

## YI COSTUMES AT LIANGSHAN, CHINA: ETHNIC IDENTITY AND SELF-REPRESENTATION OF A MINORITY IN THE CONTEXT OF MODERNITY\*

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### ABSTRACT

‘Yi Costumes at Liangshan, China: Ethnic Identity and Self-Representation of a Minority in the Context of Modernity’ is qualitative research with four research objectives. 1) To study the historical development of Yi people in Liangshan Province. 2) To study costumes in the dimension of ethnicity and material culture; 3) To study Yi's costume in the dimension of commoditization; 4) To study modern fashion from Yi's costumes in the context of modernity. two research concepts: ethnic identity and self-representation.

The results of the research are Yi costumes at Liangshan, China, which are produced to cater directly to the ethnic context of the Yi people. Such garments are being practiced on Yi people's bodies in various situations. The such costume can therefore very well indicate the ethnic identity of the Yi people. But nowadays, with the ethnic development policy of the government, it has become an important context to add the new roles of Yi costumes. This allows the Yi people to present themselves to others and to the outside world. The Yi people have chosen to present their identities through unique costumes. However, the process of presenting oneself to others. As a result, the Yi people have been creating a variety of cultures in their costumes under different conditions. Including in terms of making culture a commodity.

**Keywords :** 1. Yi Costumes 2. Ethnic Identity 3. Self- Identity Representation 4. Modernity

### 1. Introduction

The historical development of the Yi people at Liangshan Prefecture, Sichuan Province. Located in the southwestern part of Sichuan Province, Liangshan Prefecture covers an area of more than 60,000 square kilometers and has a total population of more than 4 million, with more than 10 ethnic minorities living in its territory, including

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Han, Yi, Tibetan, and Mongolian. It is a necessary route to Yunnan and Southeast Asian countries, called the "Southern Silk Road". Due to its high altitude, complex terrain, and frequent natural disasters, the Liangshan region has a complex geographical and climatic environment. Therefore, in terms of the overall natural environment and survival conditions, Liangshan Prefecture can be said to be the worst and most difficult region in southwest China in terms of survival and has become one of the most impoverished regions in China. Over the years, Liangshan Prefecture has been concerned by the people of the world because of its poverty, but in fact, the beautiful Liangshan not only has a long history, splendid culture, and colorful ethnic customs.

Yi is the oldest ethnic minority in China and is primarily located in Yunnan, Guizhou, Sichuan, and Guangxi provinces, with Liangshan being the largest Yi settlement in China. The Yi have their own language, music, and dance. As the most direct form of cultural expression, costumes can effectively convey the cultural history of a people. The Yi have a wide range of costumes in a variety of colors and more than 300 different styles, making them the most diverse ethnic group in China. Experts and scholars agree that no single ethnic group in the world has a greater variety of costumes than the Yi, but more importantly, all of these costumes come from the Yi's mountainous regions and are handmade by the folk, reflecting the Yi's ethnic identity through their costumes. (Zhong Shimin, Zhou Wenlin, 2008) As with human history, the evolution of Yi costumes is gradual and from simple to complex. Yi costume, as a cultural symbol worn on the body, is not only a product of the Yi people's material life as they continue to adapt to their natural geographical environment, but also an external cultural representation that has accumulated throughout their history and cultural development.

Before the 1956 democratic reform, Liangshan still retained its slave society intact, and although slavery was dominant, there was no unified slave-owning regime, so it led to the formation of three major dialect areas in Liangshan Prefecture due to differences in geography, language, and family clans, such as Yinuo, Shengzha, and Suodi. (Cheng Jingjing, 2017) The traditional Yi costumes in these different dialect regions have obvious hierarchical and regional distinctions, and the styles, patterns, colors, and styles on the costumes are distinctive and clearly distinguishable, and the Yi people can often tell from the costumes which rank of the Yi and which region the outsider is from, so the costumes become a kind of marker to judge the identity rank and the outsider's region.

