

# Innovations

## **The Literary Mirror of Folk Culture: A Comparative Study on Inheritance and Innovation of Adapted Works from Chinese and Korean Folktales**

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**Abstract:** Folktales, as the essence of folk culture, carry the collective memory and cultural genes of a nation. The adaptation of folktales into literary works not only realizes the intergenerational inheritance of folk culture but also injects new vitality into traditional culture through innovative expression. This paper takes the adapted works of Chinese and Korean folktales as the research objects, focusing on the core issues of inheritance and innovation in the adaptation process. By using the research methods of text analysis and comparative study, this paper combs the ways in which the two countries inherit the cultural connotation, narrative mode and artistic characteristics of folktales in their adapted works, and explores the innovative paths such as modern perspective reconstruction, artistic form integration and value concept updating adopted by the two countries to meet the aesthetic needs of contemporary readers. The study finds that the adapted works of Chinese folktales pay more attention to the inheritance of the national cultural spirit and the integration of traditional aesthetic artistic conception, while the adapted works of Korean folktales show obvious characteristics of combining national characteristics with popular culture in innovation. This comparative study is of great significance for deeply understanding the cultural value of folktale adaptation, promoting the cross-cultural communication of folk culture, and providing reference for the creation of folktale adaptation works in the two countries.

**Keywords:** Folk Culture; Chinese and Korean Folktales; Adapted Literary Works; Inheritance and Innovation; Comparative Study

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### **I. Introduction**

#### **1.1 Research Background and Significance**

Folk culture stands as a living carrier of a nation's spiritual heritage, accumulating the wisdom, values and emotional sustenance formed by generations. Folktales, as an important component of folk culture, are not only oral literary works spread among the people but also condensed expressions of national cultural characteristics. With the acceleration of modernization and the deepening of cultural diversification, traditional folktales face the dual challenge of inheritance

and development. Adapting folktales into literary works has become a crucial way to connect tradition and modernity, allowing classic stories to gain new vitality in contemporary contexts.

China and South Korea are geographically adjacent and share a long history of cultural exchanges. Their folktale systems both contain rich national connotations and show certain similarities in narrative themes and artistic styles, while also retaining distinctive national characteristics due to different historical and social environments. In recent years, both countries have seen a boom in folktale adaptation creations. Chinese writers have continuously explored the integration of traditional folktale elements with modern literary expressions, while Korean folktale adaptations have also formed unique creative characteristics in combining national culture with popular aesthetics. However, the existing research on folktale adaptations often focuses on the single case analysis of one country, lacking in-depth comparative exploration of the inheritance and innovation strategies between the two neighboring countries with close cultural ties.

From the theoretical perspective, this study fills the gap in the comparative research field of Chinese and Korean folktale adaptations, enriches the theoretical system of cross-cultural folk literature research, and provides new perspectives for the study of folk culture inheritance. From the practical perspective, by sorting out the experience and characteristics of the two countries in the adaptation process, this study can provide reference for creators of both countries to carry out folktale adaptation creations, promote the in-depth exchange of folk culture between the two countries, and enhance the international communication power of national culture.

## **1.2 Literature Review at Home and Abroad**

Domestic research on Chinese folktale adaptations has achieved relatively rich results. Scholars have carried out in-depth discussions on the adaptation history, thematic evolution and artistic characteristics of Chinese folktales. Some studies focus on the inheritance of cultural connotations in adaptations, emphasizing that the core of adaptation lies in the continuation of national spirit and cultural genes. Others focus on innovative exploration, analyzing how adaptations realize the modern transformation of traditional stories through narrative perspective adjustment and value concept updating. However, these studies mostly take Chinese local works as the research object, and the comparative research involving foreign folktale adaptations is relatively scarce, especially the systematic comparison with Korean folktale adaptations is still in the initial stage. Korean academic circles attach great importance to the research of folktale culture. The research on folktale adaptations mainly focuses on two aspects. One is the analysis of the inheritance of national characteristics in adaptations, discussing how works maintain the uniqueness of Korean culture in the adaptation process. The other is the research on the combination of adaptations and popular

culture, exploring the path of Korean folktale elements integrating into mass culture. Some international scholars have carried out cross-cultural comparative research on Asian folktales, but most of them focus on the comparison of original folktales, and the research on adapted works is not in-depth enough, failing to systematically compare the inheritance and innovation differences between Chinese and Korean folktale adaptations.

To sum up, the existing research provides a certain theoretical basis for this study, but there is still room for expansion in the comparative research of Chinese and Korean folktale adaptations. This study takes the inheritance and innovation of adapted works as the core perspective, which is a useful supplement to the existing research.

### **1.3 Research Objects and Core Concepts**

The research objects of this paper are the literary works adapted from Chinese and Korean folktales since the 21st century. The selection of Chinese works covers different literary types such as novels, short stories and prose, including both classic adaptation works and representative new creations in recent years. The selection of Korean works mainly includes modern literary works adapted from classic Korean folktales, and pays attention to the diversity of creative styles to ensure the comprehensiveness and representativeness of the research samples.

Core concepts involved in this study mainly include the following aspects. Folk culture refers to the sum of material and spiritual cultural phenomena created and inherited by the people in long-term social life, with strong national characteristics and continuity. Folktale adaptations refer to the creative behavior of writers extracting core elements from original folktales and reprocessing them through literary techniques under the guidance of contemporary aesthetic concepts. Inheritance in the adaptation process refers to the retention and continuation of the core cultural connotation, narrative tradition and artistic characteristics of the original folktales. Innovation refers to the exploration and breakthrough in theme expression, artistic form and value connotation based on the needs of contemporary society and readers' aesthetics.

### **1.4 Research Methods and Framework**

This paper mainly adopts three research methods. The first is the text analysis method, which deeply interprets the selected Chinese and Korean folktale adaptation works, sorts out the ways of inheritance and innovation in the works, and excavates the cultural connotation behind the text. The second is the comparative research method, which compares the adaptation strategies of the two countries from the dimensions of inheritance content, innovation path and value orientation, and summarizes the similarities and differences. The third is the cultural research method, which combines the historical and cultural backgrounds, social development status and aesthetic trend changes of the two

countries to analyze the causes of the differences in the adaptation works.

