



**LIVING INHERITANCE OF DAI TEXTILE
CRAFTSMANSHIP AND FEMININE AGENCY TRANSFORMATION:
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC PRACTICE IN RURAL REVITALIZATION
OF MANG VILLAGE, DEHONG, CHINA**

**Yin Ruiting¹²ⁱ,
Zhang Rui²,
Liu Yutong²**

¹National Centre for Borderland Ethnic Studies in Southwest China,
Yunnan University,
Kunming, China

²Faculty of Art and Communication,
Kunming University of Science and Technology,
Kunming, China

Abstract:

Current research shows two oversights regarding female cultural subjectivity in rural change: it overlooks the role of intangible cultural heritage in reshaping gender roles. It fails to examine women's governance in overcoming the "family-market" divide. This paper examines the Dai textile craftsmanship in Mang Village, Yunnan, China, employing a case study approach to develop a "cultural aggregation- subject activation" framework to elucidate the interactive dynamics between rural revitalization and women's development. The findings of this study indicate the following: First, textile techniques reconstruct cultural space through the triad of material production, ritual performance, and pattern narration, encouraging women to evolve from "family producers" to "cultural meaning creators," thereby reinterpreting ethnic memory through symbolic engagement. Second, women leverage traditional mutual aid networks to engage in rural governance, transforming "domestic" labor into organizational and coordination skills, thereby exhibiting distinctive community mobilization in the development of cultural spaces and the planning of folk activities, culminating in a capacity progression from "skill inheritors" to "cultural operators." Third, the industrialization of handicrafts yields combined benefits in terms of economic empowerment, cultural continuity, and community solidarity. Women employ flexible production models to harmonize family responsibilities with public participation, which not only mitigates the effects of industrialization on rural regions but also reconciles the divide between tradition and modernity through the role of cultural intermediaries,

ⁱ Correspondence: email ruitingyin@kust.edu.cn

fostering a symbiotic structure of “policy-culture” dual empowerment. This research demonstrates how rural women convert local knowledge into revitalization impetus by activating cultural subjectivity, offering theoretical and practical pathways for reconstructing an inclusive governance framework.

Keywords: living inheritance; Dai textile craftsmanship; feminine agency transformation; rural revitalization; craft ethnography

1. Introduction

Dehong Dai's¹ textile craftsmanship is highly regarded, particularly weaving, which has traditionally been a household activity for women. The Dehong State Committee recently launched a “Tourism-Driven State” strategy to create a region rich in ethnic customs and culture, focusing on developing the traditional Dai textile craft as a key ethnic cultural industry. Mang Village, part of Mangshi City in Dehong Prefecture, Yunnan Province, has capitalized on its location as a transportation hub near the airport expressway to secure the “Mang Village Dai Brocade Cultural Park” initiative from the State Cultural Industry Planning Office. In 2023, thanks to policy funding, Mang formed a women's brocade weaving group, which organized local women to produce Dai-specific textile crafts, including hand-woven cloth, brocade garments, and ethnic satchels. This initiative has spurred the growth of rural sideline businesses and boosted farmers' incomes. By 2024, the women's brocade weaving group in Mang grew to 198 members, alongside 3 tailoring shops of various scales and 1 small garment accessories processing factory. There is also a noticeable trend toward attracting a younger demographic to the Dai textile industry, with product innovations that align closely with current fashion trends. Furthermore, the government established the “Dai Brocade Workshop” to promote and sell textile handicrafts in the Mang Village area. This initiative has earned the village several accolades, including “Dai Brocade Culture Benefit Demonstration Village,” “Yunnan Province Characteristic Cultural Industry Demonstration Village,” and “Yunnan Top Ten Embroidery Villages.” At the same time, women in Mang have become producers and operators of traditional textiles, taking on leading roles in various aspects of the rural textile cultural industry.

