

A Study on the Traditional Culture of the Korean Ethnic Group in Yanji, China

Chen Zhuo, Aminuddin bin Hassan, Siti Sabihah Ghazali

Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang, 43400, Selangor, Malaysia

Email: gs65068@student.upm.edu.my

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v13-i1/20093>

DOI:10.6007/IJARPED/v13-i1/20093

Published Online: 08 January 2024

Abstract

The Korean ethnic group in China boasts a rich and vibrant traditional national culture with a long history. However, the rapid economic development has led to significant sinicization and severe damage to their national culture. The influx of transnational labor families has resulted in an intergenerational rupture in the transmission of this cultural heritage. Persistent conflicts and population movements have contributed to the erosion of national characteristics. Hence, the preservation and safeguarding of Korean traditional culture becomes imperative.

This study primarily employed the questionnaire method, interview method, and ethnographic research to collect firsthand data. Through a comparative analysis of survey data from various perspectives and levels. This study focuses on etiquette culture, clothing culture, food culture, residential culture, and folk culture. It aims to explore the current state of traditional culture among ethnic minorities in Korean-inhabited areas. The findings of this research hold theoretical significance, providing valuable references for interdisciplinary studies in education, sociology, ethnology, and other related disciplines.

Keywords: Chinese Korean, Korean, Traditional Culture, Cultural Protection, Cultural Inheritance.

A Study on the Traditional Culture of the Korean Ethnic Group in Yanji, China

Introduction

Culture is not only a social phenomenon resulting from the amalgamation of human material and spiritual civilizations but also a historical product, precipitated over time. Yet as this global era of uniformity progresses, people and individuals will inevitably encounter identity confusion. Numerous individuals, ethnicities, nationalities, and countries around the world are working to counteract such identity confusion. As globalization progresses, groups and nationalities that fail to preserve their identities will dwindle and become absorbed by stronger entities. Therefore, many societies are investing great efforts into rediscovering and revamping their indigenous traditions, cultures, and customs (Chung et al., 2016)

Culture serves as an inexhaustible driving force for sustaining the survival and advancement of a nation. The preservation and development of a nation's traditional culture

are essential for fostering the national spirit, instilling national pride, and fortifying national cohesion.

Various cultural ecologies have given rise to distinct cultural typologies, fostering a rich tapestry of human cultural diversity. Nevertheless, as the forces of globalization and modernization intensify, the cultural traditions of diverse ethnic groups undergo erosion or necessitate adaptations. The disruption of the cultural ecological equilibrium poses a significant threat to the pluralism and diversity inherent in human culture, placing the continuity of our cultural heritage at risk. Hence, preserving the overall balance of cultural ecology and fostering the symbiotic integration of national cultures holds both theoretical significance and practical importance.

China, as a unified multi-ethnic country, has witnessed the collaborative creation of a rich and diverse social culture by fifty-six ethnic groups over the course of long-term social production. This has led to the formation of a pluralistic yet unified Chinese nation characterized by ethnic equality, unity, mutual assistance, and harmony. In the words of American cultural scholar Marshall Sahlins, 'People's groups use various ways to give meaning to themselves and their world.' As a significant minority in China, the Korean community has contributed substantially to the nation's vibrant history. Throughout the undulating currents of historical development, their rich traditional national culture has found a steadfast foothold on Chinese soil through unwavering determination and ingenuity.

The ancestors of the Korean ethnic group in China originated from Koreans who migrated from the Korean Peninsula to Northeast China, predominantly settling in the three northeastern provinces and the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. The formation and evolution of the Korean ethnic group have undergone numerous migrations and integrations, with the initial wave of immigrants establishing roots more than 300 years ago. The challenges they faced are evident, yet these adversities have shaped the contemporary Korean people in China, known for their steadfastness, tenacity, resilience in the face of hardships, and spirited determination.

Since the 21st century, the forces of modernization, globalization, and urbanization have exerted a profound impact on the politics, economy, culture, and society of countries worldwide. Within this global trend, the traditional culture of Chinese ethnic minorities, including the Chinese Koreans, has inevitably undergone transformation. As the economy progresses, traditional ethnic villages in Yanji, the settlement area of the Korean ethnic group in China, are rapidly diminishing, accompanied by a rise in the number of landless farmers. Urbanization and city expansion have resulted in varying degrees of damage to traditional buildings, altering the regional landscape and quietly reshaping the national cultural ecology. The inheritance and protection of traditional cultural heritage face unprecedented challenges from external factors, severely impacting the foundation of Korean national culture. Conversely, the deeply rooted "labor economy," inherent language advantages, and shared customs prompt many Korean young adults to seek employment in South Korea. This has led to a significant number of left-behind children in the Yanji area. Upon the return of these workers, the influence of the Korean lifestyle, including coffee culture and clothing preferences, becomes inevitable. The phenomenon of transnational labor families further exacerbates intergenerational conflicts in the preservation of national culture. Population migration contributes to the weakening of national characteristics and the loss of the original cultural living environment. Combined with the blurred and paradigm-shifted government policies, the cultural inheritance of Koreans in China faces a series of pressing challenges.

National culture is the cultural expression of unique characteristics created and cultivated by each nation throughout its historical development, reflecting the nation's level of historical progress. China stands as a unified multi-ethnic country, and the Communist Party of China, along with the government, places significant emphasis on the cultural heritage of ethnic minorities. The inheritance of ethnic minority cultures holds the potential to elevate the scientific, cultural, and moral quality of the entire nation. It serves as an ideological cornerstone, offering spiritual motivation and intellectual support for the country's modernization efforts. Furthermore, it enhances the nation's cultural soft power, ensures the protection of people's fundamental cultural rights, adds vibrancy to social and cultural life, and fosters a more spirited spiritual outlook among the populace. Consequently, the preservation of Korean culture plays an indispensable and pivotal role in advancing Yanji's engagement with the outside world, spurring economic development, fostering national unity, promoting social harmony, and ensuring border stability.