In 1956, the Chinese government carried out democratic reforms in Liangshan Prefecture, and slavery was abolished, so Liangshan entered a new stage of socialism,

and the hierarchical nature of the Yi dress gradually disappeared in the emancipation of "Equality for all." However, the traditional Yi dressing is still intact.

Since the reform and opening up of the country in 1978, the economy of the Yi region has been developing rapidly through opening up to the outside world and increasing state support for development. The traditional social form in this period faced disintegration and disappearance under the impact of a strong civilization. The division of labor in society, the commodity economy, the communication media, and the wave of part-time jobs caused many people to break away from their original social identity attributes, and some of the best Yi costume craftsmen began to make a living by doing their craft full-time, while more people became consumers. Yi costume-making is no longer a product of collective standardization but is developing in the direction of individualization and diversification. (Xu Yan, 2014)

After the year 2000, the Chinese government put into place the Western Development Strategy, which modernized the Liangshan area. The policy encourages and supports minority groups to show and express their ethnic identity to the outside world, which has become the cultural capital used to develop products to create income. So the phenomenon of Yi costume cultural tourism and cultural commodities has arisen in Liangshan Prefecture, and in order to adapt to modern people's aesthetics and expand consumer groups, many professional designers began to combine this ethnic costume with modern fashion elements, and after redesigning and reprocessing to make Yi The Yi costume has become a kind of fashion that is displayed on a larger international stage, making the Yi costume a modern fashion.

The Yi people and cultural societies in the Liangshan region are related to the geography, settlement, and historical and socio-cultural contexts of each period from the past to the present. The environment and cultural traditions have affected "Yi people's costumes." The Yi costume has unique characteristics. Such Yi costume is therefore a cultural object that indicates their ethnicity very well. At the same time, the ethnicity of the Yi people is important for defining the local identity of Liangshan. Thence, the Yi costume has been an important factor in shaping the characteristics of the region, city, and Yi communities from past to present.

## 2. Yi's costumes in the dimension of ethnicity and material culture

As a product of both material and spiritual civilization, the costume has long been regarded as a cultural representation by anthropological studies and has become one of the paths to understanding, grasping, and studying the cultural systems of ethnic groups. (Ma Lingying, 2018) The Yi costume is a reflection of the life of the Yi people, and the strict rules for wearing costumes in daily social life, special life, and festive ceremonies of the Yi people have given the Yi costumes different functions

such as clan identification, professional identification, status identification, age identification, marriage identification, etc. This special use of costumes has formed the unique national identity of the Yi people.

## 2.1 The Embodiment of Ethnicity in Yi Costume

### 2.1.1 Costume of the Liangshan and the everyday life of Yi people

The Yi people have many clans in Liangshan and are widely scattered among the vast area, which grants clear regional characters to their costume styles. In fact, the differences can also be noticed among the three dialect regions, namely, Yinuo (costumes with loose trouser legs), Shengzha (costumes with mid-sized trouser legs), and Suodi (costumes with tight trouser legs). (Hu Xiaoping, 2011)

The Yi costume in the "Yinuo" dialect area is mainly located in the eastern part of Liangshan Prefecture and is called the "loose trouser legs" Yi costume. "Loose Trouser Legs", as its name implies, refers to the loose trouser legs (with the width of a skirt) for men's trousers. The Yinuo men wear the "Chaerwa" and the "hero belt" in all seasons and a lock of long hair on top of their heads, which is called the "Tian Pusa". This is the typical dress of men in the Yinuo region, which reveals their unique ethnic identity. Young women wear tight-fitting and beautiful clothes and wear beeswax bead strings, silver earrings, and collars. Women's dresses are strictly regulated and can be distinguished from the hats they wear. Women who have not given birth wear tile hats, while women who have given birth wear lotus leaf hats, reflecting the wedding recognition function of the Yi dress. The costumes of the elderly are plain and comfortable, with fewer patterns, wider sleeves and waists, and longer tops. The Yinuo Costumes are distinguished by their luxuriousness, passion, and free patterns.

