

A SEMIOTIC STUDY ON THE VISUAL RECONSTRUCTION OF XUNPU WOMEN IN CONTEMPORARY MEDIA CONTEXTS*

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Received 27 January 2026; Revised 31 January 2026; Accepted 2 February 2026

Abstract

This research article aims to: 1) examine how the visual image of Xunpu women is reconstructed and circulated in contemporary media environments; 2) analyze the semiotic mechanisms through which symbolic elements are selectively preserved, emphasized, or disconnected from their original cultural meanings; 3) conduct a semiotic research study by collecting visual data from museum archives, traditional references, and contemporary media platforms, and analyzing these materials through comparative analysis. Adopting a qualitative approach, this study differentiates between the levels of signifier and signified to examine the visual systems of clothing, headwear, and earrings associated with Xunpu women. Research materials are obtained through purposive sampling of representative visual images, and interpretive semiotic methods are employed to analyze visual form, structural relationships, and culturally embedded meanings.

The research results indicate that: 1) the reduction of cultural meaning in contemporary representations of Xunpu women does not stem from the

Citation:



* Chen Rui-rui, Arnuphap Chantaramporn and Phuvanart Rattanarungsikul. (2026). A Semiotic Study On The Visual Reconstruction Of Xunpu Women In Contemporary Media Contexts.

Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Development, 4(1), 619-640.;

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.>

Website: <https://so12.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/JISDIADP/>

disappearance of symbolic elements themselves, but from the disruption of structural relationships between visual form, cultural practice, and social function; 2) in contemporary media representations, individual visual elements are frequently extracted and reorganized according to principles of visual efficiency, resulting in the loss of proportional and relational logic inherent in the original visual system; 3) design-oriented semiotic translation strategies that re-establish disrupted structural coherence can directly inform the design and dissemination of cultural products. Based on these findings, this study proposes an analytical framework that integrates semiotic analysis with design translation, offering a transferable model for addressing meaning reduction in the contemporary dissemination of female imagery associated with intangible cultural heritage.

Keywords: semiotics, visual reconstruction, Xunpu women

Introduction

In the contemporary visual communication environment shaped by short-video platforms and social media, local folk images are increasingly circulated through image-driven forms of cultural consumption. As a representative female folk figure from the southern coastal region of Fujian, China, Xunpu women have gained heightened visibility in contemporary media contexts through recognizable visual elements such as floral headdresses, traditional clothing, and earrings. Within tourism-oriented dissemination, these elements are often extracted and circulated as visual symbols, gradually transforming Xunpu women from lived cultural figures into visually iconic representations. However, contemporary media representations tend to prioritize fragmented visual components over coherent systems of dress and adornment. Practices such as the selective emphasis on floral headdresses, the arbitrary combination of traditional garments with unrelated clothing, and the

decontextualized use of accessories have become prevalent. As a result, the visual system that once articulated women's everyday labor, social roles, and local cultural relations is weakened, leading to a reduction of cultural meaning and a shift toward surface-level visual symbolization.

Although this issue has been widely discussed in studies on the visual communication of intangible cultural heritage, existing research has largely emphasized interpretive readings of individual visual elements or iconographic meanings, with limited attention to the structural mechanisms through which cultural meaning is displaced. While semiotic theory provides an effective framework for explaining how visual structures carry cultural meaning, its traditional interpretive orientation is insufficient for addressing processes of visual reconstruction under contemporary media conditions. In contexts where cultural imagery is actively reconfigured through design practices and media circulation, an integrated approach is therefore required to examine how disrupted visual structures may be analytically identified and reassembled.

Building on this foundation, the study introduces a design-oriented perspective, conceptualizing visual reconstruction as a process of symbolic translation rather than a purely aesthetic intervention. By integrating semiotic analysis with a design-based translational approach, this research establishes an analytical framework for examining and reconstructing the visual structure of Xunpu women imagery in contemporary media contexts. Through this approach, the study aims to provide a methodological reference for the visual transformation of female imagery associated with intangible cultural heritage, with particular implications for the design and translation of cultural products in contemporary media contexts.

