

Practice and Exploration on High-quality Cultural Development of Land Border Ports in the New Era — A Case Study of Yunnan Province

Lianlian Li*

School of Humanities, Chuxiong Normal University, Chuxiong 675000, Yunnan, China

**Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.*

Copyright: © 2026 Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), permitting distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is cited.

Abstract: The cultural construction of border ports bears a close bearing on national image, frontier stability, and cultural security. Against the backdrop of in-depth implementation of the governance philosophy that governance of the country hinges on effective border administration, researching the cultural development of land border ports carries profound practical implications. As China's pivotal opening gateway toward South and Southeast Asia, Yunnan's border port cultural construction exerts far-reaching significance for boosting cross-border people-to-people exchanges and facilitating the Belt and Road Initiative. Within the nationwide systematic project of constructing a ten-thousand-li cultural corridor along national frontiers, Yunnan takes the lead in putting forward the development conception of national gate culture and has carried out bold practical explorations and attained tangible achievements in port cultural development. Relevant investigations reveal that the infrastructure supporting border port culture has been remarkably upgraded, and cross-border ethnic cultural activities have grown increasingly affluent in recent years. Nevertheless, prominent bottlenecks still linger, including insufficient integration of scattered cultural resources, imperfect cross-border cultural governance frameworks, latent cultural security hazards, and underdeveloped brand cultivation and digital communication mechanisms. Targeted at such existing drawbacks, this paper puts forward a five-project practical framework to advance the high-quality cultural progression of land border ports.

Keywords: Port culture; High-quality development; Border region; Yunnan province

Online publication: July 15, 2026

1. Introduction

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the Party Central Committee has attached top priority to frontier governance within the overall national governance agenda. The pivotal strategic proposition of governing the country starts with managing borderlands, proposed by the President of the CPC, which serves as the fundamental guiding principle for coordinating national development and

security in the contemporary era. Fully deciphering the theoretical connotation and practical requirements of such philosophy and propelling high-quality cultural advancement of border ports helps translate theoretical wisdom into robust driving forces for long-term stability and high-caliber socioeconomic development of border territories. Defined as a compound cultural form taking border ports as spatial carriers and emerging amid an open frontier context, land border port culture integrates national mainstream civilization, frontier regional culture, indigenous ethnic culture, and transboundary folk culture, functioning as an organic embodiment of national gate identity, frontier patriotism, and inter-civilization mutual learning^[1]. Former academic research has delved into border port culture from the frontier governance perspective; scholars such as Fang Shengju hold that the optimal governance paradigm for China's land borders lies in the organic synergy of soft cultural governance and rigid institutional administration^[2]. Spurred by the Belt and Road Initiative, Yunnan's border ports have evolved into crucial nodal hubs linking China with neighboring nations. Existing literature demonstrates that despite the overall advancement of port cultural industries, macroscopic top-level construction remains inadequate, and ethnic cultural development lags behind at numerous land border ports^[3]. Under such a research backdrop, this paper selects Yunnan as the research specimen to analyze the current developmental status and high-quality developmental pathways of border port culture, which bears practical value for tapping cultural potential and facilitating cross-border humanistic communication^[4].

2. Major measures and achievements in the cultural development of land border ports

Ports refer to harbors, airports, railway stations, and cross-border thoroughfares that authorize the inbound and outbound movement of personnel, commodities, articles, and transportation vehicles across national customs and borderline. As strategic frontier pivot points, port towns boast multifaceted functions covering external diplomatic exchanges, commodity circulation, and economic complementarity; ports stand as the core hub steering the socioeconomic growth of hinterland urban areas^[4]. Ever since the reform and opening-up drive, China's cultural industry has traversed four distinctive developmental phases: embryonic germination, preliminary formation, rapid expansion, and comprehensive upgrading^[5]. The cultural construction of domestic land border ports has realized a historic transformation from quantity-oriented existence to quality-focused refinement and from single landmark setup to highland-oriented cultural aggregation, according to field investigations, with Yunnan scoring notable progress while retaining further room for improvement.