The research framework of this paper is divided into six parts. The first part is the introduction, which clarifies the research background, significance, literature review, research objects and methods. The second part is the theoretical basis, which expounds the cultural value of folktales, the relationship between folktale adaptation and folk culture, and the core dimensions of inheritance and innovation. The third part combs the inheritance practices of Chinese and Korean folktale adaptation works respectively, focusing on the inheritance of cultural core, narrative tradition, national spirit and folk aesthetics. The fourth part explores the innovation paths of the two countries' works from the aspects of theme transformation, artistic expression, popular culture integration and character image reconstruction. The fifth part makes a comparative analysis of the similarities and differences in inheritance and innovation between the two countries and explores the causes of the differences. The sixth part is the conclusion and prospect, summarizing the main research results, expounding the research value and enlightenment, and pointing out the limitations of the study and future research directions.

## **II. Theoretical Basis: Folk Culture and the Literary Mirror of Folktale Adaptation**

### **2.1 The Cultural Connotation and Value of Folktales**

Folktales are not random oral stories but cultural entities formed by long-term accumulation. They carry the collective memory of a nation, recording the historical changes, living customs and spiritual pursuits of the people. Every detail in folktales, from character settings to plot development, contains the value orientation of a specific cultural community. For example, Chinese folktales often emphasize filial piety, honesty and harmony between people, while Korean folktales highlight the respect for elders, the loyalty to the community and the reverence for nature. These values are not explicitly stated but are subtly conveyed through the fate of characters and the outcome of stories, becoming an important part of the cultural identity of the nation.

The cultural value of folktales lies in their dual attributes of tradition and vitality. As a traditional cultural form, they inherit the spiritual code of the nation and provide a historical coordinate for contemporary people to understand their own culture. As a living cultural carrier, they can adapt to the changes of the times and continuously absorb new cultural elements. In the process of spreading from generation to generation, folktales will be adjusted according to the language habits and aesthetic needs of different eras, which makes them always maintain the vitality of communication. This dual attribute enables folktales to connect the past and the present, becoming a bridge for cultural inheritance.

In the context of globalization, folktales show unique cross-cultural value. The similar narrative themes in Chinese and Korean folktales, such as the struggle against evil forces and the pursuit of happy life, reflect the common spiritual

needs of human beings. At the same time, the unique cultural expressions in the folktales of the two countries also show the diversity of human culture. By interpreting the cultural connotation of folktales, we can not only deepen the understanding of our own culture but also promote the communication and mutual learning between different cultures.

## **2.2 The Mirroring Relationship between Folktale Adaptation and Folk Culture**

The so-called mirroring relationship means that folktale adaptation works can reflect the core connotation of folk culture and present the style and characteristics of folk culture in a literary way. Folk culture is invisible in a sense, existing in the daily life and spiritual world of the people. Folktale adaptations, as a tangible literary form, turn the intangible cultural elements into concrete characters, plots and scenes, making folk culture visible and perceptible. For example, the description of traditional festivals, folk customs and daily life in the adapted works can directly show the folk cultural landscape of a certain era and region.

This mirroring is not a simple copy but a selective reflection and artistic refinement. Adaptors will screen and reorganize the elements of folktales according to the needs of contemporary expression. They will retain the core cultural elements that conform to the spiritual pursuit of contemporary people and discard the outdated content that conflicts with the times. This selective reflection makes the adapted works not only a mirror of traditional folk culture but also a reflection of contemporary cultural psychology. For instance, modern adaptations of Chinese folktales often weaken the feudal ethical concepts in the original works and strengthen the expression of individual independence and equality, which reflects the changes of contemporary Chinese cultural values.

The mirroring relationship is bidirectional. On one hand, folk culture provides rich materials and spiritual connotation for folktale adaptations, which is the foundation of adaptation creation. On the other hand, folktale adaptations promote the spread and renewal of folk culture. In modern society, the reading group of traditional folktales is gradually shrinking, while the adapted literary works, with their modern expression methods, attract more readers, especially young readers, making the cultural elements in folktales gain new communication vitality. This bidirectional interaction promotes the sustainable development of folk culture.

## **2.3 Core Dimensions of Inheritance and Innovation in Folktale Adaptation**

Inheritance in folktale adaptation has clear core dimensions, among which the inheritance of cultural core is the most fundamental. The cultural core refers to the values, moral concepts and spiritual pursuits contained in folktales, which are the soul of folktales. No matter how the adaptation changes the form, the retention of the cultural core can ensure that the adapted work does not deviate from the

essence of the original folktale. For example, the adaptation of the Chinese folktale *The Legend of the White Snake* always retains the core of sincere love and resistance against oppression, while the adaptation of the Korean folktale *Chunhyangjeon* always inherits the connotation of loyalty and perseverance.

The inheritance of narrative tradition is another important dimension. Folktales have formed relatively fixed narrative modes and artistic techniques in the long-term spreading process, such as the simple and vivid language style, the clear plot structure of beginning, development, climax and ending, and the symbolic character images. These narrative traditions are the artistic characteristics of folktales, and their proper inheritance can make the adapted works retain the unique charm of folktales. For example, many Chinese folktale adaptations still use the narrative method of combining realism and romance, while Korean folktale adaptations often retain the narrative feature of integrating folk songs and stories.

Innovation in folktale adaptation mainly focuses on three dimensions. The first is the reconstruction of the narrative perspective. Traditional folktales usually adopt an omniscient and objective narrative perspective, while modern adaptations often use a limited perspective or multiple perspectives to enhance the sense of substitution and depth of the work. The second is the integration of artistic forms. Adaptors often integrate modern literary techniques, such as stream of consciousness and intertextuality, into the adaptation, or combine folktale elements with other literary genres to enrich the expression form of the work. The third is the updating of value connotation. Adaptors will interpret the original folktales from a contemporary perspective, inject modern values such as gender equality and environmental protection into the works, and realize the dialogue between traditional culture and modern society.

The balance between inheritance and innovation is the key to the success of folktale adaptation. Excessive emphasis on inheritance will make the work rigid and lack of contemporary vitality, while excessive pursuit of innovation will make the work lose the cultural attribute of folktales. Only by grasping the core dimensions of inheritance and finding the correct innovation path can the adapted works realize the organic unity of tradition and modernity.

