

Exploring the Characteristics of Popular Culture Rooted in Folk Traditions

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Abstract: This study focused on a lack of systematic discourse concerning the characteristics of popular culture within folk culture. Therefore, it was an exploratory study to find out the differences between popular culture and folk culture while highlighting their complementary roles. To this end, the study first established a theoretical framework by delving into the concepts of popular culture and folk culture from a cultural studies perspective through a review of relevant literature. Subsequently, the study identified the presence of elements of popular culture embedded in folk culture by establishing a relationship between the characteristics of popular culture and folk culture. A brief summary of this indicates that as follows. First, folk culture has evolved as a culture that transcends various social classes and geographic regions rather than being confined to a specific class or art form. Second, It exhibits characteristics that are collectively produced, transmitted, and enjoyed. Third, each region's creativity has allowed folk culture to develop its unique identity as a community-based culture, fostering cultural diversity. Based on this, the study concluded that folk culture shares characteristics with popular culture, a Culture That the People Actively and Creatively Create, An On-Field, a Participatory Culture of Bilateral Communication, and a Timeless Culture Based on Imagination.

Keywords: Cultural Study, Folk Culture, Mass Culture, Popular Culture, Traditional Culture

1. Introduction

Geertz, an American anthropologist, defines culture through an anecdote involving a spider and a spider web[1]. According to Geertz, individuals, much like a spider unable to move freely outside its web, experience discomfort when they find themselves outside the cultural framework they belong to. This analogy underscores the idea that culture, despite being invisible and intangible, elicits a physical sensation. This highlights a strong connection between culture and the mass public, emphasizing that culture is also a product of the collective, one that may wane or vanish without the support of the public.

Whether traditional or popular, culture encompasses a vast spectrum and embodies various facets depending on one's viewpoint. Furthermore, depending on the circumstances and the standpoint of the observer, different cultures can either confront each other or coexist in a complementary fashion. Traditional and popular cultures are often seen as prime examples of such interactions[2].

In a similar vein, there has been a lack of systematic discourse concerning customs and traditional cultures, as they have been conceptualized in various ways. Consequently, this research aims to examine the characteristics of popular culture, which is currently undergoing new interpretations while retaining, at least partially, its roots in traditional culture. This examination will involve defining and analyzing the concepts of popular culture and traditional culture within the framework of cultural studies.

A culture that prevails in a particular era is not just enjoyed in the present; a part of it also represents an invaluable cultural legacy that is passed down to future generations. Therefore, it becomes crucial to

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preserve the unique historical origin, significance, and modes of transmission of that culture to ensure its continuity across generations rather than allowing it to eventually fade away. To achieve this, it becomes imperative to identify within the mass culture the traditional elements linked to the past and ensure that these traditional elements become more popularized[2].

To begin with, the author intends to explicate, using examples, the differences between popular culture and folk culture while also emphasizing their mutually reinforcing roles. In doing so, the study begins by comparing popular and folk cultures. This comparative analysis seeks to unveil the notably close relationship between popular and folk culture, despite their seemingly unrelated nature at first glance.

Until now, there has been a lack of systematic discourse concerning the characteristics of popular culture within folk culture. Therefore, the significance of this discussion as an exploratory study is substantial.

2. Literature Review

2.1 A Discussion on Mass Culture

2.1.1 Concept of Mass Culture

Mass culture refers to the culture that is easily accessible and enjoyed by the anonymous masses, and is spread and shaped by the mass media. The advent of mass culture maintains a close relationship with the establishment of mass society and the development of the mass media.

In the case of the West, culture was divided into the culture of the nobility and the culture of the people before mass media became popularized[3]. The culture of the nobility is a highly spiritualized culture achieved by professional artists and intelligentsia that were under the financial auspices of the upper class. The culture of the people is a culture in which the basic expression of emotion and life's joys and sorrows are represented in their raw, unpolished forms. The two types of culture were very distinct, and interactions seldom took place, if ever. However, as the Industrial Revolution gave rise to the middle class, a form of art for the general public, or the mass culture, was established[3]. As a result, the bourgeoisie was formed after the French Revolution, signaling the advent of a mass society. As democratization took place across the society, human rights and the ideology of equality came about. Economically, as industrialization progressed, the social structures of mass production and mass consumption were established, enabling the supply of uniform and affordable goods. Consequently, lifestyles were standardized. In addition, the development of mass media must not be forsaken. Mass media disseminated common images throughout the society, played the role of sustaining and developing social phenomena, and mass culture had a subconscious but enormous impact on the sensitivity, taste, and behaviors of the masses.

Like this, the mass society that gave rise to the general public originated from the Western civil society or the industrial society that came about after the French Revolution and Britain's Industrial Revolution. After the establishment of the industrial society, the issue of whether culture is endangered has been constantly brought up; this bears a cultural confrontational characteristic between the intellectual defense of conservative aristocratic elite values, and the intellectual defense of democratic values.