Serving as the vital nexus bridging domestic and overseas cultural intercourse and economic interplay, Yunnan's border port cultural infrastructure has achieved remarkable upgrading spearheaded by national gate landmark construction. The China-Myanmar Cultural Corridor, a signature port cultural landmark, witnesses a soaring daily number of visitors and operates as a pivotal exhibition venue showcasing cross-border ethnic costumes and traditional musical instruments. Endowed with privileged geographical adjacency to Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam, plus clustered transboundary ethnic communities, Yunnan, as China's radiation hub for South and Southeast Asia, has fostered a cross-cultural dissemination system anchored in national gate festival activities^[6]. Leveraging unique geographic and ethnic superiorities, Yunnan has forged an exemplary port cultural development mode featuring ideological guidance via national gate education, integrated ethnic civilization, interconnected cross-border people's bonds, and industrial empowerment driven by cultural

tourism. Survey statistics manifest that Hekou Port boasts the highest public recognition thanks to its featured China-Vietnam border-themed exhibitions among all inbound and outbound passenger-serving venues, where tourists can easily access diversified port cultural displays. Annually, Yunnan's border ports host abundant cross-border thematic cultural events, transforming conventional customs clearance checkpoints into composite multi-functional spaces integrating cultural exhibition, patriotic education, and sightseeing tourism and forming a standardized construction template consisting of boundary steles, national gate architectures, cultural plazas, and red-themed exhibition halls, which effectively consolidates national identity and frontier dignity.

Against the strategic backdrop of the Belt and Road Initiative, Yunnan's ports gain amplified geographical edges, superimposed preferential policy dividends, and deepened international cooperative platforms, with a preliminary supportive policy framework for local port culture already in place. At the provincial administrative level, regulatory documents, including the 14th Five-Year Plan for Yunnan Port Development and Implementation Opinions on Boosting Integrated Development of Border Culture and Tourism, have been promulgated to set the target of constructing featured port cultural belts. During the 14th Five-Year Plan period, Yunnan has optimized overall port layout, perfected supporting infrastructure, elevated digital informatization and border prevention capabilities, and secured fruitful international collaboration outcomes. Ports categorized by different transportation modalities display differentiated cultural traits: long-standing frequent population exchanges contribute to profound ethnic cultural accumulation at land crossings such as Hekou Port, marked by pervasive bilingual Chinese-Vietnamese storefront signage. Concentrated residential settlements of cross-border ethnic groups along southern frontiers naturally evolve into inherent cultural transmission corridors, with the age-old business heritage of the Southern Silk Road accumulating abundant resources for intercultural fusion, while policy incentives following the Belt and Road rollout fuel the mushrooming of newly launched cross-border cultural programs. Port culture and regional economy interact positively in a mutually reinforcing cycle, where cultural awareness propels the transformation of cultural resources into industrial upgrading and the integration of culture and tourism spawns emerging business formats. For instance, the One Village, Two Countries scenic spot in Ruili converts borderline cultural symbols into immersive tourist experiences and generates steady annual income hikes for surrounding villagers.

3. Current dilemmas and challenges confronting border port cultural construction

As exploitable cultural resources, port culture can yield comprehensive political, economic, and cultural benefits upon development and utilization. Currently, border cultural tourism, dominated by cross-border sightseeing and frontier shopping, constitutes the core pillar of the port cultural industry, yet such business is constrained by seasonal visitor inflows and predominance of out-of-town tourists, resulting in excessive commercialization of local cultural undertakings and declining local residents' mastery, participation, and publicity of Chinese frontier civilization content^[7]. Three prominent predicaments are summarized as follows:

First, mounting hidden security risks are accompanied by a mismatched cultural governance capacity against frontier developmental demands. Contemporary port cultural development is confronted with emerging threats from external cultural infiltration, while embedded localized education fails to sufficiently strengthen residents' identification with Chinese civilization, necessitating innovative solutions guided by updated frontier governance concepts. Global frontier governance is caught in dual contradictory dilemmas:

the tension between rigid sovereign jurisdiction requirements and flexible developmental demands, and the imbalance between abundant transboundary resource endowments and insufficient tangible benefits for indigenous border dwellers. The continuous influx of overseas migrant laborers in recent years has compounded challenges for grassroots administration and border safety maintenance^[8].

