



# A Study on the External Translation of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Yi Ethnic Torch Festival from the Perspective of Skopos Theory

Xinyu Xia, Liang Luo\*

School of Foreign Languages and Cultures, Panzhihua University, Panzhihua 617000, Sichuan, China.

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\***Corresponding author:** Liang Luo, School of Foreign Languages and Cultures, Panzhihua University, Panzhihua 617000, Sichuan, China.

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## Abstract

The Yi Ethnic Torch Festival was inscribed in the first batch of the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in 2006. Hailed as the “Oriental Carnival,” it stands as a significant symbol of Yi cultural identity. The successful hosting of a series of activities of the 2025 Liangshan Yi Ethnic Torch Festival has continuously elevated its international profile, making the demand for external communication increasingly urgent. However, existing publicity translations of the Yi Ethnic Torch Festival suffer from inconsistent terminology, insufficient cultural interpretation, and a lack of systematic strategic guidance, with relevant academic research remaining virtually non-existent. This study adopts Skopos Theory as its theoretical framework and takes *The Torch Festival of the Yi People* by Zhu Wenxu as its core corpus. Through comprehensive application of textual analysis, comparative analysis, case study, and literature review methods, the study systematically explores strategic pathways for the external translation of the intangible cultural heritage of the Yi Ethnic Torch Festival. The findings demonstrate that the three principles of Skopos Theory possess significant guiding value in ICH publicity translation. The Skopos principle helps translators anchor communication objectives. The coherence principle enhances readability and acceptability of target texts. And the fidelity principle achieves dynamic balance between cultural authenticity and communication effectiveness. Based on this analysis, the study constructs a three-dimensional translation strategy model of “purpose priority, cultural fidelity, and reader acceptance”, proposing specific methods including transliteration with annotation, explanatory translation, and amplification. Systematic recommendations are further advanced from four dimensions: terminology standardization, multimodal communication, translator cultivation, and channel optimization. This study addresses the lack of empirical evidence in translating Yi Torch Festival ICH. It refines the applicability of Skopos Theory within ethnic minority contexts through systematic source-target alignment, yielding actionable strategies for reconstructing culture-specific items rather than generalized prescriptions for cultural dissemination.

## Keywords

Skopos Theory; the Yi Ethnic Torch Festival; ICH publicity translation; culture-loaded words; translation strategies

## 1. Introduction

The rapid evolution of global cultural exchange has reshaped how nations present their heritage. For China, promoting ICH is a strategic imperative to tell China’s stories well in ways that resonate internationally. Recent policies, exemplified by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism’s 2025 initiative, have shifted from static protection to active

global engagement, framing ICH as living resources for dialogue. However, translating culturally dense concepts such as the Yi ethnic group's fire reverence rituals or the role of the Bimo (Yi priest) poses unique challenges. Balancing fidelity to source culture with audience accessibility remains a central tension. Skopos Theory addresses this by arguing that a translation's purpose should dictate its strategies rather than rigid adherence to source-text forms.

The urgency of this issue is evident in the Yi Ethnic Torch Festival. Recognized as a national-level ICH since 2006 and dubbed the "Oriental Carnival," the festival attracts global tourists with its vibrant fire worship ritual, horse racing, and performances. Yet, its rising profile exposes critical gaps in translation practice. Existing materials suffer from inconsistent terminology, superficial literalism, and a lack of cultural interpretation that obscures deeper meanings like ancestor worship. While Skopos Theory has been applied to other ethnic minorities' ICH, systematic research on the festival remains scarce, with fewer than ten academic papers addressing its English translation.

This study examines the translations of the Yi Ethnic Torch Festival through the lens of Skopos Theory, arguing that effective publicity requires prioritizing the target text's function over mechanical equivalence. By analyzing case studies involving terms like Suni (Yi shaman) and Tuo Tuo Meat (chunk meat), the research proposes a three-dimensional strategy model: purpose priority, cultural fidelity, and reader acceptance. These findings aim to bridge theoretical frameworks with practical needs, offering actionable solutions for terminology standardization, multimodal communication, and translator training.

