

Research on the Loss of Traditional Culture in Korean Literature and Innovative Inheritance Strategies

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to explore the current situation of the loss of traditional culture in Korean literature and the coping strategies for innovative inheritance. This paper adopts research methods such as literature analysis, case studies, and reader acceptance surveys to systematically sort out the presentation and loss of traditional themes, folkloric elements, and values in contemporary literature. The research results show that factors such as modernization, urbanization, and the impact of Western culture have weakened the influence of traditional cultural elements on literary creation. However, through modern adaptations, cross-media integration, and cultural policy guidance, literary works have achieved significant effects in recreating traditional culture. Innovative inheritance not only enhances the readability and social identity of works but also promotes social re-recognition of Confucian ethics, folkloric values, and historical memory. The study concludes that innovative inheritance of traditional culture combined with modern literary forms is an important way to maintain cultural continuity and promote literary development.

Keywords: Korean Literature; Traditional Culture; Innovative Inheritance; Social Influence

1. Introduction

Korean literature, from antiquity to the present day, has borne the weight of rich traditional culture, Confucian thought, folk elements, and festive rituals, all reflecting the profound historical accumulation within literary works. However, with the acceleration of modernisation, the impact of Western culture, urban development, and the prevalence of mass media, traditional culture has exhibited a marked tendency towards erosion within the contemporary literary sphere. The gradual

marginalisation of classical themes and folk elements, the modernising tendencies in linguistic style and expressive forms, and the weakening influence of traditional values on literary works have collectively challenged cultural continuity. In this context, innovative preservation has emerged as a vital approach to fostering the development of Korean literature and revitalising traditional culture. Through modern adaptations, cross-media integration, and policy guidance, literary creation reimagines and reconstructs traditional culture. This approach not only enriches literary expression but also enhances societal recognition and reader engagement, providing practical pathways and theoretical foundations for the continuous transmission and innovation of culture.

2. The Literary and Historical Significance of Korean Traditional Culture

2.1 The Reflection of Confucian Thought and Folk Elements in Literature

Traditional festivals, rituals and folk tales have played a significant role in conveying cultural heritage within Korean literature. Customs associated with festivals such as Lunar New Year and Chuseok, alongside various sacrificial rites, not only reflect the rhythms and ethical order of social life but also provide abundant thematic material for literary creation. Folk tales, transmitted orally, have developed diverse narrative patterns. Their character portrayals, plot structures, and value systems have been perpetuated and reimagined in novels, poetry, and dramatic works. Concurrently, the ritual symbols, customary details, and folk wisdom associated with festivals and ceremonies have been visualised and symbolised through literary texts, enabling readers to appreciate the profound significance of traditional culture through aesthetic experience. However, with the acceleration of modernisation and global cultural exchange, the prominence of these

traditional elements within contemporary literature shows signs of diminishing. They increasingly exhibit characteristics of symbolisation and fragmentation, creating an urgent need for innovative literary practices and research to ensure their effective preservation and inheritance.

2.2 The Literary Transmission of Folk Tales in Traditional Festival Ceremonies

Traditional festivals, rituals and folk tales embody the rich cultural significance and social memory inherent in Korean literature. Celebrations, religious ceremonies and folklore constitute not only vital themes in literary creation but also encapsulate social ethics, value systems and life wisdom. These elements are perpetuated and reimagined through narrative, lyricism and symbolism in poetry, fiction and drama, reflecting both historical continuity and the spiritual landscape of the populace. Influenced by modernisation, the literary expression of traditional festivals and folk tales exhibits a trend towards formal diversification. Through modern rewritings, symbolic depictions, and cross-media dissemination, it preserves cultural identity while injecting innovative momentum into contemporary literature, thereby achieving an effective convergence of tradition and modernity.

2.3 An Analysis of Traditional Literary Genres and Expressive Forms

Korea's traditional literary genres are rich and diverse, encompassing poetry, fiction, drama, and folk tales. Their forms bear profound influences from Confucian ethics, patriarchal concepts, and folk culture. Classical poetry emphasises metrical structure and poetic imagery, embodying social ethics and philosophical reflections on life. Both fiction and legends draw themes from historical events or folk traditions, serving dual educational and entertainment purposes. Drama places emphasis on integrating performance with music to enhance emotional expression and moral instruction. Traditional literature exhibits highly formulaic characteristics in narrative structure and linguistic style, reflecting prevailing socio-cultural values and aesthetic pursuits. In today's modernised context, these genres face tendencies towards simplification and homogenisation in their expressive forms. The cultural significance and artistic appeal they

embody urgently require innovative approaches to preservation and inheritance.

