

Research on the Cultural Value Characteristics and Contemporary Design Translation of Bai Ethnic Wedding Attire

¹Xi Ya, and ^{2*}Thirawut Bunyasakseri

Faculty of Architecture Arts and Design, Naresuan University, Thailand

* Corresponding author. E-mail: ¹942249291@qq.com, ²tbunyasakseri@yahoo.com

Received August 18, 2025; **Revised** October, 2025; **Accepted** October 26, 2025

Abstract

As an important component of ethnic culture, Bai ethnic wedding costumes not only carry rich historical memory and ethnic identity but also reflect distinctive aesthetic styles and ritual functions. Taking Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture's Dali city as a case, this study adopted methods such as literature analysis, field investigation, and questionnaire surveys to systematically examine the cultural value system, expressive forms, and structural characteristics of Bai wedding attire. It further explores innovative strategies for contemporary design translation. The findings revealed that Bai wedding costumes possess significant value in terms of ritual heritage, emotional expression, and cultural identity, characterized by symbolic garment structures, patterns, colors, and craftsmanship. In contemporary contexts, modern design can revitalize such traditions through East–West fusion, material and technique innovation, and user participation. This research provided both a theoretical foundation and practical approach for the contemporary expression of traditional attire and offers insights into the revitalization of intangible cultural heritage and regional culture.

Keywords: Bai ethnic group; Wedding attire; Cultural value; Contemporary expression; Design translation

Introduction

Weddings are among the most symbolically significant social rituals across various ethnic cultures. They not only embody the solemnity of life rites but also reflect a community's social structure, values, and aesthetic traditions. For the Bai ethnic group, weddings represent not only a pivotal moment of familial and societal restructuring but also a concentrated expression of cultural identity and collective memory. Within China's multi-ethnic cultural system, the Bai people are renowned for their rich intangible cultural heritage. Among these, wedding attire, as an essential component of traditional Bai clothing culture, encapsulates layers of ethnic history, religious beliefs, and natural aesthetic sensibilities. However, with the advancement of social modernization and changing lifestyles, the frequency of wearing traditional Bai wedding costumes in daily life has significantly declined. These garments are gradually being replaced by modern-style wedding dresses, posing the risk of simplification, homogenization, and even disappearance of their cultural and aesthetic value (Liu, 2023). Therefore, a systematic investigation into the cultural value and expressive forms of Bai wedding attire, along with its reinterpretation in contemporary contexts, carries significant academic and practical relevance.

Existing studies have largely approached Bai clothing from ethnographic or anthropological perspectives, focusing on historical development, structural composition, and regional distribution. While the Bai people have maintained a continuous tradition of attire, they have also adapted to external cultural and market influences. Nevertheless, most current research emphasizes the broader characteristics of cultural fusion, with relatively limited attention to the specific cultural symbols and expressive forms of Bai wedding costumes. In recent years, some scholars have shifted focus to fashion design and visual culture. For instance, Xie and Lee (2024) investigated how traditional Chinese folk styles are reimagined in modern wedding dresses, emphasizing the bidirectional dynamics of "cultural appropriation" and "creative translation" in contemporary contexts. Although these studies provide a theoretical foundation for understanding the cultural expression and modern transformation of ethnic wedding attire, they still lack comprehensive analyses centered specifically on Bai wedding costumes—particularly in terms of their symbolic systems, aesthetic features, and paths of contemporary design translation.

Against this backdrop, this study takes the cultural value and expressive forms of Bai wedding attire as its central theme. By combining literature review with field investigation, it aims to explore in depth the symbolic system, aesthetic style, and mechanisms of identity construction and design innovation related to Bai wedding attire in contemporary society. This research not only

contributes to a deeper understanding of the cultural connotations of Bai clothing, but also provides practical references for the contemporary expression and design translation of traditional ethnic costumes. More importantly, in the broader context of cultural heritage preservation and the strengthening of cultural soft power, this study offers a sustainable practical pathway for the revitalization and utilization of Bai wedding attire as a specific item of intangible cultural heritage

Research Objectives

1. Systematically analyze the cultural value system of Bai ethnic wedding costumes, highlighting their significance in rituals, aesthetics, and ethnic identity;
2. Examine the expressive forms and structural features of Bai wedding attire to identify its unique stylistic, color, and craftsmanship characteristics;
3. Explore innovative translation strategies for Bai wedding costumes in contemporary design contexts and propose practical paths for cultural redesign.