From our fieldwork, we have noticed that the traditional gender roles in Dai society classify men as leisure seekers and women as primary producers. Women commit themselves to textile production, fulfilling their families' daily needs and creating gifts for relatives and friends. Despite their substantial contributions, the worth of their textile work is often overlooked because these products are not sold for financial profit, which conceals their actual impact. However, with the push for cultural revitalization in rural areas, Dai traditional textile crafts have been included in the artistic industry. They are recognized as a resource-rich form of rural heritage. “Dai Folk Textiles Handcrafts,” a specialty from Dehong Prefecture, has gained recognition as a cultural product, highlighting the comprehensive economic, social, and cultural values within Mang

Village's traditional textile practices, thus promoting rural cultural advancement. In terms of production, women have perfected intricate textile techniques over the years, creating a distinctive ethnic aesthetic that is unmatched by Dai men. Faced with the traditional household management role, Dai women have historically participated in straightforward commercial activities and honed their inter-ethnic relations skills. The growth of Mang Village's unique textile handcraft industry has opened more avenues for rural women and empowered them significantly. Some women in the village have shown remarkable talents, earned community admiration, and have become key players in the rural revitalization process, attracting considerable attention. The endeavors of this emerging group will indeed influence the preservation of Dai textile culture, which has been on the brink of extinction, as well as the establishment of community organization systems and the broader development of rural culture.

We emphasize the analysis and discussion of Dai women's role in utilizing ethnic and cultural resources, focusing specifically on the tension between individual women's empowerment and the traditional social framework governing gender roles. Through this micro-case study, we seek to illustrate the logical interplay of "mutual assistance" between the enactment of the rural revitalization strategy and the advancement of rural women analyzed at a macro level.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Post-Productivist Transitions in Rural China

Rooted in the crisis of productivism under postmodernism, the concept of "post-productivism" serves to question and critique the notion of "productivism," which perceives the countryside as having a singular role focused on "agricultural production." In contrast, it highlights the multifunctionality, ecological sustainability, and cultural significance of rural regions (Wilson, 2009; Wang et al., 2024). In China, urbanization has significantly changed the traditional village structure; rural agricultural culture's "productive function" has progressively diminished, while the "post-productive function" has been continually enhanced. To ensure food security, traditional agricultural villages gradually evolve into post-productivist villages characterized by consumption, ecology, and leisure functions. Furthermore, agricultural products and rural consumption services are transitioning towards diversification, refinement, and personalization (Liu SJ, 2024). Research indicates that within the current context of rural transformation in China—where both "productivism" and "post-productivism" are present—rural areas possess dual value, encompassing agricultural ecological carrying capacity alongside social and cultural regulation (Zhang et al., 2014). Academics posit that post-productivist villages may be positioned as spaces where agriculture coexists with tourism, ecological preservation, and cultural innovation, thereby rediscovering the intrinsic value of "agricultural culture," reconstructing rural functions that integrate "life, ecology, and production," and exploring the relevance of "rurality" to urban industrial civilization (Liu et al., 2018). While these studies often emphasize the macro-structural

transformation of post-productivist villages—including aspects such as industry, governance, and culture—they overlook the subjective dimension inherent in rural development. Nevertheless, culture and subjectivity, as interconnected categories within local research, have long been the focus of scholarly attention. Scholars advocate exploring the underlying cultural roots that contribute to the dilemmas of rural development. For instance, Liang Shuming (2015) identifies rural cultural maladjustment and the persistence of conservative, outdated beliefs among farmers as significant causes of the deficiencies in farmers' subjectivity. Fei Xiaotong (2013) characterizes the “erosion of local culture” —evidenced by the diminishing cultural nurturing function— as a critical factor in the decline of rural areas, emphasizing the urgency of realizing the “reconstruction of local culture” centered around people, utilizing knowledge and culture as a vehicle, and fostering comprehensive social transformation. Although earlier studies did not explicitly introduce the concept of farmers' subjectivity, they confirmed the link between local culture and farmers' subjectivity, drawing upon historical experiences to illustrate the potential of cultural development to stimulate farmers' subjectivity (Zhang, 2025). A section dedicated to the significant literature resources consulted or employed that contributed to the study. It surveys scholarly articles, books, and other sources (e.g., dissertations, conference proceedings) relevant to a particular issue, area of research, or theory, providing a description, summary, and critical evaluation of each work. The purpose is to offer an overview of the significant literature published on a specific topic.