Consequently, this work contributes to two critical domains. Theoretically, it extends Skopos Theory to underexplored areas of ICH of ethnic minorities, verifying its relevance for culture-loaded terms. Practically, it provides concrete strategies to enhance the festival's global visibility while safeguarding cultural authenticity, aligning with national goals to strengthen China's cultural soft power. As cultural boundaries blur in the 21st century, ICH translation becomes not just a linguistic task but a diplomatic one. By centering purpose-driven translation, this study posits that we can transform ethnic heritage into a bridge for mutual understanding.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Corpus Construction and Sampling Criteria

This study uses Zhu Wenxu's *The Torch Festival of the Yi People* (Zhu, 1999) as its primary source text. Rather than adopting an exhaustive sampling approach, specific representativeness criteria were applied to select high-frequency lexical items and passages with significant cultural density. The resulting dataset encompasses eight core dimensions including festival names, religious figures, ritual activities, belief concepts and so on. Based on these parameters, a parallel corpus was compiled via the Coze platform. The source component consists of curated excerpts from the primary text, while the target component aggregates existing English translations from both official websites such as China Intangible Cultural Heritage Network, China Daily, CGTN, Yizuren.com, Liangshan and Chuxiong prefectures, and academic publications, ensuring both authoritative coverage and discursive diversity.

### 2.2 Analytical Dimensions and Research Procedure

The analytical framework operates in three stages to establish precise source-target correspondence through cross-validation:

- Stage I (Textual Alignment): Selected culture-loaded terms were traced and defined through close reading of supplementary literature, including *The Torch Festival of the Yi People*, *Selected Readings of Yi Literature*, and *Primitive Religion and Culture of the Yi People*.
- Stage II (Multidimensional Comparison): Analysis combined horizontal and vertical axes. Horizontally, we compared translations across official sources (government bodies and mainstream media) against non-official or folk translations. Vertically, the data were benchmarked against successful translation cases of other ethnic minority ICH to identify prevailing patterns and regularities.
- Stage III (Case Analysis): Micro-level challenges underwent targeted analysis, specifically addressing issues such as terminological standardization for "Yi Ethnic Torch Festival" and the reconstruction of cultural defaults regarding "Bimo (Yi priest)".

### 2.3 Evaluation Criteria for Translation Efficacy

Translation quality was assessed using Skopos theory's tripartite framework: the Skopos rule, coherence rule, and fidelity rule. A systematic review of Skopos theory and recent scholarship on ethnic minority ICH validated an evaluation model of "purpose priority, cultural fidelity, and reader acceptance". This model serves a dual function:

evaluating existing translations and guiding the development of optimized, purpose-driven strategies. Ultimately, this provides empirical evidence and actionable solutions for enhancing China's cultural soft power through effective translation of the Torch Festival.

### 3. Theoretical Foundations

#### 3.1 Overview of Skopos Theory

Skopos Theory is governed by three hierarchical principles: the Skopos principle, the coherence principle, and the fidelity principle. As the supreme principle of Skopos Theory (Reiss & Vermeer, 1984), the Skopos principle explicitly stipulates that “translation behavior is determined by translation purpose (Munday, 2016).” In ICH promotion, this means strategies such as domestication or amplification are flexibly chosen to convey cultural connotations and engage international audiences, prioritizing reader acceptance over rigid forms.

The coherence principle mandates that the target text must be logically fluent and culturally acceptable within the target context (Gao & Wang, 2025). If a translation violates target linguistic norms or confuses readers, communication fails regardless of its faithfulness to the source. It is critical for ICH texts which must resonate with foreign cognitive backgrounds.