W. Kornhauser defines the modern society as a mass society, and suggests two different critical ways to examine it. Among them, the criticism about the mass society is generally interpreted as a criticism about the mass culture.

A Swingewood (1977)[4] also reconciles the studies of mass culture with the categories of mass society theories that he has classified. He categorizes the theories of mass society into three categories: the early theories of mass society (Toqueville, Nietzsche, Gasst, Eliot), mass society theories as totalitarianism (Mills, Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse), and mass society theories as pluralistic democracy. He then explains mass culture theories as the cultural perspective of a mass society theorist

from these categories[5].

In South Korea, Korean traditional culture came into meaningful contact with the Western culture in the late nineteenth century. It ran parallel with an economic invasion ever since the foundations of the feudal governmental system were eroded away and fell victim to attacks from major Western countries[6].

In addition, the traditional culture and values began to fall apart from the early twentieth century, and Korea fell under the military, economic, and cultural domination by the colonial Japanese government. The colonial cultural views imbued in the capitalists, who were descendants of the Yangban class, and the intelligentsia during this time later became the foundation of the uncritical acceptance of foreign cultures from the West[7]. Moreover, the emancipation of 1945 served more as a cause of a divided homeland and penetration of the American culture, rather than as an opportunity to recover the independence of the Korean people.

Consequently, the Korean society was introduced to the double trends of mass culture from the United States and Japan. This is precisely the external factor that gave rise to the subordinate characteristic of Korean culture, particularly its foreign orientation centered especially on the U.S. and Japan.

Meanwhile, the internal factor that shaped the unique forms of Korean mass culture is found in the nature of Korean political structure. Korea came to possess a social structure that lacked centralization and middle organizations without having undergone a popular revolution to eradicate totalitarianism and the old order. Industrialization began in early 1960s, a time when absolute centralized rule was being strengthened. Entering the 1970s, Korea began to witness mass cultural phenomena that were found in Western societies, owing to industrialization that gave rise to urbanization, national proliferation of transportation and communication, popularization of education, and the mass dissemination of the mass media[8].

To summarize, mass culture includes standardized material goods and art, lifestyles, ideologies, hobbies, trends, and values; it is a product that mass media has homogenized. Mass culture was formed and developed with the help of technological innovations such as printing and transportation. Cultural activities that were originally enjoyed solely by educated aristocrats had now spread among the general public for profit, giving rise to mass culture.

The perspective of identifying mass culture as commercialized culture reflects the tendency to equate mass culture with the West's decadent culture. There is also a high level of concern among mass culture critics about Westernization through mass culture, or, more specifically, Americanization[9].

Advocates of high-class culture refer to mass culture as a culture that most people enjoy, but they also criticize such a mass culture to be harmful to not only those who enjoy it but also the society in general. However, despite such criticisms, the public that embraces mass culture has always been a recipient of mass media contents and a consumer of mass consumer goods, rejecting high-class culture[10].

Therefore, the perspective that views mass culture as an ever-changing way of life and an ideological tool to form identities is increasing.

2.1.2 Existing Studies and a Discussion on South Korean Mass Culture

The debate about South Korea's mass culture began concurrently with the full-scale influx of mass culture. Radio and television, movies, daily newspapers, and weekly newspapers spread quickly in the late 1960s, and, at the same time, mass culture also settled in as the dominant form of culture.

Only, there are a few unique characteristics to note. First, due to delayed modernization and experiences of colonization, the debates in Korea on culture were based on the existing discourse of "mass culture studies" transplanted from the West. Second, compared to the West, the mass culture and the discourses on it fall far short of those in the West, quantitatively and qualitatively[9].

In 1967, Uh-Ryeong Lee initiated the theories on mass phenomena and mass cultures in Korean

society in his thesis “Beginning of the Age of the Masses.” Kyeong-dong Kim pointed out that South Korea’s mass culture has a few problems, such as the selfish attitudes of producers of mass culture who promote vulgarity by imitating vulgar works from overseas, and the blind attitudes of consumers who are taken advantage of [11].

In addition, Bae-geun Cha claimed that mass culture possesses imitative subjects and contents, and is customized to the public’s taste, its main function being entertainment. Therefore, it has the cultural characteristics of being easily acceptable to many, having an innocent and direct ways of expression, and being delivered in a top-down fashion for the masses to accept passively[12].

However, discussions on Korean mass culture were inactive. This is partly because special political and social circumstances left little room for much debate. The traditions of studies on Korean mass culture came to possess an ahistorical characteristic due to a lack of historical awareness. In addition, it is pointed out that discussions focused so much on the incessantly produced trends of mass culture that they failed to build up academic depth.

In the early discussions of mass culture, critical perspectives dominated; however, as positive perspectives like theories on taste culture were introduced, mostly by American scholars, the nature of discussions have been changing.