### **III. Inheritance Practice of Chinese and Korean Folktale Adapted Works**

#### **3.1 Inheritance of Cultural Core in Chinese Folktale Adaptations**

Chinese folktale adaptations always take the inheritance of cultural core as the primary principle, and the values contained in the original stories are often retained as the spiritual backbone of the adapted works. The emphasis on benevolence, righteousness, integrity and filial piety in traditional culture runs through various adaptation creations, forming a consistent cultural tone.

*The Legend of the White Snake* has been adapted many times in modern literary works, and the core of sincere love and the spirit of resisting unreasonable constraints has never been weakened. In the novel *Green Snake* by Li Bihua, the emotional connection between the two snake spirits and Xu Xian is still the core of

the story. The adaptation deepens the description of the characters' inner world but still adheres to the respect for true feelings. This kind of inheritance makes the story cross the barriers of time and still arouse the emotional resonance of contemporary readers. Another example is the adaptation of the folktale Yugong Moving Mountains. Modern writers often set the story in a contemporary context, but the core spirit of perseverance and never giving up is always highlighted. Some adaptations take the form of short stories, describing the process of contemporary people facing difficulties and drawing strength from Yugong's spirit, which realizes the modern continuation of the cultural core.

The inheritance of the cultural core also shows the respect for the concept of harmony in traditional Chinese culture. Many adaptations of folktales about the coexistence of man and nature, such as the story of Hou Yi Shooting the Suns and Chang'e Flying to the Moon, still retain the idea of respecting the laws of nature and pursuing the balance between man and the universe. These works not only inherit the traditional values but also provide ideological resources for contemporary society to advocate ecological civilization.

**Table 01: Core Inheritance Dimensions of Chinese and Korean Folktale Adaptations**

Inheritance Dimension	China (Key Manifestations)	South Korea (Key Manifestations)	Emphasis Level (1-10)
Cultural Core	Preservation of Confucian ethics, mythological archetypes, and traditional moral values	Preservation of Confucian ethics and clan culture in folk tales	China:9 / Korea:7
Narrative Tradition	Adherence to linear narrative structure and poetic expression in classical folk literature	Weak adherence to traditional narrative; focus on modern rhythm adaptation	China:8 / Korea:6
National Spirit	Reflection of collectivism and perseverance (e.g., Yugong Moving Mountains)	Reflection of national identity and community cohesion (e.g., Heungbu and Nolbu)	China:7 / Korea:9
Folk Aesthetics	Integration of ink painting aesthetics and traditional opera artistic forms	Integration of hanbok, traditional music, and regional folk custom aesthetics	China:6 / Korea:8

### **3.2 Inheritance of Narrative Tradition in Chinese Folktale Adaptations**

Chinese traditional folktales have formed a set of mature narrative traditions in the long-term spread, including clear plot clues, vivid character images and the combination of realism and romance. Modern adaptations have inherited these artistic characteristics, making the works retain the unique charm of traditional folktales while having contemporary vitality.

The linear narrative structure is a prominent feature of traditional Chinese folktales, and most adaptations still follow this structure to ensure the clarity and readability of the story. For example, the modern adaptation of the folktale *The Butterfly Lovers* still takes the meeting, acquaintance, love and sacrifice of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai as the plot thread, and the key plot nodes such as the eighteen-mile send-off and the tomb opening and butterfly transformation are retained. This kind of narrative inheritance enables readers to quickly enter the story and feel the classic charm of the original work.

The inheritance of the narrative tradition is also reflected in the shaping of character images. Traditional folktales often shape characters with distinct personalities, and the good and evil are clearly distinguished. Modern adaptations have enriched the complexity of characters but still retain their core personality traits. In the adaptation of the folktale *The Journey to the West*, Sun Wukong's brave and unruly character, Zhu Bajie's greedy but honest side, and Tang Seng's firm belief in seeking scriptures are still the main characteristics of the characters. The adaptation adds more psychological descriptions to make the characters more three-dimensional, but the core image recognized by the public is always maintained.

In addition, the narrative technique of combining realism and romance in traditional folktales is also inherited in modern adaptations. Many works describe real social life while integrating fantasy elements. For example, the adaptation of *Liaozhai Zhiyi* often sets the story in the real social background of a certain era, and the fox and ghost images in the story are not only fantasy characters but also reflections of real human nature. This combination makes the works have both romantic charm and realistic connotation, which is consistent with the narrative tradition of traditional folktales.

### **3.3 Inheritance of National Spirit in Korean Folktale Adaptations**

Korean folktales carry the unique national spirit of the Korean nation, including the respect for the nation, the emphasis on collective consciousness and the tenacious perseverance in the face of difficulties. Modern Korean folktale adaptations take the inheritance of this national spirit as an important creative direction, making the works become the carrier of national cultural identity.

*Chunhyangjeon* is a classic Korean folktale, and its adaptations always inherit the core spirit of loyalty and perseverance. In modern literary adaptations, *Chunhyang's* unyielding character in the face of the county magistrate's coercion is still the focus of the description. Some adaptations expand the background of

the story to the period of social change, but Chunhyang's loyalty to love and her adherence to moral principles have not changed. This kind of inheritance makes Chunhyang become a symbolic image of the Korean nation's good moral character. Another example is the adaptation of the folktale Heungbu and Nolbu. The story's emphasis on kindness and mutual help is always the core of the adaptation. Modern versions often connect this spirit with contemporary social values, describing the help between neighbors in modern society and reflecting the inheritance of the Korean nation's collective spirit.

The inheritance of the national spirit also shows the respect for national history and culture. Many Korean folktale adaptations will integrate historical events and cultural symbols into the story. For example, in the adaptation of folktales related to the Goguryeo period, the description of national heroes and historical events is added, which not only enriches the content of the story but also strengthens the readers' sense of national identity. This kind of inheritance makes folktale adaptations not only literary works but also an important way to spread national history and culture.

