

# The application of Yunnan Yi costume color elements in space design

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## Abstract

Yunnan Province, a multi-ethnic province in the border area of southwest China, is a rich tapestry of diverse ethnic minority cultures and traditional costumes. The Yi people, one of the oldest ethnic minorities in China, have their costumes listed as part of the national intangible cultural heritage, a testament to their specific research value. The author's commitment to integrating Yi costume color culture with contemporary interior space design is not just a theoretical exploration but a practical application that can create a suitable environment for the inheritance of regional ethnic culture and provide more theoretical support and practical application programs for the protection and inheritance of ethnic culture.

**Keywords:** Yunnan Yi costume, space design, costumes

## Introduction

Environmental design is a comprehensive interdisciplinary professional field that aims to provide a reasonable living space for human beings through sensible planning and design to meet people's material and spiritual needs. With the development of The Times, the discipline of environmental design has encountered more and more challenges. Nowadays, based on post-modernism, the development and research of contemporary design are gradually deepened, and people pay more and more attention to traditional culture. More designers will integrate

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conventional cultural elements into space design to meet people's spiritual needs.

As we all know, the inheritance and development of culture need objective carriers to bear people's subjective images and spread the connotation of culture through the means of use. According to the article "Color technology is not necessary for rich and efficient color language," "Each culture has its unique color concepts and symbolism, and through the language of color, people can transmit and share cultural values, beliefs and traditions" (Wnuk et al., 2022). This unique aspect of culture, expressed through color, is a rich and diverse tapestry that we can all appreciate and learn from.

Color plays a vital role in our lives; it has been assumed as a culture since ancient times and continues to affect people's lives; in the article "Visual performance of painting colors based on psychological factors" provided by *Frontiers in Psychology*: "Since ancient times, people have been studying color, until the 20th century began to appear a relatively complete color system. In modern psychology, researchers have found that vision is the most important way to obtain information sources, and its acceptance is far greater than that of hearing, smell, and touch" (Chen Chen Yao, 2022). Therefore, in our daily lives, even without any language or other information communication, color can still be used as a primary means of information transmission and emotional stimulation for human beings. After the development of the rational and functional design of modernism, the post-modernist design represented by color and national culture emerged in the 1960s, which not only inherited the functional concept of modernism but also added more humanized decoration. Therefore, in exploring contemporary design, designers have been striving to explore more national culture and a more inclusive design environment.

As the seventh largest ethnic group in China, the Yi nationality has numerous branches. The Yi people in China are mainly distributed in the four provinces (regions) of "Dian" (Yunnan), "Sichuan" (Sichuan), "Qian"

(Guizhou), and "GUI" (Guangxi). Among them, there are 4.05 million Yi people in Yunnan Province, concentrated in Chuxiong Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Honghe Hani Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Eshan, Ninglang, Lunan, and other counties (Bai Du, Yi, 2020). Yunnan Province, referred to as "Cloud" or "Yunnan," is a multi-ethnic province in the border region of southwest China. The province has 25 ethnic minorities, and so many live together to create a rich diversity of ethnic culture, traditional clothing, and clothing colors. Chuxiong Yi Autonomous Prefecture, as a tourist city in Yunnan Province with Yi culture as the central ethnic culture, will be more perfect and centralized in its preservation. (Figure 1)

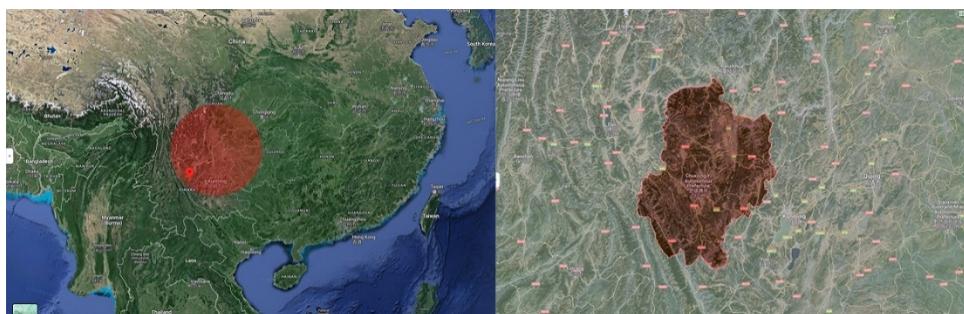


Figure 1: Chuxiong Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province, China  
(Map source: Google Maps)

