, traditional crafts, traditional medicine, and folk customs [1]. Guangxi has always attached great importance to the protection and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage. Guidelines from Guangxi authorities set 2025-2035 development goals for protecting intangible cultural heritage. By improving five systems—investigation and documentation, representative projects, representative inheritors, regional holistic protection, and the construction of inheritance experience facilities—intangible cultural heritage in Guangxi plays a key role in shaping the regional image of Guangxi and building a strong cultural tourism region. To achieve this goal, Guangxi has not only established various levels of intangible cultural heritage protection institutions but also introduced research programs and specialized courses in intangible cultural heritage protection at the secondary and higher education levels, systematically cultivating professionals. This has transformed cultural preservation from static museum-style protection to dynamic integration into contemporary socio-economic life.

2 THE COMPOSITION TYPES AND MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF GUANGXI CLOTHING CATEGORY INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

As the most distinctive cultural symbols with strong regional characteristics, the ethnic minority costumes of Guangxi are not only garments for warmth and protection for people of various ethnic groups, but also a concentrated embodiment of their cultural history, folk beliefs, social structures, and aesthetic tastes, earning them the titles of "history books worn on the body" and "wordless cultural symbols" [2]. Whether it is the Zhuang brocade, one of the "Four Famous Brocades of China," or the exquisitely patterned Dong brocade, the elegant Miao brocade, or the masterfully crafted Shui ethnic horsehair embroidery, all demonstrate the superb weaving skills of Guangxi's ethnic minorities. Each garment, hat, and skirt carries the collective memory and worldview of an ethnic group through its unique form, material, color, and patterns. Overall, the ethnic minority costumes of Guangxi exhibit characteristics of mutual integration: in terms of materials and colors, they predominantly use natural materials such as cotton, linen, silk, and wool, favoring subdued and durable colors like indigo and dark blue. The costumes balance practicality for daily wear with aesthetic appeal that harmonizes with the natural environment. In terms of craftsmanship, weaving, dyeing, embroidery, and carving are the core techniques, reflecting the artisans' superb manual skills and rigorous craftsmanship. By promoting the production techniques and artistic aesthetics of Guangxi's costume-related intangible cultural heritage to the world, more foreign readers can understand the cultural connotations embedded within, which helps in building Guangxi's regional image and enhancing the effectiveness of its cultural symbols in international communication.

2.1 The Composition Types of Guangxi Clothing Category Intangible Cultural Heritage

The development of ethnic minority costumes in Guangxi has spanned significant historical periods across both temporal and spatial dimensions, giving rise to a rich and diverse historical and cultural heritage through their

transmission and evolution [3]. Consequently, the composition of Guangxi's costume-related intangible cultural heritage exhibits comprehensive characteristics. It encompasses not only physical artifacts such as garments and production tools, but also traditional handicraft techniques and pattern textures associated with them, along with various unique cultural derivatives developed through historical changes and technological advancements. This study conducted field investigations at institutions including the Guangxi Zhuang Brocade Museum and Guangxi Ethnic Museum, analyzing the collected data on Guangxi's costume-related intangible cultural heritage. The analysis reveals that the Zhuang ethnic group has 5 items: brocade weaving, embroidery, and garment production. The Miao ethnic group has 4 items: embroidery and garment production. The Yao ethnic group has 3 items: embroidery, garments, and woven embroidery. The Maonan ethnic group has 1 weaving technique, while the Dong and Gelao ethnic groups each possess 1 embroidery technique. The Jing ethnic group has 1 garment production technique. The categorized types include: 6 garment production techniques, 5 embroidery techniques, 3 spinning (weaving) techniques, and 2 garment-making techniques (See Table 1).