3. Cultural Practices and Rural Revitalization

In the context of fostering the development of a robust socialist modernized state in China, the Third Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China has established provisions for advancing reform within the cultural system and mechanisms. This reformation introduces a new cultural policy framework aimed at invigorating the subjective agency of farmers. In parallel, the initiative for rural revitalization underscores the imperative of cultivating rural cultural infrastructure. Scholars assert that through comparative analyses of Taiwan's community development and rural gentrification in Hong Kong, a need arises to investigate local history and ecological wisdom pertinent to rural revitalization. It is essential to transform cultural resources into economic drivers and steer industrial diversification toward leisure and ecological sustainability. Furthermore, employing cultural heritage as a means to fortify community cohesion and counteract “de-agriculturalization” and “de-communityization,” which stem from industrialization, emerges as a vital strategy to reconstruct rural subjectivity and facilitate sustainable development (Liu, 2024). Zhang Jianyu (2025) advances the notion of the “Aggregation of Cultural Functions,” advocating for the utilization of rural cultural practices—such as folk festivals and traditional skills—as vehicles to consolidate the tripartite functions of meeting livelihood needs, constructing cultural identity, and enhancing governance effectiveness. This aggregation

is posited to activate farmers' autonomy, initiative, and creativity, thereby fostering their transition from "passive participants" to the "principal actors in rural revitalization," consequently addressing the inadequacy of endogenous power in rural settings. Scholars have employed this framework to scrutinize rural revitalization propelled by "intangible cultural heritage protection" policies and "rural civilization enhancement." Wang (2024) elucidate the significance of traditional handicrafts as vital cultural assets in rural revitalization by examining the post-productivist approaches in both developed (such as the European Union's agricultural environmental policies) and developing nations (like China's trend toward "de-agriculturalization"). These approaches embody the tension between cultural preservation and market principles, potentially serving as a viable avenue to actualize the transformative potential of rural cultural capital into multifaceted value and re-establish the principal identity of farmers (Wang et al., 2024). Qu Aixue (Qu et al., 2023) utilizes Xuzhou Mazhuang sachets as a case study to illustrate how the realm of intangible cultural heritage can activate villages through a "trinity" model comprising production, display, and tourism. This activation purportedly strengthens local cultural identity by innovating intangible cultural heritage symbols, facilitating the transition of villagers from traditional producers to cultural custodians, industrial operatives, and inventive practitioners (Qu et al., 2023). Zhang (2025) further asserts that the subjectivity of farmers in rural revitalization is distinctly articulated through the functional aggregation mechanism of local culture, forming a principal driving force that engenders rural development through the establishment of autonomy, enhancement of awareness, expansion of initiative, and exercising of creativity, thereby creating a virtuous cycle of "cultural empowerment-subject action-rural development." Existing scholarly works exhibit a lack of systematic consideration regarding the role of gender dynamics, particularly the participation of women as central custodians of local culture—such as with intangible cultural heritage crafts—wherein their labor value and subjectivity have predominantly remained in an "invisible" status.

In all, the literature frequently relegates female artisans to passive "cultural resources" rather than recognizing them as active agents in rural governance and economic restructuring. For instance, while the study of Mazhuang sachets highlights the reconstruction of the intangible cultural heritage space, it fails to analyze how women transcend the traditional "family labor" role through craft practices, subsequently empowering their decision-making capabilities and economic involvement in the public sphere (Qu et al., 2023). Furthermore, although the theorization of "cultural function aggregation" proposes pathways to stimulate farmer subjectivity, it does not adequately investigate the disparate influences of gender differences on the efficacy of cultural aggregation (Zhang, 2025). This theoretical gap leads to two unresolved pivotal issues: First, do female handicrafts possess a distinct cultural aggregation function—precisely, through skill transmission, community cooperation, and symbol creation, thereby reshaping rural social relational networks and local identity? Second, how might women achieve "subject activation" through craft practices to transcend the "family market"

dichotomy and emerge as participants in governance and cultural innovation during rural revitalization?

This paper explores the textile handicrafts of Dai women in Dehong, Yunnan, focusing on these key issues: 1. Cultural Aggregation Function: How does Dai textile craftsmanship reconstruct rural cultural spaces and social capital through the three dimensions of “material-ritual-narrative”? 2. Subjectivity Activation Mechanism: How do female artisans navigate traditional gender labor divisions, market regulations, and policy interventions within the multi-scale production network of “family workshop-cooperative-cultural park” to legitimize their identity as “cultural governance subjects”?

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Case Study Design

Recognizing the cultural intricacies of Dai brocade weaving and its subtle effects on female identity, the research team conducted in-depth participant observation and semi-structured interviews to develop a systematic understanding of the field. Our selection criteria focused on three aspects: 1) the complete intergenerational transfer of brocade weaving techniques along with a significant base of practitioners; 2) the preservation of traditional Dai social systems, including the “Pai Chuang Sect of Theravada Buddhism” belief and village mutual aid, showcasing cultural authenticity; 3) a rich interaction between weaving traditions and rural revitalization policies. Consequently, we selected Mang Village in Mangshi, Dehong Prefecture, Yunnan Province, as the field site. As a critical location for the living heritage of Dai textile culture, Mang Village encapsulates its distinctiveness and universality: its integrated textile culture system—encompassing designs, techniques, and rituals—has developed over nearly three centuries, serving as a foundational force to enhance female subjectivity. Simultaneously, the government-led “Dai Brocade Cultural Park” initiative and cooperative economic strategies illustrate the broader framework of rural cultural governance tied to the industrialization of intangible heritage.

