

# Comprehensive Analysis of Li Ethnic Clothing Based on Five Major Dialects and Its Application in Modern Fashion Design

Xiangmei Kong<sup>1</sup>, Qianqi Liao<sup>1</sup>, Chen Yang<sup>1,2</sup>\*

<sup>1</sup> Institute of Fine Arts, Hainan Normal University, Haikou, Hainan, 571158, China

<sup>2</sup> Jiangxi Centre for Modern Apparel Engineering and Technology, Jiangxi Institute of Fashion Technology, Nanchang, Jiangxi, 330201, China

\* Corresponding author. E-mail: comradeyang@qq.com

## Abstract

This research aims to undertake a comprehensive analysis of Li ethnic clothing rooted in five major dialects and investigates its relevance in modern fashion design. With the progression of contemporary society, traditional Li ethnic attire has progressively lost societal attention, resulting in fewer individuals proactively engaging with it. However, can infusing the distinctive features of Li ethnic clothing from these five major dialects into contemporary fashion design rekindle an allure for this heritage? Through diverse channels and approaches, this study endeavors to address this inquiry and illuminate often-overlooked facets. By judiciously melding traditional Li ethnic clothing with contemporary fashion design, we can attain objectives that are more rational, meaningful, and valuable.

## Keywords

Ethnic attire, Li ethnic clothing, five major dialects of Li, contemporary apparel design, cultural application.

## 1. Introduction

The Li ethnic group is a minority in Hainan Province, China, communicating through the Li language. The Li people are widely distributed, primarily across various regions of Hainan Island. The Li language consists of several dialect regions, including Qi, Ha, Run, Meifu, and Sai dialects. These dialects exhibit some differences in different areas but collectively belong to the Li language category. The Li people utilize these dialects to preserve and express their culture and traditions. Each dialect region possesses unique clothing styles and characteristics closely tied to the environment and lifestyles of the five distinct Li dialect areas. The attire of the Li people in Hainan provides an opportunity for the public to understand the distinctive traditional culture of the Li ethnicity, forging a connection deeply embedded in people's hearts. Li ethnic clothing signifies not only the pride and heritage of the Li people in Hainan but also carries the invaluable legacy of traditional attire within Chinese culture.

The objective of this study is to inherit the traditional clothing culture of the Li ethnic group, ensuring its presence and value are recognized not only by the general public and scholars but also

within the design community. However, with the advancement of modern society, traditional Li ethnic clothing is increasingly marginalized, and fewer individuals actively engage with it, which is regrettable for societal development. Could infusing the distinctive features of Li ethnic clothing from these five major dialects into contemporary fashion design rekindle an allure for this heritage? This study aims to analyze the colors, styles, patterns, and other aspects of Li ethnic clothing from these five major dialects through various data collection methods, practical investigations, and interviews. The intention is to extract suitable elements for integration into modern fashion design, thereby creating contemporary attire that preserves the distinctive characteristics of Li ethnic clothing.

The selection of research methods was carefully considered to analyse the current state of development of Li ethnic traditional clothing culture as well to understand the methods and approaches adopted by previous scholars in their investigations and collections related to Li ethnic clothing culture. This involved integrating data collection methods suitable for the subjects of this study. Previous scholarly research often sourced information from books related to Li ethnic clothing and museums dedicated

to it. However, it was rare for scholars to actually visit the living areas of the Li ethnic minority to conduct field research and interviews, which is an aspect this study seeks to improve and supplement.

By entering the living areas of the Li people, a standard selection process for interviewees was conducted. This process identified cultural inheritors of Li traditional clothing and craftsmen closely related to Li brocade, a key element of Li ethnic clothing, for interviews. Through these discussions, it was evident that these inheritors are highly concerned with the preservation and development of Li traditional clothing, expressing their wholehearted support for activities related to Li ethnic attire and its subsequent development.

## 2. Overview of Traditional Li Ethnic Clothing

### 2.1. Historical Origins of Li Ethnic Clothing

Understanding the culture of an ethnic group necessitates grasping its historical perspective of progress. Thus, comprehending and analyzing the history of the Li ethnic group is a prerequisite

for understanding and analyzing its clothing culture. The Li ethnic group, one of China's ancient and mysterious ethnic groups, has a unique culture and rich historical heritage that captivates numerous scholars. The origin of the Li ethnic group can be traced back over 3000 years to the Shang and Zhou dynasties. The term "Li" initially did not represent the self-identity of the Li ethnic group; rather, it referred broadly to the minority ethnic groups in the southern part of China. It was after the founding of the People's Republic of China that the national identity of "Li" was established based on the will of the Li people [1]. In fact, "Li" can also be used as a collective term for the ethnic group. However, due to the diverse regional languages, customs, and clothing within the Li ethnic group on Hainan Island, five main branches formed: Run Li, Meifu Li, Ha Li, Qi Li, and Sai Li. These branches hold significant status and influence within Li society. The different dialect regions are referred to as the five major dialects. Despite having their own spoken language, the Li people do not have a writing system of their own. Traditional Li ethnic clothing is also well-documented in ancient texts. For instance, the "Han Shu. Geography" records: "In the first year of Emperor Wu of the Yuanfeng era (110 BC), the Danning and Zhuya commanderies were partially annexed, and the people there all wore cloth garments, like single-layered garments with a sewn hole in the center for the head to pass through." There are also numerous records in works such as Gu Yanwu's "Advantages and Disadvantages of the World's Prefectures and States" [2]. Long ago, Li women on Hainan Island excelled in techniques such as spinning, dyeing, and embroidery related to clothing production. "Jiehua Li," a special tie-dyeing technique, was mentioned by Su Shi in "Records of the Junling King's Temple." It was created by Li women as an expansion of traditional techniques, featuring exceptional patterns and delicate textures, transcending time and earning people's admiration.

Some related research mentions that according to legend, the ancestors of the Li ethnic group traversed oceans

and faced numerous hardships before settling on Hainan Island. Subsequently, they constructed homes with wooden boats as roofs, bamboo frames, and gable roofs replacing the semi-circular arch boat canopies, with floors raised more than a meter off the ground. Walls were made of bamboo wattle daubed with mud or coconut leaves. This adaptation to local conditions and utilization of local materials i.e. primitive plants, laid a solid foundation for the later development of cotton-spinning plant fibers, reflecting the Li people's life traces and showcasing their hardworking and intelligent qualities [3]. This analysis of the Li people's geographical environment reveals the origins of the materials used in their clothing, which has significantly influenced the development of fabrics used in Li ethnic clothing. Therefore, these studies provide valuable insights into the background and origins of the Li ethnic group, offering a meaningful reference for future related research.