Utilizing the CiteSpace (6.2.R4), we conducted a keyword analysis of the current research landscape concerning Koreans in China. Our findings indicate that prevailing research focuses on rural revitalization, national cultural education, national village construction, and the preservation of national cultural heritage. The exploration of cultural inheritance encompasses various aspects, including traditional music, costume culture, traditional dance, architectural culture, folk stories, family virtues, and folk cuisine. This study is grounded in the existing research on the preservation of Chinese Korean culture. It aims to systematically organize and summarize current findings, offering a valuable reference for related research endeavors and contributing to the continued preservation of Chinese Korean traditional culture.

Methods

This study employed a combination of research methods, including the questionnaire method, interview method, and ethnographic research method. A questionnaire was specifically designed to investigate issues related to language use, language proficiency, language acquisition, and language attitudes. A structured questionnaire survey was then conducted among the Korean community in Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture (referred to as Yanji), China. The collected data from the questionnaire survey were statistically analyzed using SPSS 20.0 software. One-way ANOVA and T-test methods were employed to assess the current state of Korean language practices across different genders, age groups, educational levels, occupations, regions, and life experiences.

To supplement the limitations of literature collection, questionnaires, and field surveys, and to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the survey content, interviews and discussions were conducted. Semi-structured interview outlines guided conversations with leaders of administrative agencies, civil servants, teachers, journalists, residents, etc.

The ethnographic research method involved an in-depth study of Korean ethnographic books to comprehend the historical and cultural background, language, national customs, local people, and other aspects of the Korean community. This approach aids in a deeper understanding of the developmental origins and key features of Korean traditional culture.

Through field research on the traditional cultural life of the Korean community in Yanji, employing questionnaires, interviews, and document collection, first-hand data was obtained for a comparative analysis from various perspectives and levels. This exploration aimed to uncover the current status of the traditional culture of ethnic minorities in the Korean

settlement area. The findings of this research hold theoretical reference value for interdisciplinary studies in education, sociology, ethnology, and other relevant disciplines.

Results and Discussion

Etiquette Culture

Language

Yanji stands as the primary and largest settlement of the Korean ethnic group in China, where the Korean and Han ethnicities have coexisted for an extended period. Over time, the interaction between the Korean and Chinese communities has been substantial, leading to a mutual influence. Bilingualism has become a common phenomenon at the societal level, contributing to a linguistically complex environment.

The questionnaire, focusing on respondents' language usage in family settings, comprises three key questions

'What languages do you use when talking to your siblings?'

'What languages do you use when conversing with your parents?'

'What languages do you use when communicating with your children?'

Responses, categorized as 'all in mother tongue,' 'majority in mother tongue,' 'native language nearly identical to Chinese,' and 'majority or all in Chinese,' help assess the linguistic choices within the family environment of Yanji Koreans. Detailed statistical results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Language Usage of Respondents in Family Situations (N=1000).

		Number of People	Percentage
The language used when speaking to one's own family brothers and sisters	All in mother tongue	309	30.9
	Mother tongue is the majority	414	41.4
	Mother tongue is almost the same as Chinese	209	20.9
	Chinese is the majority or all are in Chinese	68	6.8
	All in mother tongue	428	42.8
Language used when speaking to one's own parents	Mother tongue is the majority	333	33.3
	Mother tongue is almost the same as Chinese	171	17.1
	Chinese is the majority or all are in Chinese	68	6.8
	All in mother tongue	114	11.4

Note. Questionnaires were distributed in Yanji through random sampling

Collectively, in the current speech communication within family settings in the Yanji area, the predominant language choice remains Korean, representing the mother tongue. When communicating with different individuals, the percentage of instances where the mother

tongue constitutes the entirety or the vast majority is notably high: 72.3%, 76.1%, 27.6% (with a missing value in 53.4% of cases). The dominance of mother tongue usage stands unwavering."

Table 2

Respondents' language use in public places (N=1000)

	Language	Number of people	Percentage
Meet and Greet	Chinese	266	26.6
	Korean	550	55.0
	use simultaneously	184	18.4
Ethnic Festivals, Gatherings	Chinese	181	18.1
	Korean	709	70.9
	use simultaneously	110	11.0
Wedding, Funeral	Chinese	217	21.7
	Korean	693	69.3
	use simultaneously	90	9.0
Shopping mall, Supermarket	Chinese	499	49.9
	Korean	314	31.4
	use simultaneously	187	18.7
Hospital Visit	Chinese	433	43.3
	Korean	331	33.1
	use simultaneously	236	23.6
Meeting	Chinese	486	48.6
	Korean	380	38.0
	use simultaneously	134	13.4
School or Workplace	Chinese	373	37.3
	Korean	383	38.3
	use simultaneously	244	24.4

Note. Questionnaires were distributed in Yanji through random sampling

Considering the overall speech communication in public spaces in Yanji, traditional communication situations still witness a significant preference for the respondents' mother tongue over Chinese. In non-traditional public places and workplaces, respondents tend to use Chinese slightly more than their mother tongue. However, the trend of using both languages simultaneously is on the rise. It is evident that, influenced by national language policies, the use of Mandarin has extended to non-traditional public social situations among the Koreans in Yanji.

The current language usage patterns of Koreans in China can be summarized as follows: their mother tongue serves as the primary language in family situations, with Chinese playing a supplementary role. In public places, the use of the mother tongue is marginally higher than that of Chinese. While Chinese is widely employed, its usage rate in remote rural areas remains low. Chinese is prevalent in modern media, with significantly higher frequency of use compared to the mother tongue. Most Koreans exhibit a typical bilingual proficiency, possessing strong proficiency in both their native language and Chinese. They place value on

acquiring proficiency in both their mother tongue and Chinese, and their language attitudes towards both languages are relatively positive.

The language development trend suggests notable improvements in the use, proficiency, acquisition, and attitudes towards Korean and Mandarin in Yanji. The status and influence of Chinese have also experienced substantial growth. Despite the positive linguistic environment shaped by social stability and a rich traditional cultural atmosphere, challenges persist, including a lack of cultural protection awareness, inadequate traditional cultural quality education, and a lack of long-term systematic planning.