The Yi costume in the "Shengzha" dialect area is mainly located in the western part of Liangshan Prefecture and is called the "medium-sized trouser legs" Yi costume. Shengzha lads wear black headcloths, with "hero knots" on the right upper corner, and beeswax beads as ornaments. The most unique costume for women is the sleeve cage, the undershirt with white rabbit fur inlaid on the hem, and the colorful pleated skirt, and they wear earrings made of silver wire loops and red beads, beeswax beads, and a silver collar plate around the neck. Older people dress more generously, without too many fancy decorations. Shengzha Costumes is characterized by its decency, grace, and nobility.

The Yi costume in the "Suodi" dialect area is mainly located in the southern part of Liangshan Prefecture and is called the "tight trouser legs" Yi costume. The pants worn by men have a larger crotch but smaller legs and are made of black corduroy. Women like to wear brightly colored clothes, such as big red and medium yellow, with strong contrasts, and wear hand-loomed pure wool pleated skirts underneath. Young, unmarried women's hats are mostly triangular, while married

women wear flat-topped hats. The Suodi costumes are unique with their primitive simplicity, wildness, and warriors' boldness.

In the daily life of the Yi people, Yi clothing is an important marker to distinguish different branches of the Liangshan Yi people from different regions of residence. The dress varies from one branch to another, and even within the same branch, the dress varies greatly depending on the region of residence. Therefore, Yi costumes become a symbol of the region of residence and a symbol of ethnic identity.



**Figure 1** Young women's costumes in the three dialects of "Yinuo" (left), "Shengzha" (middle), and "Suodi" (right) in Liangshan Prefecture. Dress styles vary from one dialect area to another, and dress is a sign of the region in which the Liangshan Yi people live, forming a unique ethnic identity for the Liangshan Yi people.

Photo: Ding Xuerui, November 2022

### 2.1.2 Liangshan Yi Wedding costumes

Throughout the historical migrations and cultural changes, there are many rituals of the Liangshan Yi people that still maintain their ancient, profound, and humane cultural heritage, which regulate and maintain the social order of the Yi region and strengthen the ethnic identity of the community. (Peng Zhaorong, 2007)

The wedding is one of the most important rituals of the Yi people over the years, and the wedding costume, which is the carrier of the wedding customs of the Liangshan Yi people, is grander in style than the usual clothing. The bride's clothes are usually hand-sewn by the bride herself before the wedding, usually in two sets, inside and outside: inside a set of new and colorful bridal clothes, outside another set of old-age clothes draped with black or green wool felt as a symbol of healthy aging in her husband's home. On the wedding day, the bride needs to put on her dress under a fruit tree, tie up her hair with a red headband, and then wear a round headband. Women can only wear a round headband once in their lifetime, and those who remarry cannot wear a round headband again, so if you ask if they have worn a

round headband, it is a euphemism for whether a Yi woman is married. After dressing up, they wear silver hair ornaments and earrings. In the Liangshan Suodi region, women usually also get a valuable chest ornament, called "Zezefu" in Yi, when they get married. It is about two to three feet long, weighs five or six pounds, and consists of six to eight separate ornaments connected by silver chains in the form of rings, with auspicious patterns such as the sun, the moon, birds, etc. It looks very noble and exquisite as it tinkles when walking. Finally, the bride will wear the wedding veil, made of colorful cloth in the shape of a radial circle and decorated with chicken or peacock feathers with a festive, blessed meaning.

The costume worn by the bride in Yi wedding ceremonies, the headgear, and the batch felt all have corresponding folkloric functions, containing the Yi people's expectation and blessing for marriage and maintaining the purity of the wedding ceremony process, reflecting the respect for the bride and the Yi people's special way of using costume, which is a kind of establishment and maintenance of the Yi people's national identity.



**Figure 2** The author attended a traditional Yi wedding (left) during the field survey, and the dress worn was that of a young Yi girl, with bright and vivid colors. The dress worn by the bride (right) was hand-sewn, and the breastplate headdress worn was all made of pure silver, which was delicate and grand. The author is not a Yi but wore a traditional Yi dress when attending a Yi wedding, which is a form of respect and recognition of the Yi people's ethnic identity.