## 2.2. Recent Development of Traditional Li Ethnic Clothing

With the progress and development of modern society, the interactions between the Li ethnic group and other ethnic groups have increased over time, leading to evident changes in certain aspects of Li ethnic clothing. One of the most noticeable changes in the evolution of traditional attire is the transition from collarless straight-necked blouses to those with scooped necklines. Additionally, the design of attire shifted from straight-cut, straight-stitched, and straight-sleeved forms to designs featuring waistlines and seamed cuffs. The attire transitioned from being buttonless to incorporating decorative buttons, eventually incorporating pipa-shaped buttons. Moreover, the style changed from symmetrical front-opening garments to asymmetrical designs. The flower tube skirt is a unique style worn exclusively by women in the Sai dialect Li area, specifically in the LingShui, ZuGuan, and QunYing regions. In other areas, women only embroidered the hem and waist of their skirts. The hem of clothing was

adorned with colorful fabric edges, while the skirts were woven with stripes.

Furthermore, the upper garments were either blue, black half-skirts, or solid-colored garments without patterns. In recent times, the influence of Han culture on the Li ethnic group has grown, leading most young Li individuals to adopt Han clothing and language. However, the tradition of wearing Li ethnic clothing is still retained by middle-aged and elderly women in remote areas. Yet, much of this attire is now created from materials bought in markets, no longer crafted through traditional techniques, and the form of upper garments has changed significantly.

Moreover, in terms of the design evolution of traditional Li ethnic clothing, recent phases have shown definite success. The clothing market in Hainan has increasingly featured designs related to traditional Li ethnic attire. Most of these designs revolve around patterns from Li brocade and the traditional color schemes of their attire. Rarely do designers consider the structural design and fabric of traditional Li ethnic clothing in their fashion designs. To address this, our study supplements and perfects by taking into account the structural design of Li ethnic clothing, understanding its primary structures, extracting features that are closer to modern clothing designs, and integrating these with fabric designs. Achieving this integration is one of the objectives our research aims to fulfill.

The development and transformation of traditional Li ethnic clothing has been a lengthy and arduous process, influenced by the advancement of time and societal progress. Practical evidence suggests that traditional Li ethnic clothing possesses unique characteristics in terms of aesthetics and practicality, with different dialect regions exhibiting distinct clothing features. Traditional Li ethnic clothing, within the spectrum of Chinese attire, offers abundant significance and developmental trends. It is not only a treasured asset of the Li people but also an indispensable part of Chinese culture. The attire is a splendid manifestation of Li culture, featuring colorful hand embroidery, weaving,

and textile craftsmanship that artfully display the Li people's way of life and cultural heritage. Despite Li young men and women adopting Han clothing and language in modern society, they still preserve the tradition of wearing traditional attire, particularly during weddings. This underscores the Li people's dedication to and reverence for their cultural heritage. Thus, it is vital to jointly strive to preserve, inherit, and promote the cultural value of Li ethnic clothing, upholding China's exceptional traditional culture.

While preserving traditions, Li ethnic clothing should also embrace modernization, integrating contemporary elements and seeking innovation, enabling the fusion of traditional culture with modern life. This adaptation would enable Li ethnic clothing to better align with the development of the times and the evolution of society, enhancing its vitality and influence amidst the current cultural wave.

### 3. Comprehensive Analysis of Li Ethnic Clothing Based on the Five Dialects and its Application in Modern Fashion Design

In the Hainan region, where the Li ethnic group is concentrated, five major dialect areas have emerged, each with unique clothing forms and characteristics. Through on-site investigations and close observations of the process of Li ethnic clothing production, we gained deeper insights into the clothing culture of the Li people. We explored the relationship between clothing and the local environment, as well as the habits of production and daily life. After collecting and organizing data on the characteristics of clothing in the five major dialect regions, the following are the results of our research:

#### 3.1. Overview of Ha Dialect Clothing

Among the five major dialect areas of the Li ethnic group, the Ha dialect has the largest

population and the widest distribution. Due to its extensive distribution and large population, women's clothing in the Ha dialect area has the most diverse styles and intricate patterns. The upper garment for women in the Ha dialect area is mainly a long-sleeved black blouse with a straight neckline and no buttons. The front placket is longer than the back placket, and the lower back of the garment is usually woven with patterns for added decoration. The sleeves and length of the garment have specified dimensions, with the sleeves measuring about 112 cm in length and the length of the garment being approximately 60 cm. The lower garment is primarily a knee-length tube skirt, adorned with various arranged patterns. The dimensions of the skirt are also specified, with the tube skirt measuring around 62 cm in length and 89 cm in width. In addition to clothing, Ha dialect accessories also have unique features. For example, the large earrings are both ear ornaments and headpieces, composed of around 10 rings with diameters of 14 to 20 cm. They are usually made of copper or silver rings and are worn on the earlobes. They are quite heavy and can be flipped over the head like a hat during walking or labor. These distinctive clothing and accessories reflect the living environment and production habits of the Ha dialect area, representing an essential part of Li culture. A summary of Ha dialect clothing characteristics can be found in Table 1.

#### 3.2. Overview of Qi Dialect Clothing

The distribution of the Qi dialect covers a relatively wide area, mainly in Wuzhi Mountain, with a small number in the Ledong, Changjiang, Baisha, Lingao, Sanya, and Dongfang regions. The population is second only to the Ha dialect. Women's clothing in the Qi dialect area has different characteristics due to the varied living environments. In terms of color and patterns, women's clothing in different areas of the Qi dialect also varies, but overall, the clothing tends to have natural, simple colors and patterns that reflect the local natural environment and folk culture.