At its core, language possesses a social dimension. Analyzing language use differences among the research subjects from a social perspective provides valuable insights into the linguistic living environment of Yanji Koreans. This understanding holds crucial practical significance for the region's economic development, the establishment of a standardized, harmonious, and healthy social and linguistic environment, as well as the protection and development of minority language and cultural resources."

Behavior

Respecting the elderly and cherishing the young is a longstanding virtue within the Chinese nation. The Korean people, in particular, hold deep admiration for this traditional virtue, often referring to their land as a place that reveres the old and loves the young.

"The Korean people are known for their humility, courtesy, and deep appreciation for culture and education. Traditionally, Koreans prefer the cohabitation of multiple generations under one roof, encompassing parents, sons, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren within a family. The relationships between elders and younger family members are highly esteemed, emphasizing particular identities and expectations in daily interactions. Any casual or disrespectful behaviors and attitudes are strongly disapproved of within the Korean cultural context."

Koreans place significant emphasis on the kindness of fathers and the filial piety of sons, with the eldest son traditionally taking on the responsibility of supporting their parents. Disrespect towards parents and behaviors lacking in filial piety are frowned upon. Young Koreans are expected to use honorifics when addressing their elders, even in initial encounters. Traditional dining etiquette includes allowing elders to use their chopsticks first, with the spoon placed in the soup bowl; if placed on the table, it signals the completion of the meal. When walking with the elderly, younger individuals are required to walk behind them. In the event of an emergency requiring the younger person to proceed ahead, a respectful explanation to the elderly is mandatory.

In social situations, younger individuals refrain from drinking or smoking in the presence of their elders. At banquets, wine pouring and toasting follow a strict order of age. When clinking glasses with older individuals, the younger person customarily touches the lower part of their own cup to the other person's cup, signifying humility. Before going to bed, the younger generation is expected to arrange the bedding for the elders.

In the past, knocking on the door was not a common practice among Koreans. Instead, it was customary to cough a few times and wait for the homeowner to come out and initiate conversation. Both parties used honorific language during these interactions.

Respect for teachers is deeply ingrained in Korean tradition. Regardless of age, adults, or children, addressing teachers with due respect and offering salutations upon seeing them are mandatory practices. The Korean people place immense value on education, as reflected in their proverb: 'No matter how difficult life gets, children must read books.'

Known for their etiquette, the Korean people in China uphold behaviors such as respecting their elders, displaying politeness towards others, and fostering unity and mutual assistance. These customs form the core of daily interactions among the Korean community.

Festival

Korean festivals share a fundamental similarity with those of the Han people, encompassing key events such as the Spring Festival, Shangyuan Festival, Qingming Festival, Cold Food Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, Winter Solstice, and more. Additionally, the Korean community celebrates Children's Day, Elderly Day on August 15th, and Zhouqing on September 3rd. Three significant family-oriented celebrations include the first anniversary of a baby's birth, the sixtieth birthday, and the sixtieth wedding anniversary.

For Chinese Koreans, the Spring Festival holds particular significance as the most traditional festival. Activities during this time involve ancestor worship, New Year greetings, a festive New Year's Eve dinner, and various forms of entertainment. On New Year's Eve, families stay up all night, preparing sumptuous festival foods. Men, women, and children engage in joyful singing and dancing, while neighbors and friends exchange blessings, creating a lively atmosphere.

The Shangyuan Festival occurs on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month each year. Traditionally, this day involves the consumption of grain rice, symbolizing hopes for a prosperous harvest. Festivities include various games, adding to the vibrant and lively atmosphere.

The Hui Wedding Festival marks the 60th anniversary of marriage and stands as the most solemn Korean family celebration. During this event, relatives and friends come together to extend their congratulations. Elderly individuals don wedding attire, and everyone raises their glasses in a collective toast to bless the occasion. The atmosphere becomes livelier for those embarking on their marital journey.

Children's Day, originally an international holiday, has evolved into a unique festival in Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, home to the Chinese Korean community. On this day, every household actively participates in celebrations, donning traditional costumes and preparing abundant food. Families celebrate with their children by visiting parks or other scenic locations.

815 Elderly Day is dedicated to honoring the elderly in Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture. On this day, every household presents holiday gifts to the elderly and hosts a lavish holiday banquet. Festival activities include recognizing role models who exemplify the virtues of respecting the elderly and caring for the young, extending birthday wishes to the elderly, and organizing events suitable for their enjoyment. Unique cultural and sports activities serve to highlight and embody the traditional virtues of the Korean people in respecting the elderly and caring for the young.

93 Folk Festival, observed on September 3, 1952, commemorates the establishment of Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture. On this day, people from all ethnic groups in Yanji engage in celebratory activities.

The baby's first birthday banquet, known as "Zhuzhou," is a particularly significant birthday ceremony in Korean tradition. On this day, the mother dresses her child in a colorful satin top, allowing the child to choose any favorite item during the celebration as an early wish for their future. This custom continues to be preserved and upheld.

The Sixty Years Banquet reflects the Korean people's enduring emphasis on respecting the elderly in both family and social life since ancient times. Celebrated on an individual's

sixtieth birthday, children organize a birthday banquet to express gratitude to their parents for their upbringing. This practice remains a cherished traditional virtue of the Korean people."

Life

Life events primarily revolve around birth, marriage, and death.

The Korean people place immense significance on birth rituals, considering them the commencement of life, and they adhere to these rituals with great attention to detail. The birth rituals of the Korean people typically encompass ceremonies such as "Ji Rope," "Hundred Days," and "Zhu Zhou." The "taboo rope" serves as the initial component in birth etiquette. Upon a baby's birth, the family suspends a straw rope under the eaves of their house to announce the arrival of the newborn, with a prohibition on outsiders entering or exiting. If a boy is born, chili peppers or charcoal are inserted into the rope; for a girl, pine leaves and branches are used. The "taboo rope" remains hung for 21 days, allowing the mother and baby to enjoy a serene and undisturbed period. This practice symbolizes the love and care bestowed upon the baby by the mother and the family. "Hundred Days" marks a small banquet celebrated 100 days after a baby's birth. On this occasion, family members gather to express wishes for the baby's healthy growth."

