

Encyclopedia of Korean Folk Literature

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한국민속문학사전

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F O R E W O R D

Among the many intangible cultural heritages passed down by mankind, the oldest and the most essential would be the tradition of folk literature. In Korean, the word for oral literature is “*gubimunhak*,” literally meaning “oral stele literature,” which can be interpreted as orally transmitted words that are lasting and unchanging, like engravings on a stele.

Folk narratives serve as cultural repositories as well as oral history, and in Korea, the rich tradition lives on today in the form of mythology, including the myth of Dangun, the progenitor of the Korean people, and in legends and stories transmitted around the country, like the widely known “Fairy and the Woodsman.” Today these tales have expanded into contemporary narrative genres like movies, animation, exhibitions, theater, and games, and will continue to influence many other storytelling genres in the future.

In 2004, the National Folk Museum of Korea embarked on a comprehensive project to compile a series of publications on Korean folk culture, beginning with the first volume of the *Encyclopedia of Korean Seasonal Customs*, followed by the publication of the *Encyclopedia of Korean Folk Beliefs* in three individual sets, on shamanism (2009), village gods worship (2010) and household gods worship (2011), respectively. The next project was the *Encyclopedia of Korean Folk Literature*, published in two sets, on folk narratives (2012) and on folk songs and *pansori* (2013), respectively. The Korean-language publications were followed by ambitious English-language editions, of the *Encyclopedia of Korean Seasonal Customs* in 2010 and of the *Encyclopedia of Korean Folk Beliefs* in 2013, now followed by this English edition of the *Encyclopedia of Korean Folk Literature*.

While this volume does not contain all of Korea’s folk narratives, it is a compilation of the essential tales that make up the Korean folk literature tradition, which we hope will serve as an important reference for those interested in Korean culture and scholars of folk literature around the world.

Lastly, I would like to extend my warmest thanks to the many institutions that provided assistance and support for this English-language edition of the *Encyclopedia of Korean Folk Literature*, and many others who contributed to the publication their dedication and insight, including writers, advisors, editors, reviewers, and especially the editorial staff at the museum and the translation team at the Ewha Womans University Graduate School of Translation and Interpretation.

November, 2014

Cheon Jin-gi

진기

Director, National Folk Museum of Korea

NOTES

- 1 This publication is a revised and abbreviated English edition of the “Folk Narratives” volume of the Korean-language *Encyclopedia of Korean Folk Literature*, published in 2012 by the National Folk Museum of Korea.
- 2 Entries are presented in English translations of the Korean titles or terminology, accompanied by the original Hangeul version, and in some cases, their Romanized form, in the beginning of the main text.
- 3 Entries are categorized into the following four sections, and arranged in alphabetical order within each section :
Mythology, Legends, Folk Tales, References
- 4 The transliteration of Korean terms and names in this publication follows the Revised Romanization of Korean system, with the exception of some administrative units, geographical features and artificial structures, which in some cases have been transliterated in alternate forms to enhance the readability of the text. For example, the province 경상남도 has been rendered as Southern Gyeongsang Province within the main text and as Gyeongsangnam-do in photo captions.

The transliteration of Chinese and Japanese terms and names follows the *pinyin* system and the Revised Hepburn system, respectively.
- 5 The following is a chronology of Korean dynasties as referred to in the encyclopedia :
Gojoseon (108BCE – 2333); Buyeo (18 BCE – 660); Goguryeo (37 BCE – 668); Baekje (18 BCE – 660); Silla (57 BCE – 935); Balhae (698 – 926); Goryeo (918 – 1392); Joseon (1392 – 1910)
- 6 Traditional measurement units, including *mal, doe, ri, cheok, ja*, are transliterated in the texts without metric conversions, to focus less on the exact scale of the measurements and more on the significance of the units and their numbers within the narratives.
- 7 Credits have been given to all photographs copyrighted by institutions and individuals other than the National Folk Museum of Korea; Captions to the photos and images list the title, date, venue, photographer/painter and holding institution.
- 8 The index includes titles and terminologies both in their transliterated form and in English translation.

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This encyclopedia brings together the narrative tradition of Korea that has been transmitted for over five millennia, under the comprehensive term of “folk literature (*minsokmunhak*).” This term is used interchangeably with oral literature, or *gubimunhak*, referring to a literary tradition transmitted by people in the form of spoken words and preserved within speech communities, whereas written literature refers to work that has been created by individuals in the form of a text. Oral literature encompasses folk tales, folk songs, shamanic songs, folk drama, proverbs and riddles.

The earliest use of the term “*gubi*,” literally meaning “oral stele,” is found in the writings of Sirhak (Practical Learning) scholars of Joseon, and can be interpreted as orally transmitted words that possess structure and artistic value, lasting and unchanging like engravings on a stele. Language is transmitted word by word, and for the words to take on a literary quality, they must form units of meaning beyond basic sentence structures. Another requirement of oral literature is the presence of beauty in the method with which meaning is embodied.

The term *gubimunhak* was first used to refer to the specialized literary genre when a chapter titled “Hangukgubimunhaksa (History of Korean Oral Literature)” was included in the fifth volume on language and literature of the 1967 publication *Hangukmunhwasadaegye* (*A Compendium of Korean Cultural History*) from Korea University’s Research Institute of Korean Studies, which was followed by the publication of *Gubimunhakgaeseol* (*An Overview of Oral Literature*) in 1971, authored by Jang Deok-sun et al.

The tradition of oral literature precedes the invention of writing systems and takes on great significance especially for a people without an indigenous writing system, whose use of a writing system came late in history or remained limited. On the Korean peninsula, Chinese characters were adopted as a formal writing system during the Three Kingdoms period, but their use was limited to the ruling class and the rich tradition of folk tales and songs was transmitted by word of mouth. Korean mythology was formed orally in tribal societies, performed as part of religious rituals and transmitted by word of mouth by ritual officiants and priests. The nation’s founding myth (*geonguksinhwa*), now preserved in written form, was based on orally transmitted tribal myths and revised and edited when the tribe led by the progenitor Dangun took power, for the purpose of sacralizing the newly established monarchy. Myths and legends were partially transliterated into Chinese characters and preserved in the form of steles or books, but most were transmitted orally among the people, a tradition that still lives on today. Korea’s oral literature has continuously negotiated with written literature in the creation of new literary genres and styles, and their transformation, contributing greatly to the establishment of a distinctive literary tradition. *Hyangga*, a genre of folk songs from Silla, recorded in the ancient writing system *hyangchal*, retains the rhythms, forms and vocabulary of the songs as they were sung by the public at the time. *Goryeogayo*, a lyric

genre from Goryeo, is believed to reflect many of the folk songs (*minyo*) and shamanic songs (*muga*) that had been orally transmitted. *Sijo*, the most widely recognized verse form in the Korean literary tradition, was based on the three-line stanza structure of orally transmitted songs; while the two-foot lyrical prose genre *gasa* was developed from the rhythm and form of verse-chorus folk songs with even-numbered metric beats. Korean classical novels also borrowed their subjects from folk tales, and the fiction genre *seolhwamunhak* of premodern times was developed from biographical epics on the lives of heroes or women, orally transmitted in the form of heroic or shamanic myths. In other words, oral literature had immense influence on the development of written literature.

Within the vast spectrum of the literary tradition categorized as oral literature, this book focuses on *seolhwa*, or folk narratives, a genre that is the oldest and the most widely spread in the oral tradition, not only in Korea but around the world. *Seolhwa* refers to fictional folk narratives with a coherent plot, orally transmitted among the people. They are also called *yetiyagi* (old tales); *godam* (ancient tales); and *yadam* (tales).

While it is difficult to determine when and where Korean folk narratives originated, it is believed that they date back to the time the first men settled on the peninsula. The narrative of Jumong and his founding of the ancient kingdom Goguryeo as King Dongmyeong was documented in detail between the 12th and 13th centuries by writer Yi Gyu-bo, but basic elements of the story can be found, in fragments, in the engravings on the King Gwanggaeto Stele, erected circa 5th century. The narrative of *Bangi*, from Silla, which is associated with what is now known as the magic club (*dokkaebibangmanggi*), tale or the tale of brothers Heungbu and Nolbu, was recorded in the 9th-century Chinese book of miscellany *Youyang Zazu* (*Miscellaneous Morsels from Youyang*). *Samgungnyusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*), compiled in 12th-century Goryeo, is the most important and most comprehensive collection of Korean folk narratives. Collections published up to the 1950s include the Japanese-language publication *Chōsen mintanshū* (*Collection of Joseon Folk Tales*, (1930) by Son Jin-tae and the English anthology *Folk Tales from Korea* (1952) by Zong In-Sob. The 82-volume *Hangukgubimunhakdaegye* (*A Comprehensive Collection of Korean Oral Literature*), published over eight years from 1980 to 1989, compiled a vast amount of folk narratives by putting into book form oral recordings collected through field work. This work was followed by the 12-volume *Hangukgyeonseolhwa* (*Korean Folk Narratives*), published from 1989 to 1993 by Im Seok-jae, which serves as another important reference.

Folk narratives are generally categorized into mythology (*sinhwa*), legends (*jeonseol*) and folk tales (*mindam*). Mythology centers on the gods worshipped by the public, narrating their deification and achievements. Some gods are deities from the beginning, while some are human heroes later worshipped as deities. Korean mythology mostly

comprises founding myths (*geonguksinhwa*) and progenitor myths (*sjosinhwa*), which are preserved in written form, and shamanic myths (*musoksinhwa*). Legends portray human acts that end in tragedy, generally religious acts that involve natural surroundings like mountains, rivers, or villages; artificial structures like buildings; or humans, flora and fauna, and objects. Evidence is required to support the verity of these tales.

Korean folk narratives are mostly preserved in prose form, but some take the form of lyrical verse, which helped transmission in the past among the illiterate, both in delivering the story and drawing interest from listeners. When these narratives are sung by folk singers or performed by shamans, they are categorized as narrative folk songs or narrative shamanic songs (*muga*).

While folk narratives are basically an oral tradition, some have been preserved and transmitted in the form of written words, which are categorized as *munheonseolhwa*, documented folk narratives.

The oldest form of Korean folk narrative preserved in written form is from the anthology *Suijeon (Tales of the Bizarre)*, published between late Goryeo and early Joseon. The book is said to comprise a wide range of outlandish stories and biographies, among which only a few remain today in versions printed in other publications. *Samguksagi (History of the Three Kingdoms)* and *Samgungnyusa (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms)*, important history books from mid-Goryeo, also contain various folk narratives, especially the latter, which is sometimes classified as a folk tale anthology due to its large portion of folk narratives including myths and legends. Other books on folk narratives from Goryeo include *Haedonggoseungjeon (Lives of Eminent Monks from East of the Sea)*; *Pahanjip (Collection of Writings to Break Up Idleness)*; *Bohanjip (Collection of Writings to Relieve Idleness)*; and *Yeokongpaeseol (Writings of Old Man Oak)*. It was in Joseon, however, that folk narratives emerged as a major literary genre called *paeseolmunhak*, updated and polished versions of the orally transmitted folk narrative tradition, released as major publications including *Taepyeonghanhwagolgejeon (Collection of Humorous Tales of Leisure)* by Seo Geo-jeong in early Joseon. These narratives were later compiled in 1958 by the government agency Folk Material Publishing Committee into the comprehensive book *Gogeumsochong (Assorted Collection of Ancient Humor)*. Following partial documentation of ancient oral literature through the various kingdoms it was in mid-Joseon, after suffering massive attacks by Japan and Qing China in the 16th and 17th centuries, that folk narratives began to be fully incorporated into written literature.

Folk narratives, in written form, carry great literary significance as records of human lives of the past, allowing an insight into ancient culture and values beyond the limits of space and time. At the same time, these records also reflect the consciousness of those who carry out the documentation, which adds an interesting layer to the genre.

OPEDIA

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신화

Sinhwa, or mythology, refers to narratives about deities worshipped as sacred entities by a folk group; about the origins of natural or social phenomena; or about universal and archetypal symbols rooted in the collective unconsciousness of mankind.

In oral literature, folk narratives are classified into mythology, legends, and folk tales, among which mythology is essentially based on sanctity. The storyteller deems the contents of the myth as sacred, and critical perspectives on the verity of these narratives are considered taboo.

When we define mythology as holy tales or narratives about gods, gods can be defined as absolute and fundamental beings but also as sacred beings worshipped through religious rites. This means that mythology was born when sacred rituals began to be staged in human societies. The gods worshipped in sacred rituals are revered as holy entities and at the same time possess the powers to oversee the fate and fortune of a community: Families observe ancestral rites for the health and prosperity of their community while villages stage communal rituals for the safety and good fortunes of the villagers. In Korean folk religion myriad gods oversee different aspects of human life: fortune; longevity; productivity; proliferation and many others. Mythology was formed in the process of worshipping these gods and offering prayers for their wellbeing and good wishes. Korean shamanic myths are called *bonpuri*, chronicling the shamanic god worshipped in the ritual. Mythology, in other words, was formed and transmitted through sacred rituals. The earliest forms of mythology from primitive tribal societies were transferred and reorganized as kingship myths with the development of state societies. A nation's founding myth, for example, is based on mythology of the tribal group responsible for the founding of the kingdom, embraced by the new state as the narrative of its progenitor.