Mang Village was selected as a research site to preserve the Dai ethnic group’s textile production knowledge, highlighting significant conflicts and opportunities for rural revitalization in western ethnic minority areas. The village is home to 198 female weavers organized within a multi-tiered production framework, including family workshops, cooperatives, and cultural parks. The combination of technological advancements, organizational changes, and spatial reconfigurations makes it a compelling case study of women transitioning from often unnoticed domestic roles to key players in the market. Additionally, the rise of traditional handwoven textiles from household items to cultural products—encouraged by the “Tourism-Promotes-Prefecture” initiative—illustrates the intricate relationship between traditional gender roles, where men enjoy more ease. At the same time, women engage in demanding labor and the factors surrounding gender empowerment. Thus, Mang Village symbolizes cultural authenticity and is a prototype for policy experimentation. The transition from

craft bearers to cultural facilitators builds a cooperative framework that revitalizes intangible cultural heritage and empowers women in craft-oriented communities. This approach reveals the factors that enhance the self-agency of Dai women and contributes to broader theories on the evolution of cultural capital and gendered spatial transformations in ethnic minority regions.

4.2 Data Collection Procedures

The materials and data referenced in this paper are derived from the author's extensive fieldwork conducted during doctoral dissertation research from 2018 to 2022 and a 30-day short-term survey executed by our research team in July 2024. Subsequently, data collection and ongoing observation were performed through online platforms and social media channels. The July 2024 survey specifically concentrated on the living heritage of Dai textile techniques and rural revitalization practices. Through on-site observations encompassing a three-tiered production network of "family workshops—cooperatives—cultural parks," comprehensive interviews were conducted with key stakeholders closely associated with textile craftsmanship and rural development, including three village officials, one inheritor of intangible cultural heritage, and nine weavers, resulting in a total of 472 minutes of audio recordings. Furthermore, the survey systematically accumulated four policy documents from official websites, including the Dehong Prefecture Intangible Cultural Heritage Center and the Mangshi Town Government, and obtained 6 items of activity records along with image data pertinent to handicrafts, ultimately yielding 12,000 words of observational notes and 43,000 words of interview transcripts. These two methodologies complement each other, and the diverse materials corroborate one another, thereby ensuring the effective presentation of action logic and the systematic exploration of practical mechanisms to the maximum extent.

4.3 Case Analysis: Mang Village's Textile Craftsmanship Revival

4.3.1 Developing Rural Textile Handicraft Industries to Awaken Women's Cultural

The traditional textile techniques of Mang Village originated from the local geographical conditions and the production customs of the Dai ethnic group. Over two centuries, the folk customs embodying Mang Village's cultural memory have significantly transformed or nearly faded. Only the textile techniques have been continuously passed down to the present. Throughout various social and historical periods, Mang Village's traditional textile techniques have fostered material and spiritual wealth for the villagers in numerous forms, playing a crucial role in the village's transformation and development. During the natural economy period, farmers depended on the land for their livelihoods, planting in spring, harvesting in autumn, and settling in summer. During the idle summer months, women spun yarn and wove cloth to create daily textile essentials for their families, achieving self-sufficiency. After founding the People's Republic of China and aligning with national policies to transform rural handicrafts, Mang Village established a cooperative for dyeing and weaving ethnic satchels. In this period, the specialization of Mang Village's handmade textiles intensified, moving towards a