Literature Review

1. Cultural Symbolism and Identity Construction of Ethnic Wedding Attire

Ethnic wedding costumes often serve as a composite system of cultural identity, social structure, and symbolic meaning. As Zogaj (2020) noted, traditional ethnic attire is not only a visual representation of cultural heritage but also a primary medium through which group members express identity, participate in ritual practices, and transmit cultural values. She emphasized that in modern society, weddings—retaining many traditional elements—continue to serve important social functions through the symbolic power of their attire.

Yang and Talib (2024), in their study of Chinese ethnic minority films, examined how costumes function in visual culture and ethnic representation. In many cinematic narratives, wedding attire is deliberately emphasized as a "representative symbol" of ethnic identity, playing a dual role in reinforcing cultural otherness and emotional authenticity through cinematography and narrative structure. This aestheticized and exoticized approach gives wedding costumes a strong cultural label but may also lead to an oversimplified portrayal of ethnic traditions.

2. Aesthetic Features of Yunnan Minority Costumes and Bai Style Recognition

Zhao et al. (2018) conducted a systematic analysis of the decorative elements and accessories of various Yunnan ethnic groups, identifying the Bai ethnic group as exhibiting a distinctive "structure–pattern–color" aesthetic triad in their wedding attire. Using a combination of

quantitative and visual analysis methods, their study compared the styles of Bai, Zhuang, Hani, and Dai ethnic groups, clearly indicating that the Bai possess a high degree of stylistic identity, especially in color systems and motif combinations. This provides a solid aesthetic foundation for the further exploration of the visual logic and form of Bai wedding attire.

Weiming and Chartniyom (2025) investigated the transformation of Korean–Chinese wedding attire. They argued that ethnic costumes do not passively decline in the face of modernization but instead evolve into new cultural forms and narratives. Drawing from extensive fieldwork, they analyzed how Korean–Chinese communities retain traditional dress elements while incorporating modern design features to meet younger generations' aesthetic preferences. Their methodological approach—centered on aesthetic modernization and cultural recoding—provides valuable insights into potential pathways for the development of Bai wedding attire in contemporary society.

Zhang and Liu (2023), from a user-centered perspective, conducted an empirical study on the contemporary expression and reception of traditional ethnic attire in Western China. Based on a large-scale questionnaire, they found a structural contradiction in respondents' perceptions: “high emotional identification but low wearing frequency” regarding traditional wedding garments. This suggests that although Bai wedding attire retains symbolic cultural value, its actual use is increasingly constrained by modern demands for convenience, personalization, and efficiency. Therefore, the study underscores the need to prioritize user participation, contextual adaptability, and functional optimization in future design innovations to activate traditional symbolic systems in modern life.

3. Contemporary Expression and Design Translation of Traditional Wedding Attire

To achieve “living heritage” status, ethnic wedding attire must address the challenge of expressing its design language in contemporary terms. Xie and Lee (2024) explored how Chinese haute couture designer Guo Pei reinterpreted traditional folk visual symbols through modern structural language in her wedding dress collections, achieving both cultural revival and artistic sophistication. The study emphasized how Guo retained elements such as golden-thread embroidery and the traditional phoenix coronet robe while applying modern treatments to silhouette, color layering, and multi-material construction. This design strategy—combining Eastern aesthetics with contemporary appeal—provides a compelling model for the creative expression of Bai wedding attire and suggests that “reprogramming cultural codes” is more effective than merely replicating traditional symbols.