Objectives

1. To analyze the visual structure of Xunpu women's imagery from a semiotic perspective by distinguishing between the levels of signifier and signified.
2. To identify the mechanisms of visual misreading and meaning reduction in contemporary media representations of the Xunpu women image.
3. To propose a design-oriented visual reconstruction framework, derived from the semiotic analysis of the Xunpu women image, as a method of symbolic translation for intangible cultural heritage imagery.

Literature Review

1. Semiotic Approaches to Visual Culture and Folk Imagery

Semiotic theory has long served as a foundational framework for the analysis of visual culture by examining how meaning is generated through signs and symbolic systems. Building on Saussure's distinction between the signifier and the signified (Saussure, 1983), scholars have emphasized the role of visual structure in shaping cultural meaning, particularly in the interpretation of culturally embedded visual forms (Barthes, 1977). Within studies of folk imagery and traditional dress, semiotic approaches have been widely applied to decode symbolic references embedded in clothing, accessories, and bodily adornment. These studies demonstrate that visual forms function as structured systems shaped by historical experience, social practice, and collective cognition, rather than as arbitrary aesthetic choices (Chandler, 2017). However, existing semiotic research has largely remained at the level of interpretive reading, focusing on relatively stable cultural contexts. In contemporary digital environments shaped by short-video platforms and algorithmic visual circulation, visual signs are increasingly encountered as fragmented and recontextualized elements rather than as coherent semiotic systems. Platform-specific logics of visibility,

circulation speed, and visual efficiency actively reorganize visual grammar, challenging the explanatory scope of classical semiotic interpretation and calling for renewed analytical attention to semiotic structure under contemporary media conditions.

2. Visual Communication of Intangible Cultural Heritage

With the expansion of digital media platforms and tourism-oriented dissemination, the visual communication of intangible cultural heritage has attracted growing scholarly attention. Research has shown that visual media can enhance the visibility and accessibility of heritage imagery, enabling local cultural symbols to circulate more widely within public visual space (Smith, 2006). At the same time, critical studies have highlighted the limitations of visually driven dissemination, noting that an emphasis on recognizability and transmission efficiency often leads to the selective extraction of highly identifiable visual elements, contributing to the fragmentation of cultural structure and the simplification of meaning. From the perspectives of digital heritage and cultural mediatization, heritage imagery can be understood as being shaped not only by representational intent but also by platform logics and media infrastructures. In short-video and social media environments, algorithmic recommendation mechanisms tend to prioritize visual immediacy and repeatability, reinforcing iconic visual motifs while weakening relational and contextual dimensions of cultural meaning. Although issues of visual misreading and meaning reduction have been repeatedly noted in discussions of contemporary heritage communication, analytical frameworks for systematically examining how media-driven processes restructure visual meaning at the level of visual grammar remain underdeveloped.

3. Translational and Reconstruction-Oriented Perspectives in Cultural Communication

In response to the limitations of purely interpretive approaches, recent studies have explored translational and reconstruction-oriented perspectives in cultural communication research. From this viewpoint, visual reconstruction is understood as a form of symbolic mediation through which cultural meanings are reorganized and rearticulated within new communicative contexts, rather than as a process of aesthetic reproduction alone (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). These perspectives highlight the potential of symbolic translation to bridge traditional cultural systems and contemporary visual practices, particularly in design- and media-based contexts. Nevertheless, much of the existing literature remains largely conceptual and provides limited methodological guidance on how semiotic structures can be systematically operationalized for visual reconstruction. The lack of analytical models that integrate semiotic structure analysis with reconstruction strategies indicates the need for an approach that moves beyond interpretation toward the operationalization of semiotic structure as a methodological foundation for visual reconstruction, particularly in contexts where cultural imagery is continuously reshaped through digital media circulation and design practices.

Methodology

1. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design that integrates semiotic analysis with comparative visual analysis. Through literature review, visual data collection, and cross-contextual comparison, the research examines the visual representation of Xunpu women and the relationship between visual form and cultural meaning. A two-level analytical framework is employed, consisting of the signifier level and the signified level, to support the systematic examination of visual structures under contemporary media conditions.