Mythology can be categorized into creation myths and founding myths; or into origin myths about nature and those about human culture. Creation myths narrate the origins of the universe, of the opening of the heaven and earth, and the creations of all celestial and terrestrial worlds, from the sun and moon and the stars to mountains, rivers, flora, and humans. The main mythemes that make up creation myths include the creation of heaven and earth; the origins of the sun and the moon; the origin of fire; the origin of water; and the origin of mankind. Myths about the creation of heaven and earth are again categorized into myths that involve a creator god that divides heaven and earth or builds the universe by performing acts like carrying soil from the sea; and into self-creation myths that depict the formation of the heaven and earth from a state of chaos by the separation of clear and light energy from the dense and heavy energy.

Sun and moon myths are classified into ones that narrate the process of their creation, and ones that narrate the story of a hero who arrives at a universe with many suns and moons, which made life hard for humans, then eliminates them, save for a single sun and moon. Across East Asia, including Korea, China and Japan, there are also versions in which the eyes of the universe's first human-like creature turn into the sun and the moon, also reflected as episodes in the Korean shamanic myths "Sirumal (Earthenware Steamer Narrative)" of Osan, Gyeonggi Province and "Cheonjiwangbonpuri (Origin of the Celestial King)" of Jeju Island.

Founding myths (*geonguksinhwa*) are ancestral myths that chronicle the life of the progenitor and founding king of a state. Korea's mythical founding kings include Gojoseon's Dangun; Silla's progenitor Bak Hyeokgeose; Goguryeo's progenitor Jumong; and Kim Su-ro, the progenitor of Garak. Their stories are formed and transmitted through ancestral rites performed at the tombs of the progenitors, constructed by their royal descendents. Martial hero myths depict the acts of superhuman heroes who eradicate fierce evil beasts or overcome natural disasters; or of ancestral heroes who defended the community in wars against other tribes or people. These tales share the common narrative structure as biographies of heroic lives.

Myths are set against the time of the universe's beginnings and within a sacred space separate from the secular space of reality. The time of the beginning of the heaven and earth in creation myths, or of the birth of a progenitor, is the time of heralding a new start, and unlike historical time, is unaware of the time that came before it. The divine altar tree (*sindansu*) on Mt. Taebaek, where Hwanung the son of the heavenly god descends in the myth of Dangun, or Guji Peak, where King Suro is born in the Garak founding myth, are sites of the birth or life of these sacred kings, a sanctified mythical space. The mythical heroes are extraordinary humans with traits of sanctity, who acquire reverence from the people by emphasizing their noble lineage; the marvelous and mysterious circumstances of their birth; and their supernatural accomplishments.

Myths are ultimately tales of success. The protagonist displays outstanding abilities to achieve great improvements for mankind. Or he eradicates bad fortunes or natural phenomena that deter human lives; or builds new states to restore order and make life more comfortable for the people. This brings him respect from the community, and upon his death, he is worshipped through rituals.

For mythology to maintain its sanctity, it must be transmitted as part of a religious ritual. Korea's shamanic origin myths, or *bonpuri*, for example, are performed as part

of shamanic rituals to glorify the gods worshipped in the ritual. Origin myths take the form of biographical chronicles, their narrative structure comprising a set of formulas that begin with an unusual birth, followed by overcoming trials, acquiring reverence through supernatural acts, and enthronement as a deity. Mythology belongs to the group that believes in its sanctity. Myth titles that include the names of their folk group, in this case the ethnic group or nationality, indicate the boundaries of the validity of the sanctity of the myths. This also means that myths reflect the pride and the norms that reign over the group, and thus continue to influence the culture created within the community.

Each folk group's mythology varies in content and characteristics. A majority of Korean myths are founding myths that have been documented and shamanic myths transmitted as part of shamanic rituals, but also includes village god myths (*dangsinhwa*) and clan ancestor myths, transmitted within individual villages and clans, respectively. The founding myths of the various Korean kingdoms generally feature protagonists who descend from the celestial world, or their descendants, and narrate their founding of a new state, emphasizing the dignity of the Korean people as descendants of the Heavenly God, Cheonsin.

Mythology is an important cultural heritage that contains the intuitive imagination of ancient people and the traditional norms of a specific folk group. Myths also reflect the archetypal symbols rooted in the depths of human nature, delivered through the narrative formula of biographical chronicles of heroes or women, and serve as great influences on the formation and development of narrative literary genres including epic poems and novels.

Abandoned Princess Bari

바리공주

The shamanic myth “Barigongju” narrates the origins of an underworld deity and is recited as part of death-appeasing shamanic rites including the underworld entry rituals *jinogigut*, *ogugut*, *mangmugigut* and the grievance cleansing ritual *ssitgimgut*.

The following version of “Barigongju” is considered one of the most complete:

Jusangeummama (His Majesty the King) and Jungjeonbuin (Lady Queen) are to be wed, but when they seek the advice of Dajibaksa of Cheonhagung (Palace Under Heaven), he imposes a taboo that they should not rush the wedding. The couple, however, breaks the taboo and goes ahead with the wedding, which results in the birth of a string of daughters and no sons. When their seventh child once again turns out to be a daughter, they abandon

her, and she thus acquires the name Barigongju, or Abandoned Princess, and is rescued by Birigondeok Grandpa and Birigondeok Granny, who bring her up. Princess Bari’s parents, in the meantime, fall critically ill, and learn that the only cure is the potion Yangyusu and flowers, available only where Mujangseung lives. The king orders his six princesses to go to Seoecheonseoyeokguk (Kingdom of Western Territories Under Western Heavens) to get the medicine, but the princesses all make excuses not to go. Left with no other choice, the king searches for the seventh princess who he abandoned, to ask her to find the cure, and finally the king and queen reunite with Princess Bari. Determined to get the cure for her parents, the princess disguises herself as a man and travels to the underworld, in the course of which she saves those suffering in hell, using spells and a rattle. When she finally arrives in the underworld, she encounters Mujangseung, and she serves him by practicing good deeds and having his children, in the course of which she learns which flowers and potions can save her parents. She takes the flowers and Yangyusu, along with her children and her husband, and heads back to the world of the living, during which she meets Gangnimdoryeong (Descended Young Man) and learns that the royal funeral is under way. Princess Bari hurries along and with Yangyusu and the flowers, brings back her parents from death. For this accomplishment, she is given a sacred title by the king. Her children are assigned to serve as Chilseong (Seven Stars), Mujangseung as Siwanggunung (Guardian of the King of the Underworld), and Princess Bari as the possessing deity (*momju*), worshipped by the shamans.

“Barigongju” is transmitted as different versions of shamanic song, with details that vary according to region, the versions categorized as follows:

The version transmitted in North Korea portrays Bari’s parents as exiles from the heavens, and includes a scene of her parents, who are childless, envying couples with children, and also a scene in which Bari dies after bringing back the medicinal



Shaman dressed as Princess Bari.
1930s, National Folk Museum of Korea



Shaman reciting the Song of Abandoned Princess Bari during an underworld entry ritual.
Mt. Inwang Guksadang, Jongno-gu, Seoul, 1970, National Folk Museum of Korea

water. In this version, Princess Bari's status as the guide of the spirits of the dead to the underworld has been weakened.

In versions from the mid-western region, which includes Seoul, Gyeonggi and Chungcheong provinces, the scene of the births of Bari's six sisters take up a significant amount of time; Bari is rescued by Birigondeok Grandpa and Birigondeok Granny; and Bari meets Mujangseung, the guardian of the medicinal water, after which they wed. The mid-western version is considered an alternate version that emphasizes the ritualistic traits of the narrative, and of Bari's role as guide to the underworld for the spirits of the dead.

The east coast version highlights the entertaining elements of the narrative: the guardian of medicinal water, called Dongsuja in this version, tries again and again to reveal that Bari, disguised as a man, is a woman; the comical rendering of the scene of Bari fetching the potion at Yaksutang (Pool of Medicinal Water); and sexual implications in the scenes of the conception and birth of the seven daughters.

The versions from the South Jeolla Province vary

greatly in detail, allowing for sub-categorization. The biggest departure is that unlike versions from other regions, Bari does not disguise herself as a man, and many other differences are found in characterization, backdrop, and especially the plot following Bari's return with the medicinal water.

An examination of the characteristics of the various versions, show that the Barigongju narrative took shape as a shamanic song based on the existing underworld entry ritual *cheondogut*, influenced by folk narratives and myths of the divine mother (*sinmo*) and developed into different versions that emphasized ritualistic or entertainment elements. The versions from the mid-western regions focus on the ritualistic, and with the embrace of shamanism by the royal court, maintained a serious tone, while in the east coast regions the song was influenced by the solo narrative song genre *pansori*, developing into longer versions that focused more on entertainment elements. To conclude, the mid-western version of "Barigongju," with its focus on the ritualistic elements and clear in its purpose as a underworld entry ritual, is considered the basic type, while the

South Jeolla version the condensed type; the east coast version the expanded type with a focus on entertainment; and the North Korean version the modified type, in that the heroine dies in the end.

This narrative features the heroine Princess Bari as the agent of action who drives the plot, also notable for placing priority on blood ties rather than family ties established through marriage. The story's ending includes a section that prays for rebirth, revealing Bari's desire to rise above the limitations of mortality. To sum up, "Barigongju" is a vivid expression of the desire to overcome male-centered worldviews and human mortality, and the limitations of this desire.

Earthenware Steamer Narrative

시루말

The shamanic myth "Sirumal (Earthenware Steamer Narrative)," belonging to the category of universe creation myths, is performed as part of the second segment in the Twelve-Segment Ritual (Yeoldugeorigut), transmitted in the Busan-dong neighborhood of Osan, Gyeonggi Province.

The following is a summary of a version of this myth recorded during the Japanese colonial period:

Dangchilseong, of Cheonhagung (Palace Under Heaven), descends to Jihagung (Palace Underground) chasing after fugitives on the run. He is looking for a place to spend the night when he comes across the house of Lady Maehwa (Plum Blossom), its lights on, in Maehwatteul (Plum Blossom Garden). Dangchilseong and Lady Maehwa spend the night together, during which Lady Maehwa has a series of dreams. Dangchilseong gives an interpretation that the dreams indicate that she will give birth to two sons, and after giving them names, leaves to return to Cheonhagung. Lady Maehwa indeed conceives and gives birth to two sons, their names Seonmun and Human. They enter a village academy to learn

to read, but are teased by other children for being fatherless. Learning that their father is Dangchilseong of Cheonhagung, they ascend to the sky to meet him. Their father, upon confirming their names, bestows the kingdom of Daehanguk to Seonmun and the kingdom of Sohanguk to Humun.

"Sirumal" includes the mytheme of chaos, and of the arrangement of sun and moon, which are characteristic of creation myths, this myth being a type transmitted in the middle regions of the Korean peninsula.



Shaman reciting the Earthenware Steamer Narrative for Seven Stars during the village ritual of Gyeonggi Province. 1999, National Intangible Heritage Center

Founding Myth

건국신화

Geonguksinhwa, or founding myths, are sacred narratives of a nation's origins.

Ancient states created epic poems that narrated the story of the kingdom's founding to be performed as part of state rituals and proclaimed publicly for the purpose of emphasizing the sacred origins of the state. When history began to be documented in written form, the orally transmitted epics were recorded, generally in prose form, as the opening sections of national history. These documented narratives of a state's origins are defined as founding myths. Examples of Korea's founding myths include

“*Dangungogi (Ancient Records of Dangun)*” quoted in *Samgungnyusa (Memorabilia of the Three kingdoms)*, the “Goguryeobongi (Records of Goguryeo)” section of *Samguksagi (History of the Three Kingdoms)* and other historical records.

Founding myths are based on progenitor myths (*sijosinhwa*). Ancient states were formed in the process of a single powerful tribe unifying a number of other tribes, as indicated by the administrative structure of “*bu* (enclave)” in Goguryeo and Silla, the former comprised of five enclaves and the latter six. Each tribe brings to the state their individual ancestral myths that narrate their tribal origins, which are combined into the ancestral myth of the unifying tribe and rearranged as the founding myth of the new state.

Korea’s ancient founding myths include the Dangun Myth of Gojoseon; Haeburu Myth of North Buyeo; Geumwa Myth of East Buyeo; Jumong Myth of Goguryeo; Bak Hyeokgeose Myth of Silla; Suro Myth of Garak; and the Sameulla Myth of Tamna. Medieval kingdoms also left behind myths about their founders, including Wang Geon of Goryeo, Yi Seong-gye of Joseon and their ancestors. Traces of elements that make up founding myths can be found in legends about progenitors whose states failed to continue through history, including Gungye of Taebong and Gyeon Hwon of Late Baekje.

The founding myths of Korea’s ancient kingdoms share several characteristics, including the motif of the union of the sky father and earth mother (*cheonbujimo*), as observed in the union of Hwanung and Ungnyeo of Gojoseon; Haemosu and Yuhwa of Goguryeo; Bak Hyeokgeose and Aryeong of Silla; Suro and Heohwangok of Garak. In these cases, the groom is associated with the celestial gods and the bride with the terrestrial gods. The foundation of a state through their union possibly indicates the worship of the heavenly god Cheonsin by the ruling power, or the attempt by the rulers to emphasize the dominance of the paternal line in the monarchy.

These unions vary in form by region, mainly the

southern and northern parts of the Korean peninsula. While in the south, the progenitor is crowned as founding king, in the north the progenitor founds his kingdom through competition and conquest, as in the case of Jumong.