### **3.4 Inheritance of Folk Aesthetics in Korean Folktale Adaptations**

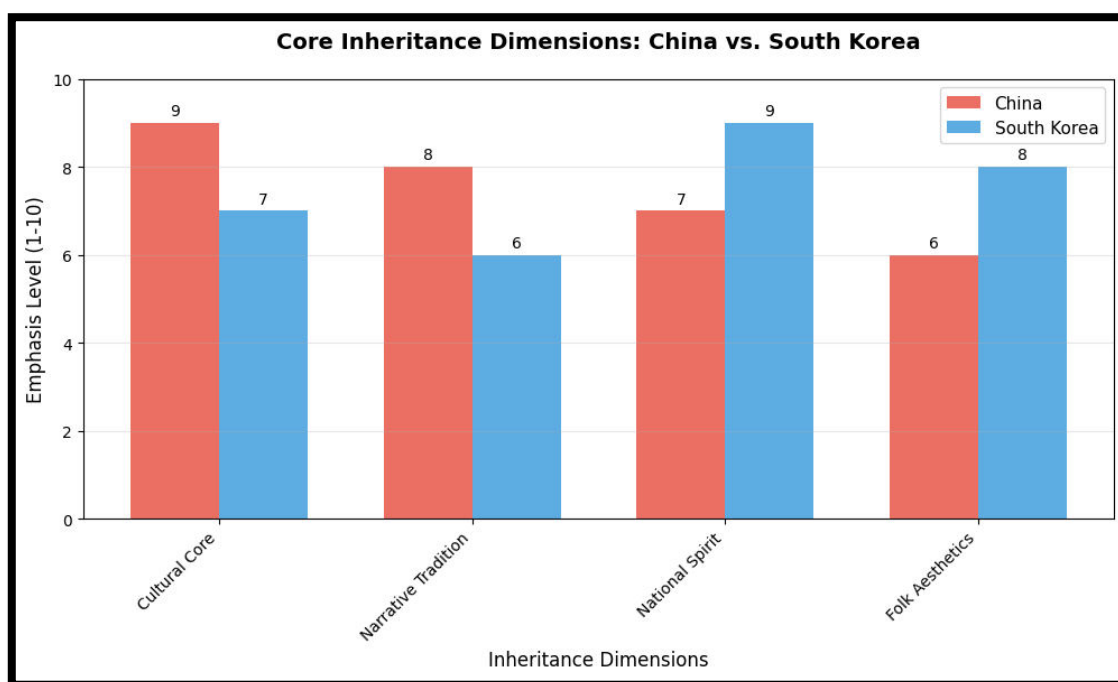
Korean traditional folk aesthetics is characterized by simplicity, nature and attention to emotional expression, which is fully reflected in folktales. Modern Korean folktale adaptations inherit these aesthetic characteristics, forming a unique artistic style that combines tradition and modernity.

The respect for nature is an important part of Korean folk aesthetics, and this concept is fully inherited in folktale adaptations. Many works take natural scenery such as mountains, rivers, forests and fields as the background of the story, and describe the beauty of nature in simple and vivid language. For example, in the adaptation of the folktale Shim Cheong, the description of the sea is an important part of the work. The adaptation not only shows the vastness and majesty of the sea but also uses the changes of the sea to set off the fate of the characters, which is consistent with the aesthetic concept of integrating man and nature in Korean folk culture.

The inheritance of folk aesthetics is also reflected in the description of folk customs and life details. Korean folktales contain rich folk custom elements, such as traditional festivals, costumes, food and etiquette. Modern adaptations often retain these elements and describe them in detail. In the adaptation of Chunhyangjeon, the description of the traditional Korean costume Hanbok, the custom of Korean New Year and the way of making kimchi is often added. These descriptions not only make the story more authentic and vivid but also show the unique charm of Korean folk aesthetics.

In addition, the emotional expression of simplicity and sincerity in Korean folk aesthetics is also inherited in the adaptations. The characters in the works express their feelings directly and sincerely, without complicated rhetorical devices. For example, in the adaptation of the folktale The Tale of Sim Cheong,

Sim Cheong's love for her father is expressed through simple words and practical actions, which moves readers with sincerity. This kind of emotional expression is consistent with the aesthetic pursuit of Korean folk culture and has become an important feature of Korean folktale adaptations.



**Figure01: Core Inheritance Dimensions (China vs. South Korea)**

#### IV. Innovation Paths of Chinese and Korean Folktale Adapted Works

##### 4.1 Modernization Transformation of Theme in Chinese Folktale Adaptations

Chinese folktale adaptations realize the dialogue between tradition and modernity through the modernization transformation of themes. Traditional folktales often carry the ethical concepts and social norms of their era. Modern adaptors extract the universal spiritual connotations from these themes and re-interpret them in combination with contemporary social issues and value demands.

The theme of individual value realization has become a key direction of modern adaptation. The traditional folktale *Nezha Conquers the Dragon King* focuses on the courage to resist authority. Modern literary adaptations such as *Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child* (literary version) further elevate this theme to the pursuit of individual self-determination. The adaptation reshapes Nezha's identity dilemma, breaking the inherent label of being a "demon child" and emphasizing that "my fate is up to me". This transformation responds to the contemporary youth's pursuit of independent personality and self-worth, making the traditional story resonate with the current social psychology.

Another important direction is the integration of contemporary social issues into traditional themes. The traditional folktale *The Cowherd and the Weaver Girl*

centers on the pursuit of free love. Modern adaptations often extend this theme to discuss the balance between love and career, the equality of gender relations and other realistic topics. Some short story adaptations set the background in modern urban life, describing the Cowherd and the Weaver Girl as contemporary office workers facing the pressure of life. Their persistence in love is no longer just a confrontation with the heavenly rules but also a struggle against realistic difficulties, which makes the theme of the story more grounded and contemporary.

In addition, the theme of ecological protection has also become a new highlight of adaptation. Folktales such as Hou Yi Shooting the Suns and Jingwei Filling the Sea contain the concept of harmonious coexistence between man and nature. Modern adaptations take these concepts as the core and expand them into stories focusing on environmental protection. For example, an adaptation of Jingwei Filling the Sea describes Jingwei not only as a bird avenging itself but also as a guardian of the marine ecology. Its behavior of filling the sea is interpreted as a response to marine pollution, which endows the traditional story with new era connotations.

**Table 02: Case Summary of Innovation Paths in Representative Adapted Works**

Country	Innovation Path	Representative Work	Core Innovation Measures	Proportion in Total Samples
China	Thematic Modernization	Contemporary Adaptation of Yugong Moving Mountains	Reconstruct themes around “sustainable development” instead of “perseverance alone”	30%
China	Artistic Expression Innovation	Science Fiction Adaptation of Chang’e Flying to the Moon	Blend science fiction narrative with traditional mythological framework	25%
South Korea	Popular Culture Integration	Digital Adaptation of Shim Cheong	Integrate K-pop elements and web serial narrative into traditional tale	28%
South Korea	Character Reconstruction	Feminist Reconstruction of Chunhyangjeon	Reconstruct Chunhyang as an independent female image breaking feudal constraints	17%

#### **4.2 Innovation of Artistic Expression in Chinese Folktale Adaptations**

Chinese folktale adaptations have made bold innovations in artistic expression, breaking the traditional narrative constraints and enriching the literary charm of the works through the integration of modern literary techniques and the cross-border combination of genres.