The design of Qi dialect clothing is indeed exquisite and unique. The upper garment is usually a black or dark blue medium-length blouse. The style of the upper garment is a front-placket, low-neckline design without buttons. Instead, a row of round silver buttons is used to adorn the front placket, adding a touch of folk charm and delicacy to the clothing. Additionally, the edges of the upper garment are embellished with white cloth to create layers and details. There are also front pocket flowers and waist flowers, showcasing local folk culture and traditional craftsmanship. The lower hem and cuffs of the garment are embroidered with exquisite and varied colorful patterns, reflecting the local life, natural environment, and cultural background. The upper garment has developed into two styles: traditional and "fashionable." The traditional upper garment is a high-necked, front-placket, long-sleeved blouse with intricate embroidery on the back hem. Patterns mainly include ancestral, human, plant, and animal motifs. The lower garment of the Qi dialect also has its distinct style, usually worn as a knee-length medium tube skirt. The skirt is composed of three pieces of fabric sewn together. The skirt top is black fabric with no patterns, while the skirt body and skirt tail are both designed with woven floral patterns, showcasing exquisite and unique beauty. The four-joined woven brocade long tube skirt is the representative lower garment of the Qi dialect. It consists of four parts: the skirt hem, skirt body, skirt eye, and skirt top. The patterns on the skirt eye are varied, mainly human, animal, and plant motifs, exuding a rich natural and life ambiance. The patterns on the skirt body include tie-dye geometric diamond continuous or two-sided continuous patterns, intricate jacquard raised flower patterns, geometric patterns, and more. The three-dimensional effect created by embroidery further enhances its exquisite beauty.

Overall, the clothing design of the Qi dialect pays meticulous attention to details, brimming with regional characteristics and cultural connotations. Headscarves hold a significant place in Qi women's clothing. The headscarf in


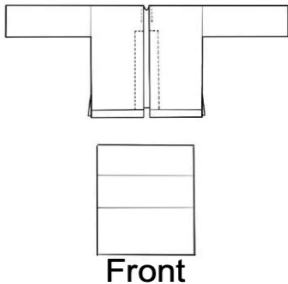

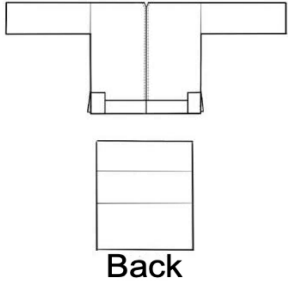

Clothing Part	Dimensions	Characteristics (Color, Style, Patterns)	Reference Image	Style Diagram
Upper Garment	Sleeve Length: 112 cm	Style: Mainly black, long-sleeved with a straight neckline and front placket, but without buttons. The back lower end of the upper garment is woven with patterns.		 Front
Lower Garment	Skirt Length: 62 cm	Mainly a knee-length tube skirt with arranged pattern designs		 Back
Accessories	Around 10 rings with diameters of 14-20 cm	Large earrings that serve as both ear ornaments and headpieces, made of copper or silver rings. They are worn on the earlobes and can be flipped over the head like a hat.		

Table 1. Summary of Ha Dialect Clothing Characteristics

the Qi dialect is made from coarse fabric, dyed with plant pigments to achieve a deep blue color. The sides of the headscarf are embroidered with red lace, and the intricate patterns are embroidered with red, yellow, and blue threads dyed from plant pigments. When worn on the head, the headscarf gives the appearance of horizontal decoration, enhancing the overall elegance. For formal occasions, women also wear delicate accessories such as earrings, bracelets, necklaces, and simple iron wires strung with blue and white beads. A summary of Qi dialect clothing characteristics can be found in Table 2.

### 3.3. Overview of Run Dialect Clothing

It is noted that the clothing of Run dialect women in the Baisha region is particularly distinctive within the local dialect culture.

They wear costumes such as “Yacha,” “Baisha,” “Yuanmen,” “Nankai,” “Qingsong,” “Jinbo,” and the old-style wide and slightly shorter “Guantou Yi.” These attires are highly popular among local women and serve as symbols of Run dialect clothing. The garments are simple in design, wide and slightly shorter, made by stitching together pieces of “broad cloth,” of varying sizes, with a “V” shaped hole in the middle that serves as the collar, hence the name “Guantou Yi” [4]. The unique “double-sided” technique of the Run dialect in Baisha is used to embroider patterns on both sides of the upper garment, the hem of the garment’s front opening, and the lower half of the back of the garment. At the upper back of the garment, there is a wide border adorned with distinctive totemic and plant patterns.

In contrast to the tube skirts of women from the other four dialect regions, the

tube skirts of Run dialect women are narrower and the shortest. This type of skirt is tailored based on the wearer’s body shape, fitting closely to the waist and being more suitable than other non-customized clothing. These skirts lack a waistband and have a length that reaches the upper thigh, designed with a mid-low waist that does not cover the lower abdomen. In terms of style, it can be regarded as the oldest “mini skirt” of the Li ethnic group.

The tube skirt in Run dialect attire can be divided into three parts, each with distinct characteristics. The skirt head typically uses three main colors: deep blue, white, and reddish-brown. Horizontal patterns are woven to create geometric designs, resulting in a simple yet elegant overall style. Some skirts also incorporate other light-colored accents at the head, adding depth to the overall clothing. The design of the skirt body


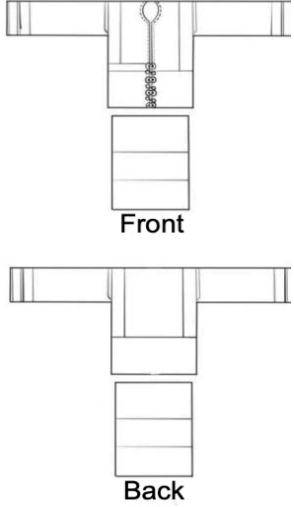


Clothing Part	Dimensions	Characteristics (Color, Style, Patterns)	Reference Image	Style Diagram
Upper Garment	Sleeve Length: 54 cm, Sleeve Width: 16 cm, Garment Length: 56 cm, Garment Width: 29 cm	Color: black or dark blue; style: medium-length front-placket blouse with low neckline, no collar, and a row of circular silver buttons on the front placket; pattern: the upper garment is bordered with white cloth, with exquisite embroidery on the cuffs and back hem, featuring ancestral, human, plant, and animal patterns.		
Lower Garment	Skirt Length: 55 cm, Skirt Width: 44 cm	Color: black, with black fabric on the skirt top and floral patterns on the skirt body and tail; style: Knee-length medium tube skirt composed of three pieces of fabric sewn together; pattern: skirt eye patterns include human, animal, and plant motifs; skirt body patterns include tie-dye geometric diamond continuous or two-sided continuous patterns, intricate jacquard raised flower patterns, geometric patterns, and more.		
Accessories	Headscarf	Color: mainly coarse fabric in deep blue, with red lace on the sides and intricate patterns embroidered with red, yellow, and blue threads, style: headscarf adorned with fringes, which women roll up on their heads; for formal occasions, they wear earrings, bracelets, necklaces, and simple iron wires strung with blue and white beads as decoration.		