In her conference paper, Liu (2023) focused on the ceremonial attire system of Bai weddings in the Dali region. Combining cultural interviews with costume image analysis, she argued that Bai wedding garments are a crystallization of religious beliefs, family structure, and nature worship. Liu particularly pointed out that the question of "what to wear" in wedding rituals is no longer a matter of tradition alone but rather a convergence of ethnic culture and individual aesthetics. Therefore, design innovation must account for both "cultural context" and "contemporary semantics." This study raises a central question for our research: how to retain the spiritual essence of tradition while enhancing the communicative power and acceptance of Bai wedding attire in the modern era.

Research Methodology

This study aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of the cultural value system and contemporary design translation strategies of Bai ethnic wedding costumes. By systematically exploring their cultural meanings, expression forms and structural characteristics, as well as contemporary expressions and innovative transformations, the study seeks to propose effective approaches to guide the innovative design of Bai wedding attire. To achieve these research objectives, a combination of literature review, case analysis, and field investigation was employed.

1. Literature Review

The research began with the systematic collection, sorting, and analysis of relevant literature, with a focus on studies from ethnology, cultural studies, and design disciplines. Key references include Mackerras (1988), who analyzed the cultural integration features of Bai clothing; Zogaj (2020), who examined the ritual functions of ethnic costumes; and Xie and Lee (2024), whose work on creative translation of ethnic attire offered interdisciplinary theoretical support for this study.

2. Case Analysis

Representative examples of clothing design were selected for in-depth case analysis. Particular attention was given to elements such as silhouette design, fabric selection, color application, motif expression, and craftsmanship techniques. The analysis emphasized how contemporary design methods creatively translate traditional Bai elements. Key features explored include the fusion of Eastern and Western styles, innovative color matching, symbolic meaning of patterns, and the use of modern techniques such as beading, embroidery, and three-dimensional

tailoring. These cases provide valuable insight into the modernization trends of traditional wedding attire and offer practical references for innovative design of Bai wedding costumes.

3. Field Investigation

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the real-world application and contemporary design needs of Bai wedding attire, the study conducted field research through interviews and questionnaires. In-depth interviews were carried out in the Dali region, with participants including local Bai artisans, costume inheritors, and married or engaged Bai youth. The interviews focused on the perceived cultural value of traditional wedding attire, its use in daily and ceremonial contexts, current design demands, and attitudes toward design innovation.

Following existing research models, a questionnaire was distributed among Bai youth to explore their design preferences regarding wedding attire. The questionnaire addressed preferences for styles, fabrics, colors, patterns, and craftsmanship. A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed and collected, all of which were valid. Statistical analysis of the data clarified the specific design preferences of contemporary Bai youth and their acceptance of modern craftsmanship, thereby providing empirical evidence for user-oriented design development.

Research Results

1. Analysis of the Cultural Value System of Bai Ethnic Wedding Costumes

1.1 Inheritance of Costumes and Ritual Cultural Value

As an integral part of Bai traditional culture, Bai ethnic wedding costumes carry rich historical memories and social value, serving as a vital medium in traditional wedding rituals. In Bai communities, girls begin sewing their wedding garments at the age of thirteen or fourteen. Once completed, the costume is carefully preserved and only worn on the wedding day (Liu, 2023). After the ceremony, it becomes a cherished keepsake, occasionally worn again during major festivals. This practice reflects the Bai community's deep respect for wedding attire and highlights its unique role in cultural transmission. Accessories worn on the wedding day—such as silver bracelets and snake bone chain—symbolizes a shift in social identity, marking the transition from maidenhood to married womanhood. These specific and systematic ritual practices make wedding costumes an indispensable part of Bai matrimonial culture, embodying the community's reverence for the institution of marriage.