Table 1 Types of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Clothing in Guangxi

project name	Related Ethnicities	Application region
Zhuang brocade weaving	the Zhuang nationality	Jingxi City
Yao Ethnic Costume	the Yao nationality	Hezhou City, Nandan County, Longsheng Autonomous County
Mao Nan flower bamboo hat weaving skills	Mao Nan	Huanjiang Maonan Autonomous County
Dong Embroidery	Dong Minority	Dong Autonomous County of Sanjiang
Gele embroidery	Gelo minority ethnic group	Luocheng Gelao Autonomous County
Zhuang Embroidery	the Zhuang nationality	Mashan County
Miao Embroidery	the Miao nationality	Miao Autonomous County of Rongshui
Xingan Yao Embroidery	the Yao nationality	Xing'an County
Jing ethnic costume making skills	the Jing nationality	Dongxing City
Miao costume making skills	the Miao nationality	Nandan County
Yao embroidery	the Yao nationality	Yao Autonomous County of Jinxiu
Miao bright cloth making skills	the Miao nationality	Miao Autonomous County of Rongshui
Zhuang costume making skills	the Zhuang nationality	Nanning City
Longlin Miao costume making skills	the Miao nationality	Multinational Autonomous County of Longlin
Nandan Zhuang Costume	the Zhuang nationality	Nandan County
The making of the Zhuang guan costume	the Zhuang nationality	Longlin Autonomous County

2.2 Technical Characteristics of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Clothing in Guangxi

The art of textile craftsmanship and embroidery holds a central position in Guangxi's intangible cultural heritage of ethnic costumes. These techniques are not merely garment-making skills, but living cultural codes that preserve history, narrate myths, and define identity, embodying profound cultural significance [4]. Zhuang brocade and Miao embroidery stand as the most representative treasures in this field.

Zhuang brocade, along with Yun brocade, Shu brocade, and Song brocade, is known as one of the "Four Great Brocades of China," being the only ethnic minority brocade. Its history dates back to the Han Dynasty and reached its peak during the Song Dynasty, becoming a tribute to the imperial court. Its rich cultural connotations and superb craftsmanship make it one of the most representative cultural symbols of Guangxi. According to the "Book of the Later Han: Biography of the Southern Barbarians," as early as the Han Dynasty, the ancestors of the Zhuang people had learned to weave colorful Zhuang brocade using cotton yarn as the warp and silk velvet as the weft. The bamboo loom was the primary equipment for weaving Zhuang brocade, employing the "continuous warp and intermittent weft" method. The bamboo flower cages at the top of the machine controlled the lifting of the warp threads, creating exquisite and intricate patterns. The patterns of Zhuang brocade are closely related to the daily life of the Zhuang people. These include natural motifs such as sun patterns, thunder patterns, and cloud patterns, symbolizing reverence and worship for nature. Animal and plant motifs like fish patterns, frog patterns, and floral patterns, where frog patterns symbolize "prosperity" and "favorable weather," representing the hope for a bountiful harvest. Geometric patterns, including continuous cloud patterns and swastika patterns, reflect the ancient and natural artistic aesthetics of the Zhuang people. Miao embroidery was developed by the ancestors of the Miao people during their migration, development, and adaptation to nature. The dyeing technique of Miao embroidery is the foundational craft of Miao embroidery production. Taking the Miao bright cloth technique as an example, every summer and autumn, artisans would crush, soak, and ferment the harvested indigo grass to make a deep blue dye. Then, they would repeatedly immerse their white woven fabrics in the dye vat, remove them for oxidation, wash, and dry until the fabrics showed a uniform bluish-black color. Miao embroidery predominantly employs the horse-tail embroidery technique and paper-cutting embroidery method. Its themes encompass not only the Miao people's migration history, war history, and development history, but also their labor history of harmonious coexistence with nature. The Miao ethnic costumes feature numerous simplified and highly generalized patterns, such as the Yangtze River, Yellow River, roads, mountain ranges, and city walls. These motifs reflect the Miao people's rich spiritual emotions and ancestral beliefs, serving as expressions of their collective unconsciousness [5].

3 TRANSLATION STATUS OF GUANGXI CLOTHING CATEGORY INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

Translation, as an important means and pathway for language communication and cultural dissemination, must adhere to the principle of "three closenesses" in foreign publicity from the very beginning to achieve closeness to the actual development of China, closeness to the needs of foreign audiences for information about China, and closeness to the thinking habits of foreign audiences [6]. After long-term development, the translation of Guangxi's intangible cultural heritage in the field of clothing has achieved certain results. In terms of translation theory research, scholars have studied the translation and international dissemination of Guangxi's intangible cultural heritage clothing from perspectives such as ecological translation studies, ethnology, social communication studies, and semiotics.