In the realm of marriage, the Korean people adhere to the practice of monogamy. According to traditional customs, individuals with the same surname and close blood ties are not allowed to marry. A common societal norm is that 'men take charge of the outside world, and women take charge of the house.' In contemporary simplified wedding customs, three key procedures are followed: engagement, the groom sending betrothal gifts to the bride's family, and the wedding ceremony.

Before welcoming the bride, the groom traditionally bids farewell to his parents and elders. The bride's family hosts a lavish wedding banquet for the groom, where he must partake in drinking three glasses of wine, exchange gifts with the bride, and engage in a 'handover ceremony.' The groom and bride individually bid farewell to their elders. The bride, accompanied by her dowry and gifts, travels to the groom's house, where she receives a grand welcome. After the wedding banquet, friends and relatives prepare the bridal chamber, offering words of advice to the bride regarding honoring her parents-in-law, fostering sibling relationships, maintaining marital harmony, and living a fulfilling life. On the second day, the bride showcases her culinary skills, preparing a meal for the entire family and presenting pre-prepared gifts to her in-laws. The third day involves the bride taking the groom back to her natal home, accompanied by rich gifts, in a tradition known as 'returning to the door.'

In the context of funerals, Koreans predominantly practice burial, while cremation is also observed in certain regions. According to traditional funeral customs, when an elderly family member passes away, immediate relatives abstain from washing their faces and hair for three days and remain in mourning for a period of three to seven days. Dutiful sons don mourning attire and extend condolences to relatives and friends. The funeral is typically conducted at least three days after the demise, involving the deceased being adorned in new clothing, with the old clothes burned symbolizing the ascent of the soul to heaven. Rice grains and copper coins are placed in the mouth of the deceased, symbolizing wishes for a prosperous afterlife. A Feng Shui master selects a cemetery, usually on the sunny side of a hillside. The funeral proceedings include burial, offerings placed in front of the grave, and salutary kowtows. Sacrifices are held for three consecutive days, with subsequent

observances on the deceased's birthday, death anniversary, or significant festivals as expressions of ongoing grief.

Costume Culture

Ethnic costume is the clothing inherited from the past as appropriate to the climate and customs while adjusting to the aesthetic sense according to each ethnic group's view of nature (Kim & Sung, 2005)

National costumes serve as a tangible expression of a nation's characteristics, embodying its personality and carrying the essence of its culture. The traditional costumes worn by Korean residents in Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture trace their roots to the attire of the Korean Peninsula's inhabitants. The fundamental structure of Korean national costumes reflects influences from the attire of northern nomadic communities. Evolving from traditional clothing, a distinctive style emerged, characterized by its nomadic features. This style lacks a skirt and waistband, opting instead for a narrow-sleeved top paired with tight trousers. This design stands in stark contrast to the foundational forms of traditional Han Chinese jackets.

Basic Form

The basic styles of Korean clothing can be broadly categorized into four groups: "Ru," "Hatama," "Shang," and "Pao."

"Ru": This term refers to the upper body garment worn by both boys and girls, known as "Ru" or locally called "Zegoryeo" among the Korean population in Yanji. Structurally, men's and women's undergarments share similarities, featuring straight-cut shoulders, sleeves, and sleeve heads. The collars and tie bars are formed with curves, and even the hem and armholes exhibit curved lines. The diagonal placket and collar are hand-edged, sewn with white cloth. The removable and washable white fabric edge serves to maintain a clean collar.

"Hatama": This category encompasses the lower garment worn by boys and girls, as depicted in Figure 3. Initially termed as "pants" during the Joseon Dynasty, the garment evolved, with the lower attire for boys being referred to as "pants" and for girls as "panties."

"Shang": Denoting a slender skirt, the term "Shang" translates to "Qi Ma" in Korean.

"Pao": This style draws inspiration from the Hanfu of the Han people, exhibiting a visual resemblance to the Hanfu attire.

Clothing Requirements

Current Trends

In the contemporary landscape marked by advanced machine production, industrial technology, and a fast-paced lifestyle, the Koreans in the Yanji area have diversified their daily activities. While still engaged in basic agricultural labor, they have seamlessly incorporated industrial and commercial work into their lives. Commercial and industrial labor has become an integral aspect of their daily routines. As a result, the demand for various types of clothing has increased to meet the diverse needs of their lifestyles.

In adapting to the evolving requirements of their lives and labor, the Yanji Koreans have witnessed a decline in the prominence of traditional Korean clothing within the daily clothing market. The frequency of individuals donning traditional Korean attire has gradually diminished, even during significant festival celebrations. Fewer people opt for traditional costumes, reflecting a shift in contemporary clothing preferences.

Daily Wear

Regarding daily wear, the local Korean population in Yanji tends to favor modern, trendy clothing. This not only aligns with contemporary aesthetic preferences, characterized by a sense of progress and continual improvement, but also offers a more comfortable and straightforward wearing experience. Workwear and professional attire have become commonplace in both work and daily life, contributing to enhanced comfort and recognition. This evolution is gradually shaping a new modern clothing culture.

Festival Wear

During significant Korean festivals, a portion of attendees chooses to wear Korean traditional costumes, adding vibrant colors to the festival atmosphere. However, it's notable that not everyone opts for traditional clothing, particularly among the younger demographic. Many prefer modern, convenient, and creatively designed attire over the fixed and relatively unchanged colors and styles of traditional Korean clothing.



Figure 1: *Chinese Korean Traditional Clothing*

Clothing Innovation

Innovation is crucial for Korean clothing, blending tradition with new elements to stay relevant. Color innovation is a primary focus, as traditional Korean clothing often features fewer colors, leaning towards light, plain, or black-and-white tones. This may not align with modern preferences for a broader spectrum of colors and subtle contrasts. Therefore, innovation involves breaking away from traditional color patterns, incorporating popular and contemporary colors. Style innovation is also necessary, especially considering that traditional Korean clothing tends to be wide and long. Reforms aim to enhance comfort, particularly for the middle-aged and elderly, while the younger generation explores creative designs that merge traditional and modern styles.