1.2 Ethnic Identity and Social Normative Value

Bai wedding costumes also serve as a strong symbol of ethnic identity and play a regulatory role in maintaining social norms. Since the 1950s, Bai men have gradually adopted Han-style clothing, making women's attire the primary bearer of ethnic dress characteristics. In contemporary society, Bai women's wedding costumes have thus become crucial markers of group identity (Liu, 2023). Under globalization, these distinctive garments reflect the Bai people's strong recognition and respect for their ethnic heritage, reinforcing cultural ties and identity.

Moreover, the accessories and ways of wearing the costume signify clear social roles. The details of a woman's attire can differentiate between unmarried and married status, reflecting the strict moral codes and social conventions of the Bai people. The normative function of these costumes reinforces internal ethical standards and behavioral expectations within the community, contributing to harmonious and stable social order.

1.3 Aesthetic Culture and Emotional Expression Value

Bai wedding costumes also convey the emotional richness and unique aesthetic values of the Bai people. The decorative elements in the attire often embody blessings and hopes for a joyful and prosperous family life. In terms of aesthetics, the costumes express layered emotions and artistic tastes, illustrating deep emotional connections to nature, daily life, and the universe. The intricate decoration techniques and restrained, refined style reflect the Bai people's modest, sincere, and poetic cultural character.

These costumes reveal the community's emotional world, value systems, and worldview. Through the details in adornment and wearing practices, the Bai people present their ideals of harmonious coexistence with life, family, and nature to the outside world.

2. Expression Forms and Structural Characteristics of Bai Ethnic Wedding Costumes

2.1 Composition and Stylistic Features of Bai Wedding Costumes

Bai ethnic wedding costumes are structurally rigorous, emphasizing coordination, practicality, symbolism, and aesthetic characteristics. Women's wedding attire is mainly composed of headwear, upper garments, layered jackets, aprons, trousers, footwear, and accessories. Each part serves not only a functional purpose but also carries cultural symbolism and aesthetic expression. Headwear is highly region-specific and culturally symbolic. In particular, the crescent-shaped headscarves commonly worn in the Dali region feature patterns representing the four scenic icons of Dali "Wind, Flowers, Snow, and Moon" (Figure 1). Upper garments typically include

right–front long–sleeved inner shirts, worn with vests and a sleeveless short jacket called "bijia." These clothing structures reflect historical continuity and religious beliefs, especially dragon worship, a central spiritual element in Bai culture. The aprons and trousers exemplify the evolution of Bai women's practical clothing, integrating labor aesthetics with matrimonial expectations. In recent years, the integration of skirt elements reflects the contemporary expression and pluralistic development of Bai costume culture (Table 1).



Figure 1 The Bai Ethnic Motif of "Wind, Flowers, Snow, and Moon"

(Source: <https://www.douyin.com/note/7331305914047237416>)

Table 1 Main Components and Stylistic Features of Bai Wedding Costumes

Component	Main Style	Function & Symbolism	Regional & Craft Features
Headwear (Headdress)	Scarves, kerchiefs, hats & ornaments	Symbolizes nature worship (e.g., Cangshan snow, flora, scenic icons)	Crescent-shaped headscarves in Dali, colors and patterns reflect nature
Upper Garment (Inner Shirt)	Right-opening, front–short back–long narrow shirt	Traditional ancient form, symbolizing dragon protection	Paired with round-neck vest and sleeveless, collarless "bijia"
Layered Jacket (Bijia)	Collarless, sleeveless, right–breasted short jacket	Layered aesthetic, signifies identity and aesthetic hierarchy	In Erhai region, commonly red, purple, green, or black with black–white trim
Apron	Two panels (front and back) with embroidered straps	Combines functionality and decoration; symbolizes fertility and harmony	Simple for girls; elaborate patterns for married women with applique/embroidery
Trousers	Wide–legged, foldable	Practical for paddy work; reflects rural lifestyle practicality	Skirt elements are newly integrated in modern designs
Shoes & Jewelry	Cloth shoes, silver ornaments	Primarily decorative, enhances ceremonial feel	Handmade, highlighting ethnic craftsmanship