Photo: Ding Xuerui, October 2022

### 2.1.3 Liangshan Yi Funeral Costume

The Liangshan Yi people attach great importance to the end-of-life rituals of individuals, so the funeral costumes after death are very important. After death, Yi people are dressed in traditional mourning clothes by their families, cleaned up, and then cremated in a ceremony performed by Yi Bimo. (The word "bimo" is the translation of Yi language; "bi" means "reciting scriptures," and "mo" means

"knowledgeable elder." Bimo is a kind of Yi folk priest who specializes in prayer and sacrifice, and all Bimo are male.) Yi funeral costumes are configured according to local mourning clothing standards, and the fabric of the life jacket is usually made of pure wool or cotton; chemical fiber fabric cannot be used as the life jacket. (Sha Madage, He Wenhui, 2022) According to Yi tradition, the black batch of felt worn by the parents at the time of their deaths is provided by the daughter. In Yinuo and Shengzha, men are required to wear a spiral bun on their foreheads after death, and the inner clothing must be white. After the death of women, they should wear white skirts inside and blue and black outer clothing, and avoid wearing red and yellow clothing. Because the Liangshan Yi people believe that the soul still exists after death, and the soul has to wear the clothing recognized by the ancestors in order to be accepted into the clan, the life clothes worn by the deceased should stick to the old customs and be in the traditional colors and styles.

The importance of the Liangshan Yi people the life jacket stems from the worship of ancestors and the view of the soul. According to Yi legends, in the soul-sending ceremony, people will not be recognized and accepted by their ancestors if they are not wearing Yi costumes, and they will become the souls of harmful people. Therefore, in the funeral ceremony, people will wear their grandest costumes to participate in the ceremony to show their worship of their ancestors and respect for the dead.

The concept reflected in the funeral rituals of the Liangshan Yi people has a special function of maintaining the order of the community and is a manifestation of the cohesion of the Yi people, a spiritual force that sustains the Yi community, and the Yi costume becomes the material carrier of this spiritual force, a racial emblem mark, and a symbol of the ethnic identity of its community.



**Figure 3** Before attending a funeral, the Yi people are cleaned up and dressed in the grandest of Yi costumes to show respect for the deceased. This costume call "Chaerwa". The unique funeral ceremony reflects the ethnicity of the Yi people and is a symbol of the Yi group's national identity.

Photo: Ding Xuerui, October 2022

## 2.2 Yi Costumes and Material Culture

As a history worn on the body, the Yi costume is a precious material culture that solidifies the historical origin, traditional craftsmanship, aesthetic sensibility, and level of development of social productivity of each specific period.

### 2.2.1 The Making of Yi Costumes

The early clothing fabric of the Yi people in Liangshan was "Fireweed cloth," (Fireweed is a common herb in southwestern China, with a white film on the back of its leaves. The Liangshan Yi people will pick fireweed, sprinkle it with local sour plum water, and then twist the fleece on the back into thread while tearing it off to make fireweed yarn for weaving into cloth.) made from twisted fibers on the back of the fire grass leaves and made into fire grass clothes and fire grass bags through the fire grass thread. With the invention and progress of spinning skills, the Yi people began to use natural short fibers and various types of long fibers, such as hemp and wool, for weaving. At present, the material used in the production of Liangshan Yi clothing is mainly high-quality sheep's wool, which is raised locally. Every year in the fall, when the wool is sheared, local villagers repeatedly rinse the sheared wool with water to remove the impurities in the wool and then use a special "spindle" (A spindle, a special hand tool for spinning, is made of wooden material and spins the thread by self-weight or continuous rotation.) tool to roll the cleaned wool into a fine wool thread. Once the thread is successfully made, the next step is to weave the fabric.

The Liangshan Yi people have a special machine for weaving cloth called the "waist machine". The loom is extremely simple in composition, with no frame or body, and is a horizontal strap loom. The user combines the various parts of the loom into a set of hand-operated instruments. In the use of "waist machine" machine weaving, first, the two ends of the line are tied to the wood pile and rolled on the shaft, and the ground is used to maintain a horizontal state, with the weaver sitting on the ground, legs flattened forward, with the waist of the taut force and legs to adjust the tension of the cloth. After the weaving process is completed, the dyeing process can be started.