3.1 Enhancing Text Readability by Integrating the Target Language Context

The translation of Guangxi's intangible cultural heritage costumes constitutes a "community of cultural dissemination," representing a dynamic process where translators internally adjust their perspectives while coexisting with external contexts [7]. Through continuous self-improvement, translators achieve holistic equilibrium between their translations and personal cultural refinement. The translation of Zhuang brocade weaving techniques, for instance, transcends mere cultural export—it embodies translators' pursuit of cultural authenticity and artistic perfection. Translators must exercise restraint in additions or omissions, maintaining fidelity to source texts while adopting context-specific strategies. When rendering the "Tongjing Duanwei" technique (a unique interlacing method), one might phonetically translate it as "Tongjing Duanwei" with the annotation: "This distinctive weaving procedure involves complete wrapping of cotton threads while silk weft threads only appear where required." Similarly, Miao embroidery's traditional batik process—where white fabric is dyed with mineral pigments to create blue or black hues, naturally sun-dried, and polished with pebbles—exhibits rustic elegance with exceptional colorfastness and dimensional preservation. For instance, when translating the production process, the text could be rendered as: "Its color is dyed through the traditional batik process. First, the white cloth is dyed blue or black using plant or mineral pigments. Then, it is polished with pebbles after air-drying." By adding transitional phrases like "firstly" and "then," the translation enhances logical coherence and helps readers better understand the Zhuang brocade dyeing process. When describing the production of Zhuang embroidery balls, the translator should arrange steps like pattern making, cutting, embroidery, stuffing, sewing, and bead threading in chronological order, accompanied by illustrations for clarity. When explaining the uses of Longlin Zhuang ethnic belts, the focus should be on their exquisite patterns and embroidered motifs—such as swords (for boys), gourds (for girls), hibiscus flowers, and pomegranate blossoms—showcasing elders' care and blessings for children. When translating the craftsmanship of Rongshui Miao ethnic bird feather garments, attention should be paid to the hundreds of bird feathers and intricate embroidery, reflecting the Miao people's long-standing bird totem worship and ancestor veneration, thereby enriching the text's ethnic cultural depth.

3.2 Focus on Source Language Cultural Imagery to Ensure Translation Accuracy

The translation of Guangxi's intangible cultural heritage costumes represents the dissemination of Guangxi's cultural elements and symbols abroad. The translated text should adhere to the principle of ecological rationality in constructing a discourse communication system. On one hand, it must maintain the dynamic balance between the whole and parts of the translation; on the other hand, it should embody the ecological aesthetics of the translation, advocating diversity and unity within its form [8]. For instance, in the Tang Dynasty document "Youyang Zazu" introducing the origin of Zhuang brocade, there is a story about Ye Xian, a southern ethnic minority woman from the Qin-Han period: After her father's death, she suffered repeated abuse from her stepmother. On the Gan Dong Festival, her stepmother took her biological daughter to play while leaving Ye Xian to guard the fruit trees. With divine assistance, Ye Xian obtained beautiful brocade garments and embroidered shoes. She wore them and secretly attended the festival, only to flee hastily when discovered by her stepmother, accidentally dropping one of her embroidered shoes. This shoe was later found by a king who sent people to find Ye Xian and crowned her queen. The story was later spread to Europe by Arabs and French scholars during the Tang Dynasty. This demonstrates that Ye Xian serves as the prototype for the Western Cinderella fairy tale, with the origins of Cinderella-type stories rooted in the regions where the Zhuang people now reside in Guangxi. The Ye Xian story reflects the creativity, culture, and cultural interactions of the Tang Dynasty Zhuang people [9]. Given this context, when translating the Ye Xian story, a domestication strategy could be adopted, rendering it as "Ye Xian, Chinese Cinderella, a kind but poor girl in the folklore of the Zhuang ethnic group." By adding translations and inserting phrases, not only does it convey the cultural imagery of the Zhuang people, but it also makes the target language readers more receptive and understanding of the translation, while attracting readers to explore the story of China's "Cinderella".

4 DIFFICULTIES AND STRATEGIES OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF GUANGXI CLOTHING IN EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

In modern times, Guangxi's intangible cultural heritage of ethnic and regional clothing has undergone continuous evolution. Designers and inheritors have integrated traditional elements like brocade weaving and embroidery with modern innovations such as textile science, cutting techniques, design concepts, and product styles. This fusion has led

to the creation of numerous new products that not only preserve the traditional ethnic charm of garments but also resonate with younger generations, establishing these designs as significant symbols of Guangxi's regional identity.