Moreover, in the 1970s and the 1980s, many books on mass culture were published: starting with *Modern Society and Mass Culture* (Hyun-doo Kang, Jae-chul Yoo and Guen-sam Lee, Seogang University Humanities Research Institute, 1978), Hyun-doo Kang’s *Theories of Mass Culture* (Minumsa, 1980), Jung-ho Choi’s *Media Culture and Mass Culture* (Minumsa, 1982), and Kang-soo Lee’s *Korean Studies on Mass Culture* (Bobmunsa, 1987). With these, the discussions began to be invigorated.

The 1990s were when the publication of books on mass culture was happening at full-scale. The most representative books include Kang-soo Lee’s *Mass Culture and Theories on Cultural Industries* (Nanam Publishing House, 1998), *Formation of Modern Mass Culture* by Hyun-doo Kang et al. (Seoul National University Press, 1998), and Jun-man Kang’s *The Inside and Out of Mass Culture* (Inmul Publications, 1999). This is also when works such as *Cultural Imperialism* by John Tomlinson (translated by Dae-In Kang, Nanam Publishing House, 1994) and *Popular Culture and High Culture* by Herbert Gans (translated by Hyun-doo Kang, Nanam Publishing House, 1998) were translated.

In the 70s and 80s, the nature of many dissertations also comprised mostly critical views that supported the Frankfurt school; however, from the late 80s, more dissertations began to reflect positive perspectives such as positivism or taste culture studies based on cultural pluralism.

2.2 A Discussion on Folk Culture

Today, we frequently come across the term traditional culture. Nonetheless, the idea of tradition has expanded, as the term traditional culture is widely understood to mean national culture.

Originally, tradition refers to the psychological tendencies or qualities that have formed over the historical development of a human group, be it a clan, a tribe, or a folk. It is also a rudimental force that is inherited each generation, and expressions of its cultural style, methods, and attitudes that have active importance about the sustaining or development of the culture. Also, the word culture originally comes from the Latin *cultura*, which means cultivation, denoting the fruits of man’s enthusiastic exploitation of nature[13].

Nonetheless, the culture of all groups contains traditions of elements that are expressed through the groups’ lifestyles, in the form of consistent behavior or ideologies. These traditions constitute the group’s cultural characteristics, and are maintained and passed on; however, such characteristics are neither fixed nor absolute. This is because, while most cultural groups evolved into certain stages of hunting, livestock farming, and agriculture, assimilation of cultures takes place when the group comes into contact with

other cultural groups, and gives rise to a donor culture and a recipient culture. Tradition is when a culture chooses or adapts to the foreign culture that it has accommodated.

From such a perspective, the term “traditional culture” that is in use today only mean “a culture of traditions,” or a national culture that the Korean people have shaped and inherited historically.

In a national culture, there are two layers: a surface culture and a base culture. A surface culture is a creative culture that has gone through changes historically; it usually is a classy, sophisticated form of high-level culture. A base culture is a rather raw culture that has not gone through much change; it is a folk culture generally in banal, simple forms. In addition, in the past, high-level culture was recorded in writing, whereas folk culture lacked written records; therefore, today, folk culture requires identification of the contents that were transmitted by words of mouth or behaviors, and extracting from them the traditional values and significance of national culture[13].

Therefore, the mass culture as popular culture this research wishes to discuss can be said to have a close relationship with folk culture, within national culture, as a base culture.

3. Research Question and Methodology

Although the flood of various cultures makes it hard to realize, culture is omnipresent. In this context, it is often noted that although popular and folk culture may initially appear unrelated, they are, in fact, closely intertwined in significant ways. While differing viewpoints on culture exist and opinions may vary depending on the analytical approach or the academic disciplines in question, a society represents not only a cultural phenomenon where folk and popular cultures intersect and interact but also serves as the backdrop for folklore. To examine this phenomenon, the following research questions have been formulated:

Research question 1: What are the key characteristics of popular and folk culture?

Research question 2: Can folk art be considered to be folk culture?

Research question 3: Does folk culture encompass elements of popular culture?

To answer these questions, the study begins by laying down a theoretical framework for analysis. This involves defining and analyzing the concepts of popular culture and folk culture through the lens of cultural studies. Subsequently, the study unearthed the elements of popular culture embedded in folk culture by establishing a correlation between the characteristics of popular culture found in folk culture. To this end, the study drew upon existing research and delve into various folk art genres as part of a comprehensive review of relevant literature.

Unlike other academic disciplines, folk culture relies on a system of transmission that lacks any specific written records, thus exhibiting characteristics of orality and variability. Consequently, analyses grounded in the real-life experiences and recollections of actual performers hold tremendous value.