Korea’s medieval founding myths differ from their ancient counterparts on several points. First is the tendency to combine various different lineages of divinity. In the founding myth of Goryeo, progenitor Wang Geon’s sixth-generation-back ancestor Hoggyeong is identified as a former general from Silla’s Seonggol royalty who upon descending from Mt. Baekdu becomes the mountain god (*sansin*) of Mt. Guryong. Second is that the emphasis of the divine lineage is focused on the progenitor’s ancestors rather than the founding king himself. In the case of Joseon, the achievements of Yi Seong-gye’s multigenerational ancestors, from Mokjo and Ikjo to Dojo and Hwanjo, are mystified, rather than Yi’s own. This is the result of the attempt to justify the dynasty by establishing its sanctity through various alternative approaches of interpreting the world including blood lineage, geomancy and signs, within a new framework based on medieval rationality that no longer accepted ancient mythology featured deities and sacred animals.

Founding myths aim at justifying a state and its rulers by relying on transcendental authority, which make them not mere works of imagination but political narratives that reveal specific ideologies and impose them on the members of the state.

Grandmother Mago

마고할미

The myth of Magohalmi tells the story of a giant goddess who created all of nature and its geographical formations of this universe.

Giant goddess Magohalmi carried mud in her skirt and created mountains and islands. Her urine

and excrement formed hills and rivers. Big rocks in various villages were placed there by Magohalmi's hands or whips. Magohalmi's body was so immense that 90,000 *pil* of hemp was not enough to clothe her. She was so tall she walked across the seas off the island Wando, and drank water from the Yongdeumbeong Pond on the remote islets of Chujado, standing with her feet on the rocks on Wando's shore and her hands on Osipigogase (Fifty-Two Pass). She was so strong that when she urinated with her legs straddled on Mt. Nogo and Mt. Bulguk in Yangju, the spray of urine cracked a huge rock on Munhakjae Pass.

This narrative is an orally transmitted myth of the giant goddess creator. Magohalmi is believed to have played a part in the creation of mountains, islands, rivers, rock, bridges and fortresses, but has been excluded from written record or formal worship through state rituals. In the course of transmission, the narrative lost its significance as a creation myth, misinterpreted as a legend about geographical formation and names, or as one about a negative deity that must be eradicated, which resulted in its exclusion from mythological research, but recently its importance as an archetype of goddess myth has been illuminated. Magohalmi's creation of the universe is distinguishable from the creation carried out in Korean mythology by male deities like Mireuk or Cheonjiwang (Heavenly King), who execute the initial stage of creating heaven and earth, and the sun and the moon, while Magohalmi is in charge of the process that follows, of forming mountains and rivers and other features of nature, or of forming specific geographical features of an actual place. This separation of responsibilities in the creation of the universe between male and female deities is a distinctive characteristic of Korean creation myths, which is related to the shift in the status of Korean goddesses towards marginal deities, and in the course of oral transmission, the myth was reduced as legend, some versions close to a caricature-like folk tale.

Grandmother Seolmundae

설문대할망

This oral myth from Jeju Island is about a goddess of immense size and strength named Seolmundaehalmang, who created the island by shoveling mud from the seabed. Some ancient records refer to this goddess as Samandugo or Seonmago, and oral variants of the name include Seolmanduhalmang, Seolmyeongjihalmang and Semyeongjuhalmang.

In the beginning of the universe, in Tamna, lived Seolmundaehalmang, the biggest and the strongest being in the whole world. One day, as she was sleeping, the granny sat up and passed gas, which set off the creation of the universe; islands of flames shook with thunderous sounds and columns of fire shot up to the sky. The granny put out the fire by shoveling up seawater and mud, and built Jeju's mountains by transporting mud on her skirt, one skirtful of soil forming Mt. Halla and mud dripping from the holes in her skirt forming the island's many volcanic cones, called *oreum*. The granny's urine tore off a piece of land from Seongsan Port and made the island Soseom.

Grandmother Seolmundae's body was rich and fertile, carrying everything inside: The people of Tamna plowed fields on her soft flesh; her hair turned into grass and trees; the powerful streaks of her urine gave birth to all types of seaweed and fish, octopus, abalone, and sea conch, enriching the sea and making the way for the profession of Jeju's women divers.

Because the granny had only one ragged skirt, she washed it constantly, her hips resting on Mt. Halla, one leg on Gwantal Island, the other on Jigwi Island off the town of Seogwipo, using Seongsan Peak as laundry basket, and Soseom as washboard. She sometimes lay down, resting her head on Mt. Halla and dangling and kicking her feet in the sea, creating white foam all around the island, which turned into surf and waves, and each time she moved and shifted her feet, the sea rocked as if in a great storm.

Despite all the riches that she brought, Grandmother Seolmundae was unhappy due to her great size, which made it impossible for her to dress properly, her ragged and torn skirt unable to cover her vagina, as big as Goraegul (Whale's Cave). For a long time the granny wanted to build a bridge to the mainland for the people of the island, and one day offered that if the people made an undergarment for her, she would build the bridge. One hundred barrels of silk were required to weave the granny's undergarment, but the people of Tamna were able to come up with only ninety-nine barrels, which was not enough to produce a complete piece of underwear. This was when silk was still a rarity in the human world and the islanders felt disappointed and frustrated at the lack of material, and the granny was ashamed and upset at the incomplete undergarment, which revealed her vagina. The granny gave up building the bridge, and since that time Jeju remained an island isolated by water.

The granny, on the other hand, was always proud of her immense height: When she stepped inside Yongyeon (Dragon Estuary), known for its depth, the water reached only the top of her foot, and the spring water at Hongnimul reached only her knees. Muljangorimul on Mt. Halla, however, was a bottomless spring and she drowned before she could climb out of the water.

A variant of this myth combines Grandmother Seolmundae's death with the tale of Obaekjanggun (Five-Hundred Generals):

The granny was living on Mt. Halla after giving birth to Five-Hundred Generals, but poverty and a bad harvest made it difficult for her to feed such a big family, and she sent out her sons to get food. After all her five hundred sons left in search of food, the granny began making porridge in a gigantic cauldron hung on Baengnokdam, the crater lake on top of Mt. Halla, starting a fire, then walking along the rim of the cauldron to stir the porridge. While stirring, however, Grandmother Seolmundae took a wrong step and fell into the cauldron, drowning herself. The

five hundred brothers returned and unaware of what had happened, began to eat, enjoying the porridge, which tasted more delicious than at other times. The youngest of the five hundred, who returned last, was scooping up porridge for himself when he found strange bones in the cauldron, and upon a closer look, realized that they were his mother's. The youngest son lamented, refusing to remain with his disrespectful brothers who had eaten their own mother, and ran off to the faraway island of Chagwi off the village of Gosan in Hangyeong-myeon, where he wept and wept until he turned into a rock. Thus today in the valley of Yeongsil can be found the four-hundred-and-ninety-nine generals and the youngest brother, on his own, on Chagwi Island.

All around Jeju Island, the myth of Seolmundae-halmang has been transmitted, in different versions that reflect local characteristics, to explain the origins of the island's geographical features. In regard to transmission method, this myth has not been documented or performed as part of shamanic rituals or worship, and has been passed down strictly as an oral tradition.

Myth of Bak Hyeokgeose

박혁거세신화

The myth "Bakhyeokgeosesinhwa" tells the story of Bak Hyeokgeose, founder of the kingdom of Silla.

Ancestors of the six *bu* (enclaves) of the state of Jinhan gathered at Alcheon Hill with their respective offspring, with an aim to appoint a virtuous king to found a new kingdom and its capital. They climbed up high and looked down toward the south, where at the foot of Yangsan, by a well called Najeong, they witnessed a strange lightning-like glow from the sky illuminating the earth, next to which was a white horse kneeling to offer a bow. They arrived at the site to find a red egg, and when the horse saw the men, it let out a long neigh and ascended to the sky. The egg

was cracked, and a young boy was begotten, which was a surprise and a mystery to everyone, and when they bathed him at Dongcheon (East Spring), his body emitted a splendid glow and birds and beasts danced with the light. Soon followed a trembling that shook the heavens and earth, and the sun and moon shone bright. At this, the boy was named King Hyeokgeose, or King Bulgeonae, and was given the official royal title Geoseulhan.

People lauded the new king, and said, “Now the king must find a virtuous woman to be his wife.” That day, a half-fowl-half-dragon appeared by the well Aryeongjeong in Saryang Village and gave birth to a girl from its left rib. The girl was very beautiful, but her mouth resembled the beak of a fowl, so they bathed her at the stream north of the fortress Wolseong and she lost the beak. A palace was built west of Mt. Namsan, where the two sacred children were raised. The boy was given the last name Bak (朴), a homonym for *bak*, which means gourd, for the egg he was born from was round like a gourd. The girl was named after the well where she was born. When the two sacred beings turned thirteen, on the first year of era name Wufeng in the reign of Xuandi in Han China, the year of Gapja, they were appointed king and queen, the name of the kingdom Seorabeol. It was also called Kyerimguk (Fowl Forest

Kingdom), to reflect the queen’s birth from the fowl by the well, but later generations called it Silla. The king ascended to the sky on his sixty-first year of rule, and seven days later his corpse scattered down on earth in pieces, and the queen also died soon after. The people tried to put together the parts of the king’s corpse to stage a funeral, but a huge snake appeared and intruded, which left them no choice but to hold separate funerals for the five parts of the corpse and bury them in five separate tombs. Thus the tombs were called Sareung, or Snake Tombs.

The Myth of Bak Hyeokgeose can be characterized as follows:

First, it follows the basic narrative structure shared by other Korean founding myths, of a celestial god descending on earth and founding a kingdom. In this myth, the traits of a celestial god are rendered as a strange lightning-like glow from the sky; the white horse; the red color; glowing body; trembling that shakes the heavens and earth; the sun and moon shining bright; and birth from an egg, which can be interpreted as the sun. These traits helped give sanctity to the Silla monarchy.

Second, the births of the progenitor king and the queen Aryeong take place simultaneously, emphasizing the sacred marriage and enthronement of both male and female. This implies that the group represented by Hyeokgeose immigrated to the Gyeongju area, after which they expanded their power by forming an alliance with the group represented by Aryeong before taking the throne. The group of six enclaves, as portrayed in the myth, accepting Hyeokgeose as king upon his descent from heaven, reflects the historical context of the existing clan society coming together to form a single kingdom.

Third, the significance of wells as the venue of heavenly descent or birth—Najeong in the case of Hyeokgeose and Aryeongjeong in the case of Aryeong—indicates that wells were sacred places since Silla’s early years. Wells are of great importance for agricultural settlements and in present-day village



Records on Silla's progenitor Bak Hyeokgeose in *Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*. Iryeon, 1512, Kyujanggak, Seoul National University

rituals, wells, along with village guardian deity trees (*dangsannamu*), are worshipped as sacred entities.

Fourth, “virtue” is emphasized as the primary trait in the enthronement of Hyeokgeose and Aryeong as king and queen, which reflects the values of the human world, where moral superiority is more important in a ruler than supernatural powers.

Fifth, the process of Hyeokgeose’s burial is a rare example in Korean founding myths, from his ascent upon death to his corpse scattering on earth and the snake interfering with the joint burial, resulting in five separate tombs. While most scholars interpret this as an agricultural ritual to pray for prosperity, some make connections with the separated corpse motif found in the shamanic initiation rituals of Siberia.

Myth of Dangun

단군신화

“Dangunsinhwa” is the first sovereignty myth in Korean mythology, which tells the story of the founding of Korea’s first kingdom Gojoseon.

The myth of Dangun is recorded as follows in the section on Gojoseon in the chapter “Gii (Records of Marvels)” of *Samgungnyusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*):

A long time ago, Hwanin, the God of the Heavens, noticed that his son Hwanung was nurturing interest in the human world under the heavens, and as Hwanin gazed down at the area around Mt. Taebaek, he saw it was an ideal place to found a kingdom, and sent down Hwanung to rule the land, giving him the Three Seals of Heaven (Cheonbuin). Hwanung led a group of three thousand and descended on the summit of Mt. Taebaek, where he began overseeing some three hundred and sixty affairs of the human world, including grains, life, disease, punishment, and good and evil, with the Wind God, Rainfall God and Cloud God under his command. At this time, a bear and a tiger that lived in the same cave prayed



Cheonjedan on Mt. Taebak.

Taebaeksan Mountain, Gangwon-do (2004, Kim Do-hyeon)

and prayed to Hwanung for their wish to become human. Hwanung gave them divine mugwort and twenty garlic bulbs, explaining, “If you live on this and avoid sunlight for one hundred days, you shall acquire the appearance of humans.” The bear turned into a woman after twenty-one days of observing the taboos, but the tiger failed to abide by them, thereby failing to acquire a human body. Everyday Ungnyeo (Bear Woman) prayed under Sindansu (Divine Altar Tree) to conceive a child, but there was no one for her to marry, so Hwanung turned into a man and married Ungnyeo, giving birth to a son who was given the name Dangun Wanggeom. Dangun set up a capital at Pyeongyang Fortress and named his kingdom Joseon. The capital was moved to Mt. Baekak, then Asadal, then back to Pyeongyang Fortress. One thousand and five hundred years into Dangun’s rule, China’s Zhou dynasty appointed Jizi to govern Joseon, upon which Dangun moved to Jangdanggyeong, then to Asadal, where he was deified as Sansin (Mountain God) at the age of 1,908 years.

Another book, *Jewangungi* (*Songs of Emperors and Kings*), provides a slightly different account of Dangun’s birth, in which Hwanin’s son Danung Cheonwang descends on the summit of Mt. Taebaek, under Sindansu, where he gives a drug to his granddaughter to turn her into a human, and then arranges a marriage to Dansusin (Altar Tree God),

and the son from this marriage is Dangun.