2. Research Materials and Visual Samples

Visual materials were collected from two primary sources, namely contemporary media representations and traditional reference materials. Contemporary visual samples were drawn from short-video platforms and tourism-oriented visual media, while traditional references related to clothing, headwear, and earrings were obtained from ethnographic records, museum archives, and published academic literature. In total, 38 contemporary visual samples and 27 traditional reference samples were selected for analysis. Purposive sampling was applied to ensure representativeness in relation to the research objectives. For contemporary media samples, selection criteria included explicit representation of Xunpu women imagery, clear visibility of key visual elements including clothing, headwear, and earrings, as well as high circulation frequency or recurring visual patterns indicative of mainstream media representation. For traditional reference samples, the criteria focused on documented historical or ethnographic credibility, completeness of visual information regarding dress and adornment systems, and relevance to established cultural practices and social contexts.

3. Research Instruments and Data Collection

The primary research instrument employed in this study is a semiotic analytical framework that distinguishes between the signifier level and the signified level. At the signifier level, analysis focuses on formal visual elements, including clothing forms, headwear structures, and earring types. At the signified level, analysis addresses cultural meanings associated with female identity, life stages, and social roles. Visual data were organized into comparative sample groups according to media context, specifically traditional versus contemporary contexts. Each sample was coded based on predefined analytical categories at both levels, enabling systematic cross-contextual comparison. Coding at the signifier level generated comparable feature profiles, which were then aligned

with corresponding signified meanings to support systematic cross-sample comparison.

4. Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted through comparative semiotic analysis following a step-by-step procedure. First, at the signifier level, visual elements were examined in terms of form, structural composition, proportional relationships, and visual hierarchy. Second, at the signified level, corresponding cultural meanings were interpreted with reference to historical records, ethnographic literature, and prior scholarly research. Third, comparative analysis was applied to identify patterns of continuity, transformation, and disruption between traditional visual systems and contemporary media representations. Through this process, shifts in the relationship between visual form and cultural meaning were systematically identified, allowing for an examination of how semiotic structures are reorganized under contemporary media conditions.

Results

1. Analysis of Visual Symbols at the Signifier Level

The results of the semiotic analysis indicate that directly perceptible visual elements, including clothing, headwear, and earrings, constitute the signifier level of the Xunpu women image and provide the formal basis through which cultural meaning is generated and communicated. Through systematic image sampling and structural analysis, these elements can be examined in terms of contour, proportional relationships, and visual hierarchy. In contemporary communication contexts, the image of Xunpu women frequently enters public visual space in highly stylized and visually intensified forms. Distinctive elements are repeatedly extracted and emphasized in image production, tourism display, and design practices, leading certain formal components to solidify as highly recognizable visual symbols. At the same time,

this process reshapes the perception of the overall image structure and alters the internal relationships among visual elements. Analysis at the signifier level therefore provides a necessary foundation for identifying how clothing, headwear, and earring systems function as an integrated structure and how this structure is selectively retained or disrupted in contemporary representations.

1.1 Garment Form and Structural Configuration

As shown in Figure 1, the traditional clothing system of Xunpu women is primarily composed of the Da Ju shirt and wide-leg trousers. Across different usage contexts, including coastal labor and everyday wear, these garments exhibit a high degree of structural stability. The clothing system is consistently characterized by short or mid-length upper garments, loose silhouettes, and symmetrical construction, forming a clear and unified visual outline. Key structural features, such as the standing collar, right-side closure, front-opening construction, and frog buttons, recur across samples and constitute the most recognizable components of Xunpu women's attire (Chen et al., 2018). From the perspective of formal relationships, the loose garment body, right-side opening, and gently curved hemlines together establish a stable outer form, enabling the clothing system to accommodate bodily movements associated with coastal labor, including bending, wading, and large-scale physical motion. The proportional division between short upper garments and wide-waistband lower garments produces a distinct visual segmentation of the body, resulting in a compact upper-body appearance combined with a relaxed lower-body structure. Originating from functional demands linked to labor practices, this proportional logic has gradually solidified through long-term use into a clothing paradigm with collective identificatory significance (Xiao et al., 2010).