Consequently, the significance of this exploratory study is substantial, given the scarcity of systematic investigations into the characteristics of popular culture within Folk Culture in academic literature. This remains true even when considering that the inclusion of oral accounts from veteran living human cultural assets in the existing body of literature is poised to greatly enhance our ability to identify the historical folk culture elements and the contemporary popular culture elements embedded within it.

4. Discussion

4.1 Key Characteristics (Keywords) of Mass Culture

4.1.1 Diversity Distinguished from Pure Arts

The term aesthetics originated from the Greek word *aesthetica*, meaning emotional. However, in explorations of aesthetic phenomena, aesthetic factors cannot serve as reliable guidelines when defining social phenomenon, due to the ever-changing preferences and taste of modern times. However, reversely, they are useful when identifying “social environments,” so aesthetics as a standard also be applied to not only studies of mass culture but also identifying cultural trends. Originally, aesthetics is a study that sheds light on the nature and the rules of the development of the arts as rules and forms of understanding to grasp the world with, and their social functions. In other words, aesthetics refers to the degree to which mass arts have been disseminated in modern mass societies by identifying how popularized the general public’s tastes are in the arts. However, aesthetics in mass culture implies something different. The aesthetics in mass culture rather refers to standards that helps it identify and confirm what types of tastes mass culture exhibits, and, depending on the type, distinguish between pure arts and mass arts[14][15]. Aesthetic consciousness is a feeling that arises when a person accepts and accommodates something because he finds its aesthetic aspects pleasant. This consciousness forms in various ways among many recipients, depending on their individual emotions. Here, the many “aesthetic things” of cultural arts, formed by the recipient’s emotions, represent their taste. On one hand, there are things that come across as easily accessible because the recipients find them easy to understand; on the other hand, there are other things that are received only by a minority because they are professionally interpreted from rationality. It refer to the former as “mass arts” and the latter as “pure arts”[16].

Herbert Gans suggests another view, in which he compares the two types of culture by assuming that all human beings naturally possess aesthetic impulse and from the perspective that accepts the fact that high-level culture and mass culture actually exist in reality. Gans claims that the values and standards that make us choose the contents of culture form the basis of taste culture, and refers to those people who choose similar cultural contents as taste public. From the perspective of taste culture, Gans differentiates between high-level class, medium high level culture, medium low level culture, low level culture, and new folk culture[10].

Creators and critics of culture dominate high-level culture, and only a few consumers enjoy it. By excluding other masses of culture, they take pride in what they refer to as their own culture.

Medium-high level culture is the taste culture of the middle class, such as professional workers with a college education, business CEOs and their wives. They desire a higher class culture, and strive to become accomplished cultured people. They often enjoy novels about individual success or an ascent of status, classical music by composers from the nineteenth century, or opera.

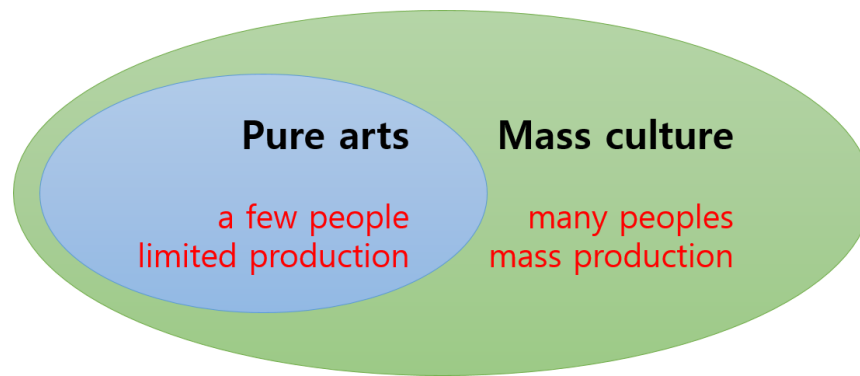
Quantitatively, medium-low level culture is the dominant taste culture in the American society. The consumers are middle class and middle-low class who work in white-collar jobs or low-level brainwork. They enjoy novels about current affairs, or novels and TV shows that dramatize biographies of celebrities. In the arts, they prefer romantic representational paintings while shunning abstract pieces.

Consumers of low-level culture are those who have completed secondary education, such as semi-skilled workers, workers in the service industry, and semi-skilled office clerks. They reject, or even exhibit hostility towards, culture. The male consumers of low-level culture put up erotic pictures of women on their wall, whereas the female consumers like to put up religious paintings or copies of paintings on their wall.

New folk low-level culture is also the taste culture of most poor people, whose education level is approximately primary education. Most of them are of color, and this culture emerges in a reinvented version during street festivals or social gatherings and events[10].

Despite such a categorization, it must be noted that the cultural preferences of each class is flexible rather than fixed. Depending on the changes in time or space, mass culture may become popular culture,

and folk culture may transform into mass culture[9].