coordinated production and sales organization through the cooperative and production team, leading to a highly politicized textile cultural memory. After the reform and opening up, with the gradual improvement and stabilization of the rural land contract responsibility system, significant changes occurred in traditional agricultural organization and production methods. Concurrently, with rapid urbanization, industrialization, and the continued enrichment of materials, traditional handmade textiles gradually lost their practical market. Only the elderly persisted in hand-weaving supplies for Buddhist worship and funerals. The significance of traditional craftsmanship was diminished and forgotten in daily choices, resulting in a fragmented cultural memory. Until the new era of rural revitalization, Dehong Prefecture's local specialty, "Dai Brocade," emerged as a cultural product. In 2006, Dehong Dai Brocade was recognized as a state-level intangible cultural heritage. Mang Village was designated as one of the first municipal-level pilot villages to construct a new socialist countryside. By 2015, Mang Village earned the honorary title of "Yunnan Province Characteristic Cultural Industry Demonstration Village." The comprehensive economic, social, and cultural values embedded in the traditional textile technology of the Dai ethnic group in Mang Village have gradually been appreciated by society. Leveraging rural cultural resources to develop the traditional handicraft industry, local governments and all sectors of society have jointly promoted this emerging pillar industry in rural areas. The economic benefits of traditional textile technology have increasingly been recognized by villagers, leading to the restoration of the traditional textile practices of the Dai ethnic group in Mang Village, which has also inspired the cultural subject's autonomous practice and innovation.

MAGW, a villager from Mang, recalls,

"A few years ago, government representatives came to our village looking for old textiles. They only picked a few pieces from the Lang family for an exhibition. In our Dai language, my age group is called 'Mieba.' We are probably the last generation to remember those traditional weaving techniques. One day, I was sitting on a bamboo stool and saw a pattern that looked so familiar—it reminded me of the designs on our old leggings. It was such an exciting moment! It got us all excited about weaving again. We began crafting vibrant, dyed bamboo strips replicating the textile design, transferring them onto the loom's pattern recording. After a few tries, we finally got the technique right! Now, our village dance troupe shows off these amazing costumes made from our handwoven fabrics, and everyone loves them. People keep asking for fabric samples. And you know what? With a little help, anyone can learn to weave!"²

Within the Mang Elderly Art Troupe, the revival of handwoven fabric garments has become a tradition. On traditional Buddhist festival days, elderly women organized by age group, referred to as "Ban," wear clothing made from handwoven fabrics that showcase consistent colors and patterns. Our research in Mang Village reveals that skilled and innovative women are experimenting with more robust materials like

polyester and spandex rayon yarns. They incorporate gold and silver weft threads to create spandex rayon brocades, retaining the classic silky sheen of traditional woven brocade while adding a luxurious touch. Additionally, they use monochrome warp threads combined with two to three colors of weft threads, eliminating the need for dyeing. These artisans have crafted dye-free jacquard fabrics for garments by utilizing the reverse side of brocade. In Dai villages, the widely embraced philosophy of “求同避异” (qiú tóng bì yì, seeking harmony and avoiding differences) has contributed to the rapid popularity of these innovative handwoven fabrics in various Mang villages, making them highly sought after. Villagers increasingly regard Dai clothing made from these handwoven fabrics as formal wear for festive occasions and important life events. Consequently, artisans engaged in this craft have experienced a boost in their income. Through their committed efforts, the women of Mang have revitalized traditional crafts, safeguarding these practices' technical, artistic, cultural, and historical significance. This not only strengthens the fabric of ethnic culture but also contributes to the ecological restoration of traditional craft practices. This evolution, led by Dai women who blend traditional textile methods with governmental support and market interest, showcases their active participation and practical efforts in revitalizing and progressing rural culture.

4.3.2 Cultivating “Women’s Brocade Weaving Groups” to Enhance Weavers’ Self-Efficacy

From the perspective of cultural inheritance mechanisms, local knowledge focuses on the individuals within the community, and the means through which this knowledge is transmitted is similarly through individuals. It is crucial to fully respect and harness the subjectivity of farmers, actively encouraging their engagement in preserving traditional cultural practices and advancing rural culture.³ Additionally, nurturing and supporting talent within the rural cultural sphere is essential for fostering cultural revitalization and ensuring sustainable rural development. In Mang Village, women’s expertise in local knowledge manifests across various facets of daily life, including traditional handicraft skills, religious beliefs, marriage customs, rituals, and distinctive attire. From a young age, Dai girls learn weaving techniques from their female elders, becoming acquainted with etiquette norms and acquiring practical life skills alongside traits of diligence and intelligence. At the inception of the Dai traditional textile industry in Mang Village, the resident working teams initially recognized the importance of women and weaving collectives. The village Party branch led the formation of “Women’s Brocade Weaving Groups,” with the Women’s Federation director taking on the role of chairperson. She coordinated with the group leaders from each village to motivate women interested in weaving and capable of contributing their skills to join the Mang Village Women’s Brocade Weaving Group. Furthermore, they enlisted the village’s female artisans to mentor the youth during the agricultural off-season, establishing a crucial technical foundation and developing a reserve of personnel for large-scale production of traditional textiles.