As one of the oldest ethnic minorities in China, the culture of the Yi is still intact today after a long period of development. After consulting "Chuxiong Prefecture to promote the high-quality development of Yi cultural industry characteristics - thread the needle weaving Jinxiu life" in detail On November 4, 2014, the Yi costumes of Chuxiong in Yunnan Province were approved by The State Council of the People's Republic of China to be included in the fourth batch of national intangible cultural heritage list (Bai Du, Yunnan Provincial People's Government, 2023), It has great research value, and after a long time of development, the ancestors of the Yi nationality have produced a lot of branches because of the reasons of survival and development. According to the master's thesis "Chuxiong area Yi costume elements in the application of clothing accessories Design" detailed introduction: "Yi ancestors to survive and

develop branches, according to the " Brief History of the Yi "records, the Yi claimed to have 35 kinds, he said there are 44 kinds, after the founding of the People's Republic of China, it was unified with the title of " Yi ", and divided into 24 branches, and Chuxiong Yi branch there are 15".(Mingming Liu, 2020) These branches are divided according to the place of residence, the Yi costume, and the Yi language. (Appendix 1)

As one of the representatives of Yi culture, Yi costume bears the subjective culture of Yi people based on objective material. The Chinese master's thesis "Wenshan Zhuang Costume Pattern in Modern Home Soft Decoration Design Application Research" said: "Clothing can be used as a carrier of national character and spirit" (Li Yue, 2020). Although the Yi costumes, as a commitment to the spiritual connotation of the Yi nationality, have diversified culture for many reasons of their branches, their costume color culture will also produce specific differences according to different branches. However, on the whole, the primary colors of Yi clothing are similar, but the proportion of colors in clothing will be different. Through The Times literature "Chuxiong Yi costume color art culture" more detailed introduction "Through a variety of comparisons, it is found that the main colors of Chuxiong Yi dress are black, red, blue, yellow and white. Among them, the Yi people have a strong sense of worship for blacks, highlighting their self-dignity. The red on the dress symbolizes fire, which can bring people infinite enthusiasm and hope; Yellow brings abundance, warmth, happiness, and peace to life" (Shengting, L & Xiaofeng, H.2015). Although the development of national color may be interfered by objective factors, the inheritance of subjective consciousness in national culture will not change with objective factors, symbolizing the nation's soul and the endless national spirit.

As a tourism city with Yi culture as the center of development, combining regional traditional culture and contemporary interior design can enhance regional self-confidence and cultural inheritance and deepen contemporary design theories with more cultural connotation and inclusiveness. (Ruiyi L. & Jing G., 2022) Study on the Application of Yi Painting Art in the Interior Decoration Design of Homestay in Central

Yunnan: "Through the relevant research of Yi culture, the author found that designers should retain the charm of traditional Yi culture in the design process, and only by the coexistence of inheritance and epochal attributes can they design a space that contains the characteristics of Yi culture and meets the individual needs of consumers." The fusion of tradition and novelty in the space environment enables the diversified development of artistic images, which is significant in the humanities, art, and science fields. It challenges and surpasses the previous unified interior design and reflects the cultural connotation.

After consulting relevant case studies, the author found a few case studies on "the application of color elements in Yunnan Yi costume in space design." However, in the research process, the author found that using other minority costume color research cases in Yunnan Province for analysis could provide specific references for this article. According to the article "Use of Colours in Interior Design" in D'Source, "color is an important method of interior space design, and choosing the right space color is relative, and unified rules cannot be determined." When using color in interior Spaces, it is necessary to transform abstract color schemes, theories, and meanings into natural materials and data for experiential use in the space." (Shruti Hemani). Based on the same space and color, the paper uses color cards and experimental comparisons to verify the effect of other colors in space (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Use of red in space

(Picture source : <https://www.dsoucre.in/print/course/visual-design-colour-theory/use-colours-interior-design>)

The Dali White Balance project is located under Cangshan Mountain in the ancient city of Dali, adjacent to Erhai Lake. Shen Mo and Zhang

Jianyong of Hangzhou, China, designed the hotel. Since the person in charge of the hotel is a native Bai in Dali, and Bai is one of the 25 ethnic minorities in Yunnan Province, the hotel's design is mainly based on functional design and mainstream color design, supplemented by Bai culture. Tie-dyeing is a unique craft in Yunnan, so the designer integrated blue, the representative color of Dali Jachan, into the space (Figure 1-3). In addition, refer to the 2020 Chinese color academic paper "Color Research and Analysis based on Bai Nationality Clothing" : "The Bai nationality is one of the oldest ethnic groups in China, and the Bai people advocate white. In recent years, the clothing of the Bai nationality has become more and more colorful. From the perspective of clothing color, in addition to white, there are red and blue." (Qian X. & Sujie F., 2020) Therefore, the author believes that in addition to the introduction of the designer, the hotel also uses the color elements of the local Bai nationality clothing and its cultural connotation.