Second, insufficient investment in port cultural development leads to underutilized economic functions of cultural resources. Parts of cross-border ethnic residents along Yunnan's borderline require further consolidation of national identity and intensified exchanges, communication, and integration among different ethnic groups, leaving ample room for innovative external communication of fine traditional Chinese civilization via port culture. Cultural construction lags behind port economic expansion, with the guiding cohesion and overseas spreading efficiency of cultural undertakings falling short of expectations; an inadequate sense of Chinese cultural belonging among certain border inhabitants restricts endogenous developmental momentum. Endowed with four-fold cultural genes featuring border geography, ethnic diversity, ecological resources, and cross-border folk customs, Yunnan's ports are trapped in the transit-oriented passive economy, hindering the transformation from a single passage economy to comprehensive port-driven economic growth.

Third, imperfect collaborative institutional frameworks and obstructive cross-border institutional barriers hamper in-depth cultural synergy. Insufficient cross-cultural integration and fragile coordination mechanisms have become universal obstacles for transnational enterprises, cross-border e-commerce, and international cooperative projects; most cultural resource sharing remains spontaneous without standardized institutional guarantees. Relevant policies mostly list cultural development as incidental auxiliary clauses for port economic construction, lacking specialized implementing rules targeting cultural sectors alone. Diversified customs and festival calendars bring administrative hurdles: staff at Mohan Port cite inconsistent holiday arrangements between China and Laos as a major impediment to synchronized cultural event planning, which requires port cultural development to strike a balance between inclusiveness and systematic coordination. Dual restraints from capital shortages and technical deficiencies curb cultural innovation, as defective cross-border cooperation frameworks block the industrial landing of promising creative ideas^[9].

4. Optimized a five-project development path for high-quality port cultural advancement

Possessing multi-layered functional attributes, border port culture facilitates interpersonal communication, stabilizes frontier social order, and regulates residents' behavioral norms^[10]. Based on field surveys of Yunnan's practical experience, this paper proposes a five-dimensional project framework to tackle existing developmental bottlenecks:

4.1. Project one: Foundational project centered on identity consolidation for fortifying cultural security defenses

Cultural security constitutes the spiritual lifeline of national security, with ideological frontiers serving as the in-depth extension of territorial sovereignty. Consolidating cultural safety barriers stands as an inevitable requirement for safeguarding national sovereignty and ethnic unity, as well as a core implementation measure of the border governance philosophy. Innovative carriers, including Party lectures beside boundary steles and cross-border community learning classrooms, are introduced to boost residents' Five Identities consciousness,

namely identity with the country, Chinese nation, Chinese culture, the Communist Party of China, and socialism with Chinese characteristics. On the precondition of respecting diversified ethnic identities, efforts are devoted to fostering the sense of community for the Chinese nation^[11]. Regulatory governance is strengthened to purify the online ideological atmosphere via expanded 5G coverage and targeted cyber supervision across the borderland, with legal crackdowns on illegal circumvention of internet restrictions and clandestine online proselytization to safeguard the digital national gate.