The Dangun myth can be categorized as the union of the sky father and earth mother (*cheon-bujimo*) type, which indicates that the narrative was formed after the establishment of patriarchy on the Korean peninsula. The myth's protagonist is Hwaung but it is referred to as "Dangun myth," and Dangun, not Hwanung, is viewed as the progenitor of the Korean people, which is due to the fact that the population of Sinsi (Divine City) that Hwanung founded was ethnically different from that of Joseon, founded by Dangun. In other words, it is likely that Dangun's Joseon was newly formed through the alliance and expansion of the population of Hwanung's Sinsi and a bear totem tribe, represented by Ungnyeo: the former an immigrant population characterized by sun worship and farming, the latter an indigenous group characterized by bear

worship and subjugated by the former. The account of Dangun becoming the mountain god of Asadal signifies that he was worshipped by later generations through religious rituals.

The Dangun myth features the Three Seals of Heaven (Cheonbuin) as tokens of rulership, generally interpreted as the divine mirror (*singyeong*), which represents rulership over a people and is found in the tombs of many ancient tribe chiefs on the Korean peninsula in the form of bronze mirrors; the divine sword (*singeom*), which is the sword of the monarch, representing military commandership; and the divine rattle (*sillyeong*) or the divine drum (*singo*), sacred props used in rituals to draw the attention of gods before reporting about human affairs.

Myth of General Im Gyeong-eop

임경업장군당신화

The myth "Imgyeongeopjanggundangsinhwa" narrates the story of the deification General Im Gyeong-eop (1594-1646), war hero of late Joseon.

When Qing China invaded Joseon in 1636, its troops landed on the Korean peninsula instead of the northern land route for fear of General Im Gyeong-eop. But they succeeded in defeating Joseon, taking a large number of hostages, including the crown prince and other princes, back to China. Im Gyeong-eop set out after them on a boat to take revenge, accompanied by fishermen, but as they were passing Yeongpyeong Island, the fishermen, fearing death, threw out all their food and water and said they could not keep going without food and water. At this, Im Gyeong-eop ordered his men to cut off oak branches, which he planted in the sea in a circle, and on each branch grew croakers to feed the men. After this incident, croaker fishing became a livelihood for the people of Yeongpyeong Island. Still today, the island's fishermen stage a ritual for General Im Gyeong-eop when they set out to the sea.



Portrait of Dangun.
National Folk Museum of Korea

The myth of General Im Gyeong-eop grew out of the profession of croaker fishing, and is notable for its association with a historical figure, as is its concentration in Korea's west coast region. It spread among the fishermen across the region from Ongjin and Yeongpyeong Island, where the narrative originated. The tale shows the formation and development of a belief rooted in a specific region and also helps define the many cultural heritage related to croaker fishing observed on the western coast, including the fishermen's song "Baechigi" and the shamanic ritual segment "Baetginaerim (Spirits Descend on Banners)."



Shamanic painting of General Im Gyeong-eop.
National Folk Museum of Korea

Myth of Haemosu

해모수신화

"Haemosusinhwa" narrates the story of Haemosu, the progenitor of North Buyeo and the father of Jumong, founder and progenitor of Goguryeo.

Haemosu was the son of Cheonje (Celestial Emperor), who descended to earth to rule the human world, wearing a hat made of crow feathers on his head; carrying on his waist the dragon light sword (*yonggwanggeom*); riding a carriage pulled by five dragons; and accompanied by a hundred men riding swans. The region from which he descended had originally been ruled by Haeburu. Haemosu attended to state affairs in the morning and ascended to the heavens in the evening, and people called him Cheonwangrang (Celestial King). One day Haemosu encounters, by the waters of Ungsim Pond, Habaek's three daughters, who had emerged from Cheongha, which is Amnok (Yalu) River, under Mt. Ungsim, north of his fortress. Haemosu hosts a gathering for them with drinks with an aim to acquire a wife, and after getting them drunk, captured Yuhwa, one of the daughters. Upon receiving this news, Habaek rushes to the shore, furious, and engages in a duel against Haemosu, to see if Haemosu is really the son of the Celestial Emperor. When Habaek transformed himself into a carp, Haemosu turned into an otter to chase after him; when Habaek turned into a deer Haemosu turned into a wild dog; when Habaek turned into a pheasant, Haemosu turned into a hawk and attacked. Finally Habaek accepted that Haemosu was the son of the Celestial Emperor, and permitted him to wed his daughter Yuhwa. Worried that Haemosu might leave Yuhwa behind, Habaek gets Haemosu drunk and puts the couple in a leather cart, which is then loaded onto the five-dragon carriage to take them to the heavens. Haemosu, however, wakes up before the carriage leaves the water and escapes from the leather cart cutting a hole using Yuhwa's golden hairpin, then ascends alone to the celestial kingdom. Habaek, furious that Yuhwa has

brought dishonor to the family, pulls out her lips until they hang three *ja* long, and abandons her on the shore of Ubalsu. Yuhwa gets caught in a fishing net that belongs to the fisherman Gangnyeokbuchu, who pulls her out and offers her to King Geumwa. Yuhwa could not speak due to her drooping lips, and only after her lips were cut three times, she was finally able to speak. The king, realizing that she is the wife of the celestial prince, decides to keep her in the queen's palace. There, Yuhwa is impregnated when a ray of sunlight shines on her body, and she gives birth to Jumong, who grows up to become the founder of the kingdom of Goguryeo.

The mythology of northern Korea follows a narrative structure that starts with the marriage between a celestial god and earthly god/water god and moves on to the birth of the progenitor and the foundation of a kingdom, which the myth of Haemosu also adheres to. The characteristics of the deities in this myth as a celestial god and a sun god are closely related to those in the shamanic myth of Maiden Danggeum, also known as the Song of the Origin of Jeseok.

Myth of Jumong

주몽신화

The myth “Jumongsinhwa” narrates the story of the birth and life of Jumong, the founder of Goguryeo.

Mythological records on Jumong can be found in a number of books, among which the accounts in *Gusamguksa* (*Old History of the Three Kingdoms*) and “Goguryeobongi (Records of Goguryeo)” are most detailed and richest in mythical elements, bringing together many different versions of the tale to form a new and magnificent narrative of national foundation.

Jumong is born to Haemosu and Yuhwa when Cheonje (Celestial Emperor) sends his prince Haemosu to Buyeo's ancient capital, the territory of

King Buru who, at the command of the Celestial Emperor, founded East Buyeo upon moving his state to Gaseopwon by the East Sea (Donghae). Haemosu descended on a carriage pulled by five dragons, accompanied by a hundred men riding swans. He wore a hat made of crow feathers on his head and carried on his waist the dragon light sword (*yonggwanggeom*). He attended to state affairs in the morning and ascended to the heavens in the evening, and people called him Cheonwangrang (Celestial King). When Haemosu encounters Habaek's three daughters by the waters of Ungsim Pond, he seduces them with a beautiful copper house, and forces the oldest daughter Yuhwa into intimacy. Haemosu then follows their dragon carriage to Habaek's land, where Haemosu requests permission to marry Yuhwa. After losing to Haemosu in a metamorphosis battle, Habaek grants permission, then, worried that Haemosu might leave Yuhwa behind, gets Haemosu drunk and puts the two of them in a leather cart, which is then loaded onto a dragon carriage. Haemosu, however, wakes up and escapes from the leather cart using Yuhwa's golden hairpin, then ascends alone to the heavens. Habaek, furious, banishes Yuhwa to Ubalsu.

But Yuhwa gets caught in a fisherman's net and is taken to King Geumwa of East Buyeo. The king, realizing that she is the wife of the celestial prince, decides to keep her in the queen's palace. There, Yuhwa is impregnated when a ray of sunlight shines on her body, and she lays a large egg from under her left arm. The king orders the egg to be thrown out, but cows and horses avoided it and birds tried to hatch in under their wings, so he has no choice but to have the egg taken back to Yuhwa, and a boy finally hatches out of the egg. The baby is able to speak a month after birth, and when he is given a bow and arrow, he shoots at flies, never missing a single shot. And thus he is given the name Jumong, meaning “good archer.” Growing up, he accompanies King Geumwa's seven sons on their hunting, and he proves to be so good that he is constantly an object of envy. This pushes Jumong to leave east Buyeo

on a fast and strong horse that Yuhwa presents him, accompanied by three friends. When they came across the river Eomchesu, northeast of Amnok (Yalu) River, Jumong pointed at the sky with his whip and requested, “Have mercy on this grandson of the Celestial Emperor, the maternal grandson of Habaek,” then as he struck the water with his arrow, fish and terrapins formed a bridge for them to cross, escaping the soldiers who were chasing after them. Jumong settled in Jolbon, where he founded a kingdom and triumphed in a duel against Songyang, king of Biryu. In the nineteenth year of his reign, Jumong ascended to the sky and did not return, and the crown prince buried his father’s jade whip on Yongsan (Dragon Mountain) and held a funeral.

The myth of Jumong offers a vivid example of the reconstruction of a founding myth, a combination of a wide range of mythological sources including the myth of King Dongmyeong of Buyeo; the myth of the Hae lineage including Haeburu; the water god mythology as represented by Habaek; and the myth of Gojoseon as represented by Songyang. It is notable that the water god lineage, as represented by Yuhwa’s father Habaek, the god of Amnok River, is not found in other Korean founding myths.

The myth of Jumong, as an epic of state founding, is the most representative among Korean founding myths. Founding myths, in written form, are records of state founding epics recited as part of state rituals. This myth is also important as a symbolic narrative of how the nomads from the northern lands, who possessed a celestial worldview, settled down and began agricultural production.

Myth of Kim Alji

김알지신화

The myth “Kimaljisinhwa” narrates the story of Kim Alji, progenitor of the Kim royal family of the Silla dynasty and the Gyeongju Kim clan. Kim Alji served

as Daebo (Great Minister) under King Talhae and was named crown prince but was not enthroned, and his myth has been transmitted as progenitor myth or as part of clan history through genealogical records or family writings of the Gyeongju Kim clan.

In the kingdom of Silla, during the reign of King Talhae, Great Minister Hogong (Duke Gourd) was walking in Seori (West Village) of the capital Wolseong when he saw light coming out of the forest Sirim. Purple clouds spread across the sky and on the branches of a tree hung a golden chest, emitting rays of light, while under the tree a white rooster crowed. Upon hearing of this, the king went



Golden chest.
Josok, 1636, National Museum of Korea

to the forest and opened the chest inside which a boy lay crouched, who then rose when he was found. The king carried the boy back to his palace, and birds and beasts followed him, jumping and dancing in joy. The king named the boy Alji, meaning “little child,” and gave him the last name Kim, meaning gold, since he had arrived in a golden chest. King Talhae chose an auspicious date and appointed Kim Alji crown prince, but in the end abdicated, handing the throne to King Pasa. Kim Alji’s seventh-generation descendant Michu was later enthroned as king, forming the Kim royal family of Silla.

As a progenitor myth of both royal family and clan, the myth of Kim Alji shares some similarities with Korea’s many founding myths, which are characterized by heavenly descent, birth from egg, and divine animals. The similarities are limited, however, since in the Kim Alji myth, heavenly descent is depicted indirectly; a chest is the medium of birth in the place of an egg; and the white rooster takes the place of a divine animal.

The myth is also distinguishable from other clan progenitor myths, in which the progenitor appears on land, the sea, a pond or rock, since heavenly descent is a mytheme generally reserved for kings and national progenitors in Korean mythology. Kim Alji did not found a kingdom or become king, but is depicted as a being from the heavens because many of his progeny, including his seventh-generation descendant Michu, took Silla’s throne, and at the same time the Kim Alji myth was never transmitted as part of state rituals or political narratives since he never became king himself.

Myth of King Kim Suro

김수로왕신화

The myth “Kimsurowangsinhwa” narrates the origins of King Kim Suro, the progenitor of the Gimhae Kim clan and of the ancient state Geumgwan Gaya,

as recorded in the summarized section “Garakgukgi (Record of the State of Garak)” in *Samgungnyusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*).

After the universe was created, for a long time on the Korean peninsula there were no names for states, nor those for kings or subjects, except for the nine *gan*, who served as clan chiefs and led the people. These *gan* were Adogan, Yeodogan, Pidogan, Odogan, Ryusugan, Ryucheongan, Sincheongan, Ocheongan, and Singwigan. There were one hundred households in all, comprising 75,000 people, who formed communities in mountains and plains, living on water from wells and food from the fields. On Water Valley Ritual Day (Gyeoyongnal) of the third month of the 18th year of the Jianwu era, the year of the tiger, in the reign of Emperor Guangwu of Later Han dynasty of China, a suspicious voice was heard on North Guji Peak, at whose calling gathered a throng of two or three hundred people. The voice sounded human but its appearance was hidden as it asked, “Is someone there?” The nine chiefs answered, “We are here,” and the voice asked, “What is this place I am at?” and the chiefs answered, “This place is called Guji.” And the voice said, “The Heavenly Deity summoned me for a mission to come here to build a new state and serve as king. This is why I am here. You are to stand at the peak’s summit, with a fistful of earth in your hands, dancing as you sing, ‘Turtle, turtle / stick out your head / If you would not do so / we shall grill you up to eat,’ which shall be deemed as your joyous greeting for the great king.” The nine chiefs did as they were told, singing and dancing with joy. Soon they looked up to find a purple rope hanging down from the sky, reaching down to the ground, at the tip of which they found a golden chest wrapped in purple cloth. Inside the chest they found six golden eggs, round like the sun. All the people bowed again and again in awe and joy then wrapped up the eggs again and headed to Adogan’s home, where they left the chest on a table and each went their separate ways. At the break of dawn the following morning,



Tomb for King Suro.
Gimhae-si, Gyeongsangnam-do, National Folk Museum of Korea

after twelve hours passed, the throng gathered once again and opened the chest, to find the six eggs had turned into boys, their faces dignified. The boys came out to sit on the wide bench in the yard and the throng bowed in celebration, offering their respect and dedication. The boys grew and grew for over ten days and nights, their height reaching nine *cheok*, their faces like those of a dragon, with eight-color eye lashes and double pupils. The first among the six eggs to become human was enthroned on the day of the full moon that same month, given the name Suro, or Sureung, meaning the first to appear, and his state was named Daegarak (Great Garak) or Gayaguk (Kingdom of Gaya), one among six Gaya kingdoms. The remaining five returned to their respective states and became the chiefs of the five Gaya states.