Table 2. Summary of Qi Dialect Clothing Characteristics

is primarily based on white threads, incorporating vertical lines of red, blue, black, and small amounts of yellow and green to create a checkerboard pattern. Within the squares, various patterns are woven, including human figures, frog motifs, dragon motifs, cattle patterns, and fish patterns. The skirt tail primarily uses black threads as its base color, and its patterns are more imaginative and varied compared to the skirt head and body. The craftsmanship of the skirt tail is more intricate and exquisite, with more diverse

patterns and clearer color distinctions. Notably, most Run dialect women's tube skirts are unique; among dozens of them; it is exceedingly rare to find two with precisely identical patterns.

Run dialect women's headwear primarily comes in three types. The first is a black headscarf, about 10 cm wide. When worn from the front, it resembles a large black hat without a top. Some women also attach tassels made of red and green threads on one side of the

headscarf or at the end of a hairpin. This flowing tassel adds dynamism and aesthetics. The second type is a headscarf with embroidered patterns on a white background, accompanied by small tassels on both sides, although this style is relatively less common. The third type is the local "human-shaped hairpin," which is simple yet elegant, embodying the distinct features of the Run dialect. A summary of characteristics of Run dialect clothing can be found in Table 3.


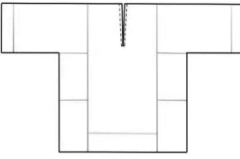

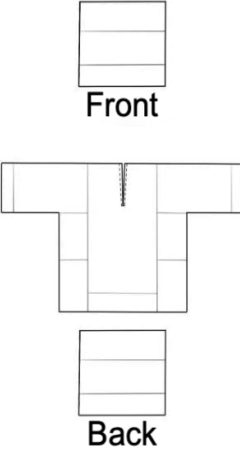



Clothing Part	Dimensions	Characteristics	Reference Image	Style Diagram
Upper Garment	Sleeve length: 99.5 cm Sleeve width: 16.3 cm Length: 58.9 cm Width: 55.5 cm	Style: the ancient style "Guantou Yi" is wide and slightly shorter, lacking a collar, and featuring long sleeves without buttons. The collar forms a "V" shape.		
Lower Garment	Length: 28-38 cm Waist circumference: 30-40 cm	Skirt head: the color and pattern of the skirt head are simple, primarily using white, reddish-brown, and deep blue threads to create patterns. Common patterns include geometric patterns made of horizontal lines. The skirt body uses white threads as a base and adds red, blue, black, as well as small amounts of yellow and green, creating a checkerboard pattern. Various patterns such as herringbone, frog eyes, dragon motifs, cattle patterns, and fish patterns are woven within the squares. The skirt tail uses black threads as the primary color. Patterns are more varied and intricate, with richer colors, compared to the skirt head and body.		 <p style="text-align: center;">Front</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Back</p>
Accessories	Headscarf	Types: 1. Black scarf with or without embroidered decorations, with tassels made of red and green threads. 2. White background with unique embroidered patterns and small tassels on both sides. 3. "Human-shaped hairpin," simple and elegant.	 <p style="text-align: center;">[The first type]</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">[The second type]</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">[The third type]</p>	

Table 3. Summary of Run Dialect Clothing Characteristics

### 3.4. Overview of Sai Dialect Clothing

Observations reveal that the Sai dialect is also widely distributed across various regions, primarily in areas like Jiamo Town, Liugong Township, and Baocheng Town in Baoting Li and Miao Autonomous County. It can also be found in places such as Zuguan, Qunying, and Tianzi in Lingsui Li Autonomous County. A smaller portion of this dialect is distributed in Tengqiao Town of Sanya City and Lanyang Town of Danzhou City. The clothing style of Sai dialect women does not exhibit significant regional variations; it is relatively uniform.

The people of the Sai dialect are adept at singing and dancing, and “March 3rd” holds significant importance for them, similar to the nature of the Spring Festival for the Han ethnic group. This festival is the grandest in the Sai dialect region, where people don splendid attire and hold elaborate ceremonies. Also known as the Love Festival or Love Talk Day, it occurs on the third day of the third lunar month each year. This festival primarily commemorates the hardworking and brave ancestors of the Hainan Li people and conveys a desire for love and happiness in life.

Sai dialect attire has been influenced by Han culture, and one traditional costume consists of an upper garment resembling a banner paired with a tube skirt. Women’s attire in the Sai dialect region is mostly similar, without notable differences. Sai dialect women’s skirts are usually long and loose, with wide skirts pleated when worn. Compared to the short and narrow tube skirts, this style is relatively looser and more voluminous. The tube skirt is primarily composed of four parts: the skirt head, the skirt body band, the skirt body, and the skirt tail. The essential elements of Sai dialect tube skirts are fine horizontal black lines, while different colors of threads and patterns make the skirt more colorful. The design of the skirt features a unique combination of colors like red, yellow, and green between the skirt head and body. The design of the skirt body band and skirt tail is even more diverse, adding more elements to the overall look.

The patterns on the tube skirt are rich and varied, including human figures, frog motifs, and various plant patterns. These patterns make the tube skirt more exquisite and charming, showcasing diverse styles. Sometimes, Sai dialect women choose to wear blue or dark blue upper garments, while older women prefer black clothing.

The neckline of their upper garment is high, resembling the collar of a cheongsam, with the front opening to the left and cloth buttons arranged slightly diagonally to the right from the collar. The edges of the upper garment are plain with red or white trim, and all fabric buttons are self-made.