[Fig. 1] The Relationship between Pure Arts and Mass Culture

4.1.2 Popular Culture with People as Subjects

The aforementioned concept of mass culture is without a doubt a new vocabulary for Koreans. The first time the word “mass culture” appeared on a Korean dictionary was in Korean Unabridged Dictionary by Hee-seung Lee, published in 1982. Even Korea’s general public does not seem to have a clear understanding of the concept of mass culture.

It is assumed that the term mass culture comes into use in Korean society in the late 1960s. As is the case with most terms that newly came into use in Korea recently, the term mass culture also began to be used by the small number of those educated in the West, especially in the United States[13].

Mass culture combines the words mass and culture, a result of translating the English words popular culture or mass culture into Korean. However, to be accurate, popular culture and mass culture are two very different concepts. The fundamental difference lies in “popular” and “mass.” From a historical point of view, “popular” refers to the subjugated class mostly of peasants, as opposed to the ruling aristocrats, in the eighteenth century feudal society of the West. It is also a qualitative concept of the social class understood to mean “public” in the sense that, with rationality, they actively possessed culture. In contrast, “mass” has historically referred to the lower class mostly of workers, as opposed to the capitalists, the upper class of the nineteenth century industrial society of the West. It is also a quantitative concept of the social component interpreted to mean “crowd” in the sense that they passively and indiscriminately consumed culture[13].

In Korea, however, it is often unclear whether the term mass culture is used to describe popular culture or mass culture. More recently, it is sometimes used to mean mass mediated culture, making the usages more ambivalent.

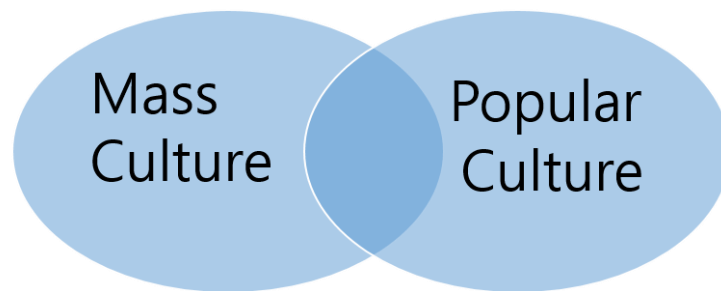
Moreover, H.J. Gens of the U.S. claims that popular culture is the appropriate term to designate mass culture. The difference in perspectives of whether to view mass culture as a culture of values or as a culture of truth explain this. Therefore, it seems more appropriate to make strict distinctions, and translate popular culture as *minjung munhwa* in Korean.

However, in South Korea, the reason both popular culture and mass culture are translated as *daejung munhwa* despite their differences in historical backgrounds and cultural significance seems to be that they share the commonality that they are a “culture of the many” for the subjugated lower classes, as opposed to the “culture of the few” for the ruling upper classes[13]. However, this research differentiates between popular culture and mass culture whenever need be.

Therefore, the aforementioned “mass culture” is different from the popular culture that our ancestors enjoyed. The producers and consumers of the mass culture being referred to as popular culture or national culture are identical, and “working” and “resting” are also positive cultures that coincide. This

is also the reason why it is also referred to as community culture that embodies the communal fate and the historical experiences of community life.

However, today's mass culture has separate producers and consumers. In other words, it is no longer something an individual creates and enjoys. The producer of mass culture views culture as an industry, and thus invests in what will make a profit. Therefore, the culture represents the interests of the producer, or even those of the ruler, rather than the interests of the public. Pop songs are created and distributed as a planned product of an entertainment management agency. New products (celebrities) appear on the market endlessly, music has become a disposable good, and commercialization is prioritized before arts



[Fig. 2] The relationship between Mass Culture and Popula Culture

Therefore, the characteristics of the popular culture discussed in this research are as follows. First, it is a culture that is active and whose main agents are the recipients and the consumers. Second, it is a culture that a majority people enjoy. Third, it is a culture that embodies the perspectives of the people and the public, rather than those of the elite minority.

4.1.3 Mass Production and Mass Consumption

Mass culture's mode of production refers to the modes of production for mass-produced good such as snacks or chewing gum. Such products are mass-produced and sold on markets for the sole purpose of being consumed by the public. Like such products, mass culture also becomes a mass produced good when created by a professional producer that has the right know-how, technical or artistic. If recall the fact brain workers can be alienated from their mental labor, just as the physical labor of industrial workers excludes the existence of the workers themselves on the production site, then it can see that in the field of mass culture, where professional brain workers labor, the mode of mass production contingent on mass consumption has become popularized and is also being taken for granted, following naturally from market principles[16].

4.1.4 The Medium of Mass Media

In modern societies, mass media plays the role of cultural mediation, and thus has tremendous impact on the shaping of mass culture. This is because mass media connects the multidimensional aspects of culture[17]. Mass media has come to mean communication and flow, as it reflects the status quo of mass culture in present society and appears universally.