The fidelity principle requires correspondence with the source text (Gao & Wang, 2025) but defines fidelity dynamically based on purpose rather than mechanical literalism. Translators may adjust or omit content to preserve core cultural spirit while ensuring communicative efficacy. Crucially, these three principles follow a strict hierarchical relationship. Specifically, the Skopos principle takes precedence over the coherence principle, and the coherence principle takes precedence over the fidelity principle. The purpose dictates the strategy; coherence ensures readability; and fidelity is adjusted to serve the former two. This framework empowers translators to balance cultural fidelity with reader acceptance, optimizing the external communication of ICH.

#### 3.2 Analysis of ICH Attributes of the Yi Ethnic Torch Festival

The Yi Ethnic Torch Festival was inscribed in the first batch of the National List of ICH in 2006 (Li, 2009), representing one of the most distinctive traditional festivals in Southwest China. It is widely distributed in Yi concentrated areas such as Liangshan, Chuxiong, and Bijie, carrying ethnic identity and social cohesion functions, and is hailed as the “Oriental Carnival.”

The cultural connotations of the Yi Ethnic Torch Festival present a three-layer superimposed structure of “primary—secondary—derivative.” The primary layer is rooted in ancient fire reverence, viewing fire as a sacred symbol for dispelling evil and avoiding harm. The secondary layer incorporates hero legends from the Han and Tang dynasties, imbuing the festival with resistance colors. The derivative layer is influenced by Confucian thought, injecting moral education content. The cultural depth requires that external publicity translation cannot stop at superficial excitement but convey its internal belief logic.

Festival activities integrate rituals, competitions, arts, and cuisine. Rituals such as fire worship ritual and sending off the fire embody sacred order. Bull wrestling and wrestling demonstrate martial spirit. Dati dance and “Duoluohu” showcase aesthetic qualities. And foods such as Tuo Tuo Meat (chunk meat) carry ethnic emotions. These diverse forms collectively constitute the unique cultural landscape of the Yi Ethnic Torch Festival.

Based on this, external publicity translation of the Yi Ethnic Torch Festival faces three major challenges. The first is balancing cultural fidelity and reader acceptance, preserving the sanctity of proper nouns such as Bimo (Yi priest) while avoiding comprehension barriers. The second is coordinating academic accuracy and communication efficiency, requiring rigorous terminology definition without excessively lengthy interpretation. The third is connecting ethnic characteristics with international understanding, transforming Yi calendar and sacrificial procedures into universally shared emotional language of humanity to achieve effective cross-cultural communication.

### 4. Textual Analysis and Corpus Organization of The Torch Festival of the Yi People

#### 4.1 Overview of the Book

*The Torch Festival of the Yi People* (Zhu, 1999) was written by Zhu Wenxu, a Yi scholar and an associate professor at Minzu University of China, and published by Sichuan Nationalities Publishing House in July 1999. The book is an important academic monograph systematically reviewing Torch Festival culture of the Yi ethnic group with 329

pages. As an in-depth researcher of his own ethnic culture, Zhu Wenxu possesses both identity proximity and academic rigor. He adopts dual perspectives of documentary folklore and field ethnography in his exposition, both combining through scattered records about the Torch Festival in historical classics and personally conducting field investigations in Yi areas. This gives the book both historical depth and vibrant folk atmosphere, laying a solid textual foundation for subsequent research.

From a structural perspective, the book's layout is rigorous. Following the preface, the main text is divided into eight chapters, supplemented by appendices and a postscript. The opening traces the origins of the Torch Festival, sorting out the historical context of its formation. Subsequently, a special chapter examines regional differences in festival dates and deeply investigates why some regions do not celebrate the Torch Festival, revealing the diversity and complex aspects within Yi culture. As for the core section, the author elaborates in detail on customs such as sacrificial rituals and competitive entertainments, and dedicates a chapter to juxtaposing the Yi Ethnic Torch Festival with the Torch Festival of Native Americans, conducting cross-cultural comparison. The book also collects numerous folk legends and songs passed down among the people, giving oral tradition new life on paper. The appendix section compiles relevant supplementary materials, while the postscript recounts the hardships of his writing.