Figure 3 Credit: god Design network

To sum up, the author believes that Yi culture and space should be rooted in the contemporary mainstream design style while integrating the color and cultural connotation of Yi clothing. In the design innovation process, it is necessary to avoid total acceptance. On the contrary, it is suggested that it be implemented simultaneously to cater to the spirit

and aesthetic needs of the public with minority aesthetics. Suppose the Yi costume colors and patterns can be reasonably used in the interior space design. In that case, the Yi culture can be inherited and developed, and the environmental design can be further optimized in contemporary design research.

## Methods

### 1. Experiment: Extract Yi costume elements

Based on the above analysis, the author will use Yuanmou County, Chuxiong Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province, one of the Yi branch "Nassu" - Hong Yi clothing color and pattern elements for case study and analysis. To complete the analysis, the author took photos of "Nassu" - Red Yi costumes through actual research and with the consent of residents. (Figure 4 & Figure 5)

In terms of color extraction, the application "Color Collect" accurately obtained the clothing colors of the "Nasu" branch of the Yi ethnic group, as well as the color proportions of red, yellow, black, blue, and green (Figure 6). Finally, Adobe Photoshop was used to verify the use of extracted colors in the space, facilitating the research of author data verification.

### 2. Experiment: Interview

The "Color Collect" application collects the color proportion and lists relevant interview questions (Attachment 2). Then, 15 interior designers in Kunming, Yunnan Province, China, are randomly interviewed. The interviews are recorded anonymously, collected, and analyzed, and the answers obtained are analyzed by case study. Verify the feasibility of this study.



Figure 4 Red Yi costume

Figure 5 Dress of the Red Yi national



Figure 6 Color proportion of red Yi costumes

### 3. Experiment: Comparative analysis

Due to the ample space, the author will use Adobe Photoshop as the color-changing tool to change colors in the interior space to obtain accurate data and experimental reference objects, as shown in Figures 1-3 in the case analysis.

### 4. Method analysis

#### 4.1 Experiment: Field investigation

After an on-the-spot investigation in the Chuxiong Yi Autonomous Prefecture, the author found that the most commonly used Yi colors in the design of the Chuxiong Yi Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan Province are red, yellow, and black, and are decorated with representative patterns or representative totems of the Yi people (Figure 7). Therefore, based on the above research, the author determined that the primary colors of Chuxiong Yi clothing are black, red, blue, yellow, and white. Still, different colors will be produced in the clothing because of other branches.



Figure 7 Outdoor product design connoting Yi culture  
(Source of reference in the picture: Shuangbai County, Chuxiong Yi Autonomous Prefecture)

#### 4.2. Experiment: Interview analysis

According to the interview results, the 15 randomly interviewed designers believe that contemporary design has gradually developed from a unified aesthetic style to a design style with regional cultural connotation. As a tourism-based development city, Chuxiong Yi Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan Province, if the color of Yi clothing is combined with interior space design as one of the expression forms of Yi culture, it will be a great success. It can not only inherit Yi culture well but also promote the spread and development of Yi culture through the tourism industry and continue to deepen contemporary design theory.

In terms of color proportion, the 15 designers all have their views and opinions (Figure 8), including the use of a single-color design (red or yellow accounted for 6% and 7% of the total number of people), color design based on most people's memory of the Yi people (red, black and yellow accounted for 40% of the total number of people), the use of other colors of clothing (blue and green accounted for 0% of the total number of people). Use all colors of Yi costumes (47% of the total). During the interview, the designer believes no specific rules exist for using colors

in Yi clothing. Still, the colors of Yi clothing should be added according to the functional requirements of different Spaces:

- A. Give priority to the primary colors and secondary colors of clothing in the space;
- B. Compare the three colors with the most significant proportion of Yi costume colors with people's memory colors of Yi;
- C. Cross-matching of hard and soft clothing can be used to meet the application of color elements of Yi clothing in space.

The designers proposed that Yi culture should not be rigorously adapted into the design space for mandatory cultural additional design but should be analyzed and explained with reasonable cultural connotations. Adaptive design should be carried out according to different spatial functional requirements. At the same time, the development of Yi culture should be grasped, and the aesthetics of the contemporary social environment should not be violated.