2.2 Accessory Characteristics and Symbolic Functions of Bai Wedding Attire

Accessories play a crucial role in Bai traditional dress, particularly silver ornaments. One of the most distinctive accessories in Bai women's wedding attire is the silver beard chain, also known as the "snake-bone chain" due to its resemblance to snake vertebrae. It is typically made of silver, although gold or gold-plated versions are also found today. The upper part of the chain often features a bee motif, symbolizing "wealth arriving naturally." The hanging snake-bone chain links to circular pieces shaped like ancient coins, representing wishes for family prosperity. The lower end of the chain can be attached to a key, sachet, or crafted as a decorative Ruyi lock.

Carved earrings typically consist of jade discs, gold rings, and agate beads. These are worn frequently in daily life and are of considerable value. Silver hairpins, used to secure hair buns and headscarves, are usually crafted in Ruyi or handle shapes with refined and archaic patterns. In addition, silver necklaces and jade bracelets also symbolize a woman's married status. Receiving a bracelet from the groom's family signifies acceptance of the marriage proposal, highlighting the clear social identification function within Bai wedding attire.

Bai footwear also has distinctive characteristics, especially the phoenix-head shoes (also known as boat-shaped shoes). These shoes feature slightly upturned and pointed toes, with back loops for easy wearing. The surface is often embroidered with floral and bird patterns and adorned with sequins, beads, and pom-poms, conveying lively folk customs. Historically, men wore black or blue cloth shoes or straw sandals. In more recent times, influenced by modern trends, rubber or lace-up sneakers have become common. Today, Bai men's everyday footwear is similar to Han Chinese styles, with traditional cloth shoes only occasionally worn during ethnic festivals to express ethnic identity.

2.3 Color Application and Pattern Expression in Bai Wedding Attire

The use of color in Bai wedding attire carries clear cultural symbolism, with white being the most iconic. In Bai culture, white signifies dignity, purity, integrity, and humility. It permeates the entire outfit and reflects an aesthetic of cleanliness and elegance. Red, the traditional celebratory color for weddings, symbolizes good fortune and smooth progress and is widely used. Blue and purple are also frequently employed, representing sincerity and simplicity. Bai costumes emphasize strong color contrast and bold, vivid combinations. Light tones serve as the primary colors, with darker shades used for accents to create a harmonious and striking visual effect (Yang & Talib, 2024).

Pattern application vividly reflects Bai folk culture and aesthetic aspirations. Embroidered motifs often include flowers, birds, butterflies, and pomegranate blossoms—symbols of family harmony, fertility, and prosperity. Waist decorations may also feature mouse patterns, symbolizing vitality and fertility, expressing the ancestral Bai belief in procreation. These motifs are typically used as embellishments on sleeves, pant hems, and waistbands rather than in large areas, emphasizing refined details and decoration. This approach embodies a restrained and understated aesthetic.

Through its diverse structural components, clearly symbolic accessories, unique color schemes, and intricate pattern expression, Bai wedding attire forms a richly layered mode of representation and design. It serves as a vital carrier of the Bai people's cultural connotations and heritage.

3. Contemporary Expression and Innovative Transformation of Bai Ethnic Wedding Costumes

3.1 Stylistic and Fabric Innovations in Bai Wedding Costumes

Contemporary innovations in traditional wedding attire primarily manifest in the fusion of Eastern and Western styles. To design new Bai ethnic wedding attire that reflects ethnic identity while aligning with contemporary women's aesthetic preferences and wearing habits, Western elements are often integrated into the internal structure, silhouette, and craftsmanship of the garments. The three primary silhouettes suitable for modern Chinese bridal gowns include A-line skirts, H-line skirts, and mermaid skirts. Under the influence of Western cultural aesthetics, Chinese wedding attire has evolved into a series of silhouettes featuring various neckline styles, such as off-the-shoulder, sweetheart, Mandarin collar, and V-neck. Sleeve designs are diverse, including lamb's leg sleeves, puff sleeves, fitted sleeves, and sleeveless options. Through user preference surveys, the final design of the new Bai ethnic wedding attire adopts an 'H' silhouette with a round neckline and long sleeves, structurally sewing multiple layers of clothing into a single top. The overall silhouette is frequently adjusted to meet thematic requirements, reflecting a trend toward diverse and fashion-forward designs (Figure 2).