The entire work is not merely a festival folklore record but a substantial text carrying fire reverence beliefs, historical memory, and ethnic spirit of the Yi ethnic group. For this study, it provides the most core source language materials and cultural interpretation basis.

## 4.2 Compilation and Classification of Culture-Loaded Words

This section aims to systematically identify and categorize the culture-loaded words within the source text. These lexical items serve as the carriers of Yi ethnic cultural information, ranging from material culture to spiritual beliefs. By classifying these terms according to their cultural connotations and functional contexts, we can better understand the linguistic challenges involved in cross-cultural translation. The following table presents the classification framework established for this study.

**Table 1. A Glossary of Yi Cultural Terminology and Existing English Translations**

Category	Example Vocabulary	Existing Translation
Festival Names	火把节	Torch Festival
	星回节	Star-Return
Ethnic Names	东方狂欢节	Oriental Carnival
	彝族	Yi ethnic group
Religious Figures	毕摩 (祭司)	Bimo (Yi priest)
	苏尼 (巫师)	Suni (Yi shaman)
Ritual Activities	祖灵	ancestral spirit
	祭火	fire worship ritual
	送火	sending off the fire
	点火	lighting the torch
Competitive Activities	绕火舞蹈	fire-circle dance
	斗牛	bull wrestling
	赛马	horse racing
	摔跤	wrestling
	选美	beauty contest

Table 1 Continued

Category	Example Vocabulary	Existing Translation
Objects	火把	torch
	面具	mask
	祭器	ritual instrument
Cuisine	坨坨肉	Tuo Tuo Meat (chunk meat)
	荞麦饼	buckwheat cake
	火崇拜	fire reverence
Belief Concepts	驱灾除邪	drive away disasters
	祈丰年	pray for good harvest

## 5. Translation Strategy Analysis under the Three Principles of Skopos Theory

### 5.1 Translation Strategies Guided by the Skopos Principle

In translating the Yi Ethnic Torch Festival for external publicity, every strategic decision spanning lexis, syntax, and discourse must align with specific communicative goals. These goals form a clear hierarchy anchored in cultural fidelity. The immediate priority is the accurate representation of ICH, ensuring that core elements such as fire reverence, ritual protocols, and folklore are conveyed without distortion. Beyond mere transmission, the translation must bridge cultural gaps, allowing international readers to resonate with the Yi people's spiritual pursuit of light, heroism, and harmony. Ultimately, these localized efforts contribute to a broader national narrative, projecting an image of China as a harmonious, pluralistic society through high-quality cultural exchange. Under the framework of Skopos Theory, the choice of translation strategies is not static but dynamically determined by the intended function of the target text in the target culture.

#### Case 1: Strategic Differentiation in Translating “Torch Festival”

The translation of the term “Torch Festival” appears simple but actually involves complex considerations of cultural positioning and communication strategy. From the perspective of translation methods, currently prevalent versions each exhibit distinct strategic orientations:

- “Torch Festival”: It adopts a literal translation method. While intuitive and highly accepted, it lacks cultural depth and fails to activate specific cultural schemas in the target audience's mind.
- “Fire Festival”: It utilizes a generalization strategy. Though concise, it suffers from insufficient cultural distinctiveness and is easily confused with numerous generic fire festivals worldwide, violating the fidelity principle regarding ethnic specificity.
- “Yi Torch Festival”: It employs an explicitation technique by adding ethnic attributes. Though slightly lengthy, it enhances recognizability and is recommended in academic contexts where precision outweighs brevity.
- “Oriental Carnival”: It represents a radical domestication strategy. While it may attract Western readers through familiar cultural analogies, it carries significant risks of oversimplification or misinterpretation of Yi sacred beliefs, potentially distorting the source culture's spiritual essence.