The Yi people living in the Liangshan Mountains have mastered the techniques of growing, making, extracting, and dyeing various types of dyes during their long lives and production practices. After the color is stabilized, the mud-soaked fabric or wool is put into the dye pot and then dried out. The dyed fabric becomes the basic fabric of Yi costumes, and only then can it be embroidered, and decorated.

Due to their geographical location, the embroidery techniques of the Yi people in Liangshan vary from region to region, and different embroidery techniques

are used for different parts of the costume, resulting in a variety of styles of Yi costumes. (Li Ming, 2022) These handicraft skills are concentrated in the production of the Yi "pleated skirt" and "Chaerwa", which are valuable handicraft skills.



**Figure 4** The process of spinning, weaving, dyeing, and embroidering traditional Liangshan Yi costumes is a manifestation of material culture and a symbol of national identity.

Photo: Ding Xuerui, February 2023

#### 2.2.2 Color Culture of Yi Costume Patterns

In the past, when the Liangshan Yi was a slave society with a wide gap between the rich and the poor, there were strict rules for the costume in terms of material, style, and color, especially the black and white symbolism in the color of clothing, which made it clear that people were superior and inferior. Since ancient times, the Liangshan Yi people have had the color concept of black as being noble and honorable. The Yi people use black to represent the earth, on which they are dependent. Black is the most basic and common color in the clothing of the Liangshan Yi people, and it is the base color of the Yi people's costume and the cultural base color of the Liangshan Yi people, which has established the deep, ancient, mysterious, and broad aesthetic style of Liangshan Yi costume.

Red and yellow are also the most common colors in Yi costumes. Red symbolizes the worship of the sun and fire by the Yi people in Liangshan, who respect fire during their lifetime and are cremated after death. The Yi people regard red as the source of life, symbolizing bravery and passion, which occupies a special place in their hearts. The Yi see yellow as a beautiful, bright, and precious color. The Yi also like to

use yellow to represent beautiful and kind women, and the Yi girls in the Liangshan region like to hold yellow oilcloth umbrellas, which also shows the Yi's love for yellow.

The symbols of any ethnic costume need to be expressed in a specific form of material composition, and this is the case with the patterns in Yi costume patterns. The Yi evolve concrete things into abstract lines and patterns, forming different patterns that can be summarized into four categories: geometric, botanical, animal, and artifact. The use of patterns in traditional Liangshan Yi costumes not only demonstrates the aesthetic sensibilities of the Liangshan Yi but also reflects the nature worship and religious worship of the Yi people.

Yi costume is a material culture that is directly related to ethnic identity. The Yi people's application of dress in their daily lives and ceremonial festivals is imbued with a certain cultural significance. Dress can indicate who they are and what makes them different from others, and wearing it gives outsiders a glimpse of the Yi people's ethnic identity.

### 3. Yi's costume in the dimension of commoditization

Since the implementation of China's reform and opening-up policy, it has been oriented towards comprehensive modernization, and the policy has encouraged support for minority communities to recover their unique ethnic identity, which has become cultural capital used to develop products to create income, thus giving rise to the phenomenon of cultural tourism and cultural products. Initially, traditional Yi costumes were self-sufficient, the consumer group was only local residents, and the market demand was very small, but with tourism globalization, more and more tourists flocked to ethnic minority areas seeking unique tourism experiences; therefore, many ethnic areas have developed ethnic tourism with the main content of displaying rich and colorful ethnic culture and customs, and quickly achieved prosperity, which sparked the process of buying and selling cultural resources as tourism products in the tourism market.