Traditional accessories for Li women include headscarves, special hairpins, and silver bracelets. These accessories are made from metals such as silver, iron, or tin. In the Jiamo area, Sai dialect Li women often wrap their heads with a black scarf-like band, about five feet in length [5]. When worn, the headscarf is wrapped around the head twice and the ends tied at the back of the head. In the Jiamo area, Sai dialect women frequently tie their hair into a bun at the back of their head. When dressed in ceremonial attire, they insert silver hairpins into the bun. These hairpins are intricately carved with delicate patterns, though this detail has diminished over time. Another simpler style of necklace is also worn; these two styles of necklaces can be worn individually or together. A summary of Sai dialect clothing characteristics can be found in Table 4.

### 3.5. Overview of Meifu Dialect Costumes

In the Meifu dialect of the Li ethnic group, the population is mainly concentrated between the middle and lower reaches of the Changhua River on Hainan Island, located between the cities and counties of Dongfang and Changjiang. This region has preserved the ancient Li ethnic dyeing technique called “jiao xie.”(tie dyeing)

The simple skirt in Meifu dialect is the widest and longest among the tube skirts worn by women in the five major dialect

regions. It can reach down to the ankles and features a loose-fitting style, requiring pleating in the front when worn. The tube skirt is composed of five pieces of fabric, and the terminology for each part varies in different regions. The tube skirt can be divided into five sections: the skirt bottom, skirt two, skirt eye, skirt flower, and skirt head. While some dialects may refer to the skirt head as the skirt tail, and the skirt bottom as the skirt head. Apart from the geometric patterns on the skirt flower, which are woven using differently colored cotton threads, the other four patterns are created using Meifu dialect’s unique dyeing and weaving techniques. This craftsmanship, unparalleled anywhere else, is a distinctive feature of the Meifu dialect. It initially uses yarn as the warp threads, forming patterned designs through weaving knots on it. Subsequent dyeing is performed on these threads. The knots on the weft threads are then loosened and removed, resulting in colorful fabric for the tube skirt, complete with a gradient effect that showcases exquisite beauty. The seams and sleeve edges sewn with white thread on the upper garment’s back might be intended to enhance the overall texture and aesthetics of the attire. The asymmetric crotch back cloth on the back could possibly be a unique design of Meifu dialect women’s clothing, adding a touch of distinctiveness to the upper garment’s form and style. Square pieces of cloth are sewn on the collar and sides of the collar, and exquisite fabric edges are stitched along the garment’s edges and outer sleeves; all these intricate details are meant to enhance the ornamental sense of the clothing. Through these decorative elements, Meifu dialect attire becomes more elegant and refined, highlighting the culture of the Meifu dialect region. The traditional headscarves of Meifu dialect women are renowned for their distinctive characteristics. These headscarves are characterized by simplicity and elegance. They are usually composed of alternating black and white colors and lack any specific patterns or decorations. During formal occasions, wearers may also adorn themselves with silver necklaces, rings, bracelets, and other accessories, adding an air of grandeur. A summary of Meifu dialect clothing characteristics can be found in Table 5.


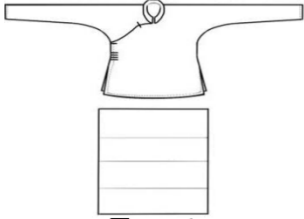
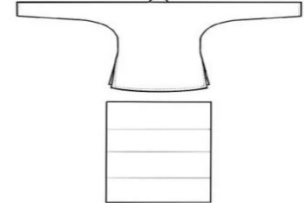




Clothing Part	Dimensions	Characteristics (Color, Style, Patterns)	Reference Image	Style Diagram
Upper Garment	Sleeve Length: 99.5 cm, Sleeve Width: 16.3 cm, Length: 58.9 cm, Width: 55.5 cm	Colors: blue or dark blue; style: resembles a cheongsam with a high collar and long sleeves. The front opens from the left and diagonally arranges cloth buttons to the right. Buttons are unevenly distributed on the collar. Patterns: edges of the upper garment are plain with red or white trim, and all fabric buttons are self-made.		 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Front</b></p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Back</b></p>
Lower Garment	Tube skirt upper and lower length: 28–38 cm, Skirt circumference (waist radius): 30–40 cm	Style: long and wide tube skirt, reaching below the calf, sewn from four sections of woven brocade. Colors: red, yellow, and green threads intertwine between the upper and lower sections of the skirt, creating a colorful effect. The lower part of the skirt and the skirt tail are even more vibrant. Patterns: the patterns on the tube skirt are rich and varied, including human figures, frog motifs, and various plant patterns. These patterns enhance the skirt's charm.		
Accessories	Headscarves, hairpins, necklaces, bracelets	In the Jiamo area, Sai dialect women often wrap their heads with a black scarf-like band, about five feet in length [5]. They wrap the headscarf around their heads twice, tie the ends at the back, and sometimes tie a knot under the bun, with one end longer than the other hanging down at the back. Traditional accessories are mainly made of silver, including headscarves, hairpins, necklaces, and bracelets.	 <p style="text-align: center;">Long cloth head scarf</p>  	

Table 4. Summary of Sai Dialect Clothing Characteristics




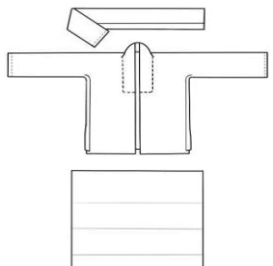

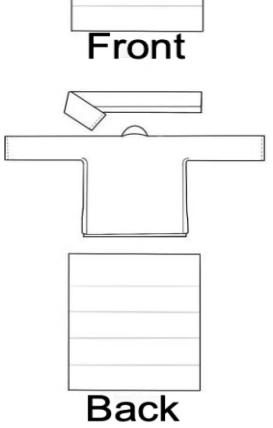


Clothing Part	Dimensions	Characteristics	Reference Image	Style Diagram
Upper Garment	Sleeve length: 45 cm Length: 55 cm	Color: women's upper garment is dark blue or black. Style: the design features a V-neck that opens to the chest. There are no buttons on the upper garment, only a pair of small cords to replace buttons.		
Lower Garment	Skirt length: 90 cm Hip circumference: 93.5 cm, with a 31.5 cm relaxation	Style: the skirt can reach down to the ankles and has a generally wide fit. The tube skirt is composed of five pieces of fabric: the skirt bottom, skirt two, skirt eye, skirt flower, and skirt head. Patterns: among the patterns on these five pieces of fabric, only the skirt flower is woven using differently colored cotton threads to create various floral patterns, while the other four patterns are achieved through dyeing and weaving.		
Accessories	Headscarf	The headscarves of Meifu dialect women are renowned for their unique characteristics, being both simple and elegant. Color: alternating black and white. Patterns: The headscarves lack prominent pattern designs but might feature embroidered text. During formal occasions, women also wear silver necklaces, rings, bracelets, and other accessories.	 	