After its inception, the women's brocade weaving group secured its initial order from the municipal government, which entailed the processing and producing 1,500 unique "small satchels" (ethnic shoulder bags). Recognizing that some of the group's younger members were new to hand-weaving and had not yet attained proficiency, the women's director and the senior members meticulously evaluated the order's production timeline, the technical capabilities of personnel, and the overall workload. They discussed establishing a systematic order processing workflow, personnel allocation, and distribution strategy. In contrast to the conventional method of individual production, which employed piecework calculations for the entire shoulder bag, this order introduced an innovative approach by segmenting the shoulder bag weaving process and organizing the production in an assembly line format, according to the technological routing of processes.

"The Dai ethnic satchel consists of several components that require meticulous stitching: the strap, the front and back panels, and the sides of the main body. One of the most challenging aspects of this task is applying a distinctive logo along with some Chinese characters on both the front and back of the bag. LYXB, recognized for their outstanding craftsmanship, will create a few samples first. After that, these samples will be replicated by skilled artisans. The sides will be adorned with traditional Octagonal patterns crafted by experienced weavers. The bag straps are relatively straightforward, so we will assign them to our new weavers, whose keen eyesight and nimble fingers will ensure swift progress in weaving. They will also assemble and stitch the entire bag together."⁴

The local government paid the women's weaving group through a piece-rate system for every bag they completed. Expanding on this approach, the group evaluated the workload based on task complexity and allocated labor costs using a 4:3:3 ratio. The innovative assembly-line method employed by the women of Mang Village improved production efficiency, ensuring timely delivery of commissioned orders that met quantity and quality standards, marking their inaugural earnings from the cooperative. Their accomplishments garnered significant recognition from the local government; on July 26, 2022, the Mangshi official website featured a story with photographs on its homepage, highlighting the ethnic minority-themed "small satchels" crafted by Mang Village women for over 1,400 grassroots Party branch secretaries. This article attracted substantial attention, quickly becoming a widespread discussion among villagers and instilling pride in every member of the weaving group. Recognizing the value of their traditional craft, women's excitement grew, prompting many to join the weaving group and learn from skilled artisans. As more women preserved textile culture, the benefits of their stewardship of local knowledge became evident.

4.3.3 Hosting the "Jin Jia Sha" Tourism Festival to Showcase Women's Autonomy

In traditional Dai culture, "Pai" denotes Buddhist practices where communities engage in virtuous activities, forming a central aspect of everyday life. With weaving emerging

as a prominent industry in Mang Village, residents proposed a village-wide blessing Pai focused on this craft, aiming to boost prosperity in the textile sector. This collective ambition among villagers fosters unity and collaborative efforts. After several conversations, the village committee, the women's group leader, the brocade weaving group head, and temple elders agreed to rename the Pai Shang Gan Han as the "Jin Jia Sha" (Golden Kasaya) Festival. This change reflects a careful consideration of rural ethnic cultural tourism needs and showcases the local government's support for Mang Village's textile industry. It minimizes the religious elements of the rite, highlights the traditional Dai cultural features, includes ethnic artistic performances, and cultivates a joyful, harmonious atmosphere.

The first "Jin Jia Sha" Festival at Mang Village, centered around the Dai Brocade Culture Park, marked a significant event organized by the Village Committee and primarily carried out by the Women's Brocade Weaving Group. The Village Director oversaw the planning team to ensure smooth coordination, while the Women's Group utilized traditional self-organization methods for effective task management. In line with Dai traditions, the organizing committee consulted religious leaders to confirm ritual protocols and collaborated with village elders to produce a Dai opera titled "The Origin of the Kasaya Festival." The village's young and middle-aged women took on essential cultural performances and hospitality roles, showcasing outstanding organizational abilities and community involvement. Dai-flavored snack stalls were introduced to cater to visitors' dining needs, along with textile competitions and handicraft exhibitions to highlight intangible cultural heritage. By leveraging the Brocade Weaving Group's social relationship, a television host was invited, and media coverage was arranged. All the festival activities encompassed traditional ceremonies, cultural performances, and folk experiences. During the planning and execution phases, women were instrumental, while male villagers contributed through manual labor. This division of labor, rooted in the Dai value of "mutual assistance and cooperation," enhanced community cohesion and created a dual platform for cultural expression and industrial promotion, establishing the tourism festival as an important means to showcase Mang Village's distinctive cultural identity.