"Our ethnic costumes are incredibly beautiful, colorful, and distinctive; however, we seldom wear them, reserving them for significant festivals. Our everyday clothing tends to be more lightweight. I envision a future where we can seamlessly blend the unique features of our traditional costumes with the practicality of daily attire. This integration would be an ideal way to promote and preserve the rich cultural heritage embedded in our traditional costumes."

Traditional Korean costumes form an integral part of Chinese national costumes, evolving through the historical development of the Korean nation. They serve as carriers of Korean traditional culture and contribute to the broader traditional culture of the Chinese nation. Preserving and inheriting this cultural heritage is crucial to showcase the unique

artistic charm of Korean costume culture in the Yanji area, promoting the broader understanding and sustainable development of Korean traditional culture.

Food Culture

A Chinese proverb wisely states, "Food is the first necessity of the people," underscoring the essential role of sustenance in our lives. The industrious and ingenious Korean people, residing in China, have cultivated a diverse array of tantalizing delicacies. Their food culture, originating from the Korean Peninsula and influenced by various factors like economics, politics, religion, and other ethnic cultures after migration to China, has undergone gradual transformations. This has resulted in a distinctive cultural manifestation of traditional Korean food in China, characterized not only by the material aspects of the diet itself but also by the spiritual connotations evolving through production, exchange, and consumption. This culinary culture permeates all facets of social life, exerting profound influences on human interactions, politics, economy, humanities, and the arts.

In exploring the origins of Chinese dietary traditions, as discussed in the "Book of Rites-Yueling," diet encompasses "staple food, non-staple food, beverages, and condiments." Given the Korean practice of directly incorporating condiments such as doenjang into their main non-staple food, we categorize "condiments" as non-staple food. Furthermore, special diets tailored for festivals, weddings, and funeral customs are delineated in a separate category.

Over an extended period, the Korean people have maintained a dietary structure centered around rice as the staple food. Non-staple foods encompass a rich array, including kimchi, miso soup, various side dishes, and products derived from meat, fish, and eggs. Additionally, festival-specific foods and homemade brews for daily consumption, such as cakes and cakes, contribute to the multifaceted tapestry of Korean culinary traditions in China.

Staple Food: Love Rice

The Korean people possess exceptional skills in rice cultivation, and Yanji's rice stands out for its excellent quality, earning nationwide acclaim. As such, rice holds an indispensable place in the culinary traditions of the Korean people in China. Notably, grain rice and medicinal rice showcase rich national characteristics. Five-grain rice, a blend of glutinous rice, sticky millet, sorghum rice, soybeans, and adzuki beans, epitomizes this diversity. Medicinal rice, akin to the Chinese Han people's eight-treasure rice, is a highly nutritious dish crafted from glutinous rice, persimmons, chestnuts, red dates, pine nuts, and walnuts.

Beyond rice, Korean staple foods encompass an array of items such as cakes, noodles, and porridge. The incorporation of porridge into the staple food structure primarily serves as a means of food conservation. Consuming potato or corn porridge during less strenuous periods allows for more efficient food preservation. Dinner often consists of porridge, maximizing food savings throughout the day. Moreover, distinct staple foods with local flair, like Changbai County's unique potato offerings—potato buns, dumplings, or black potato pancakes—add to the culinary tapestry. Noodle preparation also reflects contemporary influences, with variations such as cold noodles featuring locally sourced crops. Common types in the Yanji area include potato flour cold noodles, potato pulp cold noodles, and buckwheat cold noodles.

While Korean staple foods exhibit diversity in types and forms, they consistently revolve around the central theme of "rice." Enduring concepts like "the sweetness of rice is the best

of all flavors" and "good rice needs no accompaniment of vegetables" are deeply ingrained in the cultural ethos.

Non-Staple Foods: A Rich Variety

When delving into specific types, the non-staple foods of the Korean diet encompass a delightful array, including kimchi, miso soup, assorted side dishes, and a medley of meat, fish, and egg products. Among these, pickles and kimchi stand out as cherished favorites among the Korean populace. Pickles, crafted from platycodon, cabbage, radish, cucumber, and other ingredients, undergo unique processing to achieve a crisp and refreshing taste. Visiting the Yanji area often treats one to several plates of exquisite pickles before a meal, whetting the appetite. Notably, the renowned spicy cabbage, known as kimchi in Korean, becomes a focal point during late autumn. This season sees Korean families engaging in communal pickling sessions, a joyous occasion akin to a festival, where housewives come together amid bustling activities.

The most famous fermented food products in Korea are kimchi and gochujang. Gochujang is made using meju powder which was making while doenjang. Gochujang is produced by mixing meju powder with glutinous rice powder and red pepper powder, and then the mixture is fermented. Kimchi is another fermented food used in Korea, and is a popular side dish that makes other foods taste better. Kimchi comprises vegetables such as cabbage and white radish, along with the most important ingredient gochu (Korean red pepper) powder. Due to the presence of red pepper powder, the putrefactive microorganisms can be controlled and advantageous lactic acid fermentation occurs. Red pepper powder is the main ingredient in kimchi fermentation.(Kwon.et al.,2014)

Soup holds an indispensable role in Korean cuisine, earning the Koreans the moniker of a "soup-eating nation." A staple for all three meals, soups like miso soup, vegetable soup, fish soup, broth, and kelp soup offer a diverse selection, with over 30 varieties often accompanying rice as a common dietary combination.

"A day without a bowl of miso soup leaves them feeling unsatisfied and dull."

Nonetheless, the consumption of meat and fish products by Chinese Koreans stands out for its emphasis on natural ingredients and ingenious processing. In addition to wild animals and birds, the diet includes the meat of domestic livestock and poultry, such as cattle, dogs, pigs, and chickens, forming a significant portion of non-staple foods. Notably, meat products showcase a wealth of processing and cooking methods, with daily stewing being the primary technique, complemented by barbecue and other culinary approaches.