According to the Skopos rule, the end justifies the means; therefore, this study recommends adopting differentiated translation strategies contingent upon specific communication scenarios rather than seeking a single correct equivalent.

For mass communication, the expression “Torch Festival (Yi Ethnic Group)” is recommended. This combines literal translation with the technique of apposition. Strategically, this balances communicative efficiency and cultural accuracy by lowering cognitive thresholds through the generic term while clarifying ethnic belonging. In cross-cultural communication, this allows general audiences to access the concept without being overwhelmed, while the parenthetical note serves as a minimal cultural anchor preventing total assimilation into Western concepts.

For Academic Research, “the Yi Ethnic Torch Festival” should be used. This prioritizes the fidelity principle over the coherence principle, ensuring the accurate transmission of cultural connotations and terminological consistency

necessary for scholarly discourse.

The appellation “Oriental Carnival” should be used with extreme caution. Excessive domestication risks dissolving the religious sanctity and ethnic subjectivity of the Torch Festival. In cross-cultural exchange, preserving the “otherness” of the ICH is often more valuable than forced familiarity. By avoiding reductive analogies, the translation respects the source culture’s autonomy and ensures that the translation behavior serves the core purpose of accurately disseminating Yi ICH culture rather than merely catering to target-culture stereotypes.

Case 2: Functional Adequacy and Strategic Mediation in Ritual Translation

Regarding the translation of ritual descriptions, this case specifically illustrates how the Skopos Rule dictates translation decisions. Taking the “Three Fires” ritual as an example:

Source Text (ST): 火把节有“三把火”，连续三天烧完三把，就为彝族赶走一切邪祟。

Target Text 1 (TT1): The Torch Festival has “three fires”, burning three torches continuously for three days to drive away all evils for the Yi people.

Target Text 2 (TT2): The Torch Festival features the “Three Fires” ritual, where torches are lit consecutively over three days. This sacred practice is believed to cleanse the community of all negative forces and bring blessings to the Yi ethnic group.

Analysis:

The divergence between TT1 and TT2 reflects competing translational purposes rather than differences in linguistic competence. While TT1 pursues a referential purpose that privileges semantic correspondence, TT2 is oriented toward an expressive and vocative purpose aligned with the actual communicative goals of Yi ICH external publicity: fostering cross-cultural spiritual resonance and projecting cultural dignity. This purposive reorientation shifts the translator’s focus from replicating physical actions to mediating the ritual’s sacred significance, a shift that subsequently governs all strategic decisions at the textual level.

This expressive purpose directly motivates two key interventions in TT2. First, register elevation replaces the literal “drive away all evils” with “cleanse... of all negative forces” The source-oriented equivalent satisfies referential accuracy but risks activating superstition-related schemas in Western readerships; the revised phrasing recalibrates the text’s tone toward transnationally recognizable spiritual discourse, thereby securing the intended solemnity. Second, thick translation through additions such as “sacred practice” and “bring blessings” addresses cultural defaults that would otherwise remain opaque. These amplifications are not decorative but functionally necessary: they render implicit cosmological meanings explicit so that target readers can apprehend the ritual as a meaningful cultural system rather than an exotic spectacle.

Ultimately, the Skopos Rule liberates the translator from the constraint of formal equivalence when such equivalence obstructs the intended function. TT2 demonstrates that functional adequacy—achieving the desired perlocutionary effect of respect and understanding—takes precedence over word-for-word fidelity. The transformation from a mechanical description to a spiritually resonant narrative is thus the direct result of allowing the translational purpose to govern method selection, confirming that in ritual translation, the end indeed justifies the means.

## 5.2 Translation Strategies Guided by the Coherence Principle

The coherence principle prioritizes pragmatic reconstruction over lexical fidelity, requiring target texts to align with the audience’s interpretive frameworks. In Yi ICH translation, explicitation, cultural substitution, and narrative amplification bridge epistemological gaps to secure intratextual coherence.