Social expressions through the diversity of mass media materialize in a comprehensive and accommodating system. The impact of mass media and technologically advanced networks and digital technologies are critical for securing popular appeal in today's society. This is consistent with the perspective of mass culture, which includes the dimension of interactions and stimulation of desire.

Diffusibility, which is a characteristic of mass media, has come to play the unique role of spreading information of mass culture. By expressing, directly or indirectly, social events or aspects related to social phenomenon, it enables communications that allow the public to view social culture, and plays a

mediation role that enables the interpretation and evaluation of events and information and to resolve conflicts. The advent of new mass media is giving rise to the diversification of the public and value systems in terms of communications, and, simultaneously, is precipitating the flow of social culture.

Mass media is leading trends and currents for the public. Trends from mass media allow the identification of the most external cultural forms in modern society[18]. Trends as social phenomenon are creative and expansive flows geared towards the public, and are an expression that reflect the communication and flows of mass culture that are formed instantaneously by mass media[19].

4.2 Key Characteristics (Keywords) of Folk Culture

4.2.1 Active Transmission by the Populace

As a subject of folklore, the impact the populace exerts is explained in three different dimensions. First is the “power of the majority.” The populace constitutes the majority of members of a nation, playing a leading role in life. More generally speaking, the power of majority tends to be stronger than that of a minority. When a culture is said to reflect the life of a majority rather than a minority, it may act as a foundation for universality. Next is the “power of the ordinary people.” A majority of the populace can be described as lower class people who specialize in labor and production. They are the ones that have moved the world by the fruits of their physical labor. They are the true masters of this world, and their healthiness translates directly into the power of folk culture. The third is the “power of community.” When the populace is referred to as a majority, it does not simply mean their quantity. The populace has created a community where they coexist in harmony. They worked, played, and prepared rituals together. Consonance based on voluntary participation and communication through sharing is the source that amasses the power of majority into one bigger force. What truly exhibits the power of community then becomes folk culture of true value[20].

4.2.2 Bilateral Communication Between Satire and Humor in Life

As contents of folklore, customs are products of everyday lives and a process of life. The power of such a life also understood in three ways. The first is the “power of everyday.” Life is not far away, but rather in my every day, in our every day. Life is what breathes closely to daily routines. Such a familiarity then translates into power of folklore. The second is the “power of acting.” Life is not an abstract thing, but a specific act of physical and emotional activities. Folklore is what physically affects and moves emotionally. The third is the “power of the field.” Life happens in various fields in the real world. In the field are the people, the environment, and objects. Natural sceneries show, sounds ring the ear, and scents and textures exist. All these combine to create a harmony and dynamics. The totality of a field that includes all aspects of life is an important quality of folk culture[20].

4.2.3 Temporal Process of Lamination and Implications of Modalities

The daily lives themselves of the populace are not what folklore is. Custom in folklore is a concept that includes temporality. As customs survive the test of time, traditionality becomes the rudimental characteristic. The power of such traditionality also understood in a few different ways. The first is the "power of time." All existences in this world realize their significance within the frame of time. For something to bear existential value, it must do so within the present. That present, however, is always changing. To manifest one's value piercing through such changing present, universalism and adaptability that transcend time are required. In the field of daily life, the power of time is a crucial cultural force that folklore has perfected through the changing times. Next is the "power of lamination." When folklore is transmitted as it survives the test of time, that transmission is not uni-linear, but multilayered. It is a transformational process in which new things are incessantly fused onto the old. Into that process is

permeated the lives, experiences, desires, functions, and emotions of many, many anonymous people. This is where the multilayers of folk culture's significance is manifested. The last is the "power of modalities." In order to preserve and transmit the identity and meaning behind culture through the ever-changing times, appropriate frames, both external and internal, are necessary. This is how a culture exists in the form of a modality. Such a modality tends to be created so that it represents the essential elements of a culture most effectively. A modality is a device that concentrates the essential elements. Folk culture, which has been shaped through a temporal process of openness and layering, exhibits the essence of our lives by such implications of modality. This is another power of folk culture[20].

4.3 Characteristics of Popular Culture in Folk Culture

Folk culture is argued to embody the essence of the powers of the populace, life, and traditions. The underlying issue is whether these expressions of power can transcend their traditional eras and survive not only in the present but also in the future. Put differently, the question arises as to whether folk culture incorporates elements of mass culture. It represents a fusion of living culture, which is natural and modest in rural communities, and mass culture, armed with the latest technology, media, and capitalism. In what ways could traditional folk culture interact with modern mass culture? Is such an interaction even possible?