Drinks: Traditional Beverages

Apart from plain water, the Koreans in Yanji predominantly enjoy rice wine, rice wine, and other beverages. To create crispy rice soup, once the rice is removed, boiling water is poured into the residual section of the cast iron pot and simmered for a while, imparting a delightful aroma of crispy rice. The Korean people boast a rich history of brewing wine, a skill cultivated as early as the Three Kingdoms period in Korea, with alcohol consumption being fairly commonplace.

The primary drinks and alcoholic beverages favored by the Korean people encompass fire wine, shochu, soup wine (yellow wine), local wine (white wine), among others. Noteworthy domestic wines include amjiu, turbid wine, sake, and an array of corresponding

dishes known as "drinking dishes." These include popular choices in Yanji, such as spicy fried sea mushrooms, spicy chicken feet, and fried dried fish with chili, adding to the vibrant drinking culture in the region.

Etiquette and Food

The Korean people hold etiquette and festivals in high regard. On every New Year's Day and during festive occasions, there is a heightened focus on food. All dishes and cakes are meticulously adorned with shredded chili peppers, egg slices, seaweed shreds, green onion shreds, or pine nuts and walnut kernels. Holiday dishes, encompassing numerous renowned seasonal specialties, display a wide variety. Cold cuts and raw dishes, such as raw pollack and raw beef, are essential components of festival menus. When preparing raw dishes, Koreans incorporate appropriate amounts of sesame oil and vinegar for sterilization.

During the Qingming Festival, pollack takes center stage as an indispensable dish. There is a belief among people that consuming pollack during this festival ensures a safe and prosperous year. Beyond traditional festivals, significant life events like a child's first birthday, marriage, or an elderly person's sixtieth birthday are celebrated with grand banquets to entertain guests. During these events, a large cooked rooster, often adorned with a red pepper in its mouth, serves as a prominent centerpiece. Traditional dishes featured at these banquets showcase a variety of shapes, often resembling birds and animals.

The celebration of the first full moon, which falls on the 15th day of the lunar calendar, is the biggest holiday along with the eighth full moon, Chusoek. During the celebration, people wish for good health and fortune in the upcoming year by playing traditional games and sharing meals (Fig. 2). In the morning of Jeongwol Daeboreum, people make okokbap with five grains (glutinous rice, red beans, beans, sorghum, millet) and dried namul (bracken, mushroom, eggplant, squash, cucumber, dried radish greens, aster), which is preserved from the past year to be consumed in the winter. These dried namul are first soaked in water, blanched, then seasoned or stir-fried.(Kwon.et al.,2014)



Figure 2: *Jeongwol Daeboreum-sang*

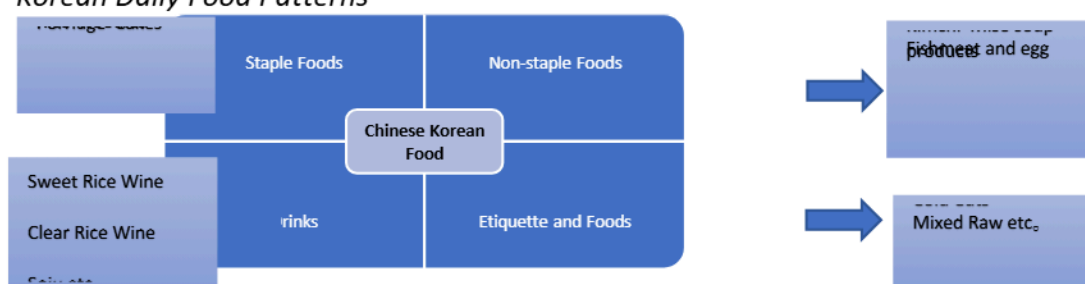
Among all banquet etiquettes, the celebration of an elder's sixtieth birthday stands out as the most refined and solemn. Every Chinese Korean family places great importance on the elder's sixtieth birthday, organizing a grand 60th-anniversary banquet for their parents on this auspicious day.

The Korean people have consistently emphasized and observed dining etiquette, a longstanding cultural tradition. At the dining table, both dishes and cutlery adhere to fixed positions. During family meals, elders traditionally begin eating with chopsticks, and younger family members follow suit. Consideration is given to preparing nutritious and delectable food specifically for the elderly. A communal dining practice involves sharing the food in one's bowl with others, while maintaining a decorum that discourages loud conversations and unfavorable topics.

Distinct etiquettes govern the act of drinking as well. When indulging in alcoholic beverages, it is customary to use the right hand for pouring the wine, raising the left hand to the chest. Failing to do so may be perceived as disrespectful to the drinking companion. Additionally, when young individuals partake in drinks with elders, a polite gesture involves turning the upper body to one side while drinking, as not doing so might be considered impolite.

Chart 1

Korean Daily Food Patterns



Residential Culture

After the migration of Korean Peninsula residents to the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, their residential structures predominantly followed the prevalent models in the northern part of the peninsula. In the process of adapting to the new natural environment and interacting with other ethnic groups, they gradually developed traditional residences with distinct national characteristics. These traditional Korean houses serve as tangible representations of Korean national culture, deeply embodying the traditional life philosophies of the Korean people, such as "the unity of nature and man," "the distinction between men and women," and "respect for elders."

The roofs of traditional Korean houses bear ethnic identifying characteristics. Shaped like a large roof, the height of the roof comprises half of the entire house's height. In traditional Korean houses, doors and windows are typically integrated, with each room usually having a single door. While modern houses in Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture maintain the doors and windows of the kitchen, back room, and warehouse, traditional Korean house layouts can be categorized into single-row and double-row types, often features six or eight rooms in most houses.

Given the long and cold winters in Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, Korean people utilize the floor-to-ceiling kang heating method and the kitchen stove for warmth. Known as the "white people," the Koreans hold an aesthetic tradition valuing whiteness, evident in the white ash coating on the walls, leaving the exposed wooden pillars in their original color. Some houses showcase patterns on the gables, depicting folk activities rich in ethnic characteristics and highlighting the unique customs of the Korean people.