Figure 1 Traditional Attire of Xunpu Women (Source: Zhang & Xu, 2023)

In contemporary visual communication and tourism-oriented display, this proportional logic is frequently disrupted. In many contemporary media representations, the Zanhua floral headdress is retained as the primary identifying element, while the traditional clothing system is replaced by modern garments or non-local costume forms, including Hanfu-style robes, Qipao silhouettes, and Thai-style attire. Although the headdress remains visually prominent, the original short-upper and wide-lower garment structure is no longer maintained. As a result, the clothing system no longer operates as an integrated structural whole but is instead reconfigured into a fragmented assemblage centered on a single visual signifier. At the signifier level, this mode of substitution enhances visual novelty and recognizability, yet it simultaneously weakens the proportional logic that historically connected garment structure with embodied labor and everyday practice (Li & Xu, 2024). Such a shift contributes to the structural fragmentation of the clothing system and reshapes the interpretive framework through which the overall image of Xunpu women is perceived.

1.2 Visual Structure and Formal Rhythm of the Headwear System

Within the headwear system of Xunpu women, the floral headdress known as Zanhuawei constitutes the most prominent visual focal point. As shown in Figure 2, the Zanhuawei is organized around the hair bun as a central axis and exhibits a clear circular aggregative structure. Floral materials are arranged in concentric layers surrounding the bun, forming a centripetal visual organization. This head-centered configuration ensures sustained visual emphasis and establishes the Zanhuawei as a stable identifying element within the overall image. From the perspective of formal composition, the visual rhythm of the Zanhuawei emerges through the interaction between layered structure and color organization. Multiple layers of floral materials create spatial progression from the center outward, while color groupings are distributed around the hair bun in a stratified yet coherent manner. Auxiliary elements, including chopsticks, hairpins, and combs, maintain relatively stable positional relationships across samples. Their linear forms contrast with the circular floral arrangement, producing a hierarchical configuration that preserves visual order within the headwear system.

In contemporary media representations, however, the Zanhuawei is frequently detached from this relational structure. In many short-video and tourism-oriented images, the floral headdress is visually enlarged, densely stacked, while accompanying garment structures and bodily proportions are minimized or omitted. Floral elements are often accumulated without maintaining the layered rhythm and spatial spacing characteristic of traditional arrangements, resulting in a flattened or excessive visual effect. Through close-up framing and visual amplification, the Zanhuawei is transformed from a component within a hierarchical visual system into an autonomous decorative symbol. This isolation weakens the structural relationship between headwear,

clothing, and bodily scale, reducing the headwear system to an iconic motif rather than a structurally integrated signifier.



Figure 2 Headdress of Xunpu women

(Source: Photograph by the researcher, 2025)

1.3 Form Differentiation Mechanism of Earrings

As shown in Figure 3, traditional Xunpu women's earrings primarily consist of three types: Dinggou earrings, Dingxiang pendant earrings, and elder women's Dingxiang pendant earrings. These types display systematic differences in form, scale, and structural complexity, together forming a sequential morphological system corresponding to different life stages. Dinggou earrings exhibit simple, closed forms with relatively small scale. Dingxiang pendant earrings introduce suspended elements and floral motifs, extending the form downward and increasing visual complexity. Elder women's Dingxiang pendant earrings further enlarge overall scale and incorporate additional decorative components, resulting in the greatest visual weight among the three types. From a structural perspective, this differentiation follows an additive morphological logic. Each subsequent form retains the basic structure of the

previous stage while introducing new elements, increased scale, and layered decoration. Through this process, earrings function not merely as decorative accessories but as visual markers of life stage and social identity. At the signifier level, variations in earring form operate as a visual coding system through which age, marital status, and social position are communicated.

In contemporary media samples, this system is frequently disrupted. Earrings worn with Xunpu headwear often bear no relation to traditional forms and instead reflect current fashion trends or generic decorative styles. These earrings vary widely in shape, scale, and material, and their selection is disconnected from local cultural conventions. As a result, the sequential logic of earring differentiation is replaced by arbitrary ornamentation. While visual diversity is increased, the semiotic function of earrings as structured signifiers of identity and life stage is significantly weakened.