The myth of Kim Suro is first of all a founding myth of a unified kingdom formed through the alliance of different clans; secondly, it is distinguishable from other founding myths in that the king's enthronement is directly commanded by a deity; thirdly, Suro's enthronement procedure is not accompanied by trials or tests, and trials are faced only after his enthronement; fourthly, the progenitor's assimilation into his reigning group through marriage comes after his enthronement, unlike in the myths of Jumong or Seok Talhae; fifthly, Suro's tricks are used to reveal his extraordinary qualities that set him apart from the existing population, and thus justify his



Guji Peak, birthplace of King Suro.
Gimhae-si, Gyeongsangnam-do, National Folk Museum of Korea

enthronement, whereas in the Seok Talhae myth, the progenitor's tricks are used to promote homogeneity and unity. These characteristics serve to maintain the myth's continuous legacy as ritual, folklore and oral tradition.

Myth of King Yuri

유리왕신화

The royal genealogy myth "Yuriwangsinhwa" narrates the story of Yuri's succession to the throne as the second king of Goguryeo.

Back when Jumong, the founder of Goguryeo, lived in Buyeo, he took as his wife the daughter of the family Ye, who, after his departure, gave birth to Yuri. One day when he was a young boy, Yuri broke the jar of a woman who was fetching water while hunting birds with a slingshot. The woman scolded him saying, "You behave like a fool because you have no father," and Yuri, feeling shameful, went home to ask about his father. His mother told him that his father had gone to the land in the south and founded a kingdom, and delivered the words that his father had left behind for him: "Find what is hidden under the pine tree on a stone with seven corners." Yuri searched mountains and valleys looking for what his father left behind but returned unsuccessful,

when he heard a sound from the cornerstone of his house under which he found a broken sword. Taking the sword, he left with Okji and two other men to Jolbon, where he met the king and when he matched the broken sword with the king's other half, blood dripped from the broken sides of the blades and joined into a single sword. The king said if Yuri were really his son, he would possess divine powers, Yuri leaped into the air and rode the sun's rays coming in through the window, at which the king was greatly impressed and made him the crown prince.

The myth of King Yuri is documented after the myth of Jumong in ancient records including *Samguksagi* (*History of the Three Kingdoms*) and "Dongmyeongwangpyeon (Saga of King Dongmyeong)." According to *Samguksagi*, Yuri was the first king in the Hae lineage, and in the myth has a last name different from his father's. In other words, because the founding myth of Goguryeo was formed around Jumong, whose last name was Go, the tale of Yuri's divine birth and marriage was omitted in the mythology, leaving only the narrative of his succession.

This myth shares similar mythemes with "Jeseokbonpuri (Song of Goddess of Childbirth Jeseok)," also called "Danggeumaegi (Myth of Maiden Danggeum)," including the quest for the father by a character denounced as a fatherless child, and blood featured in the course of identification, which serves as evidence of possible connections between Korea's founding myths and shamanic myths.

Myth of Maiden Danggeum

당금애기

The shamanic myth "Danggeumaegi" narrates the origins of Jeseok, the god that oversees farming and productivity, which is transmitted in all parts of the Korean peninsula.

The following is a summary of the Myth of Maiden Danggeum based on the version from the northern regions, considered to best preserve the mythological characteristics of the narrative:

A long time ago, in a certain place there was a noble family with nine sons but no daughter, so the family offers prayers asking for a daughter, and a daughter is born and given the name Danggeumaegi, or Baby Danggeum. She grows into a beautiful maiden and one day her parents and older brothers have to go away to attend to something, leaving her home alone. At this time a monk who received training in Buddhist doctrines in the west comes to visit Danggeum and lures her into making contact as a form of donation, impregnating Danggeum. The family returns to find Danggeum pregnant with



Shamanic painting of Triad Jeseok.
National Folk Museum of Korea

the monk's seed, and locks her up in a cardboard box, or in some versions, banishes her from the home. After ten months inside the box, Danggeum gives birth to triplet boys. When they turn seven, the boys attend the village schoolhouse, where they are teased and taunted for being fatherless. The boys ask Danggeum who and where their father is, and they set out together with their mother to Seocheonguk (Heavenly Kingdom of the West), where they arrive at a temple. Upon their visit, the monk carries out various paternity tests, which include swimming in clear water wearing paper garments; building sand castles big enough for them to walk in and out of; creating sound from straw drums and straw roosters. Lastly, the monk makes a cut in his finger and when he sees that his blood joins as one with that of the three boys, he confirms that they are indeed his sons. The monk appoints the three sons to divine positions, after which he and Danggeum ascend to the heavens and the triplets are deified as Jeseok.

There are currently over sixty versions of the Maiden Danggeum myth, each greatly varying in detail. Variations of the heroine's name include Seojangaegi (northwest regions); Sejuaegi (northeast regions); Danggeumaegi (middle regions); Jeseongnimne Ttanimaeagi, or Baby Daughter of Jeseok Household (southeast regions); Jajimyeongagi (Jeju). Versions of the monk's name include Jujaemunjang of Hwangeumsan, or Golden Mountain (Ganggye); Seoinnim, or Sir West (Hamheung, Pyeongyang); Jangseokgayeorae, which is close to Sakyamuni (Yangpyeong); Seokgayeoraesijunnim, a combination of Sakyamuni and the shamanic deity Sijun (Gangneung, Yeongdeok); Jungsang of Golden Mountain (Suwon, Osan); Hwanggeumdaesa, or Great Golden Monk (Cheongju); Hwangejung of Golden Mountain (Jindo, Yeongdong); and Jujaeseonsaeng of Golden Mountain (Jeju).

Details involving the heroine's impregnation, her trials, and the boys' encounter with the monk also vary significantly from region to region. In

versions from regions northeast of Namhan River, the monk comes to the heroine's house to request a donation and spends the night, during which the daughter dreams of receiving three marbles, resulting in the conception; while in versions from the peninsula's southwest regions, as the monk leaves with a donation of rice, he gives the daughter three rice grains to eat, or holds her wrist, or touches her hair, which results in impregnation. As for the trials that ensue her impregnation, in versions from the northeast, the daughter is locked up inside a cave, where she gives birth and raises the children, then sets out in search of the monk at the children's request; while in versions from the southwest, the parents banish her immediately and the pregnant daughter sets out to find the monk. The monk also reacts differently according to different versions: In versions from the northeast, he carries out various tests to prove that the triplets are his sons and when they pass, gives them names and positions; while in versions from the southwest, upon reencountering the pregnant daughter, he leaves priesthood and prepares for a secular life with her. In versions from Jeju Island, the triplets fail the state civil servant examination due to their status as the offspring of a Buddhist monk, and when the brothers, angry at the result, destroy the peal motif-engraved bell tower, the king's court arrest the heroine and order the triplets to repair the bell tower, after which their mother is released and the triplets are deified and worshipped through shamanic rituals.

This shamanic myth of a monk and a maiden coming together to give birth to triplet boys is the narrative of the origins of the deity Jeseok, which in Korean folk religion oversees farming and productivity. Conception and birth are rendered as divine acts in narrating as a story the functions of the god of productivity to pray for fertility and prosperity. The characterization of the male protagonist as a monk is related to the introduction of Buddhism. In the various versions, the monk descends from or ascends to the heavens, or displays

supernatural traits like Taoist magic, which are traits shared by sun god characters in Korean mythology like Haemosu, but were replaced by those of a monk following the import of Buddhism. The heroine's character reflects the traits of a goddess that oversees a region, as shown in the name Dangeum, its etymological origins traced back to the word *dangam*, from Goguryeo, meaning "grain god" or "village god." This interpretation of the myth establishes a connection with ancient founding myths of Dangun or Jumong, which involve a male from the celestial world and a goddess of the terrestrial world coming together to conceiving and giving birth to a new deity.

Myth of Mountain God of Jungnyeong

죽령산신당신화

"Jungnyeongsansindangsinhwa" is a myth about Granny Dajagu, worshipped as a mountain god, and is transmitted around the village of Yongbuwon in Danyang, North Chungcheong Province. Jungnyeong is a mountain pass that stretches from Danyang to Punggi in North Gyeongsang Province, where twice each year on the third and ninth lunar months, a ritual is held at the Jungnyeong Mountain God Shrine located on the village guardian mountain (*dangsan*).

Packs of thieves lurked in hideouts around Jungnyeong, attacking travelers and even stealing tributes from public officials, which troubled the governor of Danyang. An old granny appeared and offered that she had a scheme to catch the thieves if the governor would provide military support. The governor accepted the proposal and secured military support from the local heads of nearby towns including Punggi, Yeongchun and Cheongpung. The granny instructed the soldiers that if she called out "Dajagu!" it meant that the thieves were asleep, and that if she called out "Deuljagu!" it meant the thieves were awake. Then she went around where the thieves

were hiding, shouting, "Dajagu! Deuljagu!" and when the thieves asked what it meant, she answered, "I have two sons, the eldest being Dajaguwas and Deuljagu my second, and the younger one who left home has not returned, so I am searching for him." The thieves believed her and let her stay with them in their hideout. One night, the thieves celebrated their leader's birthday by drinking late into the night, and when they got drunk and fell asleep, the granny called out, "Dajagu!" the soldiers who had been waiting in ambush captures all the thieves. Those in the royal court heard of this accomplishment and searched for the granny to offer a reward but were unable to find her. Then one night the granny appeared in the king's dream, flying a kite, and told him that the spot where the kite fell would be where she would settle. That spot is where the Jungnyeong Mountain God Shrine is located today. After this dream, Granny Dajagu continued to demonstrate her divine powers and came to be worshipped as the Mountain God of Jungnyeong.

This myth is structured as a combination of elements of the heroic tale, about the capturing of thieves; of the origin tale, about how the Jungnyeong Mountain God Shrine came to be; of the supernatural tale, about the events that followed the protagonist's deification. The mythological elements of this narrative include the deification of the old granny,



Jungnyeong Mountain God Shrine .
Danyang-gun, Chungcheongbuk-do, National Folk Museum of Korea

and the details of the origins of the Jungnyeong Mountain God Shrine and related rituals.

Granny Dajagu is a guardian goddess who solves real-life problems of the villagers, and unlike other goddesses in Korean mythology, she does not possess the characteristics of a farming god, or the appearances of a giant.

Myth of Onjo and Biryu

온조비류신화

“Onjobiryusinhwa” is a founding myth that tells the story of Onjo and Biryu, founders of the ancient kingdom of Baekje.

In *Samguksagi* (History of the Three Kingdoms), Vol. 23, Book 1 of “Baekjebongi” (Records of Baekje), the article on the year of King Onjo’s enthronement reads that Onjo’s father was Chumo, or Jumong, who came from North Buyeo to Jolbon Buyeo and married the second daughter of the king of Buyeo. When, soon after, the king died, Jumong inherited the throne. He had two sons, the first of which was Biryu and the second Onjo. However, when a son that Jumong had back in North Buyeo came and was made Crown Prince, Onjo and Biryu left for the southern lands, taking with them ten subjects, including Ogan and Maryeo, and arrived at Hansan, where they founded the capital Wiryeseong in Hanam (South of the River) and named the new state Sipje. This was in the 3rd year of era name Hongjia during the reign of Chengdi in Former Han of China (B.C.E. 18). Biryu did not agree with the ten subjects who recommend this land and went to settle at Michuhol, which proved unsuitable to live, with damp soil and salty water, and returned to Wiryeseong where he lived until the end of his life. Onjo later changed the name of his kingdom to Baekje, to reflect that his subjects (*baekseong*) were happy under his rule. The ancestral lineage of Baekje, like that of Goguryeo, came from Buyeo, and thereby inherited the family

name from Buyeo. According to later records, King Biryu, progenitor of Baekje, was born from Utae, who was a grandson of Haeburu of North Buyeo, beget from a concubine’s son, and from Soseono, the daughter of Yeontabal from Jolbon, who gave birth to Biryu an Onjo after marrying Utae, but following his death, helped Jumong from North Buyeo found Goguryeo in Jolbon. Jumong married Soseono and treated her highly, as well as her two sons Biryu an Onjo, but upon the arrival of Yuryu, a son he had left behind in Buyeo, Jumong named Yuryu the crown prince to inherit this throne. In response, Biryu took his brother Onjo and his mother across the rivers Paesu and Daesu to Michuhol to live. On the other hand, according to the Chinese records *History of the Northern Dynasties* (*Beishi*), and *Book of Sui* (*Suishu*), Gongsun Du, a governor of Liaodong in Han China gave his daughter to Gutae, a trustworthy descendant of Dongmyeong, to marry. The kingdom of Biryu, it is said, became the powerful state of Dongi, but the identity of this kingdom is not known.