Furthermore, traditional Korean houses in Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture vividly reflect a robust farming culture, acting as museums of agricultural civilization. For instance, as a traditional farming nation, Koreans consider cattle essential to life. To protect cattle from external harm, they house them indoors, a distinctive feature that sets Korean traditional residences apart from those of other ethnic groups.

Folk Culture

Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture is renowned globally as the "hometown of singing and dancing." The Korean people excel in the arts of singing and dancing, resulting in a wealth of vibrant dances, songs, and diverse folk stories.

Korean Music

According to traditional classification, Korean music can be categorized into six groups: folk songs, songs and dances, dance music, instrumental music, "bansuili" (rap music), and opera.

Music is indispensable in Korean agricultural traditions. Each region had its own folk music (Nongak) to accompany agricultural labor, which made working together in groups easier and more enjoyable. Reading stories to melody was also a popular way of enjoying music and art. It is possible to get a glimpse of the history and culture of Korean foods through music (Chung & Kim, 2016)

According to the genre of music, folk songs can be mainly divided into five types: farm ballads, lyrical ballads, custom ballads, nursery rhymes, and long songs. Farm ballads are labor songs, such as "Planting Yangge," "Farmer's Song," "Boat Song," "Raining Song," etc. Lyrical ballads cover a wide range of themes and are numerous, including the love ballad "Arirang," life songs like "Bitterness," "Daughter-in-law," satirical songs like "Old Man's Order," and knowledge-based songs such as "Yue Ling Song" and "Nine-nine Multiplication Methods." Custom ballads are related to folk entertainment activities, weddings, funerals, and other daily life customs. Examples include "Lai Suo," sung and danced by young people simultaneously, "Tug of War Song" sung during play, and "Wedding Ceremony Song" sung at weddings. Nursery rhymes have a lively rhythm, are close to colloquialism, and include game ballads like "Picking Watermelons," life ballads like "Sun, Sun," and satirical ballads like "I Don't Know." Long songs are lyrical narrative songs with a longer structure, mainly including singing mixed songs and short songs. Long mixed songs, composed by professional singers, have a certain storyline and relatively lyrical music, such as "Song of Traveling to the Mountains," "Song of Chu and Han," etc. Short songs are longer than ordinary folk songs, and the repertoire includes "Bamboo Stick Mango Shoes," "Song of Hunan," etc.

Song music originated as a lyrical ballad serving the upper class and the citizenry. Initially composed and sung by professional artists, it later spread to the folk and gained popularity. There are three types of songs: songs, lyrics, and seasonal tunes. The melody of the song is slow, and a single melody can be paired with multiple lyrics of different contents. It includes solo singing, mixed male and female choruses, and accompaniment by a band. There are 25 songs handed down today. Lyrics are solo songs, featuring more popular and lively melodies than songs. Each song has a single word, and there are 12 songs currently in circulation. Tunes are slow and steady, with chanting characteristics, being more popular and shorter than songs and lyrics.

Dance music in Korean folk dances encompasses various forms with a broad mass base and rich musical elements. Nong music and dance stand out as the most representative. The

music, known as nong music, involves both playing musical instruments and dancing. The player of the small gong serves as the conductor for the entire nong music and dance, consisting of twelve tunes of varying lengths. Additionally, there are mask dances, mass improvisational dances, etc.

Instrumental music in Korea boasts a variety of folk instruments, including commonly used wind instruments, string instruments, and percussion instruments.

Pansori, a form of narrative rap art, predominantly contains legends and stories. It is performed by one person and accompanied by another using a drum. Traditional repertoire includes pieces like "Red Cliff Song" and "Water Palace Song." Pansori is a unique genre of musical storytelling with sori (sound) performed by a nobleman or professional singer and a drummer. Some Pansori performances were created based on popular novels of the times. (Chung & Kim, 2016)

Singing opera is a comprehensive art form with a storyline, encompassing singing, speaking, instrumental music, dance, etc., featuring numerous popular songs.

Korean Folk Songs and Dances

Nongyue dance, a prevalent Korean folk dance, represents a form of peasant dance widely embraced among the Korean people. The associated music features a diverse array of melodies, referred to as "twelve beats." Nongyue dance is a large-scale comprehensive performance, requiring several hours to complete.

The sword dance, evolved from the sword dance, encompasses majestic, brave, and leaping postures throughout the entire performance. Reflecting the brave, bold, wise, and optimistic spirit of the Korean people, this dance exudes a compelling and infectious energy.

Originating from traditional shamanism and evolving into a performative dance, the fan dance is often showcased. Its soothing rhythm imparts a graceful and elegant ambiance, while the brisk tempo contributes to a cheerful and lively atmosphere.

The Elephant Hat dance stands out as a unique skill performance. The dancer, using the power of their neck, frequently shakes their head, causing the streamers on the elephant hat to rotate like the wind. This creates beautiful, colorful rings around the dancer's head, front, back, left, and right.

The water-carrying dance is a traditional Korean women's dance named after its performance with a water jar on the head. This dance conveys inner joy through various simulated movements while carrying the water jar, showcasing relaxed and graceful postures.

The long drum dance is one of the Korean people's representative dances, capable of producing colorful rhythms and exhibiting a high artistic level.

Korean Folk Tales

The Chinese Koreans possess a rich cultural heritage, akin to the vibrant Jindalai flower blooming in the splendid literary garden. Among these treasures, the folk stories passed down orally depict the lives and struggles of the Korean people with their rich content, intricate plots, and vivid language. These stories not only hold significant educational value but also provide endless artistic enjoyment.

Korean folk tales, adorned with rich and colorful themes, paint a comprehensive picture of social life. They express the myriad emotions of the working people—joy, anger, love, hate, sustenance, and yearning.

Primarily, Korean folk stories celebrate heroes, notably those emerging from the ranks of poor working individuals engaged in farming, blacksmithing, and fishing. Many stories

highlight heroic Korean women, adding a layer of artistic charm. One such tale is that of "Jindalai," narrating the courageous escape of two siblings resisting the emperor's tyranny, their return to the village, and subsequent rebellion against oppression.