Table 5. Summary of Meifu Dialect Clothing Characteristics

## 4. Fusion of Traditional Li Ethnic Clothing and Modern Clothing Design Based on Five Dialects

### 4.1. Application of Traditional Li Clothing Fabrics in Modern Design

Li ethnic clothing is a traditional attire passed down in Hainan Province, mainly crafted through four traditional

techniques of spinning, dyeing, weaving, and embroidery. These techniques are extensively utilized in the creation of Li ethnic clothing. These ethnic garments are made from materials such as island cotton, hemp, kapok, bark fibers, and silk, sewn together. Through these traditional techniques, Li ethnic clothing has become an integral part of local culture in Hainan Province, possessing unique charm and cultural value. In certain ancient regions, people used bark from paper mulberry or blood-blocking trees to make clothes.

This clothing material was produced by processing bark taken from trees on the mountains, then removing impurities, soaking it in lime, and drying it to create fiber layers. Li ancestors used their own hands to spin, weave, dye, and sew a unique garment known as “bark clothing.” This attire was not only clothing but also used to create decorations like blankets and hats. The material of bark clothing, ingeniously created by our ancestors, may not be suitable for everyday wear in modern times, but as a form of heritage

incorporating its breathable, firm, and environmentally friendly characteristics into creative clothing design, represents an innovative attempt.

With the development of society, the use of bark clothing materials has gradually declined due to the high cost caused by the time and effort required. However, incorporating small patches of bark clothing into clothing design can reduce costs while also showcasing the main characteristics of bark clothing in the overall clothing design. This approach can reintroduce the history of bark clothing to people through design means. Traditional fabrics combined with modern clothing styles inject new vitality into traditional fabric, creating a new image of bark clothing and revitalizing modern clothing design.

Apart from the application of bark clothing, as traditional attire of island flair, most clothing fabrics on tropical islands should offer comfort and breathability. This aligns with the modern trend of pursuing comfortable and breathable clothing during hot summers, providing an opportunity for the presentation of traditional Li ethnic clothing. Prudent use of Li ethnic clothing fabrics in modern clothing design can gain popularity among the masses.

## 4.2. Application of Five Dialects' Woven Brocade Distribution Positions in Modern Design

This study reviewed numerous materials related to Li ethnic brocade, where a typical approach involves incorporating Li brocade patterns into clothing design. For example, Deng, X. H., in her study "Innovative Expression of the Cultural Connotation of Li Ethnic Brocade Patterns in Fashion Design," discusses the use of Li brocade patterns in design centered around the theme of Hainan International Tourism Island. This approach preserves the original charm and artistic essence of Li culture, using figures, deer, frogs, birds, and bird patterns from Li brocade as a base, combined with images of Hainan's traditional sports activity and

the bamboo pole dance, and integrating modern geometric patterns (combinations of vertical and horizontal stripes) [6]. Many designers and scholars are similarly concerned with the patterns of Li ethnic brocade, focusing their design efforts on these elements. While this design method is indeed innovative, this study prefers to focus on the design of the distribution of Li brocade patterns within the clothing.

The five Li dialects—Ha, Run, Sai, Qi, and Meifu—share certain commonalities and notable differences in clothing. Having comprehensively understood the clothing of these five dialects and analyzed their characteristics, it can be concluded that Li ethnic woven brocade is an extensively used element in traditional Li clothing. Li ethnic woven brocade elements are often distributed on the lower hem of the upper garment, cuffs, and collar, typically serving as decorative accents in Li ethnic clothing, enhancing the overall effect.

Additionally, within the lower garment of Li ethnic clothing, a cylindrical skirt made entirely of Li ethnic woven brocade is commonly seen. While the style and length of the skirt are similar in most dialects, variations exist in the use and arrangement of colors and patterns in the woven brocade. Nevertheless, Li ethnic woven brocade is consistently employed as a complete piece in the construction of Li ethnic clothing.

Analyzing the distribution positions of Li ethnic woven brocade enables a deeper understanding for creative integration. By utilizing this distinctive feature, Li ethnic woven brocade can be applied to modern designs following popular trends. For example, it can be employed on cuffs, lower hems of upper garments, collars, or extensively in designs such as half-skirts. However, it's crucial to emphasize that innovative design is essential in the creation of Li ethnic woven brocade— involving pattern creation, color coordination, and arrangement. Modern clothing design aims for aesthetic appeal, trendiness, individuality, comfort, and practicality. Thus, in designing the distribution positions of Li ethnic woven brocade, considerations must be given to color matching, style coordination

with woven brocade, and practicality. These are the aspects we need to take into account when combining modern clothing design with traditional Li ethnic clothing, allowing the resulting modern attire to exude the genuine essence of Li ethnic clothing while retaining its uniqueness. This fusion of design can become a source of spiritual strength, pursued by people in today's rapidly changing society. A summary of Li brocade pattern distribution locations is given in Table 6.

## 4.3. Application of Li Ethnic Patterns in Modern Design

Among the five major dialects of the Li ethnic group, the most profound element lies in the Li ethnic totem patterns. These totem patterns not only portray their visual appearance but also carry deeper meanings passed down from Li ancestors. Generally, Li ethnic totem patterns are categorized into several main types: animal, plant, and anthropological motifs.

Different types have different meanings, and even within the same type, different patterns convey distinct significance. For instance, in the animal category, there are bird, frog, dragon, fish, and deer motifs. The bird motif symbolizes a unique meaning in Li culture, representing birds as incarnations or guardian spirits of Li ancestors. This belief reflects the ideology of a matriarchal society. The frog motif signifies an imminent harvest, favorable weather, and a prosperous population. Dragons and fish, both dwelling in water, represent peaceful seasons and abundance. The meanings behind different animal motifs stem from the society's different aspirations for various species in ancient times. The plant motifs include gourd, kapok, banana, sweet potato, and others. Apart from animal and plant motifs, there are also common patterns such as human motifs, similar to Hercules motifs, and frog-human motifs.