4.2. Project two: Exchange project bonded by resource sharing for deepening cross-border cultural fusion

Cross-border cultural integration acts as the flexible driving force of frontier governance and a strategic fulcrum for consolidating the Chinese nation community awareness. While cross-border ethnic communication facilitates frontier prosperity and stability overall, latent hidden troubles remain to be addressed^[12]. In-depth cultural synergy helps resolve the alienation between neighboring peoples and solidifies the collective cognition of one big Chinese family rooted in emotional bonding to serve China's peripheral diplomatic layout. Symbolic featured events such as Drinking from the Same River, Singing the Same Song are elaborately organized to instill the philosophy of the three inseparables. Empowered by artificial intelligence, a smart cultural governance hub anchored on a cross-border cultural big-data center is constructed to realize real-time public opinion monitoring, precise demand analysis, and dynamic supply optimization. Cultural discrepancies are converted into mutual learning resources via institutionalized and platform-based development: fixed exchange hubs, including national gate cultural exchange centers, friendship plazas, and national gate bookstores, are systematically built at ports and border trade spots to sustain regular cross-border humanistic interaction.

4.3. Project three: Industrial project targeted at value conversion to invigorate integrated culture-tourism momentum

Integrated development of culture and tourism constitutes a core developmental mission in the new era aimed at industrial upgrading and satisfying people's aspirations for a better life^[13]. To unlock industrial vitality, port development adopts culture as core soul, industrial development as tangible carrier, and opening-up as developmental wing to upgrade transit terminals into high-traffic economic hubs and fuel border enrichment initiatives. A featured port cultural economic belt is planned through spatial restructuring alongside a three-tier public cultural service network covering port cities, border market towns, and frontier villages to build cultural stations in happy border villages and fix the diminishing marginal effect of cultural and tourism resource allocation at remote terminal regions. Pilot port cultural neighborhood cooperation experimental zones are explored to launch institutional innovations such as mutual recognition of cultural product origin standards and interoperable service specifications, enabling Chinese cultural symbols to embed regional industrial value chains.

4.4. Project four: Modern project characterized by smart interconnection for innovating cross-border coordination regimes

Break administrative segmentation via collaborative innovation and mobilize local residents' subjective initiative through shared benefit mechanisms to convert cultural resources into tangible livelihood gains under a three-tier linkage developmental framework^[14]. Following the principles of complex collaborative social governance, cross-border cultural corridors are further developed alongside innovative port museum

clusters and digital exhibition systems, with a complete risk early-warning mechanism for ethnic cultural risks established. The national gate education program is deepened to cultivate distinctive cross-border cultural symbols with a solid national identity. The developmental paradigm of flexible governance and resilient borderlands delivers sustainable pathways for border prosperity while demonstrating the value of the borderline as a platform for win-win coexistence under the vision of a community with a shared future for mankind. Joint construction of the Lancang-Mekong digital cultural corridor together with neighboring countries is promoted, with blockchain technology deployed for digital deposit and copyright protection of transboundary intangible cultural heritage to secure China's digital cultural discourse power.

4.5. Project five: Systematic project oriented toward diversified co-governance for perfecting civilized governance regimes

Driven by cultural empowerment, traditional governance inertia is broken via conceptual renovation to realize the balanced development of long-term frontier stability and high-level opening-up. Civilian cooperative ties are consolidated by supporting joint cross-border community cultural construction and non-governmental organization collaboration to lay a solid foundation for people-to-people connectivity, transforming ports into multi-cultural integration hubs for China's high-standard opening-up. As a fundamental driving force for global peace and human civilization advancement, inter-civilization exchange guides healthy port cultural development, elevates frontier cultural governance proficiency, and consolidates cross-border ethnic national identity while supplying localized practical experience for constructing novel international cultural relations, tapping fresh growth momentum for border opening, and contributing Chinese wisdom to worldwide frontier governance^[15].

The coordinated five-project system facilitates the holistic transformation of border ports from single cultural thoroughfares to high-end cultural highlands.