3. The Impact of Traditional Cultural Loss in the Course of Modernisation

3.1 The Influence of Western Culture and the Transformation of Literary Concepts

Modern Korean literature has been profoundly influenced by Western culture within the context of globalisation, exhibiting marked shifts in literary concepts. Western narrative structures, thematic concerns, and aesthetic standards have progressively permeated indigenous literary creation, compelling traditional subjects and expressive techniques to undergo adaptation and transformation. The emphasis in literary works on individualism, free expression, and pluralistic values has diminished the prominence of traditional cultural elements such as Confucian ethics and familial concepts. Concurrently, the introduction of emerging literary forms and narrative techniques, while affording creators greater expressive scope, has accelerated the marginalisation of traditional literary structures, themes, and symbolic motifs. This has fostered a tension between the preservation of traditional culture and the pursuit of modern innovation.

3.2 The Impact of Urbanisation and Modern Life on Literary Themes

The acceleration of urbanisation has catalysed transformations in social structures and lifestyles, profoundly shaping the themes of literary creation. The divergent life experiences stemming from urban-rural disparities have led literary works to increasingly focus on the rhythms, pressures, and interpersonal alienation of modern city life, while traditional rural life and folk customs have gradually become marginalised. Modern settings, workplace pressures and consumer culture have assumed prominent positions in literature, while traditional values and cultural symbols appear less frequently. Concurrently, writers' reflections on the predicaments of modernisation have fostered diverse literary themes, yet the continuity of traditional culture and emotional bonds face certain challenges, revealing a complex interweaving of tradition and modernity.

3.3 Mass Media and Popular Culture Have

Diluted Traditional Literary Elements

Mass media and popular culture have facilitated the dissemination of information and the consumption of entertainment, yet they have also significantly diluted traditional literary elements. Modern film and television, online novels, and social media content cater to rapid consumption and sensational appeal, resulting in a diminished presence of classical themes, folk symbols, and traditional narrative techniques within literary creation. Concurrently, popular culture's emphasis on immediacy and emotional resonance diminishes attention to historical contexts and Confucian ethical principles, marginalising traditional values within contemporary literature. This trend not only impacts the cultural depth of literary works but also poses a latent challenge to the public's perception and emotional connection with traditional culture, presenting novel challenges for literary innovation and heritage preservation.

4. Concrete Manifestations of the Loss of Traditional Culture

4.1 The Scarcity of Classic Themes and Folklore Elements in Contemporary Literature

Contemporary Korean literature exhibits a pronounced tendency towards the loss of classic themes and folkloric elements. Cultural symbols such as traditional tales, folk legends, and festive customs have become marginalised within modern literary works, diminishing literature's capacity to bear historical and cultural weight. Concurrently, modern narrative techniques and urbanised settings have increasingly supplanted detailed descriptions of folk customs, resulting in a decline in the vivid portrayal of traditional culture. The stylistic shift towards modernisation has gradually diminished expressions rich in regional character and historical resonance, while literary texts increasingly fail to embody traditional values and social norms. This phenomenon indicates that cultural transmission poses structural challenges to literary creation, demanding that creative practice seek innovative means of reinterpretation and integration.

4.2 The Linguistic Style and Forms of Expression Exhibit a Modernising Tendency

Contemporary Korean literature exhibits a pronounced modernising tendency in its

linguistic style and expressive forms. Classical rhetoric, elegant vocabulary, and vernacular expressions in emerging works are gradually being supplanted by concise, direct, and symbolised modern language, while narrative structures increasingly adopt fragmented and non-linear approaches. This shift reflects the profound impact of rapid social modernisation and global cultural exchange upon literary expression, yet it has also diminished the presence of traditional aesthetic characteristics and cultural connotations within contemporary works. Whilst modernised language enhances textual readability and a sense of contemporary relevance, it simultaneously risks marginalising the distinctive rhythms and emotional depth inherent in traditional literature. There is an urgent need to employ innovative approaches that organically integrate language and culture, thereby preserving its cultural depth and historical continuity.

4.3 The Erosion of Traditional Values through Literary Works

Contemporary Korean literature exhibits a marked tendency towards diminishing traditional values, specifically manifested in the gradual marginalisation of Confucian ethics, familial concepts, and the core principles of reverence for elders and respect for the learned within literary expression. Against the backdrop of evolving modern social structures and lifestyles, literary works increasingly emphasise individual liberty, emotional experiences, and the predicaments of urban existence. This shift renders the reflection of traditional ethical frameworks within these works comparatively subdued. Moreover, the permeation of Western values and the pervasive influence of popular culture have further diminished the emphasis on traditional notions of loyalty, filial piety, propriety, and collective responsibility within literary works. This erosion not only alters the continuity of literary themes but also presents entirely new challenges to cultural identity and the transmission of societal values.