Case 3: Explanatory Translation of Fire Reverence Beliefs

ST: 火把节的形成最早要追溯到远古时期的火崇拜。

TT1: The Torch Festival can be traced back to ancient fire worship.

TT2: The Torch Festival originates from the ancient Yi ethnic group’s fire reverence, a belief system dating back thousands of years. Fire was considered sacred, symbolizing purity, warmth, and protection from evil spirits.

Analysis: TT1’s literal “fire worship” risks triggering negative connotations of primitivism in Western contexts. TT2 adopts explicitation and cultural substitution to address the audience’s cognitive default through three techniques. First, semantic specification recalibrates the emotional register by replacing “worship” with “reverence” to align with transnational spiritual discourse, mitigating exoticization while preserving awe. Second, cultural attribution adds “Yi ethnic group’s” and anchors the abstract concept to a specific cultural agent, transforming a vague reference into an identifiable identity marker. Third, symbolic explication supplements symbolic meanings (“purity, warmth, protection”) which acts as a cognitive scaffold, enabling readers to construct a coherent mental model of Yi fire beliefs that

would otherwise remain inaccessible.

Case 4: Narrative Coherence Processing of Legend Stories

ST: 天神派蝗虫降灾，凡人点燃火把驱虫害。

TT1: God sent locusts disaster, people lit torches to drive pests.

TT2: According to legend, a celestial deity once sent a plague of locusts to devastate the crops. In response, the Yi ethnic group ancestors lit torches to drive away the pests and protect their harvest. This heroic act is commemorated annually through the Torch Festival.

Analysis:

TT1's capitalized "God" erroneously imports Judeo-Christian schemas onto Yi polytheism, causing cultural coherence failure. TT2 instead employs narrative reconstruction, justified by the etiological function of legends and their dependence on target-culture causal logic. This begins with genre framing through "According to legend," a metadiscursive marker that signals mythological status and preemptively adjusts reader expectations.

Cultural substitution replaces "God" with "celestial deity" to avoid theological interference and preserve the internal consistency of Yi cosmology. Logical amplification then inserts "In response" to repair the implicit causality compressed in the source's paratactic structure, satisfying English hypotactic coherence requirements. Finally, teleological closure links the mythical past to present ritual via "commemorated annually," fulfilling the legend's etiological function by clarifying not only what occurred but why it remains culturally significant.

Ultimately, coherence in ICH translation is an outcome of strategic mediation rather than formal correspondence. Translators must diagnose gaps in shared cultural knowledge and deploy targeted interventions that prioritize the target audience's capacity for meaning-making.

### 5.3 Translation Strategies Guided by the Fidelity Principle

In the external publicity translation of the Yi Ethnic Torch Festival, the treatment of culturally-loaded core terms—specifically Bimo (Yi priest) and Suni (Yi shaman)—serves as a critical test case for applying this principle.

Case 5: Translation of Proper Nouns such as Bimo and Suni

Taking “毕摩” as an example, simple transliteration as “Bimo” preserves the source-language form but deprives target readers of categorical information, leaving them unable to determine whether the term denotes a person, place, or title. Free translation as “Yi priest” improves readability but erases the term's cultural specificity and may introduce misleading Christian connotations. The compromise solution “Bimo (Yi priest)” —a transliteration plus categorical annotation (Li & Yang, 2021)—retains the cultural signifier through transliteration while providing minimal comprehension via the parenthetical category. It thus achieves a dynamic balance between cultural fidelity and reader accessibility, aligning most closely with the fidelity principle. The translation of “苏尼” follows the same logic: “Suni (Yi shaman)” preserves the ethnic appellation and activates cross-cultural resonance through the commensurable concept “shaman,” avoiding the derogatory “witch doctor.”