Usually, Li people incorporate animal motifs extensively into clothing, and a small portion also use human motifs, enhancing the overall elegance of the

Distribution Area	Image Showcase	Specific Area	Image Showcase	Specific Area
Upper Garment		Middle Back of Upper Garment		Lower Hem of Upper Garment
		Collar of Upper Garment		Both Sides of Upper Garment
		Both Sides of Sleeves of Upper Garment		Front Opening of Upper Garment
Lower Garment (Cylindrical Skirt)		Commonly Distributed All Over the Cylindrical Skirt		Commonly Distributed All Over the Cylindrical Skirt
				
Accessories		Headscarf		Headscarf
		Headscarf		Headscarf (Scarf)

Table 6. Summary of Li Brocade Pattern Distribution Locations, Distribution Area, Image Showcase, and Specific Area

outfits through various arrangements and color combinations. However, a neglected issue in the use of pattern motifs is the lack of attention to different meanings for different age groups, genders, and even different spiritual pursuits within Li ethnic clothing. If one can attempt to design clothes suitable

for different groups by incorporating different patterns and meanings, this can achieve a diversified effect. Li ethnic totem patterns should be distinctive, and in their creative design, respect for Li clothing culture is crucial. Reimagining and further developing them must align with their ethnic traits and cultural

essence. Only then can the clothes designed truly express Li ethnic clothing culture, bringing out the simplicity of Li culture more vividly to the public. This is the original intention of our fusion design. A summary of Li ethnic clothing patterns for the five major dialects of the Li ethnic group is shown in Table 7.

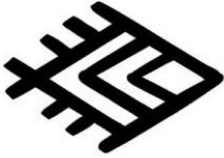



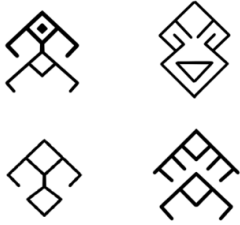

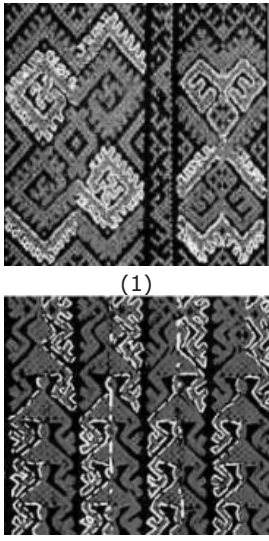
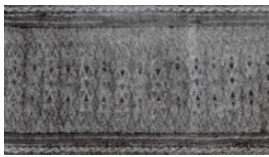
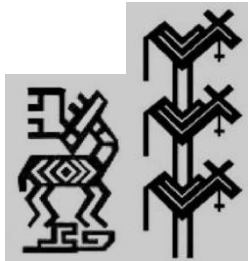
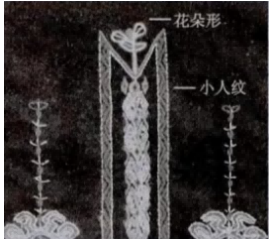
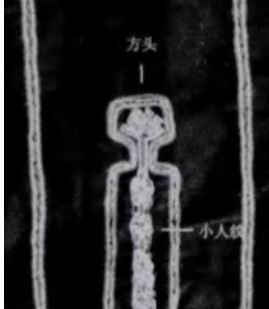
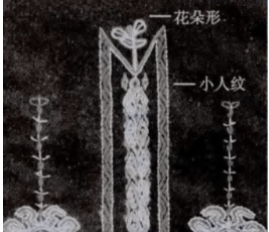




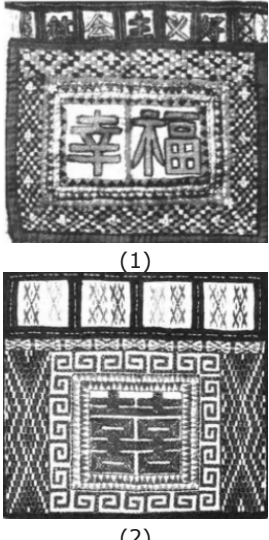
Pattern categories	Name	Image	Meaning
Animal Motifs	Dragon (Fish) Totem	 	"Dragon Roar Ridge" is an ancient saying among the Li ethnic group. Li people believe that they have a special relationship with the dragon element, using "Dragon Roar Ridge" as a mark and title for their clan group, and even placing the dragon species among their protective deities.
	Bird Totem	 	Birds are considered incarnations of Li ethnic ancestors or protective deities in daily life. They are a vital embodiment of the matriarchal society's ideology.
Animal Motifs	Frog Totem	 	Frogs, as ancient totems, were leaders and supporters of tribes in the southern ethnic groups. The frog deity was worshipped by various southern tribes, serving as a symbol and name for some of these ethnic groups. Research shows that frog deity worship dates back to primitive society and influences the artistic culture of southern tribes, reflected in various aspects like images, music, decoration, and dance.

Table 7. Summary of Li Ethnic Clothing Patterns from Five Major Dialects

Pattern categories	Name	Image	Meaning
	Bear Totem	 <p>(1)</p> <p>(2)</p>	<p>The pattern in (1) represents the male bear, while that in (2) represents the female bear. The patterns show that women of the Qi dialect have keen observation skills, capturing the essence of things. The number of male bears also implies the dominance of the male population in Qi dialect society.</p>
	Ape Totem		<p>Ape imagery is integrated into the structure of women's clothing: "The black color used for the entire upper garment represents the color of the ape's hair, while the white color represents the ape's nails. The opening under the arm is due to the ape's habit of holding young apes there, so there is no hair." The combination of the ape's image with the Qi dialect women's upper garment fully embodies Li women's qualities of gratitude and reciprocation [7].</p>
	Deer Totem		<p>The story of Luhuitou represents love</p>
Plant Motifs	Long Column Flower		<p>Plant motifs are commonly used in women's traditional cylindrical skirts.</p>
	Short Column Flower		

continued Table 7. Summary of Li Ethnic Clothing Patterns from Five Major Dialects

Pattern categories	Name	Image	Meaning
Plant Motifs	Flower Motif		Plant motifs are commonly used in women's traditional cylindrical skirts.
	Grain Motif		
	Composite Plant Motif		
Other Motifs	Human Motif		The second row of patterns features human motifs, where the white outline suggests male ancestors, and the red outline represents female ancestors.
	Hercules Motif		Hercules, the primordial god in Li mythology, represents courage, strength and wisdom, and embodies auspiciousness and divine blessings.
	Chinese Characters Motif		The embroidery patterns in (1) convey the impact of modern civilization and social systems on Qi dialect traditional clothing motifs, where phrases like "Socialism is Good" and "Happiness" are shown [7]. In (2), the words "Double Happiness" occupy a significant portion, indicating the influence of Han culture on the marital customs of the Qi dialect.

