

# Cultural Consciousness of Chinese Ethnic Minority under the Economic Globalization

## —Illustrated by the Case of Ethnic Yi in Yunnan

Hongyu Xie<sup>1,2\*</sup>, Jidong Yi<sup>2</sup>, Jianhou Gan<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>College of Travelism and Geography Sciences, Yunnan Normal University, Kunming, China

<sup>2</sup>Key Laboratory of Educational Informalization for Nationalities, Ministry of Education, Yunnan Normal University, Kunming, China

Email: \*[350080562@qq.com](mailto:350080562@qq.com)

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### Abstract

Culture is the soul of a nation, and national culture is the sign which distinguishes other ethnics. National culture is the direct reflection of cultural consciousness in real life, and cultural consciousness is the basic of national culture. The ethnical culture is easy to be impacted by the foreign culture under the rapid development of information globalization in China. As study subjects, 291 people of Shilin Autonomous in Yunnan province answered the questionnaire and investigator also made a random interview among the 291 people. Through the questionnaires and statistical analysis of the EXCEL 2003 and DELPHI method, the conclusion is the following: the ethnic cultural consciousness of Yi people in Shilin Autonomous County is rather weak today in China, the most obvious aspects showed on the ethnical language, folk dancing and costumes, festive culture and so on. At last, this paper suggested that people should protect their own culture under the strong urbanization and economic development. How to protect and develop the culture of the ethnic minority is an urgent matter in China.

### Keywords

Yunnan; Ethnical Culture; Globalization; Urbanization

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### 1. Introduction

Cultural consciousness of nationalities has long been paid close attention to by many experts and studiers

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\*Corresponding author.

throughout the world. So is there any problem about the cultural consciousness of nationalities among the ethnic people? The answer seems to be positive since the rapid development of information globalization in the last few decades. In the Chinese modern and contemporary history, both the conservatives and liberalists share a cultural anxiety in terms of the problems in modernity and nationalism. How to deal with this cultural anxiety is an important theoretic problem as well as a political, economic and cultural problem [1]. Numerous studies had been published in recent years regarding that there exists many problems on the heritage of traditional culture. In the wave of globalization today, the traditional culture among ethnic minorities is in the status of fracture and reconstruction, which those demise on the traditional culture universal in China [2]. It is an inevitable trend that the economic globalization will lead to the cultural globalization, economic power derived from cultural power [3]. Globalization may also be a cultural trap, which “smooth” the diversity of human cultural differences through the economic expansion and political coercion, so that let the human civilization and culture loses its natural, and at last it will become tedious.

Shilin Autonomous County is mainly dominated in the ethnic Yi who account for about 97% of the total population. There are ethnics of Sani, black Yi, white Yi, Yi pro, a fine, Ah Yi son. Ethnic Yi has a long history and ancient culture in Chinese ethnic minorities, and the total population is no less than ethnics of Zhuang, Manchu, Hui, and Uygur which ranked the fifth of the ethnics in China. The amazing scenery and vast fertile land nurtured Yi people generation by generation, but also gave birth to the Yi people rich history and colorful ethnical cultures [4].

Ethnic Yi has its own language, there are six kinds of tongues; and they also have their own calendar; music and dancing. The traditional arts and crafts like embroidery, silver, sculpture, painting are all rich in national characteristics. In the ethnic Yi Autonomous, the most solemn festival is the Torch, Torch Festival usually hold in Lunar June 25<sup>th</sup>, people point the torch, dance and sing around the blazing burning fire in the night. In 2006, Shilin County declared “Ashima” which was selected the first batch of national intangible cultural heritage, and the serial number is 28.

The ethnical culture is easy to be impacted by the foreign culture under the rapid development of information globalization, marketing economy and urbanization [5] [6]. The rise of industrialization and tourism in Shilin Autonomous has its advantages and disadvantages, it not only bring the opportunities of innovating and developing their own culture, but also affect the lives of ethnic Yi people, and the culture is changing constantly.

## 2. Method of Evaluating National Cultural Consciousnesses

The purpose of evaluating of national cultural consciousnesses is that it will provide a scientific basis for cultural heritage and development.