5. Conclusion

This research proposes a five-pronged optimized development blueprint covering identity-focused foundational security engineering, shared-mechanism-driven cross-border exchange engineering, value-oriented industrial revitalization engineering, smart collaborative modern governance engineering, and diversified co-governance systematic engineering to advance high-quality port cultural development in Yunnan. Key countermeasures include consummating multi-party coordination mechanisms, signing port cultural cooperation memorandums with Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam to streamline approval formalities for signature events such as the China-Myanmar Paukphaw Festival, and realizing one-time filing for multi-nation event implementation. Digital construction prioritizes practicality and full regional coverage while brand development highlights distinctive positioning and long-term sustainability via the One Port, One Brand layout alongside featured border cultural experience travel routes. Systematic implementation of the aforesaid measures will substantially elevate the soft power of port culture and better serve China's comprehensive opening-up strategy.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Funding

This paper is a phased research outcome of the Yunnan Provincial Philosophy and Social Science Think Tank Planning Project (No. ZK2025YB45): Research on Path Optimization of Promoting Border Enrichment through Port Cultural Construction in Yunnan; National Social Science Fund project (N0.24XMZ086).

References

- [1] Zhang LJ, 2016, Re-examination on Cultural Functions of China's Land Border Ports under the Belt and Road Initiative. *Gansu Social Sciences*, 2016(4): 44–48.
- [2] Fang SJ, Lü ZH, 2013, Soft Governance and Hard Governance of China's Land Frontiers. *Jinyang Academic Journal*, 2013(5): 13–21.
- [3] Zhang LJ, Wu F, Su LX, 2020, Research on Ethnic Cultural Construction of Land Border Ports. *Heilongjiang Ethnic Series*, 2020(1): 57–63.
- [4] Wu B, Wang YF, Tong YK, 2012, Interactive Mechanism between China's Border Ports and Inland Cities. *Urban Development Research*, 2012: 32–38.
- [5] Yang Y, 2018, Development Course and Achievements of China's Cultural Industry in Forty Years of Reform and Opening-up. *Journal of Shandong University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 2018(4): 30–43.
- [6] Guo XJ, Tian Y, Zhang X, 2025, Direction and Path of International Communication for National Gate Festival Culture in Yunnan. *Journal of Yunnan Institute of Socialism*, 2025(3): 20–25.
- [7] Han JR, 2026, Preliminary Research on Chinese Cultural Construction at China-Kazakhstan Border. *Guizhou Ethnic Studies*, 2026(6): 119–126.
- [8] Huang CW, He GH, 2016, Overseas Migrant Workers and Frontier Security at China-Myanmar Border. *Academic Exploration*, 2016(8): 56–61.
- [9] Liu JN, 1992, Analysis on Definition of Public Policy. *Theoretical Exploration*, 1992(1): 52–53.
- [10] Ma CW, Zhang YL, 2013, Significance of State Presence to Cultural Diversity: Field Research on Hani-Akha Festivals in China, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam. *World Ethno-National Studies*, 2013(5): 69–77.
- [11] Shen GP, 2015, Fostering the Sense of Community for the Chinese Nation and Building Cultural Bonds for National Identity. *Journal of Northwest Minzu University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 2015(3): 1–6.
- [12] Guo JJ, 2019, Cross-border Ethnic Cultural Interaction and Frontier Prosperity Stability around Yunnan's Peripheral Regions. *Yunnan Social Sciences*, 2015(6): 117–122.
- [13] Fan Z, 2019, Theory and Practice of Culture-tourism Integration. *People's Tribune Academic Frontier*, 2019(11): 43–49.
- [14] Fan RG, 2014, Collaborative Innovation of Social Governance under Complex Network Paradigm. *Social Sciences in China*, 2014(4): 98–120.
- [15] President of the CPC, 2019, Inter-civilization Exchange and Mutual Learning: Key Driving Force for Human Progress and World Peace. *Ideological and Political Work Research*, 2019(6): 7–9.

Publisher's note

Bio-Byword Scientific Publishing remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.