This choice can be analyzed across three interrelated levels: strategy, method, and technique. Strategically, “Bimo (Yi priest)” reconciles foreignization (the transliterated core) with domestication (the parenthetical gloss). The method adopted is transliteration plus intratextual categorical annotation, which avoids both the semantic vacuum of pure transliteration and the cultural erasure of free translation. At the technique level, amplification adds the hypernyms “priest” and “shaman” as categorical anchors; the lexical choice of “shaman” over “witch doctor” further destigmatizes the concept by employing a neutral, cross-culturally established scholarly category.

The theoretical preference for this strategy rests on a redefined notion of fidelity as dual loyalty—to the cultural uniqueness of the source concept and to the reader's right to basic comprehension. The formulation resists the assimilative transparency of fluent domestication: the unfamiliar transliterated form “Bimo” signals irreducible difference, while the gloss invites dialogic understanding rather than leaving a semantic gap. This gesture establishes cultural equality: the Yi term stands as the primary identity, with the English approximation relegated to a subordinate explanatory role, thereby overturning the default centering of Western frames.

In conclusion, the translation strategy model derived from Skopos Theory for Yi ICH external publicity translation begins with a clear determination of purpose. This initial decision—whether to prioritize cultural communication or information transmission—determines all subsequent strategic choices. Once the purpose is set, the three principles operate at distinct analytical levels. The Skopos principle governs macro-strategic decisions: translators select amplification, omission, or free translation based on the defined communicative goal. The coherence principle addresses reception barriers, deploying explanatory translation and cultural compensation as targeted solutions to specific

comprehension obstacles. The fidelity principle regulates core cultural proper nouns, where the choice between transliteration with annotation and literal translation preserves the cultural kernel without compromising accessibility.

These principles do not operate in isolation. Their synergy under the governing translation purpose produces a measurable outcome, namely the balance between communication effect and cultural fidelity. This balance serves as the empirical benchmark for translation quality assessment. In practice, a translation succeeds when Yi ethnic group ICH achieves international visibility without dilution of its distinctive cultural identity—when global reach and ethnic particularity are *huangnot* treated as competing objectives but as interdependent results of purpose-driven strategic coordination.

## 6. Optimization Recommendations for Yi ICH External Publicity Translation

The systematic optimization recommendations for practical needs of Yi ethnic group ICH external publicity translation propose need to be proposed from four dimensions: terminology standardization, communication methods, talent cultivation, and channel expansion, which aim to provide practicable pathways for the external dissemination of the Torch Festival and even Yi culture.

First, the standardization of terminology translation is the foundation for improving the external translation. Addressing the current situation of inconsistent translations and confused interpretation of Yi cultural terms, this study recommends establishing a Comparative Table of English Translations of Yi Cultural Terms to uniformly standardize core concepts. For example, “火把节” should be translated as “The Yi Ethnic Torch Festival” with cultural annotations added at its first appearance. “毕摩” may adopt the form “Bimo (Yi priest)” through transliteration with annotation, both preserving ethnic characteristics and clarifying its religious functions. “苏尼” corresponds to “Suni (Yi shaman),” evoking reader cognition through the cross-culturally commensurable concept of “shaman”. For core belief vocabularies such as “火崇拜” and “祭火仪式”, standardization as “fire reverence” and “fire worship ritual” is required to ensure accurate transmission of cultural connotations. As for foods with ethnic characteristic like “坨坨肉,” it is recommended to adopt “Tuo Tuo Meat” transliteration with brief explanation. Notably, although the appellation “Oriental Carnival” possesses communicative power, it oversimplifies cultural connotations. Therefore, it is recommended to be used cautiously with quotation marks. The establishment of the terminology table is only the starting point. More importantly, a long-term mechanism for terminology updating and maintenance must be formed to ensure that translation methods continuously optimize with deepening research and practical feedback.