### 2.1. Participants

The participants are the ethnic Yi people from seven major towns of Shilin County in Yunnan province; they are Lufu Town, Shilin Town, Banqiao Town, Changhu Town, Gui Town, Xi Jiekou Town and Dahe Country. 300 people were surveyed randomly who were from those seven towns with different levels and different ages. At last, there were 291 valid questionnaires, so the effective rate of recovery is 97.00% (see **Table 1**). Meanwhile, some ethnic Yi people were interviewed during the investigation.

### 2.2. Questionnaire

#### 2.2.1. Definitions of 7 Kinds of Cultural Consciousness

There are 7 kinds of cultural consciousness in this paper, they are cognitive consciousness of national culture (NCC1), concerning consciousness of national culture (NCC2), participating consciousness of national culture (NCP1), behavior consciousness of national culture (NCB), protecting consciousness of national culture (NCP2), inheriting consciousness of national culture (NCI1), innovating consciousness of national culture (NCI2), the following are the definitions of them.

NCC1—It is a consciousness of getting the national cultural knowledge through people’s mental activity, such as the formation of the concept, perception, judgment or imagined.

NCC2—It is a consciousness of treating national culture with people’s eyes or the practical action.

NCP1—It is a consciousness of integrating cultural things by the identity of the second or the third party.

**Table 1.** Basic situations of investigated residents.

Items	Categories	Numbers	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	191	65.6
	Female	100	34.3
Sites	Lufu Town	40	13.7
	Shilin Town	41	13.8
	Banqiao Town	40	13.7
	Changhu Town	39	13.6
	Guishan Town	32	10.9
	Xi Jiekou Town	29	9.9
	Dahe Town	70	24.4
Age	7 - 18	6	2.1
	19 - 35	68	23.4
	36 - 45	51	17.5
	45 - 60	99	34.0
	60 - 83	67	23.0
Educational level	Primary	97	33.0
	Junior	102	35.3
	Senior	46	15.8
	Undergraduate	30	10.3
	Graduate	16	6.6
	Student	61	21.0
Profession	Worker	14	4.8
	Teacher	17	5.8
	Farmer	155	53.3
	Doctor	8	2.7
	Driver	1	0.3
	Other	35	12.0

NCB—It is a consciousness of doing something about the culture through the usual activity.

NCP2—It is a consciousness of caring of so that the culture can not be encountered from injury, damage or harmful influence.

NCI1—It is a consciousness of accepting the culture from ancestors.

NCI2—It is a consciousness of innovating culture with the new thinking, new inventions and new features.

### 2.2.2. Questionnaire Designing

There are 2 parts in the questionnaire designing; the first part is basic situations of investigated residents, including the site where the participants belong to, gender, age, educational level and occupational range. The second part is the survey of cultural consciousness for nationalities, including cognitive consciousness of national culture (NCC1), concerning consciousness of national culture (NCC2), participating consciousness of national culture (NCP1), behavior consciousness of national culture (NCB), protecting consciousness of national culture (NCP2), inheriting consciousness of national culture (NCI1), innovating consciousness of national culture (NCI2).

### 2.2.3. Questionnaire Distribution

The survey mainly used questionnaires and interviews; the investigation time was in November 2012–November 2013. And the survey in the seven towns sites were focused on the following: 1) school survey: the subjects were students and teachers, investigators hand out the questionnaires to the people with the issuance of school, and made a interview to some subjects; 2) community survey: the questionnaire were distributed randomly in

the community, investigators let the participants fill the questionnaire face to face, if the subjects were uneducated, the investigators would quiz and fill the questionnaires.

### 2.3. Process of Evaluating National Cultural Consciousnesses

There are two main tools of statistics, one is the EXCEL 2003, and the other is the VISUL FOXPRO 6.0, so that the results are summarized by them.