Figure 2 Contemporary Bai Ethnic Wedding Dress Design Style 1 – Female

In terms of fabric innovation, modern Chinese-themed wedding dresses are usually made from materials suited to specific wedding themes. Common traditional fabrics include natural silk, satin, cloud brocade, chiffon, cashmere, and tulle. These are now often combined with Western materials such as lace, organza, and flannel to enhance design diversity. This fusion not only expands fabric options but also integrates traditional aesthetics with modern fashion, allowing for more diverse and creative wedding attire designs. The new Bai ethnic wedding dress for women is mainly made of satin and gauze fabrics.

Innovations in men's wedding attire are also noteworthy. Due to the ceremonial nature of weddings, suits and trousers have become the mainstream choices for modern grooms, emphasizing solemnity and ritual. Common fabrics for men's wedding attire include pure wool, wool blends, and imitation wool. The “new Chinese suit” incorporates materials like wool yarn and Song brocade, blending Chinese aesthetic concepts with modern international styles. New-style Bai ethnic wedding attire for men combines wool yarn and cotton-linen materials, blending ethnic aesthetic concepts with modern international styles (Figure 3).



Figure 3 Contemporary Bai Ethnic Wedding Dress Design Style 1 – Male

(Source: Designed by researchers)

3.2 Innovations in Craft Techniques

Craft innovations mainly appear in embroidery techniques and tailoring methods. The most prominent trend in embroidery is the widespread use of bead embroidery. With its radiant sheen and vibrant colors, beadwork creates a three-dimensional, luxurious effect that enhances the artistic value of wedding garments. Designers now frequently combine traditional embroidery with modern bead embroidery, using materials such as crystals, rhinestones, glass tubes, beads, and pearls instead of traditional thread to create more visually captivating results.

In tailoring, flat-cutting methods of traditional garments are gradually giving way to Western-style 3D tailoring or hybrid approaches. Techniques such as darts and princess seams help accentuate the female form, making the garments more figure-fitting and in line with modern aesthetics and wearing comfort. Modern Chinese menswear, such as the “new Chinese suit,” also adopts Western tailoring methods to achieve sleek silhouettes that fulfill contemporary aesthetic preferences while perfectly merging traditional elements with modern fashion (Figure 4).



Figure 4 Contemporary Bai Ethnic Wedding Dress Design Style 2

Discussions

Through a systematic examination of the cultural value system embedded in Bai ethnic wedding costumes, this study reveals their crucial role in ritual culture, ethnic identity construction, and aesthetic-emotional expression. These findings are highly consistent with the view presented by Mackerras (1988), who emphasized the Bai people’s ability to maintain cultural continuity and identity markers amidst modern societal transformations. Mackerras noted that while Bai culture has continually adapted to external influences throughout history, it has preserved key cultural

symbols, particularly the ceremonial and identity-related functions of traditional clothing. While Mackerras focused more on the adaptability and continuity of Bai attire in the face of cultural impacts, the present study extends this by exploring specific design translation strategies and how they merge with modern aesthetic trends—an expansion rooted in differing disciplinary perspectives.

From the perspective of practical design translation, this study shares both consistencies and divergences with the findings of Xie and Lee (2024). Their research suggested that traditional ethnic elements require creative reinterpretation in modern bridal design, advocating for a balance between cultural symbolism and contemporary aesthetic expectations. Similarly, this study identifies such a balance as essential to the contemporary innovation of Bai wedding attire. However, Xie and Lee focused more on haute couture driven by designer-led practices in an international fashion context, whereas this study emphasizes context-specific, locally rooted design applications. It prioritizes the universality and cultural adaptability of costume design in real-life settings, driven by user perspectives, thereby highlighting a more localized and participatory approach to cultural preservation and innovation.