5. Innovative Strategies and Approaches for Heritage Preservation

5.1 Modern Adaptations and Reinterpretations of Traditional Themes

Modern literature's adaptation and reimagining of traditional themes demonstrate an innovative

inheritance of cultural foundations. By modernising classical tales, folk legends and elements from traditional festivals, writers can infuse contemporary aesthetics and values while preserving cultural substance, thereby breathing new life into traditional subjects. Continuous innovation in textual structure, narrative perspective, and linguistic style allows readers to discover the transformative power of creative expression within familiar cultural symbols. Moreover, the integration of cross-generational themes and contemporary social issues not only enriches literary expression but also heightens the perceptibility and societal impact of traditional culture within modern contexts.

5.2 Cross-Media Integration: Exploring Emerging Literary Forms

Cross-media convergence has opened a novel pathway for the innovative transmission of traditional culture within the literary sphere. Through interactive presentations across film, television, comics, games, and digital platforms, traditional themes and folkloric elements can be reimagined and expanded across diverse media, thereby achieving a fusion of literary expression with visual and auditory experiences. Emerging literary forms such as online novels, interactive narratives, and virtual reality storytelling not only enrich storytelling techniques but also heighten audience engagement, facilitating more vivid and intuitive dissemination of traditional cultural content. Concurrently, cross-media practices diversify literary creation models, continually revitalising traditional cultural symbols within contemporary society and securing their social recognition.

5.3 Educational and Cultural Policies Provide Support for Literary Heritage

The education system and cultural policies play a pivotal role in the literary transmission of traditional culture. Through curriculum design, textbook compilation, and the popularisation of cultural activities, traditional literary knowledge is systematically imparted, thereby enhancing young people's cognitive and aesthetic capabilities. Supportive policies introduced by government and cultural institutions encompass literary creation grants, incentives for publishing traditional themes, and safeguards for intangible cultural heritage. These measures provide institutional safeguards and resource support for literary creation. Concurrently, national literary

competitions, lectures, and exhibitions serve as platforms to tangibly enhance societal appreciation and recognition of traditional culture and literature, thereby propelling the continuity and innovative expression of cultural values in the contemporary era.

6. Case Studies and Effectiveness Analysis of Innovative Inheritance Practices

6.1 Contemporary Writers' Depictions of Archetypal Figures in Traditional Culture

Contemporary Korean writers' literary practices in re-enacting traditional culture exhibit diverse characteristics. On the one hand, through modern interpretations of Confucian ethics, folk beliefs, and festive customs, ancient cultural symbols are revitalised with new literary vitality within contemporary contexts. On the other hand, folk tales, historical themes, and traditional narrative forms are integrated into modern narrative structures, organically blending tradition with innovation. Exemplary works enhance readability through character psychological portrayal and plot innovation while preserving linguistic style and imagery characteristics. This dual value of cultural transmission and artistic expression offers an effective pathway for modern society to inherit and recognise traditional culture.

6.2 Literary Awards and Publishing Institutions Promoting Traditional Cultural Works

Literary awards and publishing houses play a crucial role in promoting works that champion traditional culture. By establishing dedicated prizes and selection mechanisms, they encourage writers to prioritise traditional themes, thereby enhancing the visibility of traditional culture within contemporary literature. Concurrently, publishing houses integrate traditional elements into modern reading experiences through thematic publications, series collections, and cross-media promotions, thereby enhancing public receptivity and dissemination effectiveness. This dual-pronged approach—combining award criteria and publishing strategies—not only drives innovative interpretations of classical themes but also provides institutional support and practical models for sustaining traditional culture in contemporary society. Within the literary ecosystem, it constitutes a positive force

for the rebirth of traditional culture.

6.3 Assessment of Reader Acceptance and Socio-Cultural Impact

Reader receptivity plays a crucial role in the innovative transmission of traditional culture. In recent years, literary works adapted through modern reinterpretation and cross-media integration have garnered heightened reading interest and discussion fervour, indicating audiences' potential affinity for traditional cultural elements. From a socio-cultural perspective, guided by factors such as education, media, and cultural policy, such works have both heightened public appreciation for traditional literature and, to some extent, spurred society to re-examine issues like Confucian ethics, folk values, and historical memory. Evaluations indicate that high-quality innovative works can enhance cultural identity and the transmission of values within a modern societal context while preserving cultural substance.

7. Conclusion

Korean literature reflects the loss of traditional culture through modernisation, urbanisation, and the impact of Western culture, among other factors, leading to the gradual weakening of classical themes, folk elements, and traditional values within contemporary literature. However, traditional culture retains formidable vitality in the literary sphere through innovative preservation strategies. Modern adaptations and re-creations, cross-media integration, exploration of emerging literary forms, and guidance from educational and cultural policies collectively provide a viable pathway for effectively inheriting traditional culture. Practical examples demonstrate that

contemporary writers' innovative reinterpretation of traditional elements not only elevates the artistic merit of their works but also strengthens readers' cultural identity. Overall, the preservation and innovative transmission of traditional culture within Korean literature must prioritise respect for the original cultural spirit. By integrating contemporary modes of expression, it maximises the continuity of cultural values and social impact, thereby establishing a sustainable model for literary development and cultural identity.

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