The reconstruction of narrative perspective is a prominent feature of artistic innovation. Traditional folktales mostly adopt an omniscient narrative perspective, which is straightforward but lacks the depth of character psychology. Modern adaptations often use limited perspective or multi-perspective narration to enhance the sense of substitution of the story. For example, in the adaptation of *The Legend of the White Snake*, some works use the perspective of Xiaoqing to tell the story. Readers can understand the emotional entanglement between Bai Suzhen and Xu Xian from Xiaoqing's eyes, and at the same time feel Xiaoqing's own growth and inner contradictions. This perspective transformation makes the story more layered and the characters more three-dimensional.

The integration of modern literary techniques also enriches the expression of works. Many adaptors introduce stream of consciousness, intertextuality and other techniques into the creation. For example, in the novel *Blossoms* which integrates folk tale elements, the author uses the stream of consciousness technique to interweave the memories of traditional folk life with the scenes of modern urban life. The description of folk customs such as the Lantern Festival and Dragon Boat Festival is no longer a simple background setting but is integrated with the characters' inner thoughts, forming a dialogue between tradition and modernity. In addition, intertextuality is also widely used. Some adaptations will quote the plots or language of multiple folktales at the same time, forming a rich text network. For example, an adaptation of *Journey to the West* quotes the characters and plots of *The Legend of the White Snake*, creating a new story context.

The cross-border combination of genres is another important innovation direction. Adaptors break the boundaries between literary genres and combine folktale elements with detective stories, science fiction novels and other genres. For example, a science fiction adaptation of the folktale *Chang'e Flying to the Moon* sets the story in the future space age. Chang'e is no longer a fairy who ascends to the moon because of taking the elixir but an astronaut who performs a lunar exploration mission. The story combines the romantic feelings of traditional folktales with the scientific imagination of science fiction, creating a new artistic style.

#### **4.3 Integration of Popular Culture in Korean Folktale Adaptations**

Korean folktale adaptations have formed a distinctive creative feature by actively integrating popular culture elements. This integration not only enhances the popularity and spread of the works but also makes traditional folktale elements

enter the daily life of contemporary people.

The integration with pop music and television culture is the most obvious manifestation. Many Korean folktale adaptations will absorb the narrative rhythm and emotional expression of K-pop lyrics and TV dramas. For example, a modern adaptation of Chunhyangjeon uses the way of inserting lyrics in the text to express Chunhyang's inner feelings. The lyrics are adapted from popular love songs, which are concise and vivid, and conform to the language habits of young readers. Some adaptations even directly use the plot structure of popular TV dramas, such as setting up suspenseful plot twists and love triangles in the story, making the traditional folktale more in line with the viewing psychology of contemporary audiences.

The integration with network culture is another important direction. With the development of the Internet, Korean folktale adaptations have gradually moved to the network platform, and absorbed the characteristics of network culture such as interactivity and entertainment. For example, some online serial adaptations of folktales will set up interactive links, allowing readers to vote for the development direction of the plot. The author will adjust the story content according to the readers' opinions, realizing the co-creation of the work by the author and the readers. In addition, the adaptation also absorbs the humorous and relaxed style of network language, breaking the serious tone of traditional folktales. For example, an adaptation of Heungbu and Nolbu uses funny dialogues and exaggerated descriptions to shape the image of Nolbu, turning the traditional moral story into a light comedy work that is popular with readers.

The integration with consumer culture also enriches the expression form of the works. Some Korean folktale adaptations will combine with cultural and creative products, and implant the image and plot of the work into cultural and creative products such as peripheral commodities and theme restaurants. For example, the characters in the adaptation of Shim Cheong are made into dolls and posters, and the plot of the story is used as the theme of the restaurant decoration. This integration not only expands the spread channel of the work but also realizes the commercial value of the work, forming a positive interaction between culture and commerce.

#### **4.4 Reconstruction of Character Images in Korean Folktale Adaptations**

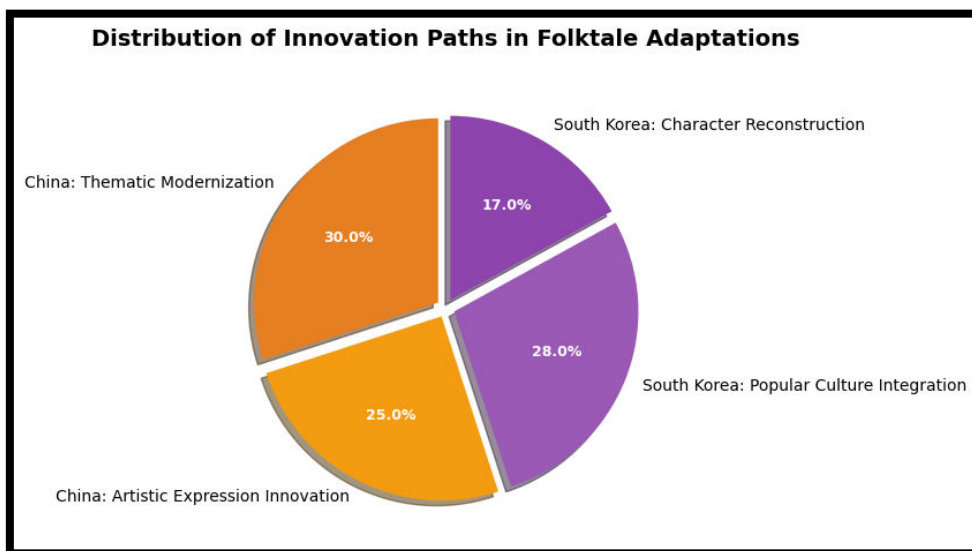
Korean folktale adaptations realize the innovation of the works by reconstructing the character images in traditional folktales. Traditional folktale characters often have single and symbolic characteristics, while modern adaptations enrich the character connotations, making the images more three-dimensional and in line with contemporary aesthetic tastes.