The primary answer to these questions suggests that, despite changes in social systems and environments, they remain fundamentally human matters, encompassing universal elements and transcending differences in time and environment. These include joy and sorrow, aspirations for a fulfilling life, the quest for self-realization, and the pursuit of beauty. These universal elements are all encapsulated in cultural prototypes. What were previously categorized as characteristic features of folk culture exhibit qualities reflective of the universal cultural pursuits of mankind, albeit with their specific aspects historically defined. In this context, the link between traditional and modern cultures is revealed. The vitality of these universal elements will be drawn from bygone cultures and revitalized in contemporary forms.

However, relying solely on straightforward theoretical reasoning is insufficient. It becomes imperative to explore the potential for these two types to act as intermediaries within cultural geography. This holds particularly true when the subject in question is a prototype of folk culture, characterized by its periodic and societal attributes, as opposed to a more general and abstract one[20]. The question arises: how can the culture of a traditional populace, steeped in its historical context, interact with the mass culture of the twenty-first century?

4.3.1 A Culture That the People Actively and Creatively Create

The present-day situation of the populace differs fundamentally from that of the twentieth century. During that era, there was limited room for active and creative participation, as elite professionals primarily led content creation, mass media disseminated the content, and consumption was largely one-sided. While the mass media continues to wield substantial influence, the range of choices available to people has expanded exponentially. As evidenced by personal websites and blogs, people are narrating their life stories in their unique ways, which subsequently transform into cultural content. Undoubtedly, the era of active participation and communication has arrived. Furthermore, there is a noticeable shift towards community-oriented behavior, marking a significant trend in the culture in the twenty-first century. Online communities, along with personal websites and blogs, are serving as incubators for this emerging community culture, albeit with less of the explosive vigor seen in the past. Through these online communities, people constantly communicate and share their experiences, transcending time and space constraints. These actions occasionally spill over to the offline realm, hinting at the emergence of a new era centered around communities.

To summarize, the populace of the twenty-first century shares certain characteristics that resonate with the populace of traditional societies. Rather than remaining mere isolated and passive consumers, they are increasingly inclined to take on the role of agents of cultural creation through voluntary participation and collaborative communication. This phenomenon underscores the innate human desire for self-expression. In today's modern society, where there is a widespread desire to build a comprehensive cultural environment that facilitates two-way communication and self-expression, there is a dearth of content that can realize this desire healthily and pleasantly. In such a society, a healthy folk culture rooted in our lives can serve as an excellent alternative.

4.3.2 An On-Field, Participatory Culture of Bilateral Communication

Modern cultural expressions, exemplified by mass media and networks, exhibit characteristics that appear qualitatively different from the on-field vitality that folk culture brought about. However, the cultural landscape of the twenty-first century is transitioning in a direction that is more on-field and grounded in real-life experiences. To illustrate, a comparison between TV and the Internet reveals that the Internet is significantly more immersive and intimately connected to real-life experiences. It integrates seamlessly into people's lives in a friendly manner and provides a platform for people to engage in a diverse range of "activities." People routinely engage in acts of revealing and sharing their life experiences. This constitutes a new dimension of life.

In this context, it is essential to highlight the diminishing qualitative gap between the virtual realm created by modern digital technology and the real field as a field of folk culture. This pertains to the specificity of actions and on-field totality. Firstly, it is worth acknowledging that modern technology is evolving in a direction that strengthens its specificity and totality. Communication through digital networks, which once primarily involved written text, is rapidly evolving into a multidimensional form encompassing videos and spoken language, thanks to the advancement of multimedia capabilities. We have now entered an era of the third or fourth dimension, which goes beyond sight and hearing to engage all five senses. In summary, the divide between the virtual and real realms is rapidly narrowing. A scenario is unfolding where folk culture as a specific and comprehensive culture of the field becomes seamlessly integrated into modern content that harmonizes with the cultural landscape of the twenty-first century. While this may appear paradoxical, it also seems inevitable since culture inherently seeks to encompass the totality of life.

In conjunction with the advancements in virtual environments brought about by technological developments, it is noteworthy that there is a growing trend toward pursuing the living culture of the actual field. People are actively seeking out recreational and cultural activities, and their desire is not merely to observe but to actively participate in a form of living culture. This orientation is not in opposition to the culture of virtual spaces on the Internet; instead, it is homogeneous. There is a palpable desire to live a life marked by active participation and communication in both online and offline domains. In essence, the message inherent in this trend is clear. The prototypical folk culture, characterized by its on-field and participatory nature, seamlessly communicates with the mass culture of the present and future.

4.3.3 Timeless Culture Based on Imagination

As evident in the flows of participatory popularity and on-field vitality, the zeitgeist of the twenty-first century carries vital elements that extend beyond the modern era and can coalesce harmoniously with traditional folk culture. This holds particularly true when considering folk culture in its various manifestations, especially if it represents a prototype that transcends the specificities of the contemporary era, has survived the test of time, and has acquired universality and significance. The inherent openness and multifaceted nature of this prototypical folk culture align well with new cultural

trends, while its holistic character and broader implications serve as forces that transcend temporal divides.