Liangshan Prefecture has been using a "whole-area tourism" strategy for the past few years to speed up the integration of tourism and traditional handicrafts. Yi costumes have contributed to the growth of cultural vitality by making the area more appealing to tourists. For example, the local government of Liangshan Prefecture has promoted Yi costumes through local festivals such as the Torch Festival and the Year of Yi, as well as cultural exchanges with foreign countries, and has created a number of excellent music, film, and television productions to showcase Yi costumes. The company will also create a number of excellent music, film, and television works to showcase Yi costumes and vigorously promote the popularity of Yi costumes and stimulate the market. At the same time, the sales market for Yi costumes has been

expanding by shifting from the traditional local consumer market to the tourism crafts market and from traditional necessities to cultural and creative products and tourism souvenirs. At present, there are more than 600 Yi costume stores in various regions of Liangshan Prefecture, and famous enterprises such as Jiajia Costume, Guyi Yi Embroidery, and Zhaojue Clothing Factory have emerged. In order to display the unique craft of Yi costume in an all-round way and focus on building the Yi costume industry, the Liangshan Prefecture government has planned a "Liangshan Ethnic Cultural and Creative Industrial Park" in the urban area of Xichang City. " Based on traditional folk culture, the 10,000-square-meter layout of the park is the most famous Yi costume business park in China, which will drive the development of Yi costume and other industries in Xichang and Liangshan as a whole.

In recent years, the Asia-Pacific region, the European region, North America, and other regions are the main sources of tourists in China. As China has opened its doors to some countries, the commodity market for Yi costumes has been further expanded, and ethnic goods with distinctive cultures have attracted many foreign tourists to buy them. As a result, Yi costumes are constantly innovating to meet the needs of the markets in the source country and are popular with tourists from all over the world. In 2017, the Liangshan Yi costumes participated in the exhibitions of the University of Ottawa and UNESCO in Canada. In 2018, Liangshan Yi costumes again participated in the United Nations conference forum and exhibition, fully demonstrating the new achievements in the development and research of Yi costume culture in recent years, and Yi costumes began to really enter the international market, being recognized and loved by more and more people.



**Figure 4** Foreign tourists wearing Yi costumes attend the Liangshan Yi Torch Festival. The commercialization of Yi costumes has driven regional economic development and generated the phenomenon of cultural tourism and cultural products, making Yi costumes go international.

Source: Quoted from <https://www.sina.com.cn> (February 2023)

### **3. Modern fashion from Yi's costumes in the context of modernity**

There are many stages of modernity in China, and for modernity in research, this means modernity that affects social change. This is the result of economic development linked to social development and extensive convergence with the rest of the world since the year 2000. During the period of western development after 2000, the Chinese government promoted many policies for the development of ethnic minorities in the Liangshan region, which led to the modernization of the region.

Modernity in the Liangshan region is a continuous process of transformation from the existing civilization to a more advanced one. In modern society, a streamlined lifestyle has slowly permeated the lives of ethnic minorities, and new concepts have gradually replaced complicated and cumbersome ethnic clothing with stylish, simple garments. To meet market demand, traditional Yi clothing has been reinterpreted and incorporated into contemporary fashion design.

Since 2000, many professional designers have been joining the Liangshan Yi costume industry, and ethnic costume brands have been created. These designers have studied the traditional skills of Yi costumes, explored the design methods of combining the culture of ethnic costumes with modern fashion, and applied contemporary design concepts to integrate the ethnic elements of traditional Yi costumes into modern life, creating new styles and patterns. (Liu Xingtao, 2020) As a result, the designers are trying to be more relevant to the lives and work of the current consumers in terms of style, color, and pattern selection and emphasize brand awareness, using a modern enterprise management and sales model to maximize economic benefits, which promotes the development of the Yi costume market and the economic development of the Liangshan region.

Aniu Aga is the representative inheritor of the national intangible cultural heritage Yi costume and a representative figure of the inheritance and innovation of the Liangshan Yi costume. Over the years, she has been dedicated to excavating millennium Yi traditional culture and building a bridge between the essence of ethnic culture, the commercial market, and community development. In 2018, Aniu Aga's work "Between White Clouds" was launched at China International Fashion Week. In her opinion, tradition and innovation are very important; not only do we need to combine the most traditional and quintessential parts of Yi costumes with modern aesthetics, but we also need to make the traditional costumes more beautiful so that more people can wear them and so that Yi costume culture can better reach the world.