From a holistic perspective, the study has systematically clarified the cultural value framework of traditional attire, analyzed in detail its expression forms and structural features, and proposed design translation strategies tailored for Bai wedding costumes. It contributes theoretical references for academic research on ethnic attire culture and design innovation while offering concrete and practical pathways for fashion design and cultural industry development.

Contemporary Bai wedding attire continues to evolve in structure and style, yet its underlying cultural functions remain evident. Field research shows that many young people do not perceive traditional wedding attire as “outdated” or “obsolete”; rather, they view it as a meaningful medium for expressing cultural affiliation and emotional heritage. In ceremonial moments such as bridal processions and group photographs, traditional costumes serve as visual markers connecting ethnic memory with familial identity. Notably, some young Bai individuals actively participate in the design and customization of their wedding garments, collaborating with local artisans and designers. This practice transforms wedding attire into a form of co-created cultural engagement rather than merely a tradition to be worn.

The scenarios in which wedding attire is worn have also diversified. Many newlyweds now choose to wear ethnic costumes multiple times for wedding photography or cultural showcase events, thereby extending their usage period and enhancing their function as cultural

communicators. Driven by wedding videos, social media, and influencer promotion, Bai wedding costumes are increasingly becoming a visual medium for expressing cultural confidence.

New Knowledge from Research

As Figure 6. This research contributes to new knowledge by systematically integrating cultural value characteristics, structural features, and contemporary translation strategies of Bai ethnic wedding costumes. It defines clear paths for blending traditional cultural elements into contemporary design contexts, proposing a comprehensive translation framework specifically suited for Bai wedding attire. The framework is structured into three dimensions: cultural value (ritual heritage, ethnic identity, emotional expression), design expression (style structure, color patterns, accessories and techniques), and contemporary adaptation (East–West fusion, innovative materials and techniques, user participation).

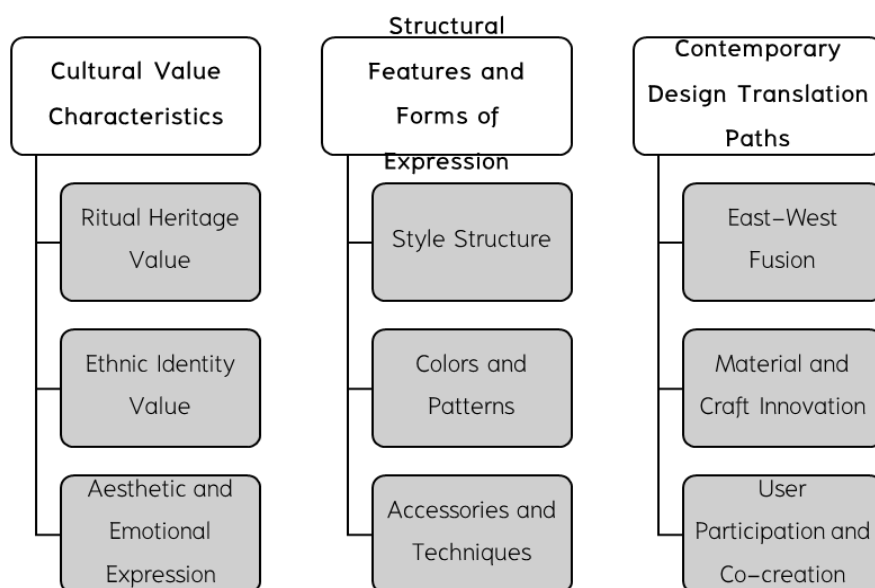


Figure 6 New Knowledge Framework (Source: Constructed by the Researchers)

Conclusion

Through comprehensive analysis of the cultural value, structural features, and contemporary design translation methods of Bai ethnic wedding costumes, this research has yielded three major findings:

Bai ethnic wedding costumes encompass a rich cultural value system, prominently reflected in ritual heritage, ethnic identity, and aesthetic–emotional expression. Particularly, wedding attire holds substantial symbolic significance for ethnic identity and cultural rituals.