Continued Table 7. Summary of Li Ethnic Clothing Patterns from Five Major Dialects

## 5. Conclusion

With the development of modern society and the progress of ideologies, the traditional clothing of the Li ethnic group, characterized by the five major dialects, has undergone a continuous evolution from simplicity to complexity. Whether in terms of styles, fabric combinations, or craftsmanship, it has diverged significantly from the past. The traditional attire of the Li people is a fusion of historical development and the wisdom of their ancestors, showcasing the distinct ethnic traits and genuine folk customs of the Li ethnic group.

Gradually incorporating the distinctive elements of traditional Li clothing into modern fashion design is not only conducive to preserving Li culture but also serves to highlight the personalized aspects of fashion design.

This study advances the inheritance and development of Li ethnic clothing through the means of fashion design, including the innovative use of fabrics, creative design in the placement of Li brocade elements, and the innovative combination and application of patterns from the five major dialects of the Li ethnicity. This approach reinvigorates Li ethnic attire, allowing more people to understand and accept Li traditional clothing through redesigned garments. Thus, in the inheritance and development of Li traditional clothing, an abundance of redesign methods emerge, serving as a vital means of cultural transmission. Modern design encompasses various methods, such as the use of Li brocade pattern elements in product packaging design and the incorporation of traditional Li patterns in environmental design. These design methods bring the culture of traditional Li clothing to life, enriching its soul; not only enhancing the

intrinsic value of traditional Li attire but also highlighting its social value.

Beyond maximizing the impact of Li ethnic clothing culture, this research also brings Li traditional clothing into society, yielding significant economic benefits. The development model of redesigning traditional culture has garnered considerable popularity and economic success in the modern market, supported by national policies protecting and venerating Chinese traditional culture, laying the foundation for the current fashion design market. Since the promotion of China's national trend culture, an increasing array of traditional Chinese cultures has been presented to the public in new forms. In fashion design, more designers are integrating traditional cultures and ethnic minority traditional clothing into the mainstream of fashion design. Holding the idea of taking Chinese traditional culture to the world, designers have presented more excellent fashion design works to the public, achieving commendable results. It is proven that the integration of traditional culture with modern fashion design is highly beneficial for the economic development of society, not only promoting the development of traditional culture but also enhancing the economic level of society. People are willing to support Chinese traditional culture financially, making this situation a win-win success in the design community.

However, there are numerous considerations to bear in mind during the process of fusion design. Integrating the characteristic elements of Li ethnic clothing into modern fashion design must be done while respecting and inheriting the traditions of Li clothing. In our design endeavors, we should contemplate how to manage the relationship between

traditional Li clothing and contemporary fashion design. Traditional Li clothing should be a source of inspiration and creative inspiration for modern fashion design, while modern fashion design should inject fresh vitality into Li culture. Only through such integration can Li culture continue to thrive and develop.

At this stage, some designers have already begun to engage in fusion designs that blend traditional Li clothing with modern fashion design. However, we've also identified certain issues within these fusion designs that warrant attention. Some designs are merely superficial imitations, employing grafting techniques without an in-depth understanding of the essence and characteristics of traditional Li clothing. Prior to designing, it is essential to gain a comprehensive understanding of the cultural significance behind ethnic Li clothing and then contemplate how best to incorporate the elements of traditional Li clothing into modern fashion design, thus ensuring a truly meaningful heritage design that resonates on a profound level. We believe that staying only at the level of design without considering the feasibility of implementation is relatively superficial. If we delve into the implementation aspects, commercial viability can also be taken into consideration. At this level of fusion design, a broader promotion of Li clothing culture can be achieved, ultimately fostering a confident sense of Li cultural identity.

## Funding

This paper was financially supported by the Hainan Provincial Social Science Foundation Project (HNSK(ZC)21-120)

## References

1. Yu, H.(2019). *The Study on Integration Design of Hainan Li Minority Tattoo's Pattern under the context of Chinese Guochao Clothing* (Master's thesis, Zhejiang Sci-Tech University).
2. Wang, X.(2004). *Li Ethnic Group in China*. The Ethnic Publishing House. ISBN:9787105059850
3. Lv, P.(2023). *A Research On The Application of Li Brocade Pattern Elements in Modern Creative Women's Wear Design* (Master's thesis, Jiangxi Science & Technology Normal University). DOI:10.27751/d.cnki.gjxkj.2023.000220.

4. Wang, P.(2010). The Research of the Women's Costume in Run Dialectal Area of Li Tribe. *Shandong Textile Economy*(10),48-49+94.DOI:10.3969/j.issn.1673-0968.2010.10.018.
5. Han, Y.(2013). *RESEARCH ON THE TRADITIONAL COSTUME OF SALABRANCH OF THE LI ETHNIC GROUP IN HAINAN* (Master's thesis, Beijing Institute Of Fashion Technology) .DOI:10.26932/d.cnki.gbjfc.2013.000005.
6. Deng, X. H.(2020). Innovative Expression of the Cultural Connotation of Li Ethnic Brocade Patterns in Fashion Design. *Chemical Fiber & Textile Technology* (09), 62-63. DOI:10.3969/j.issn.1672-500X.2020.09.031.
7. Xia, M.(2014). The Implied Meaning And Symbol of The Traditional Women's Costume Pattern in Qi Dialectal Area of Li Nationality in Hainan. *Journal of Inner Mongolia Arts University*, 11(1), 105-112.