Mang Village has introduced the "Jin Jia Sha" Rural Tourism Festival, leveraging its rich traditional textile culture. This initiative showcases how women in Mang Village effectively harness the strengths of traditional community organizations to foster rural cohesion, promote cultural values, and facilitate the preservation and advancement of their traditional culture. Social networks are vital for accessing social resources, with kinship and geographic connections in traditional Dai society serving as key sources of this social network capital. As the village committee prepared to implement the traditional textile cultural industry development plan, the women of Mang Village proactively drew on these networks to express their views from the grassroots level. They garnered support from their kinship and geographical ties, achieving a shared understanding of cooperation and mutual benefit. This collaboration triggered cooperation and reciprocity among the villagers, spurring collective momentum to

organize the “Jin Jia Sha” Festival. In the run-up to the festival, the “folk women’s organization” diligently built trust with political and religious leaders. Once they earned the villagers’ trust and acknowledgment, they effectively leveraged traditional community collaboration methods to encourage public participation in festival activities. Additionally, they broadened social networks to gather more resources to support the festival, showcasing their strong ability to integrate and utilize resources. With the collaborative efforts of internal and external forces, female leaders and men engaged in the decision-making process and represented interests related to festival public affairs, sharing social rights. This situation illustrates how the cultural industry development in Mang Village offers women a platform to build social network capital and pursue self-development. On the one hand, this capital accumulation supports women in emerging as community leaders, strengthening their belonging and unity as community members, thus forming a significant pathway for women’s “social empowerment” within the rural revitalization strategy. On the other hand, the ongoing expansion of rural women’s groups will consistently generate human capital essential for executing the rural revitalization strategy.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The cultural appreciation of traditional Dai textile handcrafts in Mang Village encourages Dai women to inherit them and reshape their social roles. While this represents a micro-level example, it highlights the interconnected relationship between cultural revitalization in rural areas and the advancement of rural women. The rural revitalization strategy for the new era outlines a vital path of “inheriting, developing, and enhancing agricultural civilization while pursuing cultural prosperity in rural regions,” thus creating conditions, opportunities, and platforms for rural women’s development. On the other hand, rural women, as part of the rural “community of values,” engage in safeguarding and passing down remarkable local culture, utilize their agency to foster the creative transformation and innovative growth of traditional agricultural civilization, and also play a role in executing the cultural revitalization strategy in rural villages. The mutual construction mechanism linking rural cultural revitalization and the development of rural women can encompass the following aspects:

Firstly, the principal identity can be solidified through cultural identity. Culture is a conceptual system, a framework of meanings, and a pattern of emotions and feelings learned and shared by members of a particular group. Rural culture is just such a system of knowledge, encompassing the wisdom of people’s daily practices in production and life and covering the essence of rural living. Dai women create a unique cultural identity by inheriting traditional textile crafts. As “unconscious inheritors” of local knowledge, they merge textile techniques with ethnic memory and ethical norms through intergenerational transmission, forming a core link that sustains the lifeblood of rural culture. This cultural identity is activated during the revitalization of the countryside, transforming women from technology holders in the family domain to “explicit actors”

in revitalizing village culture. By revitalizing traditional textile techniques and rebuilding the legacy of women's weaving mutual aid groups, they bolster the new generation's connection to national culture and provide a sustainable drive for rural talent regeneration.

Secondly, cultural capital is relied on to expand the subject's capabilities. The dual aspects of "materiality" and "mentality" found in traditional handicrafts establish the cultural capital possessed by women as an essential resource for rural revitalization. By leveraging existing social networks and gender advantages, women turn textile techniques into crucial components of contemporary cultural industries. This is accomplished by using family workshops to connect with tourism, cultural, and creative sectors and the experience economy, thus creating a flexible, low-risk production model. Additionally, through their involvement in rural governance, women transform traditional ethical standards into skills for organization and coordination, showcasing their exceptional ability to mobilize communities for cultural space development and folk event planning. This capability shift—from craft bearers to cultural facilitators—represents a significant transformation of local cultural capital into economic and social capital.