The reconstruction of female images is a key focus. Traditional Korean folktales often shape female characters as gentle, virtuous and submissive, such as Chunhyang in Chunhyangjeon. Modern adaptations break this inherent image and inject the connotation of modern female consciousness into the characters. In a contemporary literary adaptation of Chunhyangjeon, Chunhyang is no longer

just a woman who waits passively for her lover. She learns to read and write by herself, and even uses her wisdom to expose the corruption of the county magistrate. When her lover is away, she runs a small business to support herself, showing the independence and self-improvement of modern women. This kind of reconstruction makes the female image in the folktale get rid of the symbolic nature and become a real and vivid female figure.

The reconstruction of villain images also shows obvious innovative characteristics. Traditional folktale villains are often set as completely evil, with single motives such as greed and cruelty. Modern adaptations explore the complexity of villain characters, adding humanized descriptions to them. For example, in the adaptation of Heungbu and Nolbu, Nolbu is no longer just a greedy and mean elder brother. The adaptation adds the description of his growth experience: he was wronged and excluded when he was young, which led to his distorted personality. In the later part of the story, Nolbu also has a process of reflection and change. This kind of reconstruction makes the villain image more layered, and also makes the story have a deeper thinking about human nature.

In addition, the reconstruction of ordinary people’s images also enriches the connotation of the works. Traditional folktales often shape ordinary people as simple and kind, but lack the description of their social attributes. Modern adaptations combine the images of ordinary people with contemporary social issues, such as the pressure of life, the gap between the rich and the poor and other realistic topics. For example, in an adaptation of a Korean folktale about a woodcutter, the woodcutter is no longer just a lucky man who gets treasure by accident. The story describes his difficulties in supporting his family, his hesitation in the face of interests and his final choice, reflecting the living state and moral dilemma of contemporary ordinary people. This kind of reconstruction makes the character image have a strong realistic care.



**Figure 02: Distribution of Innovation Paths**

## **V. Comparative Analysis of Inheritance and Innovation: Similarities and Differences and Their Causes**

### **5.1 Common Orientation of Inheritance and Innovation in the Two Countries**

Despite the distinctive characteristics of folktale adaptations in China and South Korea, they share consistent core orientations in inheritance and innovation, reflecting the common pursuit of traditional cultural development in the modern context.

The first common orientation is the adherence to cultural roots. Both countries recognize folktales as important carriers of national culture and regard the inheritance of core cultural connotations as the fundamental premise of adaptation. Chinese adaptations retain values such as benevolence and integrity, while Korean adaptations adhere to the spirit of loyalty and collective consciousness. This kind of inheritance is not a rigid copy but a way to maintain national cultural identity. For example, the Chinese adaptation of *The Legend of the White Snake* and the Korean adaptation of *Chunhyangjeon* both retain the emotional core and moral pursuit of the original works, making the national cultural spirit continue in contemporary works.

The second common orientation is the focus on contemporary audience needs. Both countries' adaptations actively adjust the expression form and content connotation of works to meet the aesthetic tastes and spiritual demands of modern readers. Chinese adaptations integrate ecological protection and individual value pursuit into traditional themes, while Korean adaptations combine popular culture elements to enhance the popularity of works. This kind of adjustment enables traditional folktales to break the temporal and spatial limitations and establish an emotional connection with contemporary readers. Whether it is the Chinese *Nezha's* declaration of my fate is up to me or the independent image of *Chunhyang* in Korean adaptations, they all respond to the psychological needs of modern people.

The third common orientation is the exploration of cross-cultural communication potential. Both countries' adaptations, while retaining national characteristics, also pay attention to extracting universal human emotions and values from folktales, such as the pursuit of happiness, the resistance against evil and the praise of kindness. These connotations enable the adapted works to go beyond national boundaries and be understood and accepted by more readers. This kind of exploration not only promotes the spread of national culture but also contributes to the exchange and mutual learning of world folk culture.

### **5.2 Differences in Inheritance and Innovation between the Two Countries**

The differences between Chinese and Korean folktale adaptations in inheritance and innovation are more prominent, which are mainly reflected in the focus of inheritance and the direction of innovation.

In terms of inheritance focus, Chinese adaptations pay more attention to the inheritance of the overall national cultural system. The cultural core inherited by

the works is not isolated moral concepts but is integrated into the broad background of Chinese traditional culture, emphasizing the connection with the spiritual connotation of Confucianism, Taoism and other cultures. For example, the adaptation of *Yugong Moving Mountains* not only inherits the spirit of perseverance but also reflects the Taoist concept of harmonious coexistence between man and nature and the Confucian spirit of self-improvement. Korean adaptations, by contrast, focus more on the inheritance of specific national symbols and folk customs. Works often take Korean unique folk culture elements as the inheritance key, such as Hanbok, kimchi production customs and folk songs, to highlight the uniqueness of Korean culture. The adaptation of *Chunhyangjeon's* detailed description of traditional Korean festivals is a typical example.

In terms of innovation direction, Chinese adaptations tend to carry out in-depth innovation in theme connotation and artistic expression. Adaptors are more willing to explore the deep connection between traditional folktales and contemporary social issues, and use modern literary techniques to enhance the ideological depth and artistic value of works. For example, the science fiction adaptation of *Chang'e Flying to the Moon* not only realizes the cross-border combination of genres but also explores the relationship between science and humanity. Korean adaptations focus more on the integration of popular culture and the reconstruction of character images to enhance the entertainment and popularity of works. The integration of K-pop elements and the interactive creation of online adaptations fully reflect this innovation direction. The reconstruction of *Nolbu's* image in the adaptation of *Heungbu and Nolbu* also serves to make the work more in line with the aesthetic taste of contemporary mass.

In addition, there are differences in the balance between inheritance and innovation. Chinese adaptations tend to maintain a relatively balanced state, ensuring that innovation does not deviate from the cultural essence of the original work. Korean adaptations sometimes lean more towards innovation, and the integration of popular culture elements even makes the works show a strong modern style, but they still retain the core symbols of national culture to avoid losing the attribute of folktales.