Figure 3 Earrings of Xunpu Women

(Source: Photograph by the researcher, 2024)

2. Analysis of Cultural Meaning at the Signified Level

At the level of the signified, the visual symbols of Xunpu women point to a cultural meaning structure shaped by historical memory, lived experience, and folk belief. These meanings are not inherent in isolated visual forms but are

constructed through long-term social practice and collective interpretation. Systems of dress, headwear, and bodily adornment are closely intertwined with maritime labor, family organization, and women's social roles within local communities. Bodily ornamentation thus functions as a medium through which cultural meanings are articulated and transmitted. The floral headdress signifies vitality and auspicious blessing within folk understanding. Color selection and floral materials are associated with values such as diligence, purity, and everyday prosperity. The honeybee motif, materialized through bee-shaped hairpins, symbolizes industriousness and resilience, reflecting women's participation in both domestic labor and coastal production. These meanings emerge through the relational organization of visual elements rather than through individual components alone. Similarly, earring forms function as signified indicators of life stage and social identity. Differences among Dinggou earrings, Dingxiang pendant earrings, and elder women's earrings conventionally distinguish unmarried, married, and older women, enabling life-stage transitions to be communicated through a socially recognized visual language (Zhang, 2004).

3. Synthesis of Research Findings

3.1 Structural Characteristics of the Xunpu Women Visual Image

The results demonstrate that the visual image of Xunpu women constitutes a relatively stable formal system composed of clothing, headwear, and earrings. In traditional representations, these elements exhibit consistent proportional relationships and hierarchical organization. The floral headdress functions as the dominant visual focus, while clothing silhouettes and earring forms operate as secondary structural components that support visual balance and identity recognition. This recurring structural configuration enables the image to be consistently identified across different contexts.

3.2 Mechanisms of Visual Misreading and Meaning Reduction

In contemporary media environments, this structural coherence is frequently disrupted. Visual representations tend to retain isolated and highly recognizable elements, particularly the Zanhua floral headdress, while the traditional clothing system and its associated bodily proportions are often replaced by other costume forms. Content analysis indicates that in more than 80 percent of the contemporary samples, the floral headdress is paired with non-traditional garments, resulting in the absence of the original upper–lower proportional structure. From a semiotic perspective, this mode of substitution alters the functional relationship between signifier and signified. In traditional configurations, the short upper garment and wide lower garment jointly signified women's embodied labor, mobility, and everyday coastal practice. When the clothing system is replaced by elongated silhouettes or alternative costume structures, the retained headwear functions as a detached visual marker rather than as part of an integrated signifying system. Consequently, the signifier gradually loses its capacity to activate the culturally embedded associations that once anchored meaning generation.

3.3. Implications for Visual Reconstruction

The findings indicate that visual reconstruction is fundamentally linked to the maintenance or reorganization of structural relationships among visual elements. Meaning reduction does not result from the disappearance of symbols themselves but from the disruption of proportional logic and relational coherence. Reconstruction therefore depends not on the creation of new symbols but on the reestablishment of structural relationships among clothing, headwear, accessories, and bodily proportion. These results provide an empirical foundation for subsequent discussion of symbolic translation and visual reconstruction within contemporary media environments.

Discussion

1. Semiotic Coherence and Meaning Generation

Rather than functioning as a collection of independent visual motifs, the visual image of Xunpu women can be understood as a coherent semiotic system in which cultural meaning emerges through structured relationships among visual elements. This perspective reinforces a central semiotic premise that meaning is generated relationally, rather than residing inherently within isolated symbols. The findings of this study demonstrate that proportional hierarchy, visual centrality, and the coordinated arrangement of clothing, headwear, and earrings jointly constitute the conditions through which cultural meaning becomes intelligible. By foregrounding visual structure as an analytical focus, this study extends semiotic inquiry beyond the interpretation of individual symbols toward an examination of structural organization as a prerequisite for meaning generation. Within the traditional visual system of Xunpu women, semiotic coherence enabled visual form to remain closely aligned with lived practice, allowing cultural meaning to be sustained across time and context. In particular, the stable relationship among garment proportion, bodily movement, and everyday labor functioned as a mechanism through which visual form remained culturally legible. This observation contributes to existing research on folk female imagery by illustrating how structural integrity operates as a stabilizing condition for cultural intelligibility within shifting representational environments.