A notable aspect of the twenty-first-century zeitgeist is its departure from the modern era epitomized by the twentieth century. Unlike the previous century, the twenty-first century embodies the identity of a post-realistic era characterized by a timeless age of imagination. The twentieth century was marked by rationality and pragmatism, prioritizing the verifiable and the existent. In cultural arts, realism, which pursues meticulous reflection of contemporary life, held sway for a century. However, with the dawn of the new century, these values have begun to shift. The significance of imagination, which transcends the frames of reality, has emerged as a central cultural theme. Imagination has evolved into a vital element that profoundly influences people, both physically and emotionally.

In retrospect, prototypical folk culture is rooted in the specific fields of life as much as it exerts a universal force that relies on the imagination of the transcendental and the everlasting as a main medium. It is this universal imagination that empowers folk culture to exhibit temporal adaptability and modalistic totality. This element transcends temporal gaps, forging a connection between the present and the future. Whether it is the content, principles, or modes of imagination, they all contribute as evidence that underscores the meaningful convergence of folk culture with modern mass culture.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Conclusion

Although it is hard to realize because it is living in a flood of different cultures, culture is omnipresent in surroundings. Also, while popular culture and folk culture may seem distant on the surface, but they are in fact closely related in many ways. Depending on the academic field, perspectives on culture, methods or aspects of analyses differ, but a society was, and still is, both a cultural phenomenon in which folk culture and popular culture converge and communicate, and a field of folklore.

To explore this, the study examined the differences and links between folk culture and popular culture from a cultural studies point of view, and established a relationship between elements of popular culture in folk culture. Thus, the elements of popular culture in folk culture could be revealed.

To summarize, this implies that, in the Chosun dynastic society where a strict hierarchy existed, folk culture had an appeal vis-a-vis each class that could have been mutually hostile. Owing exactly to this quality, folk culture came to possess vitality and dynamics that would last a long time. In this context, it must assume that folk culture has developed as a cross-class and cross-regional popular culture, rather than a cultural art for a specific class.

In a modern society where the desire to build a comprehensive cultural environment for bilateral communication and self-expression is widespread, there is a dearth of contents to realize such a desire in a healthy and pleasant manner. In such a society, a healthy folk culture derived from our lives can be an excellent alternative.

Another element of popular culture in folk culture is that it has the properties that is collectively produced, transmitted, and enjoyed. This also was a consequence of the populace enjoying the sovereignty of cultural production in which they actively created their own cultures by sharing community culture.

People are aggressively seeking out leisure and cultural activities. What the public of today wants is not simply watching but a form of living culture in which they can participate. The desire to live life amidst active participation and communication is unraveling, in one hand, on the Internet, and, on the other hand, in offline fields. Whatever it is, the message we can take away from this flow is evident. The prototypical folk culture, as an on-field and participatory culture, excellently communicate with the mass culture of today and tomorrow.

In addition, in modern society in the 21st century, The value of imagination that goes beyond the frame of reality is rising as a core issue of culture. The world of imagination is becoming an essential matter that moves people, physically and emotionally.

This is the third element of popular culture folk culture possesses. Individual creativity enabled it to secure an independent identity as a community culture and realized cultural diversity in many regions. Unlike stylized and standardized urban cultures, many different village cultures could each be produced and transmitted. And thus came to have elements of popular culture to coexist with and be produced by the people.

5.2 Suggestions and Limitations of the Study

The popular culture that moves the people, although it might be an ephemeral trend, quite often contains elements of tradition in it. In the same way, traditional culture, which is inherited from the past, has no life away from the culture-leading populace today, which thus requires an appropriate harmonization rather than distancing itself from today's reality. To live up to the term "Age of Culture," culture is being transmitted in various ways, newly created, weakened, and disappearing. Ultimately, though many consider today to be a time when culture is valued, it is ultimately a cold-hearted "Age of Cultural Competition" where without the public's interest a culture may disappear. In order for traditional culture and popular culture to maintain their vitality and sustainability together, they need to complement each other's flaws. Popular culture is prone to weak links with traditions, whereas traditional culture is prone to neglecting its links with the reality. In order for the two to coexist, efforts must be made to find the innate elements of tradition present in popular culture, and to promote and popularize the philosophy of life people have acquired from traditional culture.

This paper first aimed to explain that, as a form of folk culture had a cultural style that is closer to popular culture than to mass culture. However, the study is introductory, and the analysis of mass culture and popular culture is merely theoretical.

In addition, because the frame of analysis was mostly the popular culture of developed capitalist countries, it may be hard to apply it to South Korea's reality. In the end, this study evidently possesses the limitation of being very general. This was inevitable, considering that it was a cultural studies scholar who majored in Communications that implemented this incipient analysis of popular culture. Therefore, a much more specific analysis on this field is required.

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