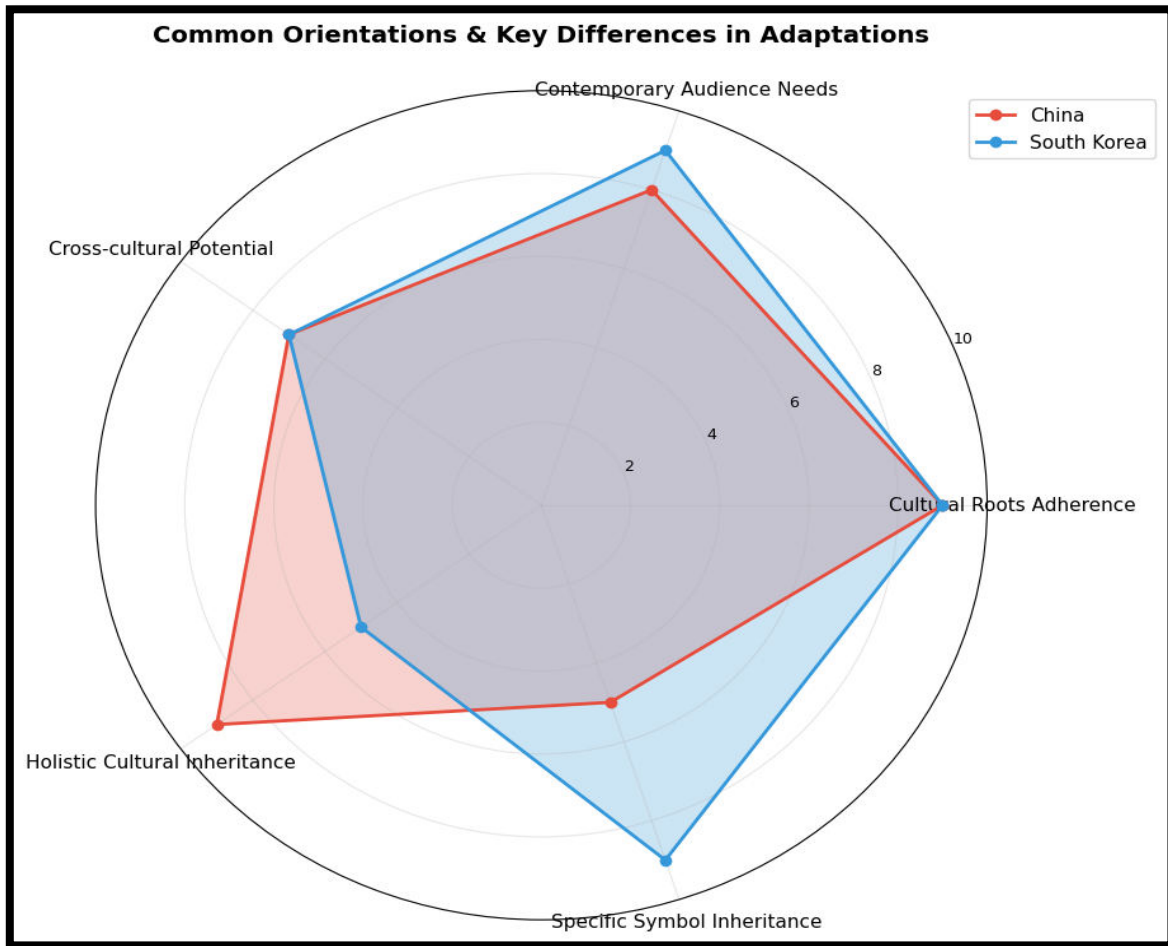


Figure03: Common Orientations & Key Differences

### 5.3 Causes of Differences: Cultural, Social and Aesthetic Factors

The differences in inheritance and innovation between Chinese and Korean folktale adaptations are not accidental, but the result of the combined action of cultural, social and aesthetic factors.

Cultural factors are the fundamental cause. China has a long history and a unified and continuous cultural system. Confucianism, Taoism and other cultures have formed a broad and profound cultural context, which makes Chinese creators have a strong sense of cultural overall view when adapting folktales. They are more inclined to place the works in the overall cultural system for inheritance and innovation, so as to reflect the spiritual connotation of the entire nation. South Korea, as a country with a long history of cultural exchanges with China but a unique national development path, has formed a cultural psychology of attaching great importance to national uniqueness. Under the influence of this psychology, Korean creators tend to take specific national symbols as the core of inheritance when adapting folktales, so as to strengthen national cultural identity. The historical experience of being influenced by foreign cultures and striving to maintain national independence has also strengthened this creative tendency.

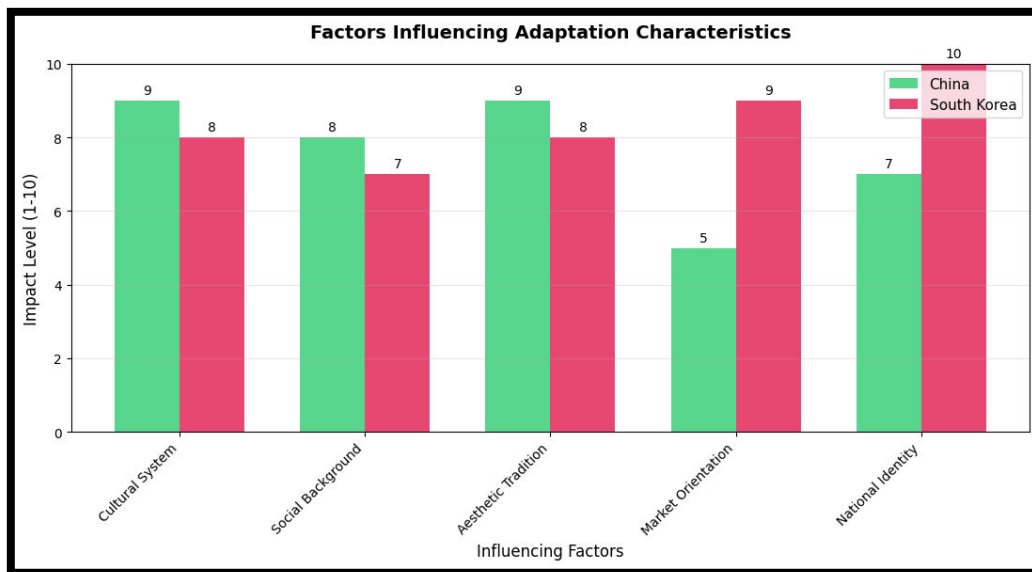
Table03: Mechanism of Factors Influencing Adaptation Characteristics