2. Structural Disruption and Meaning Reduction in Contemporary Contexts

From a theoretical standpoint, meaning reduction in contemporary representations of Xunpu women can be understood as the result of structural disruption rather than the disappearance of symbolic elements. As demonstrated in the results, highly recognizable components, most notably the

Zanhua floral headdress, are frequently retained, while the traditional clothing system and its proportional logic are replaced by alternative costume forms. This pattern indicates that visual misreading arises not from symbolic absence, but from the fragmentation of semiotic relationships within the visual system. From an institutional perspective, such structural disruption is closely linked to the operational logic of contemporary tourism promotion and platform-based media circulation. Within tourism-oriented visual economies, cultural images are increasingly optimized for immediacy, portability, and rapid recognition. Platform algorithms and promotional strategies tend to privilege visually striking and easily reproducible motifs, while more complex structural relationships among visual elements are simplified or omitted. Under these conditions, the visual system of Xunpu women is reorganized according to external representational logics rather than emerging from internal cultural practice. In semiotic terms, this process results in a decoupling between signifier and signified. In traditional configurations, the proportional relationship between short upper garments and wide lower garments functioned as a composite signifier of women's embodied labor, mobility, and everyday coastal practice. When this proportional logic is replaced by elongated silhouettes or visually dominant lower garments, the retained headwear operates primarily as a detached visual marker. Although recognizability is maintained, the signifier loses its capacity to activate the culturally embedded associations that once anchored meaning generation. This shift reflects a broader tension between visual efficiency and cultural intelligibility that characterizes contemporary heritage representation. In this sense, tourism and platform-driven visual production does not merely mediate cultural images, but actively restructures the conditions under which cultural meaning can be recognized and sustained.

3. Implications for Visual Reconstruction

Within this analytical framework, visual reconstruction should not be understood as the replication of discrete symbols, but as a process of rearticulating semiotic relationships within a visual system. Reconstruction, in this sense, involves restoring or reorganizing structural coherence so that cultural meaning may once again be generated through relational configurations rather than isolated motifs. From this perspective, IP-oriented reconstruction may be understood as one possible communicative manifestation of such a process, rather than as a purely design-driven outcome. This tension becomes particularly visible when reconstructed images are further applied to tourism branding or cultural products, where visual standardization may unintentionally reinforce symbolic abstraction. At the same time, it is necessary to acknowledge the potential risks embedded in IP-oriented reconstruction. While such approaches aim to reestablish recognizability and coherence, they may also generate new forms of iconic fixation if structural relationships are reduced to standardized visual formulas. When reconstructed images become detached from lived practice, they risk reproducing the same process of abstraction that contributes to meaning reduction. Maintaining a balance between adaptability and cultural referentiality remains essential. Visual reconstruction that prioritizes structural relationships over isolated symbols offers a pathway through which recognizability and cultural intelligibility may coexist. Viewed in this way, visual reconstruction functions not only as a design strategy, but also as an analytical lens for examining how semiotic coherence may be maintained or reestablished within contemporary communication systems.

Recommendations

1. Theoretical Contribution

Figure 4 synthesizes the analytical logic articulated in the Results section by explicitly mapping the structural progression from signifier-level identification to symbolic translation and visual reconstruction. Rather than introducing new analytical categories, the framework clarifies how meaning reduction emerges from disrupted relational configurations, and how visual reconstruction operates through the reorganization of semiotic relationships under contemporary media conditions. In this way, the framework functions not merely as a summary of empirical findings, but as a conceptual clarification of the mechanisms through which visual meaning is transformed in contemporary communication environments. This structural logic enables the framework to be employed as an analytical lens rather than a content-specific template.