Another significant aspect of Korean folktales revolves around working people resisting feudal constraints, advocating for freedom in marriage, and pursuing pure love, autonomy, and happiness. These stories challenge the rigid ethical norms of feudal society, emphasizing the struggle for love and marriage freedom, particularly for women.

The industrious nature of the Korean people is also a recurring theme in folk tales. Stories praising labor and virtue, while criticizing vices like laziness and greed, showcase the Korean people's strong work ethic. For instance, "The Key to Happiness" illustrates the sincerity of a laborer expressing the value of diligent and honest work as the true key to happiness.

Reflecting the lives, struggles, and ideals of working people, Korean folk stories often praise the natural beauty of hometowns. The tales capture the rhythm of life along river basins, engaging in year-round rice production, collecting firewood, digging ginseng, and tending to bees in the deep forests of Changbai Mountains. Themes like taking root in the frontier and building the frontier are prevalent, all narrated in a simple, vivid, and colloquial national language.

In essence, Korean folk tales stand as vibrant red flowers in the garden of the homeland's folk literature. Their rich content, broad subject matter, and beautiful forms reflect the Korean people's artistic contributions to the development of the motherland's splendid culture and art.

Discussion

China's profound and extensive traditional culture reflects remarkable inclusiveness, with the traditional culture of the Korean ethnic group standing out as a unique and integral part, adding a distinctive charm to the grand tapestry of the five-thousand-year-old Chinese civilization. This study employs a combination of questionnaires, interviews, and ethnographic methods to systematically and theoretically explore Korean traditional culture, immersing itself in the rich currents of Korean folk culture to distill its unique characteristics.

Based on an extensive examination of existing research on the traditional culture of the Korean people in China, this study delineates the characteristics and challenges inherent in the current developmental trajectory of the Korean community in China. It explores aspects such as etiquette culture, clothing culture, food culture, residential culture, and folk culture. By systematically evaluating the state of Korean traditional culture, this study aims to elucidate the direction for future research, providing valuable references for better cultural preservation and innovation. The findings contribute to the enhanced inheritance of national culture, the promotion of national unity, the bolstering of national self-confidence, and the fostering of social and cultural prosperity.

A comprehensive review of the current status of the inheritance of Korean traditional culture in China serves as a crucial impetus for promoting Chinese traditional culture and constructing a unified Chinese national community. Moreover, it offers insights into the safeguarding and inheritance of national cultural heritage. By prioritizing the preservation and protection of Korean cultural heritage in China, this study offers academic and rational perspectives, fostering the continuity of Korean cultural symbols, strengthening the cohesion of Chinese national culture, and injecting inspiration into the collective pursuit of the Chinese

dream. This approach represents an inexhaustible source of power and an effective means to innovate and uphold the traditional virtues of the Korean people.

References

- Chang, B., & Yi, Y. (2011). A century of Korean narrative in Chinese literature. *Social Sciences in China*, 32(2), 118–136. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02529203.2011.573305>
- Chung, H. K., Chung, K. R., & Kim, H. J. (2016). Understanding Korean food culture from Korean paintings. *Journal of Ethnic Foods*, 3(1), 42–50. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jef.2016.01.002>
- Chung, H. (2015). The meaning and symbolism of Korean food culture. *Asia Review*, 5(1), 97–121.
- Chung, H. K., Yang, H. J., Shin, D., & Chung, K. R. (2016). Aesthetics of Korean foods: The symbol of Korean culture. *Journal of Ethnic Foods*, 3(3), 178–188. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jef.2016.09.001>
- Howard, K. (1999). Minyo in Korea: Songs of the People and Songs for the People. *Asian Music*, 30(2), 1. <https://doi.org/10.2307/834312>
- Jung, J. (2002). The study about special characters and educational values of the folklore suited for children. *Early Childhood Education Research*, 22(4), 251–271.
- Jung, S. Y. (2009). Exploration and educational meaning of Korean traditional story. Seoul: Yeokrak.
- Kim, M., & Sung, S. K. (2005). Clothing microclimate and subjective sensation of Korean and Japanese subjects when wearing Hanbok. In *Elsevier eBooks* (pp. 347–353). [https://doi.org/10.1016/s1572-347x\(05\)80055-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/s1572-347x(05)80055-2)
- Kim, S. H., Kim, M. S., Lee, M., Park, Y., Lee, H. J., Kang, S. A., Lee, H. S., Lee, J. Y., Yang, H. J., Kim, M. J., Lee, Y. E., & Kwon, D. Y. (2016a). Korean diet: Characteristics and historical background. *Journal of Ethnic Foods*, 3(1), 26–31. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jef.2016.03.002>
- Kim, S. H., & Jang, D. J. (2015). Fabulous! Korean ethnic foods: Namdo. Korea Food Research Institute, Seoul (Korea), 121–136.
- Kwon, D. Y., Jang, D., Yang, H. J., & Chung, K. R. (2014). History of Korean gochu, gochujang, and kimchi. *Journal of Ethnic Foods*, 1(1), 3–7. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jef.2014.11.003>
- Kyu, K. Y. (1992). A Study on the Present Status of Folklore and Folk Arts in North Korea. *Korea Journal*, 32(2), 75–91.
- Lee, C. (2018). Korean Foods—History, Culture, and Characteristics. In *CRC Press eBooks* (pp. 1–22). <https://doi.org/10.1201/9781315156453-1>
- Lee, G. G., Chung, S. G., & Lee, D. H. (1974). An introduction to Korean folklore. Seoul, Korea: Minjung Sogwan.
- Mintz, S. W., & Du Bois, C. M. (2002). The Anthropology of Food and eating. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 31(1), 99–119. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.32.032702.131011>
- Pettid, M. J. (2008). Korean cuisine: an illustrated history. *Choice Reviews Online*, 46(03), 46–1446. <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.46-1446>
- 정혜경. (2015). The meaning and symbolism of Korean food culture. *Asia Ribyu*, 5(1), 97. <https://doi.org/10.24987/snuacar.2015.08.5.1.97>
- Yoon, S. S. (1999). The culture and history of Korean foods. Seoul (Korea): Shinkwang, 338–43.