The expressive forms and structural features of Bai ethnic wedding costumes manifest clearly in their systematic costume composition, symbolic usage of colors and patterns, and intricate craftsmanship of accessories and embroidery techniques. These aspects effectively communicate Bai ethnic aesthetics and philosophy of life.

Contemporary expression and innovative transformation of Bai ethnic wedding costumes emerge in three primary areas: garment silhouettes, innovative materials and craftsmanship, and user-participatory design. These innovations show a balanced approach between East-West fusion and local aesthetic preferences, establishing effective pathways for translating traditional culture into modern design contexts.

Suggestions

1. General Suggestions

Firstly, it is recommended that designers and cultural practitioners balance cultural heritage with contemporary aesthetic demands by actively incorporating East-West fusion in garment styles, diverse material combinations, and color schemes to enhance traditional attire's appeal and usability for younger generations. Secondly, deep user involvement in the design process should be encouraged through extensive surveys and co-creation, ensuring that design outcomes genuinely align with contemporary user needs and thus achieve a dynamic preservation of cultural heritage.

2. Further Research Suggestions

Further research may focus on exploring how innovative wedding costume design influences cultural identity and ethnic consciousness among younger generations of the Bai ethnic group. Through broader user surveys combined with interdisciplinary approaches from psychology and sociology, future studies could clarify the practical role of design in reinforcing cultural heritage and ethnic identity formation. Additionally, subsequent studies might integrate digital media and emerging technologies (e.g., virtual reality, interactive technology) to explore novel cultural transmission pathways and experiential models for traditional wedding costumes in the digital age.

References

- Liu, Y. (2023). Enlightenment of the traditional wedding customs of the Bai people in Dali, China. In *Proceedings of the 2022 2nd International Conference on Modern Educational Technology and Social Sciences*, 693, 309. Springer Nature.

- Mackerras, C. (1988). Aspects of Bai culture: Change and continuity in a Yunnan nationality. *Modern China*, 14(1), 51–84. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009770048801400103>
- Weiming, T., & Chartniyom, P. (2025). The wedding attire culture of ethnic Koreans in China: Change is an opportunity to growth. *Journal of Asian Art and Design*, 6(1), 51–70. Retrieved from <https://so01.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/jaad/article/view/281670>
- Xie, X., & Lee, Y. (2024). A study on modern wedding dresses reflecting traditional Chinese folk styles: Focusing on Guopei's wedding dresses collection. *Journal of Fashion Business*, 28(2), 50–63. <https://doi.org/10.12940/JFB.2024.28.2.50>
- Yang, S., & Talib, K. A. (2024). Discussion on the costumes culture and aesthetics in Chinese ethnic minority films. *Journal of Ethnic and Diversity Studies*, 2(1). Retrieved from <https://joeds.com.my/index.php/home/article/view/38>
- Zhao, X., Lee, Y., & Yoon, J. A. (2018). Characteristics of fashion accessories of minorities in Yunnan, China: Focused on Bai, Zhuang, Hani, Dai, and the Zang nationality. *Journal of the Korea Fashion & Costume Design Association*, 20(1), 109–124. <https://doi.org/10.30751/KFCDA.2018.20.1.109>
- Zhang, J., & Liu, Y. (2023). Research on western minorities costume culture and innovative development: Analysis based on a sample questionnaire on western minorities national costume. *Journal of Social Science Humanities and Literature*, 6(6), 5–12. [https://doi.org/10.53469/jsshl.2023.06\(06\).02](https://doi.org/10.53469/jsshl.2023.06(06).02)
- Zogaj, G. (2020). National costumes in today's modern time. *Philosophica: International Journal of Social and Human Sciences*, 7(13–14), 40–45. Retrieved from <https://eprints.unite.edu.mk/642>