The myth of Onjo and Biryu implies that the group that founded Baekje was an alliance of the Onjo lineage of heavenly descendants and the Biryu lineage of earthly descendants. The mythological traditions of the two groups reflect their collaborative efforts as well as their conflicts, the version transmitted by the Onjo group borrowing from the King Dongmyeong myth of Buyeo, of heavenly lineage, and that of the Biryu group from the King Geumwa myth of earthly lineage.

Myth of Samcheok Sea God Shrine

삼척해신당신화

The myth “Samcheokhaesindangsinwha” dating back to the 17th century, following massive Japanese invasions on the peninsula, is related to the sea god shrine (*haesindang*) of Galnam Village in Samcheok, Gangwon Province.

A long, long time ago in Galnam Village in Samcheok lived two young lovers. One day the maiden headed out, on her beloved lover's boat, to a rock out at sea to gather sea laver. The man returned after taking her to a rock with abundant sea laver growing, and while the maiden was gathering the seaweed, a gust of wind blew and waves rolled, sweeping up the maiden and throwing her into the sea. She struggled to survive, calling out for help, but died in the end. Villagers later called the rock Aebawi, meaning, "struggle rock". After the maiden's death, the fishermen never had a good catch, and when villagers sailed out to sea, their boats capsized, killing many men. Poor catches continued and the village suffered from famine and plague, making life miserable. Then one day, an old man had

a dream in which the dead maiden appeared, asking for appeasement of her grievance, having died an unmarried virgin. So the villagers built a village guardian shrine (*seonangdang*), where they held rituals and offered a wood-carved penis to appease the maiden's spirit. Good catches resumed for the village's fishermen, who were safe at sea and happy in the village.

In the villages of Korea's eastern coast, when the village guardian deity is a goddess, the fishermen believe that an offering of ox head or scrotum to the goddess ensures protection at sea and brings a big catch, which is associated with the belief that sexual union appeases female deities and brings productivity. The fishermen of this region use the expression that their lives "are earned in the underworld and spent in the human world." The continuity of this myth is closely associated with their longing for safety out at sea, the place of their livelihood.



Samcheok Sea God Shrine.
Samcheok-si, Gangwon-do, 2001, National Folk Museum of Korea



Painting of the deity in the Samcheok Sea God Shrine.
Samcheok-si, Gangwon-do, 2001, National Folk Museum of Korea

Myth of Scholar Sukyeong and Maiden Aengyeon

숙영랑앵연랑신가

The shamanic myth "Sugyeongrangaengyeonnang singa," recited as part of illness rituals (*byeonggut*) performed across the Hamheung region in South Hamgyeong Province, tells the story of Scholar Sukyeong and Maiden Aengyeon.

Marriage was arranged between fifteen-year-old Scholar Sukyeong and fourteen-year-old Maiden Aengyeon, after three proposals made to Master Mother and Master Father, which secured half-permission, and flowers blooming on this side and that bowing their heads to each other, which confirmed the permission for them to wed. Scholar Sukyeong referred to a fortuneteller in the south to ask about their marital compatibility and was told their signs on the sexagenary cycle indicate a willow by the river, its thousand branches swaying, and

that they would be good in marriage. The groom's family had sent plentiful wedding gifts and they were rich in possessions, so their life was without lack. But a year, two years passed, then they turned twenty, thirty, then forty, and the couple was still without child. One day, when the husband, now a lord, was on an outing to enjoy the fine weather, he saw a family of swallows returning from south of the river, the offspring flying in front of and behind the parents, then sitting them down on a tree stump that had been rotting for three years, and bringing them worms to eat. The lord felt forlorn and upon returning home, took to bed. At the urging of the wife, the couple consulted a fortuneteller in the south of Gyeongsang Province, who told them that virtue and prayers would bring them a child. So they went to Geumsang Temple on Mt. Anae, with offerings of white rice, jujubes, yellow candles, and yellow paper, and prayed for three months and ten days, which gave them a son, though he was blind. The couple named him Geobuk (Turtle) and a nanny raised him with dedication. When the boy turned three, the couple gave birth to their second son, and he was a hunchback who could not walk. The couple named him Namsaengi (Terrapin) and a nanny raised him. Despite their billions in possession, the parents died after suffering from distress, and their sons frittered away all their wealth, and then went around begging to feed themselves. When they were chased away from homes and told never to come back, the brothers sat outside the gate crying.

Then one day, the younger brother suggested that they head to the temple where were conceived, and they set out, the blind older brother carrying his hunchback brother on his back, the younger brother carrying his brother's stick, relying on each other to find the way. When they arrived at the temple's entrance, they found gold nuggets floating in the stream. When the younger brother Namsaengi suggested that they fetch the gold, the older brother responded, "Why would we be so lucky to keep the gold for ourselves?" and urged that they keep

going. Upon their arrival, Buddha ordered Bulmoki to let them stay in the southern thatched-roof quarters of the temple, to teach them how to read, and to feed them three meals of steamed white rice. When the brothers told Bulmok about the gold nuggets, the temple's Three Thousand Monks went after the gold, only to find a gold serpent, and came back to beat up the two brothers. But when the brothers went back to see, they were indeed gold nuggets, and the brothers brought them back to offer to Buddha. At this, the temple began to dance, plating Buddha and the temple's interiors with gold, upon which Buddha opened Geobuk's eyes and straightened Namsaengi's back and legs. The brothers came to Joseon and lived until the age of eighty-one, and upon their death became divine beings that oversee human spirits.

The plot of this myth, of a childless couple conceiving after offering prayers to Buddha, and of their disabled sons healing themselves by making an offering to Buddha, emphasizes the miraculous powers of Buddha. The brothers' names, meaning a turtle and a terrapin, are details that imply longevity and healing powers, which is related to the function of this narrative as part of illness rituals. In the healing ritual *honsugut*, the song "Hwangcheonhonsi (Spirit in the Underworld)," about coaxing the Messenger from the Underworld (Jeoseungsaja) to prolong an individual's life span, is sung to heal illnesses in adults, while the "Song of Scholar Sukyeong and Maiden Aengyeon" is sung to treat illnesses in children. The shamanic song "Jeseokcheongbae (Inviting Jeseok)" tells the story of the god of childbirth Jeseok, who originated from a swamp in Cheollyeong, and a brother and sister, one of whom is Namsaengi, a hunchback, and the other the blind Geobuk, who pull out a golden pillow from the swamp and offer it to Buddha to heal themselves. It is interesting that both narratives share a similar set of characters and plot, but one prays for healing, while the other for a good harvest and prosperity. The motif of a couple giving birth to

disabled children who are healed by Buddha's grace is distinctive among Korean mythology, as is the motif of brother deities.

Myth of Seok Talhae

석탈해신화

"Seoktalhaesinhwa" is the myth of Talhae, the fourth king of the kingdom of Silla and the progenitor of the royal family Seok. The narrative, rich in detail, has the archetypal structure of the biographical heroic chronicle, the most universal structure found in hero myths around the world.

The myth can be summarized as follows, based on the narrative as described in the "Records of the Talhae Dynasty" section of *Samgungnyusa*:

During the reign of King Namhae, Ajineuiseon, who was the fisherwoman for King Hyeokgeose, saw one day on the seas of Ajinpo a flock of magpies crowing as they flew over the water. The old woman thought this strange and looked closer, to find a boat carrying a large chest. The old woman opened the chest and found a boy with noble looks, along with many treasures and two slaves. She looked after the boy for seven days, after which the boy said, "I am from Yongseongguk (Dragon Fortress Kingdom). The queen gave birth to me, but I was born in an egg and abandoned, which is how I have arrived here." Upon finishing these words, the boy took his cane and his two slaves to Mt. Toham, where he dug a stone tomb and stayed for seven days. He found a place to live in the fortress on the mountain, and headed to the house that belonged to the high minister Hogong (Gourd Duke). Devising a scheme, the boy buried a whetstone and a piece of charcoal by the house, and the following morning, went to the house and claimed that his family had lived in the house for many generations. He brought charges against Hogong, saying, "I am a blacksmith and while I was away someone else took over my house. You will



Tomb of King Talhae.

Gyeongju-si, Gyeongsangbuk-do, 2004, National Folk Museum of Korea

find proof if you dig up the land around the house." When the authorities dug up the land and found the whetstone and charcoal, they were convinced and the boy took possession of the house. This boy's name was Talhae. King Namhae, upon learning of Talhae's wisdom, took him in as his eldest son-in-law.

As Talhae descended Dongak (Eastern Peak, an alternative name for Mt. Toham), Talhae ordered Baekui (White Garment), one of his slaves, to fetch water, and Baekui, while fetching water from the well Yonaejeong, took a sip first, and the bowl stuck to his lips and could not be pulled off. Only when Talhae reprimanded him and Baekui repented, did the bowl fall off. Baekui never again deceived Talhae after this incident. Talhae succeeded the throne following King Norye and died after reigning for twenty-three years. His funeral was held on the hills of Socheongu, and later, Talhae reappeared as a spirit, and at his words, the late king's bones were dug up to be buried anew. The bones were immense, the size of those of a man of great strength, and the bones were ground to be made into a statue, which was placed in the palace. Again Talhae's spirit appeared and at his words the statue was enshrined on Dongak and was worshipped throughout the kingdom as Dongaksin, the god of Dongak.

The myth of Talhae, set against the backdrop of the sea, shows that in Korean mythology not only the celestial but the marine environment was depicted as

a divine and supernatural sphere. Details in the tale about Talhae's origins indicate the possibility that a group from the fishery culture of Northeast Siberia were brought by sea currents down along the eastern coast of the Korean peninsula to the Gyeongju area, bringing with them advanced technology of the Bronze or Iron Age.

That Talhae referred to himself as a "blacksmith" indicates that he was the leader of a group that brought with them the new technology of the Iron Age. Considering that in Siberian culture blacksmiths were closely connected to shamans for they possessed sorcery powers using metal, tools and weaponry, and that King Namhae, who was the second king of Silla, played the role of *chachaung*, a shamanic figure, it is likely that Talhae was a blacksmith-shaman king, or *yamuwang*.

The practice of digging out Talhae's bones to hold a second funeral can be interpreted as a form of ancestral worship, and of worshipping ancestral bones, which was part of the belief that bones contained the spirit of the dead.

Myth of Seven Stars

칠성풀이

"Chilseongpuri" is a shamanic myth transmitted in the Jeolla and Chungcheong provinces, which narrates the origins of Chilseong (Seven Stars), a folk deity that oversees the lifespan and safety of individuals. In shamanic rituals, the myth is recited as a means to pray for health and longevity of one's children, peace in the family and prosperity.

The following is a summary of the plot based on a version from North Jeolla Province, where the myth is transmitted mostly widely:

Sir Chilseong from Cheonhagung (Palace Under Heaven) and Lady Maehwa (Plum Blossoms) from Jihagung (Palace Underground) wed but are childless for a long time, and decide to offer conception

prayers, which prove effective and Lady Maehwa gives birth to seven sons. Sir Chilseong, delighted at the news of his wife's delivery, rushes to her, but upon learning that seven sons have been born at once, he feels disgusted and afraid, and ascends to Palace Under Heaven. In the celestial kingdom, Sir Chilseong marries Lady Oknyeo (Jade Woman) and settles down. Lady Maehwa, finding herself suddenly abandoned, attempts to abandon her sons by setting them adrift in the water, but an enlightened monk appears and advises her to raise them well, for their existence has been acknowledged by the heavens. The sons grow up healthy and start attending the village schoolhouse, where they excel in their studies, but the other children at school, envious of the seven brothers' talent, tease them for being fatherless. The brothers come home and ask their mother to find their father. When she tells them that their father is Sir Chilseong of the Palace Under Heaven, he brothers ascend to the palace in search of their father, and after passing a series of tests, prove to Sir Chilseong that they are his sons. When Sir Chilseong, distracted by his reunion with his sons, neglects the household, Lady Oknyeo schemes to kill them. She feigns a grave illness and asks Sir Chilseong to seek out a fortuneteller to cure her disease, then disguises herself as the fortuneteller and tells Sir Chilseong that his wife's illnesses will be cured only by feeding her the livers of his seven sons. Sir Chilseong, at a loss, returns home and weeps in despair, and the seven sons ask him to explain the situation. Upon hearing about the fortuneteller's instructions, the seven sons persuade their father to kill them and take their livers to save their stepmother, and the two of them can have more children. Sir Chilseong takes his sons into the mountains, carrying a sword to kill them, when a doe appears and tells him to take the livers of her seven fawns, which will reveal to him what Lady Oknyeo has schemed. Sir Chilseong takes the livers of the seven fawns to his wife, who only pretends to eat them and instead hides them. Sir Chilseong and his seven sons kill Lady Oknyeo and descend to the

human world, but Lady Maehwa is already dead, having jumped into a pond in despair after losing her husband and sons. The seven brothers acquire a resurrection flower and save their mother to reunite with their father, after which they become Chilseong (Seven Stars).

In the context of the history of Korean narratives, this myth is a typical stepmother tale (*gyemodam*), examples of which include not only folk tales like “Tale of Janaghwa and Hongryeon” and “Kongjwi and Patjwi,” but ancient shamanic epics like this myth or “Munjeonbonpuri (Origin of the Gate God).” The revenge on the wicked Lady Oknyeo and the resurrection of the good Lady Maehwa represent the theme of “punishing evil and rewarding virtue (*gwonseonjingak*),” commonly found in the Korean folk narrative tradition.