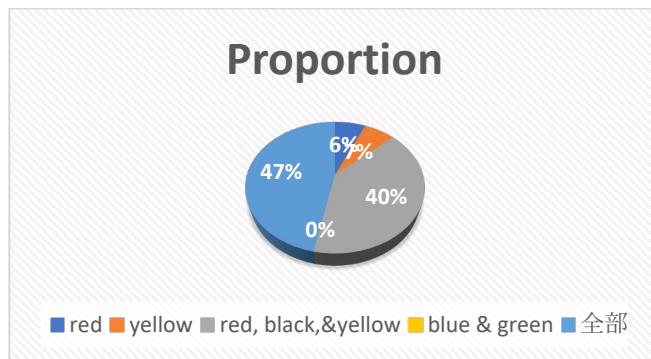


Figure 8, proportion of colors used in Yi clothing 利用 adobe Photoshop

#### 4.3. Experiment: Interview analysis

After using Adobe Photoshop to change the color of space, the first time we verify the comparison, we can get the basic conclusion.

- A. The space remains unchanged, and single color is used for spatial color analysis without adding clothing patterns (Figure 39). The results show that although color can express part of a nation's cultural connotation, a single color makes it easy to miscommunicate information

connotation. At the same time, it also causes the regional culture to lose its vitality.



Figure 9 Single color analysis

The space is unchanged, using a variety of colors (more than 3) for spatial color analysis without adding clothing patterns (Figure 10). The results show that using more than three representative colors to convey spatial and regional cultural information is more visual and more prosperous than a single color but also has a specific regional ethnic distinction and is more active in transmitting color and cultural information. The most prominent colors in the space are red, yellow, white, black, green, and blue, which occupy the most minor proportion of clothing colors.

Red is used for the wall, which cannot only be expanded to a more extensive scope in the visual environment but also contrast the neutral colors in the space white and black and create more active visual elements. Yellow is used in furniture because it can neutralize the excessive jumping visual color brought by red, forming a good transition neutralizer between red and black.

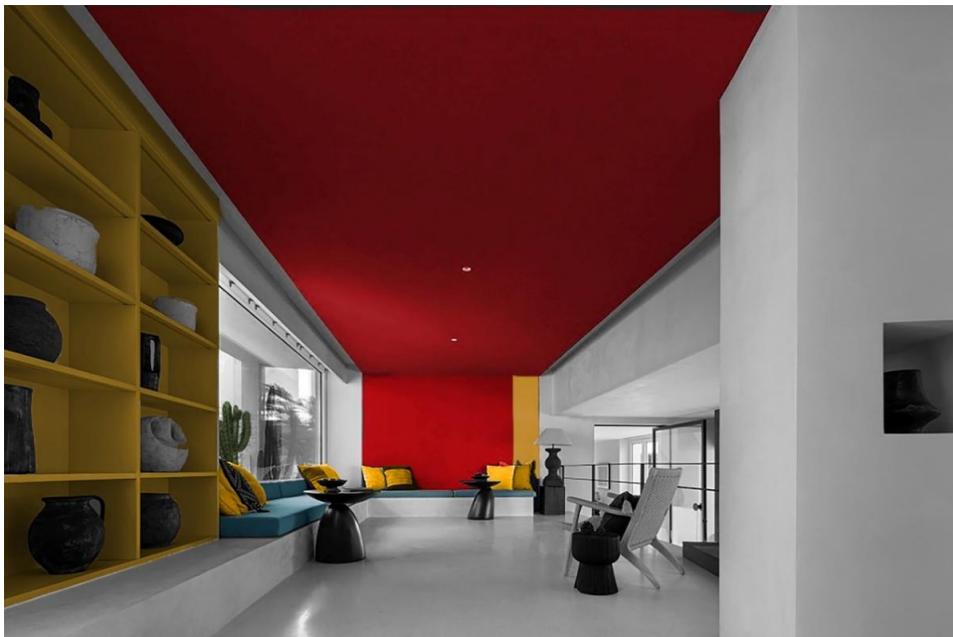


Figure 10 Multiple color analysis

### Summary and analysis

First, the design does not develop with an absolute attitude; instead, it is done by accepting the tradition without violating the current design trend, using the color elements of the traditional Yi costumes for appropriate color matching, and conveying the cultural connotation with color. The color elements of Yi costumes are integrated and used in space, and the primary colors are used to solve the problems of multiple Yi branch cultures. The author believes that using the mainstream colors of contemporary interior design as the primary color system, supplemented by the color elements of Yi costumes, can complete the Yi culture inheritance and make the space more recognizable. Secondly, the inheritance and development of culture cannot be carried out in extreme ways. Instead, it is necessary to combine tradition and form new developments to adapt to the aesthetics of contemporary society without violating the mainstream development of current society. The design should be based on the original copy of traditional national culture. The result will only be that conventional culture is incompatible with the development of the times. Finally, the colors of ethnic costumes in