4.1 Difficulties in the Dissemination of Guangxi's Clothing Category of Intangible Cultural Heritage

As Guangxi continues to integrate into the Belt and Road Initiative, the related products and cultural elements of Guangxi's intangible cultural heritage in the clothing category have also spread to countries along the Belt and Road through regional industries, products, and cultural dissemination, promoting the development and spread of Guangxi's intangible cultural heritage in clothing techniques. However, there are also certain challenges and difficulties in this process. First, the quality of translations needs improvement. Some texts are translated using strategies such as literal translation, transliteration, and free translation, which can lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations when readers encounter information that requires supplementation or annotation. Second, the translation of cultural imagery containing the ethnic characteristics of Guangxi is inadequate. Due to the long-term migration and production processes of various ethnic minorities in Guangxi, they have developed unique labor and life wisdom, combined with continuous integration and development, forming cultural characteristics and belief symbols distinct from other regions. Some translators have not considered the acceptance level of target language readers and the characteristics of culturally loaded terms, resorting to abbreviated or expanded translation strategies, resulting in significant deviations from the original meaning. Third, the construction of a corpus based on Guangxi's intangible cultural heritage in clothing categories needs further deepening. Currently, most text translations still rely on manual translation or a combination of manual and software translation. There are inconsistent and varied situations in the translation of fixed expressions and proper nouns, greatly reducing translation efficiency and readability. Therefore, we can improve the external dissemination of Guangxi's intangible cultural heritage in clothing categories from the following three aspects.

4.2 Strategies for the International Communication of Guangxi's Costume Intangible Cultural Heritage

Firstly, focus on cultural imagery to preserve the uniqueness of Guangxi's intangible cultural heritage in traditional attire. Through the integration and development of various ethnic groups, Guangxi's ethnic costumes have evolved distinctive cultural imagery in craftsmanship, production techniques, and design styles. Translators should fully explore the cultural elements embedded in these garments and investigate the cultural symbolism behind them. When translating culturally significant terms, methods like annotations, contextual elaboration, and free translation can effectively convey Guangxi's unique ethnic culture to readers.

Secondly, To build dynamic archives that provide materials for the ongoing development of Guangxi's intangible cultural heritage (ICH) corpus in the clothing category. With the continuous advancement of technologies like artificial intelligence and machine learning, traditional manual translation practices can no longer meet the demands of information-era cultural communication. By establishing parallel corpora for Guangxi's clothing-related ICH and implementing large-scale machine learning applications, we can effectively enhance the efficiency and impact of regional image and cultural symbolism dissemination.

Thirdly, Enhance dissemination efforts to promote the living inheritance of Guangxi's intangible cultural heritage in the apparel sector. Utilize modern technology to document and share craft techniques and oral histories from inheritors. Through master-apprentice transmission, cultural study tours, and digital dissemination of intangible heritage, systematically address the talent gap in heritage preservation. Strengthen international promotion and intellectual property protection for Guangxi's heritage garments, boost brand development of distinctive products (e.g., Zhuang brocade, Miao embroidery, Dong embroidery), and create immersive cultural tourism experiences (e.g., Maonan ethnic bamboo hat weaving techniques, Yao ethnic embroidery skills) that allow domestic and international tourists to consume culture through experiential engagement.

5 CONCLUSION

The intangible cultural heritage of clothing in Guangxi is a treasure of the integration and development of various ethnic cultures in Guangxi. With the continuous advancement of the Belt and Road Initiative, the intangible cultural heritage of clothing in Guangxi has become an important regional cultural symbol and a business card for external exchanges, reaching overseas. Taking textile, dyeing, embroidery, production, and cultural connotation as research objects, I explore strategies for the international dissemination of the intangible cultural heritage of clothing in Guangxi. While preserving the cultural imagery of ethnic groups, this approach constructs a living archive to provide efficient linguistic support for the construction of a corpus of the intangible cultural heritage of clothing in Guangxi and its international dissemination. At the same time, as practitioners and researchers of cultural international dissemination, translators should also break free from the constraints of literal meanings in the source language, appropriately supplementing and extending the translation to enhance its readability and acceptability while ensuring the target readers can easily understand and accept it.

COMPETING INTERESTS

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