Shamanic painting of Seven Stars.
Joseon, National Folk Museum of Korea

Myth of State Preceptor Shrine at Daegwallyeong

대관령국사당신화

“Daegwallyeongguksadangsinhwa (Myth of State Preceptor Shrine at Daegwallyeong),” orally transmitted in the regions around Gangneung, Gangwon Province, tells the story of Beomilguksa (State Preceptor Beomil, 810-889), a revered monk of Seon-sect Buddhism of late Silla, deified as the village deity Seonghwang, enshrined at the Guksadang Shrine at Daegwallyeong Pass.

State Preceptor Beomil is worshipped around the eastern parts of Gangwon Province as guardian deity Seonghwang, enshrined at Guksadang at Daegwallyeong.

In the kingdom of Silla, there lived a daughter of a respected noble family in the mountain Gulsan in Myeongju (present-day Gangneung), who was an old maiden but unable to wed. One day while she was washing laundry by the well, sunlight illuminated her belly (in some versions, she drinks water glittering with sunlight), after which she showed signs of impregnation and gave birth to a son. Afraid that her family would view this as strange, she abandoned the baby between the rocks in the mountain, but cranes flew in and made breast milk to feed the baby, and at night auspicious light appeared in the sky. The daughter viewed this as strange and retrieved the baby and raised him. The boy learned to read and write at the age of five, and at ten, mastered the Four Books and Five Classics of Confucianism, and grew up to be appointed as Silla’s state preceptor, and is now known as State Preceptor Beomil. Beomil build two large temples on two mountains, Sinbok and Gulsan, and constructed a pagoda to supplement the vein of the land. In his later years Beomil lived as a recluse on Mt. Odae, where he passed away.

Also transmitted in the region is the myth of the origin of the State Preceptor Goddess and Yeoseonghwang (Village Goddess) of Daegwallyeong. A long time ago, a maiden from the Jeong family of

Gangneung was abducted by a tiger, and the family climbed up Daegwallyeong Pass, to find her dead inside the shrine for the village god Seonghwang. The villagers believed that the village god took the maiden to be his wife, and have been worshipping them as a couple—the State Preceptor God and Goddess—as part of the annual Dano festivities.

State Preceptor Beomil was a historical figure who founded Gulsan Temple on Mt. Sagul, Gangneung, and established the Sagul Mountain School, one of Silla Buddhism's main schools of Five Teachings and Nine Mountains, but with his deification as guardian deity Seonghwang of Daegwallyeong Pass, his story took on the traits of a heroic folk narrative, including supernatural birth and other mythemes. The motif of impregnation



Enshrined painting of the village deity State Preceptor God
Daegwallyeong, Gangwon-do, 1964, National Folk Museum of Korea



Enshrined painting of the village deity State Preceptor Goddess
Daegwallyeong, Gangwon-do, 2004, National Folk Museum of Korea

through sunlight illuminating the belly or drinking sunlit water has also led to the interpretation that this narrative is a type of sun god mythology.

Myth of Three Surnames

삼성신화

The myth “Samseongsinhwa” from Jeju Island narrates the emergence and settlement of the three clans, with the names Go, Yang and Bu, reflecting the historical experience of Tamna, the island's name in ancient times.

According to old records, a long time ago at a time when there were no humans or things, three divine men emerged from the earth: The biggest man was Yang Eul-na; the second biggest Go Eul-na; and the third Bu Eul-na. The three men crossed the desolate plains and hunted animals, eating their meat and making clothes out of their hide. One day they saw a wooden chest, enclosed with a seal, wash up on the eastern seashore. They went after it and opened it to find a stone chest inside, while at the same time an envoy appeared, dressed in purple with a red waistband. Inside the stone chest were three maidens in blue dresses, a pony, calf and seeds of five grains. The envoy said, “I am an envoy from Japan. Our king, who has three daughters, said, ‘Three divine sons were sent down to a peak in the middle of the western sea to found a kingdom but they had no wives,’ and commanded me to chaperone his three daughters, which is why they are here, and now you shall marry them and accomplish big things.” The envoy then disappeared on a cloud. The three men wed according to the order of their age, then each headed to lands with sweet spring water and rich soil, settling down where their arrows landed. The land where Yang Eul-na settled was called First Capital; Go Eul-na's land Second Capital; and Bu Eul-na's land Third Capital. They were the first to grow five grains, along with ponies and calves, prospering day by day.

This myth is notable for the abrupt shift in narrative from its opening, depicting a world without humans or things, to the appearance of the progenitors of the three clans, which is not observed in most mythology. The emergence of three divine men who already possessed individual surnames at the beginning of the universe seems to reflect a mythology restructuring as the status of the three founders of the ancient Tamna kingdom were established as that of clan progenitors due to specific historical factors. Substantial evidence points to the interpretation that among the three Eul-nas of this narrative, it is likely that Go Eul-na and Bu Eul-na are not powers indigenous to Jeju but from Buyeo and Goguryeo. It is understood that this myth has its roots in the mythological tradition of Goryeo royalty, transferred as a shamanic myth of Jeju, which in ancient times was subjugated by Goryeo. In other words, the narrative of the three Eul-nas were formed by taking only the opening of the universe creation section from the founding myth of the Tamna kingdom and combining it with the narrative about the confirmation of the surnames of the three divine men. The depiction of the three divine men as hunters who shift to agriculture and cattle farming following their marriage to the three maidens from Japan is a narrative rendering of changes that took place in the island's economic foundations.



Three Family Name Cave.
Jeju-si, Jeju-do, Korea Tourism Organization

Myth of Wang Geon

왕건신화

The myth “Wanggeonsinhwa” narrates the sanctified history of the ancestors of Wang Geon, founder of the kingdom of Goryeo.

Hogyeong, who referred to himself as Seong-goljanggun (High Martial Official of Sacred Bone Class) of the kingdom of Silla, descended Mt. Baekdu and lived on the left skirt of Mt. Buso. One day he went hunting to Mt. Pyeongna with nine other villagers and, inside a rock cave, encountered a tiger. When the tiger blocked the cave's exit, the hunters threw their hats to pick who would fight the tiger and the tiger caught Hogyeong's hat. Hogyeong stepped outside the cave to fight the tiger but it disappeared and the cave collapsed. Hogyeong arranged a funeral for those who died in the cave, preceded by a ritual for the mountain god, during which the mountain god appeared, and claiming that she was a widow, the deity proposed that they be joined in marriage. As soon as these words were said, the mountain god and Hogyeong disappeared together, and the villagers of Pyeongna built a shrine to worship Hogyeong as the main deity and changed the name of the mountain to Guryong (Nine Dragons). Later Hogyeong, unable to forget his former wife, returned to her at night, as if in a dream, and they spent the night together, which resulted in the birth of a son, named Gangchung.

Gangchung married Guchiui and lived in Magagab on Mt. Ogwan (Five Crowns), where the geomancer Palwon of Silla visited and told him, “If you move the village of Buso to the south of the mountain and plant pine trees to keep the rock surface hidden, from there will be born the one that will unify the three Han states.” Gangchung moved with the other villagers, then planted pine trees and changed the village name to Songak (Pine Rock). He had two sons, and the younger, named Boyuk, became a monk and after studying the Buddhist doctrines on Mt. Jiri, returned to live in Magagab. One day in his dream Boyuk climbed up Gongnyeong (Swan Pass) and urinated in

the southern direction, which filled up the entire land with his urine. His older brother Ijegeon, upon hearing this, said the dream predicted the birth of a pillar that supported the heavens, and gave his daughter Deokju to Boyuk, and the two gave birth to two daughters. When the second daughter Jinui grew into an adult, she heard from her old sister about a dream she had, of sitting atop Mt. Ogwan and urinating, filling up the entire world, and Jinui bought this dream from her sister. Later King Su Zong of Tang China paid a visit to the village of Songak prior to his enthronement and stayed at Boyuk's house, where the king asked the two daughters to mend his torn robe, whereupon the older sister stepped on the threshold to enter his room but had a nosebleed and had to turn around, and Jinui came to serve Su Zong. A month into his stay, Jinui showed signs of pregnancy and Su Zong gave her a bow and an arrow, to be given to her child if she gave birth to a son. Jinui indeed had a son and named him Jakjegeon.

When Jakjegeon turned sixteen years old, Jinui gave him the bow and arrow, and the boy demonstrated outstanding archery skills and came to be called Singung (Divine Archer). Seeking his father, Jakjegeon boards a tang envoy's ship and while crossing the seas, encountered Yongwang (Dragon King) of the East Sea being harassed by an old fox ghost. Jakjegeon killed the fox with his bow, upon which Dragon King asked him to choose between meeting his father, who was the son of the heavens, or returning to his mother with treasures. Jakjegeon responded that his wish was to become to king of the East, and the Dragon King answered that was possible only after three generations carrying names with the character “建 (*geon*, meaning ‘to build’)” passed, and demanded another wish. Jakjegeon returned home with Yongnyeo (Dragon Maiden) as his wife, along with Seven Treasures and a pig. When the pig laid himself down on the southern skirts of Mt. Songak, Jakjegeon built himself a new house there, which was the first site at which Gangchung had settled. Later Yongnyeo was sent back to the

Dragon Palace for failing to observe a taboo, and Jakjegeon died after entering Mt. Songni, where he spent the rest of his life reading Buddhist scriptures. The eldest of Yongnyeo's four sons, named Yonggeon, married a woman he saw in his dream and lived in the old house on Mt. Songak. At the suggestion of the Buddhist monk Doseon, who had returned after studying geomancy in Tang China, Yonggeon built a new house and had a son, whom he named Wang Geon. When Doseon returned again the year Wanggeon turned seventeen, he delivered the will of the heavens, along with military tactics and the principles of the cosmos, following which Wanggeon founded the kingdom of Goryeo.

The myth of Wanggeon demonstrates the characteristics of a founding myth formed in medieval times. Unlike ancient founding myths, the story of Wanggeon's founding of Goryeo is based on sanctity assigned not by the heavens or other transcendental realms but by the royal lineage of the human world and the medieval civilization, including the Seonggol aristocracy of Silla and the royalty of Tang China, worshipped as the son of heaven, or *tianzi*. Another new trait is that the sanctification, applying the principles of geomancy and other beliefs, is focused on the ancestors of the founder and not on Wang Geon himself. This new method of constructing a mythological narrative surrounding the founder of a new kingdom was passed down to Joseon and the myth of its founder Yi Seong-gye and his ancestors.

Origin of Celestial King

천지왕본풀이

“Cheonjiwangbonpuri” is a creation myth from Jeju Island, performed as part of the shamanic ritual segment Chogamje (Song of First Invitation), the most basic procedure in all rituals on the island, from simple hand-rubbing rituals (*binyeom*) to grand rituals (*keungut*).

The version of the song as recited by shaman Bak Bong-chun is as follows:

Sumyeongmangja was an ill-behaved and malicious man, and treated Cheonjiwang (Celestial King) in a rude manner. Greatly infuriated, the deity led ten thousand troupes with a scheme, but failed (Cheonjiwang placed his hood on Sumyeongmangja's head but the man refused to be threatened, ordering his servant to strike his head with an ax). On his way back to the heavens, Cheonjiwang lodged at the home of Baekjuhalmang (Granny Baekju), where he wed Bakiwang and told her to take over the human world, and that if she gave birth to sons, they should be named Daebyeolwang and Sobyelwang (Big Star King and Small Star King). He also left for them two gourd seeds, which the

two brothers planted, then climbed up to the heavens where they met Cheonjiwang and proved that they were his sons. At the orders of the king, the two twin brothers competed to decide who should rule the human world. The first contest called for blossoming flowers inside a silver bowl, but Sobyelwang played a trick, for which Daebyeolwang sought reproach and Sobyelwang apologized. Sobyelwang then proposed a riddle contest, which he won and was named the ruler of the human world. He then sought punishment for Sumyeongmangja by turning him into a mosquito, fly and bedbug. As ruler, Sobyelwang brought discipline to human habits, offered blessings and sought distinction between good and evil.

This myth is also referred to as "Chogamje," after the ritual segment, or in some cases, the two titles narrate separate stories, with "Cheonjiwang-bonpuri" opening with the scene of Cheonjiwang punishing Sumyeongmangja, then marrying a woman of the human world, who gives birth to Daebyeolwang and Sobyelwang who take over the underworld and the human world, respectively.



Song of First Invitation segment (inviting the wind god).
Jocheon-eup, Jeju-si, Jeju-do (Jeong Su-mi)

Origin of Childbirth Goddess from Myeongjin Kingdom

명진국생불할망본풀이

The shamanic myth "Myeongjinguksaengbulhalmangbonpuri (Origin of Childbirth Goddess from Myeongjin Kingdom)" from Jeju Island narrates the deification of Saengbulhalmang (Granny Life), the goddess that oversees conception and birth.