In the process of commercializing Yi costume, Yi people become connected to the outside world, and designers, artisans, and models redesign and rework Yi costume to become a modern fashion that spreads to a larger world stage. This fashion combines consumer history, tradition, and modern elements to connect outsiders to Yi costume culture, which is a way for Yi people to express themselves through Yi costume. Yi costume has moved from the ethnicity of the Yi way of life, or "Yi tradition," into the modern fashion arena, a process also known as the reinvention of tradition.



**Figure 5** The use of traditional Yi patterns and the modern type of dress modeling are fused to reflect a unique aesthetic fashion.

Source: Quoted from <https://www.sina.com.cn> (February 2023)

#### 4. Summary

The research "Yi Costumes at Liangshan, China: Ethnic Identity and Self-Representation of a Minority in the Context of Modernity" aims to study the relationship between "Costume" as a Material Culture of Yi, an Ethnic Group in Liangshan, which still retains its clothing form as a cultural object. At the same time, their cultural objects have connected them with outsiders. The Yi minority has been taking their costumes to show off their identity to others in an interesting way. Therefore, the results can be discussed in two parts: 1) The costume of the Yi group as material culture and 2) The elevation of the concepts used in the study, Ethnic Identity and Self-Representation as follows:

##### 4.1 Yi's costume as the material culture

###### 4.1.1 Material culture in the context of the ethnicity of Yi people

This research shows knowledge paradigm and generation through their relationship with the people and society involved. Therefore, Yi people's costume has the status of "Material culture". Yi's outfit in the cultural object dimension has made the researcher understand and discover a new set of knowledge that. The beautiful

and unique fabrics and costume designs of the Yi minority group are not caused by the skill of local artists. But it is caused by the construction of related cultural traditions. From birth to death, it also deals with the conditions of the terrain, seasons, daily life, and life in the various ritual traditions of the Yi people.

#### 4.1.2 Material culture in the context of the Modernity of China

As I have shown, the costumes of the Yi people directly relate to the life and society of the Yi people. Therefore, after China has developed the country in the context of economic reform. It has resulted in Chinese society entering an era of modernity that connects with the international world. In the context of modernity, There are two important factors for society. The first factor is the Chinese government policy that wants minorities to develop themselves through their cultural identity. In this regard, it had an important effect on the revival of the Yi people's customs and clothing. In addition, it has also influenced the culture of dressing as a commodity of commoditization. Secondly, the connection with the international fashion world. From the context of modernity, in addition to the revival of the traditional dress of Yi, which a special artistic effect on Yi's costumes has resulted in the creative imagination of modern fashion designers. Therefore, modernity pushes the Yi's costumes into the modern fashion arena gracefully.

Thus, from the foregoing, in the context of ethnicity, Yi's costume indicates the important findings concerning the clothing of the Yi people that It is an artistic phenomenon created by cultural relations and interactions, it is not from one mechanic. So, understanding Yi's costume phenomenon must also be understood through a social context.

#### 4.2 The Yi's costumes and the elevation of Ethnic Identity and self-representation

As presented in Part 1, Yi's costume is the material culture. "Yi Costumes at Liangshan, China: Ethnic Identity and Self-Representation of a Minority in the Context of Modernity" is the first research to study the costumes of Yi people by explaining them through the main concepts of ethnicity, Ethnic-identity, and self-representation. So the research resulting from both concepts has expanded the borders of knowledge and academic issues. It is a phenomenon caused by "inter-ethnic relations" and "interaction with others" under modernity. The new findings of research are about ethnic characteristics in a modern context that do not exist in isolation from the outside world. Here is the modern both of these parts. There are relationships and interactions, and everyone always encourages each other.

Importantly, in the present context, "Ethnicity" cannot be separated from "Modernity". The two parts are interdependently related. And these two parts are truly the structure of "Material Culture" in today's world.

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