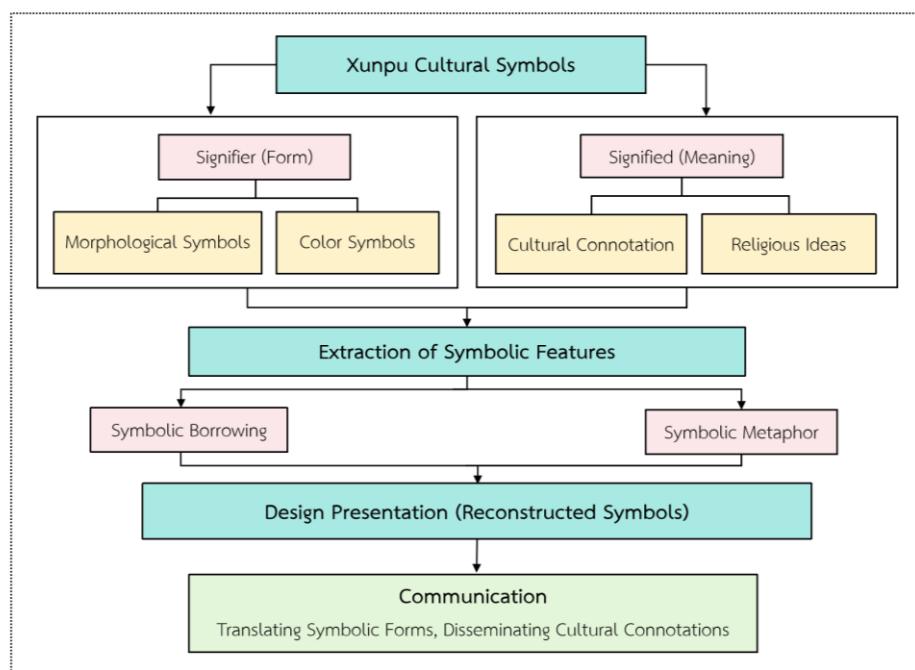


Figure 4 Analytical Framework for Symbolic Generation and Visual Reconstruction of Xunpu Women Imagery (Source: Constructed by the researcher, 2025)

Beyond the specific case of Xunpu women, the proposed framework demonstrates clear transferability to other forms of intangible cultural heritage that rely on visually mediated identity construction. By analytically distinguishing between signifier-level formal structures and signified-level cultural meanings, the framework can be applied to a wide range of heritage contexts, including ritual costumes, folk performances, craft-based visual systems, and gendered community imagery. Across these contexts, visual reconstruction similarly involves processes of symbolic selection, abstraction, and rearticulation under contemporary media conditions. Rather than serving as a case-specific explanatory model, the framework operates as a general analytical tool for examining how semiotic relationships are reorganized in the visual communication of intangible cultural heritage, thereby offering a transferable conceptual basis for the analysis of symbolic translation and visual reconstruction across diverse cultural settings.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Operational Recommendations

Based on the research findings, this study recommends the adoption of semiotic-informed strategies in the visual transformation of intangible cultural heritage imagery. Rather than relying on surface-level visual reproduction, practitioners may benefit from engaging in systematic processes of symbol selection, abstraction, and rearticulation. By maintaining structural coherence between visual form and cultural meaning, visual reconstruction can function as a mode of symbolic translation that enhances recognizability while preserving cultural depth across different media contexts. At the operational level, this study further suggests the development of structured collaboration models among designers, local cultural bearers, and digital content creators. For instance, visual reconstruction projects may adopt a co-curation workflow in which village elders and cultural practitioners participate in the selection and validation of symbolic structures prior to visual abstraction. Such collaborative

processes can help prevent excessive aestheticization and ensure that reconstructed imagery remains grounded in lived cultural logic rather than being driven solely by platform-oriented visual trends.

2.2 Policy Recommendations

For cultural institutions and organizations involved in heritage dissemination, this study recommends supporting communication practices that prioritize cultural interpretation over purely visual appeal. Policy frameworks that promote sustained collaboration among designers, cultural researchers, and local communities may help ensure that visual communication initiatives maintain cultural authenticity while adapting effectively to contemporary media environments. At the policy level, cultural institutions may also consider supporting mechanisms such as digital watermarking or metadata annotation systems for reconstructed cultural imagery. By embedding contextual cultural information within visual outputs, these mechanisms can help preserve interpretive depth as images circulate across platforms. In addition, policy initiatives that incentivize long-term partnerships among cultural institutions, local communities, and digital influencers may counteract short-term, spectacle-driven modes of representation.

2.3 Future Research Directions

Future research may further investigate audience reception to examine how reconstructed cultural imagery is cognitively and emotionally interpreted by different viewer groups. Particular attention should also be paid to the ethical dimensions of visual reconstruction in the context of generative AI, including issues of authorship, cultural ownership, and the potential displacement of community-based modes of representation. Comparative studies across different forms of intangible cultural heritage may help evaluate how algorithmic image generation reshapes semiotic authority and perceptions of cultural authenticity. In addition, quantitative approaches could be

introduced to complement qualitative semiotic analysis, providing a broader empirical basis for assessing the communicative impact of reconstructed imagery at scale.

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