The second dimension is the introduction of multimodal translation strategies (Zhong, 2025), opening new dimensions for ICH external publicity beyond text. Image-text coordination is the most basic modal synergy. Images in the book regarding mask making may be accompanied by English explanations, making craft processes clear. Video translation must balance subtitle accuracy with supplementary cultural annotations. If Torch Festival celebration videos could embed brief ritual background introductions beyond bilingual subtitles, it would greatly enhance understanding depth of audiences. For communication oriented towards new media, it is required that the text be highly simplified while the visual elements be significantly enhanced. Short videos on social media may distill key terms accompanied by animation or diagrams, capturing user attention within seconds. The potential of interactive content is even more worthy of exploration. In ICH culture websites, when users click on the term “Bimo (Yi priest)” detailed cultural background cards may pop up. This on-demand acquisition model both avoids information overload and satisfies the needs of those seeking in-depth understanding.

The third dimension is the cultivation of translation talent, which is also the long-term strategy determining publicity quality. The ideal translator should possess three capabilities: linguistic competence, cultural understanding competence and translation practice competence. At the linguistic level, translators must be proficient in three languages, namely Yi, Chinese, and English. At the cultural level, translators must thoroughly understand the core differences between Yi culture, Chinese culture, and Western culture. Ultimately, these competencies are integrated into the refinement of translation practice abilities. Based on this, it is recommended to rely on universities to establish talent cultivation bases for ethnic minority culture translation, adding ethnic text translation practice modules in translation courses, and encouraging native scholars to participate in translation work leveraging their identity advantages. Even more worthy of exploration is the collaboration model of “native scholar + professional translator”. The former ensures accuracy and authority of cultural interpretation while the latter guarantees linguistic quality and communicative effectiveness of the translation. Only through the complementary advantages of both can high-quality translations that are both faithful and readable be produced.

Finally, optimization of communication channels requires differentiated strategies based on audience characteristics. For official publicity platforms targeting international dignitaries and scholars, academic rigor and accuracy should be prioritized, with translations undergoing strict review and detailed, standardized annotations. Translation materials for international academic exchange occasions need to emphasize in-depth cultural interpretation to help researchers understand the belief logic behind rituals. In terms of the translation of tourism and cultural promotion targeting ordinary tourists, it should feature concise, clear, and attractive, focusing on conveying festive atmosphere and feeling experiences. Social media targets young demographics, where visualization and interactivity become key. Therefore, illustrations of key terms, fragmented presentation of short videos, and encouragement of user-generated contents are all directions worth exploring. Educational materials targeting students need to pay attention to systematicity and gradual progression, guiding youth from shallow to deep understanding of the overall picture of Yi culture. Different channels each have their strengths. Only through precise adaptation can the story of the Torch Festival reach those who need it most in the most appropriate manner.

## 7. Conclusions

This study examines the external translation of the Yi Ethnic Torch Festival as intangible cultural heritage, assessing current practices and proposing a strategy model grounded in Skopos Theory. While core terms like Torch Festival have achieved relative standardization, facilitating basic international communication, the translation of deeper culture-loaded items remains fragmented. Current strategies often fail to convey underlying connotations such as fire reverence and ritual symbolism, leaving international readers' demands for cultural depth unmet.

Applying Skopos Theory validates its utility in this context. The Skopos principle anchors strategic choices to the primary goal of disseminating Yi ICH culture, ensuring decisions are purpose-driven rather than arbitrary. The coherence principle improves readability by aligning translations with target readers' cognitive expectations (Gao & Wang, 2025). Meanwhile, the fidelity principle mediates between cultural authenticity and communicative effectiveness, preserving Yi cultural distinctiveness without imposing excessive cognitive burdens through over-foreignization.

Drawing on the synergy of these principles, this study proposes a translation strategy model prioritizing purpose, cultural fidelity, and reader acceptance. Specific methods—including transliteration with annotation, explanatory translation, and amplification—are recommended as operational solutions to address existing gaps in Torch Festival external publicity translation.

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