#### 2.3.1. Establishment of Indicators

The establishment of evaluating index system is the result which consulted with the research experts who are from the Key Laboratory of Educational Information for Nationalities, Ministry of Education, China (Yunnan Normal University). The level of national culture consciousnesses is characterized by a comprehensive evaluation, including seven first level indicators, namely cognitive consciousness of national culture (NCC1), concerning consciousness of national culture (NCC2), participating consciousness of national culture (NCP1), behavior consciousness of national culture (NCB), protecting consciousness of national culture (NCP2), inheriting consciousness of national culture (NCI1), innovating consciousness of national culture (NCI2) (See **Table 2**). And every first index is associated with the secondary level index, as well as the second level index was characterized by the third level index, and the third level index is the specific topics which have concrete scores.

#### 2.3.2. Determination of Weight Coefficient

The DELPHI method was adopted by this paper which determined the weights coefficient. There were 25 relevant experts who were from Yunnan Normal University and Yunnan University, they gave the scores to every first level index, secondary level index and every specific topic, and the average score were finally statistic by the investigators. And the first level weights, the secondary level weights were all reached at last, (see **Table 2**), the third weights was dialed with according to the average score.

#### 2.3.3. Specific Method of Calculating Evaluation

The method of calculating evaluation is based on every specific topic in the third indicators, which give four different scores of 0, 5, 10, and 15.

Comprehensive indicator scores, first level indicator, secondary level indicator were obtained by the following formula:

$$S = \frac{1}{m} \sum_{i=1}^n A_i \cdot W_i$$

In the above equation,  $S$  is the average score of every level indicator,  $n$  is the number of next level,  $A_i$  is the value of every level index,  $W_i$  is the value of every level weight,  $m$  is the valid number of the questionnaire. For example,  $S_{NCI1}$  includes two secondary level indexes and six third level indicators, so the specific practices are as follows:

$$S_{NCI1} = 1/m[(S1 + S2 + S3) \times 0.3749 + (S4 + S5 + S6) \times 0.6251] \times 0.1312$$

In this equation,  $S_{NCI1}$  is the total scores of inheriting consciousness of national culture in some one town of the Shilin County,  $m$  is the total number of valid samples,  $S$  is the score of the third level index, and  $(S1 + S2 + S3) \times 0.3749$  is the calculation process on the education of inheriting NC in the second indicators;  $(S4 + S5 + S6) \times 0.6251$  is the calculating process on the ability of inheriting NC in the secondary indicator.

The seven first level indicators were calculated through the above equation; therefore, the total score of  $S_{NCC}$  can be got through the following formula:

$$S = \left( \frac{1}{m} \sum_{i=1}^n A_i \cdot W_i \right) \cdot W_i$$

that is:  $S_{NCC} = S_{NCC1} \times 0.1541 + S_{NCC2} \times 0.1334 + S_{NCP1} \times 0.1982 + S_{NCB} \times 0.2691 + S_{NCP2} \times 0.1132 + S_{NCI1} \times 0.1312 + S_{NCI2} \times 0.1008$

Based on the above analysis, the total score of every level index will be reached, specifically shown in **Table 3**, of which the theoretical value refers to the average score which the 25 experts given to the questions of the questionnaire, and the actual score refers to a specific value which were calculated by the DELPHI method.

**Table 2.** Indicators and weights of NCC in Shilin Yi autonomous.

Comprehensive index	First level index and weights		Second level index and weights	
	Indexes	Weights	Indexes	Weights
Comprehensive national cultural consciousness	NCC1	0.1541	1) Common sense of understanding NC	0.5541
			2) Degree of mastering NC	0.4459
	NCC2	0.1334	1) Development of concerning NC	0.5238
			2) Education of concerning NC	0.4762
	NCP1	0.1982	1) Activity of participating NC	0.5012
			2) Propaganda of participating NC	0.4998
	NCB	0.2691	1) Habit of NC	0.4678
			2) Behavior of NC	0.5322
NCP2	0.1132	1) Common sense of protecting NC	0.4190	
		2) Policy of protecting NC	0.5810	
NCI1	0.1312	1) Education of inheriting NC	0.3749	
		2) Ability of inheriting NC	0.6251	
NCI2	0.1008	1) Concept of innovating NC	0.6137	
		2) Ability of innovating NC	0.3863	

NC = National Culture.