Influencing Factor	Impact on Chinese Adaptations	Impact on South Korean Adaptations	Impact Level (1-10)
Cultural System	Centered on Confucian cultural system; emphasize holistic inheritance of cultural connotation	Centered on Confucian-Buddhist mixed culture; focus on inheritance of symbolic cultural elements	China:9 / Korea:8
Social Background	Driven by cultural confidence strategy; focus on mainstream value transmission	Driven by cultural industry development; focus on market and audience demand	China:8 / Korea:7
Aesthetic Tradition	Adhere to traditional literary aesthetics; pursue artistic depth	Integrate popular aesthetics; pursue audience acceptance	China:9 / Korea:8
Market Orientation	Weak market-driven; prioritize cultural value over commercial value	Strong market-driven; balance commercial value and cultural value	China:5 / Korea:9
National Identity	Focus on cultural identity of big country; highlight national cultural inclusiveness	Focus on small country cultural identity; emphasize national cultural uniqueness	China:7 / Korea:10

Social factors have a direct impact on the innovation direction of adaptations. China is in a period of rapid modernization, and the whole society is paying more and more attention to cultural confidence and the inheritance of excellent traditional culture. This social background makes Chinese creators pay more attention to the ideological depth of works when adapting, hoping to provide spiritual motivation for contemporary people through traditional culture. At the same time, the continuous progress of Chinese literary creation also provides

conditions for the in-depth innovation of artistic expression. South Korea’s popular culture industry has developed maturely, and the market-oriented operation mode makes creators pay more attention to the popularity and commercial value of works. The strong influence of K-pop, Korean dramas and other popular cultures on the public also makes the integration of popular elements an effective way to enhance the spread of works. The development of the Internet and social media has further promoted the interactive and entertaining innovation of Korean adaptations.

Aesthetic factors lead to differences in the expression focus of works. Chinese traditional aesthetics emphasizes artistic conception and implication, paying attention to the integration of emotion and reason and the harmony between form and content. This aesthetic concept makes Chinese creators pay more attention to the artistic depth and ideological connotation of works when adapting, and pursue the artistic effect of being implicit and meaningful. Korean traditional aesthetics emphasizes simplicity, sincerity and emotional direct expression, and is more influenced by modern mass aesthetics. This makes Korean creators pay more attention to the emotional resonance and entertainment experience of readers when adapting, and the works are more lively and intuitive. The different aesthetic needs of the two peoples also promote the formation of different adaptation characteristics.



**Figure 04: Factors Influencing Adaptation Characteristics**

## VI. Conclusion and Prospect

### 6.1 Main Conclusions of the Study

This study takes the adapted works of Chinese and Korean folktales since the 21st century as research objects, systematically explores the inheritance and innovation characteristics of the two countries’ works through text analysis and comparative research methods, and clarifies the similarities, differences and intrinsic causes of the two. The main conclusions are as follows.

First, Chinese and Korean folktale adaptations share three common orientations in inheritance and innovation. Both adhere to cultural roots, taking the inheritance of core national cultural connotations as the fundamental premise of creation. The Chinese adaptation of *The Legend of the White Snake* and the Korean adaptation of *Chunhyangjeon* both retain the emotional core of the original works. Both focus on the needs of contemporary audiences, adjusting the content and form of works to resonate with modern readers. The emphasis on individual value in Chinese *Nezha* adaptations and the independent image of *Chunhyang* in Korean adaptations both reflect this. Both explore the potential of cross-cultural communication, extracting universal human values from folktales to promote cultural exchange.

Second, there are obvious differences between the two countries in the focus of inheritance and the direction of innovation. In terms of inheritance, Chinese adaptations pay attention to the inheritance of the overall national cultural system, integrating the core of folktales with the spiritual connotations of Confucianism and Taoism. The adaptation of *Yugong Moving Mountains* reflects both perseverance and the concept of harmony between man and nature. Korean adaptations focus on the inheritance of specific national symbols and folk customs, such as Hanbok and kimchi-making customs in *Chunhyangjeon* adaptations. In terms of innovation, Chinese adaptations focus on in-depth exploration of theme connotation and artistic expression, such as the sci-fi adaptation of *Chang'e Flying to the Moon*. Korean adaptations focus on the integration of popular culture and the reconstruction of character images, such as the combination of K-pop elements in folktale adaptations and the humanized shaping of *Nolbu*.

Third, the differences in adaptation characteristics are the result of the combined action of cultural, social and aesthetic factors. China's continuous cultural system breeds creators' overall cultural awareness. South Korea's emphasis on national uniqueness promotes the focus on specific cultural symbols. China's attention to cultural confidence drives the in-depth innovation of works. South Korea's mature popular culture industry promotes the integration of folk tales with mass aesthetics. Chinese traditional aesthetics of artistic conception and Korean traditional aesthetics of simplicity also lead to different expression focuses of the two countries' works.

## **6.2 Value and Enlightenment of the Study**

This study has both theoretical value and practical enlightenment, providing new ideas for the research and creation of folktale adaptations in China and South Korea.

In terms of theoretical value, the study fills the gap in the comparative research field of Chinese and Korean folktale adaptations. Most of the existing studies focus on single-country cases, while this study constructs a comparative framework of inheritance and innovation, systematically analyzes the similarities

and differences between the two countries' works, and enriches the theoretical system of cross-cultural folk literature research. At the same time, the study puts forward the core dimensions of inheritance and innovation in folktale adaptations, and clarifies the interactive relationship between folktale adaptations and folk culture, which provides a theoretical basis for the follow-up research on folktale adaptation.

In terms of practical enlightenment, the study provides targeted references for the creators of the two countries. For Chinese creators, it is necessary to continue to adhere to the inheritance of the overall national cultural system, and at the same time further explore the combination of traditional folktale elements and diverse modern literary genres to enhance the artistic vitality of works. For Korean creators, while maintaining the integration of national symbols and popular culture, they can learn from the in-depth exploration of Chinese adaptations on theme connotation to balance the entertainment and ideological nature of works. In addition, the study also promotes the cross-cultural communication of folk culture between the two countries. By understanding the adaptation experience of each other, the two countries can better spread their own folk culture to the world and realize the mutual learning of Asian folk culture.

### 6.3 Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study still has certain limitations, which also point out the direction for future research.

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