Yunnan are used in space design to pursue visual effects and to inherit and promote national culture. Therefore, research on the spatial application of ethnic costume colors in Yunnan Province can provide more theoretical support and practical application solutions for the protection and inheritance of national culture.

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## Appendix 1

### Branches of the Yi ethnic group in Chuxiong and their distribution

BRANCH	CLAIM TO BE	HE SAID	AREA
SA NI (撒尼)	Sa Ni Po (撒尼泼) Ni Po (尼泼)	Sa Ni (撒尼) Sa Mei (撒梅) Ming Lang (明朗) Tu (土族)	Wuding
LUO LUO (罗罗)	Luo Luo Po (罗罗泼)	Bai Yi (白彝族) Gao San (高山族) A Lu (阿鲁)	Chuxiong, Nanhua, Yao'an, Mouding, Dayao, Yuanmou
LI PO (俚泼)	Li Po (俚泼) Ma Chi (骂池泼)	Li (黎族) Su (傈族) Ma Chi (骂池族)	Chuxiong
MI QIE PO (米切泼)	Mi Qie Po (米切泼)	Mi Cha (密岔族)	Wuding
20GE PO (葛泼)	Ge Po (葛泼)	Bai Yi (白彝)	Wuding
NA LUO (纳罗)	A Duo Po (阿多泼)	Gan Yi (甘彝)	Dayao Wuding
NUO SU (诺苏)	Che Su Ru (格苏泼)	Yi (彝族)	Wuding Yuanmou
NA SU (纳苏)	Na Luo Po (纳罗泼)	Gan Yi (干彝族)	Yuanmou
	A Luo Po (阿罗泼)		
	Mi Qie Pu (诺苏泼)	Black Yi (黑彝) Liang San (凉山族)	
	Nie Su Po (聂苏泼)		
	Na Su Po (纳苏泼)	Hei Yi (黑彝) Bai Yi (白彝)	Chuxiong Wuding
	Ni Su Po (尼苏泼)	Hong Yi (红彝) Gan Yi (甘彝族)	

NIE SU (聂苏)	Nie Su Po (聂苏泼)	Luo Wu (罗武) Tu Li (土里)	Shuang Bai
GAI SU (改苏)	Luo Wu (罗武)	Hua Yao (花腰)	
CHE SU (车苏)	Gai Su Po (改苏泼)	Bai Luo Luo (白倮倮)	Wuding
	Suo Du (所都)	Luo (倮族)	
	Xi Si Ma (洗斯麻)		
	Che Su Po (车苏泼)		
	Le Su Po (勒苏泼) Sa Po (撒泼)	Qi Su Po (气苏泼) Che Su (车苏)	Shuang Bai
SAN SU (山苏)	San Su (山苏)	Tu Su (赊苏) San Su (山苏)	Shuang Bai
A ZHE (阿哲)	A Zhe Po (阿哲泼)	A Zhe (阿哲) A Dong (阿东)	Shuang Bai
A LUO (阿罗)	A LUO PO (阿罗泼)	HONG YI (红彝)	WUDING

(Data source: Liu Mingming, master's thesis, 2020)

## Appendix 2

### Designer offline interview questions

Topic	The application of Yunnan Yi costume color elements in space design
interviewee	environmental designer
Question 1	Q: Do you think ethnic and regional elements are helpful for design?
Question 2	Q: When you usually design, do you consider adding regional and ethnic elements?
Question 3	Q: How much do you know about the Yi culture in Yunnan Province?
Question 4	Q: What research value do you think Yi costume elements have in design?
Question 5	Q: How should Yi costume elements be integrated into interior space design in the design process?
Question 6	Q: In what way do you think the colors of Yi clothing represent Yi culture?

Question 8	Q: Judging from the colors extracted from Yi costumes, how do you think the colors of their costumes should be combined and matched in indoor spaces?
Question 9	Q: Thank you for attending the interview. Do you have any better ideas or suggestions for applying Yi costume colors to indoor spaces?