**Table 3.** Total scores of the first and secondary level.

Comprehensive index	First level index			Secondary level index		
	Index	T'score	A'score	Index	T'score	A'score
Comprehensive national cultural consciousness	NCC1	0.1541	0.0836	1) Common sense of understanding NC	0.5541	0.4231
				2) Degree of mastering NC	0.4459	0.2691
	NCC2	0.1334	0.1069	1) Development of concerning NC	0.5328	0.3719
				2) Education of concerning NC	0.4762	0.3927
	NCP1	0.1982	0.1098	1) Activity of participating NC	0.5012	0.4194
				2) Propaganda of participating NC	0.4998	0.4479
	NCB	0.2691	0.1285	1) Habit of NC	0.4678	0.3741
				2) Behavior of NC	0.5322	0.3701
	NCP2	0.1132	0.1117	1) Common sense of protecting NC	0.4190	0.4610
				2) Policy of protecting NC	0.5810	0.3379
	NCI1	0.1312	0.1148	1) Education of inheriting NC	0.3749	0.2690
				2) Ability of inheriting NC	0.6251	0.4183
	NCI2	0.1008	0.0941	1) Concept of innovating NC	0.6137	0.5709
				2) Ability of innovating NC	0.3863	0.2180

T = theoretical; A = actual.

## 2.4. Statistical Analysis and Discussion

It can be seen that the national cultural consciousness of Yi people is not high in Shilin Autonomous County after the statistical analysis, in the **Figure 1**; all the actual values are lower than the theoretical weight values in the survey. The detail is the following figure:

Through the statistics, this paper will analysis cultural consciousness from 3 obvious aspects: 1) language use 2) folk dancing and costumes 3) cultural festival.

1) Language use

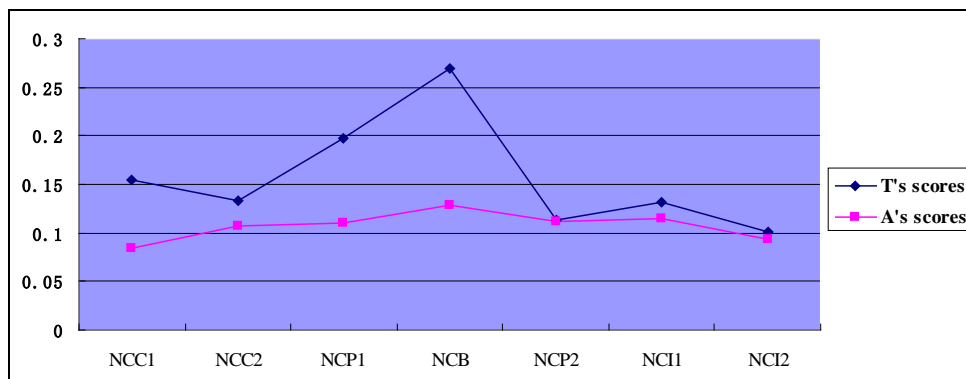


Figure 1. Comparison between the theoretical score and actual score of 7 cultural consciousnesses.

As we all known, language has the dual functions as a tool of communication and the identity of ethnic culture. In a multi-ethnic society or country, its common language bears more the function of social communication while the languages of minority groups bear more the function of cultural identity [7]. As cultural carrier, one of manifestations of national culture and the result of national spirit created. National language is of extremely important meaning for culture study [8]. The assimilation and use of loanwords is a natural phenomenon in the evolutionary process of a national language [9]. In Table 3 and Figure 1, it can be seen that the score is relative large between theoretical value and the actual value in the NCC2 and NCB, in which the theoretical scores is less 0.1406 than the actual weight value of NCB. The most obvious was embodied in the language use.

Through the random interview, most respondents are no longer speak the mother tongue in the 7 major towns, of which over the age of 60 Yi people speak mother tongue accounted for 59.6%, the group between 50-year-old and 30-year-old age are mainly speak Chinese which account for 30.2%, and the young people of 25 years old speak Yi language in “Chinese”, the frequency only account for 11.2%, so it can be said that the younger the people are, the mother tongue they speak less. The phenomenon of “Chinese” is a precursor to shake the foundation of the Yi culture which explains that the Yi language and culture has been endangered.