Finally, the principal role is underlined by cultural advantages. The diverse benefits of industrializing the textile craft industry have positioned women as pivotal agents in rural revitalization. Economically, women's mutual aid "brocade weaving groups" and craft workshops can ease the employment barriers of industrialized production while expanding income opportunities through the fusion of culture and tourism. Culturally, women-led textile exhibitions and skill competitions convert agricultural heritage into contemporary cultural products, boosting the cultural appeal of rural regions. Socially, rebuilding community mutual aid networks via collaborative crafts empowers women to redefine gender roles in production coordination and festival organization, fostering a beneficial cycle of "craft inheritance—cultural identity—community cohesion." This interplay of "internal" tradition and "external" innovation is emerging as a driving force for enhancing the rural social ecology.

Acknowledgments

We extend our gratitude to all the Dehong Dai informants who generously supported our research for this paper. We also thank the Yunnan Provincial Philosophy and Social Sciences Planning Art Project for their financial assistance in 2024(A2024YS05), titled "A Study on the Yunnan Practice of Social Innovation Design in Traditional Handicrafts," for providing financial support.

Disclosure Statement

We declare that we have no conflicts of interest. Since English is not our first language, we have used Grammarly to improve the clarity and accuracy of the expressions in the manuscript. We hope this ensures that the content is communicated effectively.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

About the Author(s)

Yin Ruiting (ruitingyin@kust.edu.cn) is a PhD candidate at the National Centre for Borderland Ethnic Studies at Yunnan University in Southwest China and a lecturer at the Faculty of Art and Communication at Kunming University of Science and Technology.

Zhang Rui (20050057@kust.edu.cn) is an associate professor in the Faculty of Art and Communication at Kunming University of Science and Technology.

Liu Yuntong is a master's student in the Faculty of Art and Communication at Kunming University of Science and Technology.

Notes

- 1) The Dehong Dai, who self-identify as "Tai Nua" for those north of the Mao River and along the Ruili and Shweli Rivers, have established settlements in the locales of this study.
- 2) Key Informants: MAGW; Date: July 28, 2024; Location: Mang Village, Mangshi.
- 3) Xinhua News Agency. The CPC Central Committee and the State Council issued the "Rural Revitalization Strategy Plan (2018-2022)". http://www.moa.gov.cn/xw/zwdt/201809/t20180926_6159028.htm, Accessed 7 April 2025
- 4) Key Informants: Esuo; Date: July 13, 2024; Location: Mang Village Mangshi.

References

- Fei XT, 2013. Rural China, Shanghai, China
- Liang SM, 2015. Rural Construction Theory, Beijing, China
- Liu ZY, Liu CJ, 2018. The Post-productivist Countryside: A Theoretical Perspective of Rural Revitalization. *China Rural Survey* 05: 2-13. doi: 10.20074/j.cnki.11-3586/f.2018.05.001.
- Qu AX, Meng ZY, Wang MQ, et al., 2023. Spatial reconstruction of intangible cultural heritage in post-productivist countryside: A case study of Mazhuang sachet in Xuzhou, Jiangsu. *Journal of Jiangsu Normal University (Natural Science Edition)* 41(03): 8-13.
- Wang TW, Liu ZY, Xu ZZ, 2024. "Post-Productionism": Theory, Practice, and Its Implications for China. *Tropical Geography* 44(7): 1263-1278. doi: 10.13284/j.cnki.rddl.20230318.
- Wilson G A, 2009. Post-productivist and multifunctional agriculture. In: Kitchin R, Thrift N (Eds.). *International encyclopedia of human geography*. Amsterdam: Elsevier Ltd, 379-386.

- Zhang JY, 2025. Aggregation of Cultural Functions: The Cultural Logic of Stimulating Peasants' Subjectivity in Rural Revitalization. *China Rural Survey* 02: 103-125. doi: 10.20074/j.cnki.11-3586/f.2025.02.006.
- Liu SJ, 2024. Research on Rural Revitalization in China from the Perspective of Post-Productionism. *Agricultural Economy* 11: 43-45.
- Zhang JX, Shen MR, Zhao C, 2014. Rural Renaissance: Rural China Transformation Under Productivism and Post-productivism. *Urban Planning International* 29(05): 1-7.

Yin Ruiting, Zhang Rui, Liu Yutong

LIVING INHERITANCE OF DAI TEXTILE CRAFTSMANSHIP AND FEMININE AGENCY TRANSFORMATION:
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC PRACTICE IN RURAL REVITALIZATION OF MANG VILLAGE, DEHONG, CHINA

Creative Commons licensing terms

Author(s) will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of Social Sciences Studies shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflicts of interest, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated into the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)