#### 2) Folk dancing and costume

Yi people are good at singing and dancing in Shilin Yi Autonomous County, the Yi folk song and dancing are the essence of Yi culture, which convey the daily living conditions of them vividly. The dancing costumes are not only the simple clothes and ornaments, but also the substantial factor of the dancing art [10]. With the rapid development of Chinese economy, Chinese society is facing from a traditional agricultural society to a modern industrial society in transition, resulting in China’s traditional agricultural society folk dance costumes, and modern social life, the aesthetic needs of the masses of people there not meet with the uncoordinated, national traditional Dance Costumes and function of culture is also increasingly diluted, or even lost, distorted, alienated. However, national traditions passed down since ancient times, dance costumes, after all, has its own unique ethnic cultural values and meaning, of which the content implied in some traditional and cultural implication of the ceremony along with the disappearance of national traditions and customs gradually forgotten by people [11].

As for the master of songs and dancing, the statistics showed that it has a higher proportion of 62.19% among the elderly people over the age of 55, which singing and dancing have become a “patent” for the older age groups; the youth group who see the dancing and singing as the “antique” now. According to the statistics, people can singing and dancing among the age 20 to 55 years old which only account for 18.27%; the reason why it happened like this is that these young men went out to work or study, and they have a close contact with the foreign world, so the way of life and the environment around them have changed, so that the ability of singing and dancing gradually disappears.

In Table 3 and Figure 1, It can be seen that Yi people has some improvement in the innovation of national culture while it has somewhat distorted because of the differences between the theoretical value and the actual value weights in the NCB and NCI2. the obvious aspects embodied in the traditional costumes of the Yi people, Yi traditional clothing has been kept the history for thousands of years, but people enter the complete openness of the living environment from the late 1980s and early 1990s, each ethnical people began to communicate with outside world gradually. The clothing exchange along with the external contact occurs, which resulted in the absorption of outside culture, Yi people began to change clothes quickly, most of the them have generally ac-

cepted Han Chinese clothing styles of Han, especially men's clothing, suits and the modern equipment mainly occupied men's daily life which accounted for 87.2% among the young men, Yi people in the age of 25 thought it needs to wear traditional costumes only accounted for 10.2%, 11.9% people thought it does not matter, most people thought that festival clothing should wear in the festival which account for 77.9%. The survey found that the declining of the ethnic costumes and cultural has two main reasons, one is the aesthetic ideas of people has changed, and machinery clothing have come into modern life, on the other hand, it needs a lot of manpower, material resources to make traditional folk costumes which is not keep up with the times.

### 3) Cultural festivals

It can be concluded that the traditional festival of Yi people is also undergoing a gradual alienation from the third indexes of NCB and NCC2 in Shilin County. For example, there are a few specific topics in third level indicators asked: "Do you think the traditional cultural festivals should cut off some taboos or procedure?" the answers were that it should be accounted for 69.8% and the people thought it should not be accounted for 21.7%, and "it does not matter" was account for 8.5%. Cultural globalization offers new historical opportunities for the modernization of national festival culture [12]. The phenomenon of contemporary variation of national festival culture is very general, it is mainly shown as the adjustment, changing, developing and innovation of all forms, content respects of traditional festival culture, at the same time, it is also shown as the appertaining a large amount of new festival [13]. There are many taboos and procedures in the traditional festival activities, along with the foreign exchange, Yi people began to change ideas, and a lot of taboos and cumbersome procedures have been streamlined, followed by the loss of festive cultural connotation and the alienation of honest folk.

## 3. Conclusion

Because of the development of history and the condition of natural history, traditional culture of Yi people presented different characteristics in the process of development. It reflected in different culture of Yi customs, religion, ethics and aesthetics. In recent years, Yi people especially the government began to attach importance to the ethnic cultural development along with the rapid development of the national culture tourism, but it is not optimistic for ethnic cultural consciousness of Yi people, which showed a gradual decay trend. So how to protect the traditional culture and development has become an urgent question, it has an important significance to raise the cultural consciousness of the Yi people in Shilin Autonomous County of Yunnan in China.

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