When the Princess of East Sea Dragon Palace is abandoned for being impious, she pleads to her mother for instructions for her survival, and she is given the responsibility of Saengbulwang, the goddess of conception, birth and childcare. The princess is locked inside a steel box and thrown into the sea, after which the box drifts on the sea until it reaches the human world. Imbaksa Imburuju finds

the box and opens it, from which the Princess of East Sea Dragon Palace emerges and in order to fulfill her responsibility as Saengbulhalmang, impregnates Imburuju's wife. She has yet to be trained in delivery skills, however, and the mother and baby are placed in critical condition. In panic, the maiden breaks down in tears, while Imburuju takes his grievance to Okhwangsangje (Great Emperor of Jade), who listens to the husband's call for help and searches for a solution. At the recommendation of Jibusacheonwang (King of the Underworld), the emperor calls the Princess of Myeongjungkuk (Kingdom of Longevity), who is the daughter of Sakyamuni, and appoints her as the childbirth goddess Saengbulwang to be sent down to the human world. The princess, unable to reject the king's orders, goes to the Jade Emperor to receive instructions about impregnation and delivery, and heads down to the human world. Upon arrival, the first person she encounters is the Princess of East Sea Dragon Palace, and the two, learning that they have been assigned the same responsibilities, go to the Jade Emperor to sort out the situation. The emperor suggests a flower gardening competition to determine who will serve as the Goddess of Life. While the Myeongjungkuk Princess's flowers thrive and turn into Prosperity Blossoms (Beonseongkkot), the East Sea Dragon Palace Princess's wilt, turning into Withering Blossoms (Geumnyuulkkot). As a result, the former is named the winner and is appointed as the Goddess of Life of the Human World (Iseumgsaengbulwang) and the latter as the Goddess of the Underworld (Jeoseunghalmang). The latter threatens to make children suffer treacherous experiences, but the former pacifies her and sends her to the underworld. Thus, the Princess of Myeongjungkuk came to oversee conception, delivery and healthy childhood in the human world.

In Korean folk religion, the concept of the goddess of birth and related rituals are widespread, but mythological narratives about the deity are rare, and the Myth of the Origin of Childbirth Goddess from Myeongjin Kingdom, from Jeju Island, is one

of few examples that clearly indicate the connection between shamanic rituals and folk narrative, serving as an important reference. This myth can be understood as a narrative of a deity of foreign origin chasing out an indigenous deity to take its place. The deity Saengbulhalmang was originally the Princess of Yowanghwangjeguk (Dragon Emperor Kingdom), but the Princess of Myeongjungkuk appeared and took her place. Among Jeju Island's village gods, Ilwetdangsin is the guardian of children, and is generally believed to be the Princess of Yowanghwangjeguk. The Princess of Myeongjungkuk is sometimes referred to as the daughter of Sakyamuni, which indicates Buddhist influence.

Origin of Farming

세경본풀이

The shamanic myth "Segyeongbonpuri" recited as part of the good harvest segment in the grand rituals (*keungut*) of Jeju Island, tells the story of Jacheongbi, the goddess of farming, and this is also called the myth of Jacheongbi.

The following is a summary of the myth based on a recited version by Gang Il-saeng:

Gimjungkuk and Jojungkuk, husband and wife, longed for a son but their offering was short by one *geun* in weight and they were given a daughter, who upon birth was named Jacheongbi. One day when Jacheongbi is doing the laundry, Bachelor Mun, headed to the heavenly kingdom of Okhwang to pursue his studies, asks her for some water to drink and she offers him a gourdful, with a willow leaf floating on the water. Bachelor Mun expresses anger at this but Jacheongbi handles the situation with wisdom, and follows Mun to Okhwang, where she studies alongside him, disguised as a man, and greatly excels. From time to time her colleagues are suspicious that she is a woman, but each time, she evades their accusation with wit and wisdom. Jacheongbi

develops romantic feelings for Bachelor Mun, and when she returns upon completing her studies, she confesses to him that she is a woman and they make love at Jacheongbi's home. Upon her return, Jacheongbi's parents accept her as the family heir for she had completed her studies, and hands her the deeds for the house, land, and servants. Bachelor Mun leaves behind a token of love and for a long time Jacheongbi waits patiently, but tired of waiting, sets out to find him, taking with her the family servant Jeongsunam. On the road, Jacheongbi ends up killing Jeongsunam to resist his seduction and to escape violence. Denounced as a murderer, Jacheongbi is abandoned by her family, and is accepted as a foster daughter by the Granny Witch of Mt. Cheongtae. Jacheongbi writes Bachelor Mun a letter of love and Mun rushes to her but is unable to meet her, after which Jacheongbi is abandoned by the Granny Witch as well, with nowhere left to go. After enduring a thousand troubles and struggles, Jacheongbi heads up to the heavens disguised as a monk, where she boards with Bachelor Mun in his room and they reconnect as lovers. Jacheongbi writes a letter to her father-in-law-to-be, explaining their situation, and after passing a series of tests, including crossing a bridge lined with knife blades, she receives permission to marry Mun. Jacheongbi also establishes the law of menstruation in women, which earns her acceptance for her powers of productivity, and contributes to a military battle against foreign enemies, for which she is awarded land for farming. When Ilcheonseonbi (A Thousand Scholars) kill her husband out of envy, Jacheongbi uses her wisdom to outwit their schemes, then travels to Secheonkkotbat (Flower Garden of the West), where she becomes a son-in-law of the Flower Garden Supervisor and picks a Resurrection Flower to bring back Mun, her husband, to life. She then sends her revived husband to Secheonjuk to take care of the supervisor's youngest daughter, whom Jacheongbi had married, but Mun does not return by an arranged date. Angry at her husband's betrayal, Jacheongbi reports this to her father-in-law Munseonwang, who

defends his son. In the end, her husband returns and Jacheongbi begins farming on the lands of Segyeong, where Mun is deified as Sangsegyeong (Celestial Farming God); Jacheongbi as Jungsegyeong (Earthly Farming Goddess); and the servant Jeongsunam as Hasegyeong (Cattle God).

"Segyeongbonpuri" is a myth about the origins of farming, which refers to the delivery of the seeds of the five grains, and also about farming gods. It is a universally observed phenomenon that farming deities are goddesses, and conflict between the sexes and confrontation regarding class can be interpreted in terms of symbolism within mythological systems. Achieving fruition through the union of male and female, and Jacheongbi's male disguise—in other words, androgyny, or the combination of the two sexes—can both be interpreted as cosmological prosperity and fertility.

As the heroine of a farming myth that aims at praying for prosperity, Jacheongbi is the earth goddess Jimosin (Mother Earth), possessing maternal traits as the mother of land, the foundation of grain cultivation. The fact that Jacheongbi brings the seeds of five grains, that she is awarded farming land on Jeju in exchange for her martial accomplishment, and that she exercises influence on the proliferation of cattle and horses, can all be interpreted as the traits of the corn goddess, or the goddess of the harvest, and at the same time as those of an epic heroine, achieving peace in battle and acquiring land for farming.

Origin of Gate God

문전본풀이

"Munjeonbonpuri" is a shamanic myth from Jeju Island that tells the story of the origins of Munsin, or Gate God. The epic is recited as part of village rituals on Jeju and the title also refers to the ritual segment.

Scholar Nam from Namseon Village and Lady

Yeosan from Yeosan Village lived in poverty with their seven sons. One day Lady Yeosan proposes that her husband take up work in grain trade, and Nam leaves on a boat. Upon reaching Odong (Paulownia) Village of Odong Kingdom, Nam is lured into a scheme by the daughter of the wicked Noiljedaegwiil, squandering all his money. He ends up living off this woman, barely surviving on bran porridge and eventually losing his sight after years of malnutrition.

After waiting so long for her husband's return, Lady Yeosan sets out on a boat that her sons built to find Nam and reaches Odong Kingdom, where she hears, while wandering all around the country, children singing a song about Nam's whereabouts. At Nam's house, Lady Yeosan begs for a room to lodge overnight, but Nam, being blind, does not recognize her and refuses. Lady Yeosan persists and is finally offered a mud hut, where she cooks rice that she has brought with her and serves it to her long-lost husband. After taking a spoon of

the rice, Nam breaks into tears and tells his story, that back in Namseon Village he had been Scholar Nam who lived with Lady Yeosan and ate white rice, but had set out to work in the grain trade and lost his money in the hands of the scheming daughter of Noiljedaegwiil. At this, Lady Yeosan reveals her identity and the husband and wife are reunited.

The daughter of Noiljedaegwiil returns home to learn of this, and invites Lady Yeosan to take a bath with her at a pond at Jucheon River, where she offers to give Lady Yeosan a back scrub then kills her by pushing her into the water. Then she poses as Lady Yeosan, telling Nam, "The daughter of Noiljedaegwiil was a wicked woman and I had to push her into the pond at Jucheon River and kill her." Nam believes this and proposes that they now return home.

Upon the couple's arrival at Namseon Village, the seven brothers see that this woman is not their mother. The daughter of Noiljedaegwiil notices this



Shaman Gang Sun-seon reciting the Origin of Gate God entrance by the of a home.
Jeju-si, Jeju-do (2008, Gang Jeong-sik)

and schemes to murder the seven brothers. Claiming that she is suffering from terrible stomach pain, she sends Nam to a fortuneteller out on the main street who performs divination while wearing a straw bag over her head. After Nam sets out, Noiljedaegwiil's daughter takes a shortcut to the main street and sits down with a straw bag over her head to pose as the fortuneteller, telling Nam that the only cure for his wife is to eat the livers of all seven brothers. The foolish Nam falls for this scheme and comes home to sharpen his knife to kill his sons. But their next-door neighbor, the Witch of Mt. Cheongtae, comes over to borrow fire and learns why Nam is sharpening his knife, then alerts the seven brothers. The youngest son tricks Nam by offering to bring back the livers of his six brothers, that his father will then only have to kill him upon his return, then takes his brothers up to the mountain.

Exhausted, the seven brothers are dozing in the mountain when their mother appears in dream and says, "A roe deer will come by and if you surround it and try to kill it, you will be given an instruction." And indeed a deer comes by and when the brothers lay siege to it in an attempt to kill it, the deer tells them seven boars will soon be coming around, and that the brothers should let the mother boar live but take out the livers of her six offspring. The brothers wait and indeed seven boars come around, the brothers retrieving the livers of the six baby boars. Returning home, the youngest son instructs his brothers to run in when he shouts, and goes inside to give the six boar livers to the daughter of Noiljedaegwiil for her to eat. But when he peeks in through the door, Noiljedaegwiil's daughter only pretends to eat and hides the livers underneath her seat. The youngest son takes Noiljedaegwiil's daughter by her hair, wrapping her locks around his fist, shouting to call out to his brothers and to alert the villagers of her crime.

Scholar Nam runs away in alarm but gets his neck caught in the wooden crossbeams of the gate (*jeongnang*) and in his death becomes Jumokjisin

(Pillar God), and the daughter of Noiljedaegwiil hangs herself in the outhouse, becoming Cheukdobuin (Outhouse Goddess). The seven brothers head to Seocheonkkotbat (Flower Garden of the West) and pick Resurrection Flowers to bring their mother back from death and to worship her as Jowangsin (Kitchen God), the seven of them serving as her divine officials.

"Munjeonbonpuri" tells the story about the many gods that oversee the various parts of a home and their origins. The myth is usually recited as a part of village rituals on Jeju Island and at shamanic rites held upon the construction of a new house or after an expansion, or as part of hand-rubbing gate rituals (*munjeonbinyeom*) held on New Year. The story can also be viewed as a folk tale, similar versions of which have been passed down in different regions under different titles, including the shamanic song "Salpuri" of North and South Hamgyeong provinces; "Seongsingut (Seven Stars Ritual)" of North and South Pyeongan provinces; and "Chilseonggut (Seven Stars Ritual)" or "Chilseongpuri (Myth of Seven Stars)" of South Chungcheong Province and North and South Jeolla provinces.

Origin of God of Destiny Samgong

삼공본풀이

The shamanic myth "Samgongbonpuri" narrates the origins of the god of destiny (*jeonsangsin*) and is recited as part of *keungut* (grand ritual) on Jeju Island.

Once upon a time, there lived a male beggar in the upper village and a female beggar in the lower village. The two met on the street and lived together, earning a living as hired hands and giving birth to three daughters: When the first daughter was born a villager brought them steamed rice in a silver bowl, so the girl was named Eunjangagi (Silver Bowl Baby); when the second was born, she was brought rice in a brass bowl, so was named

Notjangagi (Brass Bowl Baby); and when the third was born, she was brought rice in a wooden bowl, so was named Gameunjangagi (Dark Bowl Baby). After Gameunjang was born, the family's fortunes began to accumulate and soon they became very rich. Now living in luxury, the couple called in their daughters one by one on a day of drizzling rain and asked to whom they owed this good fortune. The first and second daughters answered that it was owed to Haneulnim (Heavenly God) and Jienim (Earthy God) and also to their parents, which pleased the parents. The youngest daughter, however, answered that it was thanks not only to Haneulnim, Jienim, and her parents, but also to the vertical line that runs down the middle of the abdomen. Upset at this answer, the couple kicked out Gameunjang from their home, and the youngest daughter left home, carrying some food and clothes on a black cow, with a maidservant in tow. Her parents felt bad about kicking out their youngest daughter and ordered their two daughters to go tell the youngest to come and have some cold rice with water before setting out. The two daughters were jealous, however, and lied to Gameunjang that her mother and father were coming to beat her to death, at which the youngest daughter cast a spell and turned her sisters each into a blue centipede and horse dung mushroom (petticoat mottlegill). Their parents were walking out of the house, wondering what was going on, when they tripped on the doorsill and lost their sight, and from that day one they could only sit at home and consume their fortune, in the end turning to begging, wandering all around with the help of a cane.

Gameunjang, in the meantime, wandered around after leaving home, and coming upon a cottage where an old granny lived asked if she could spend the night. Using a pot she borrowed from the granny, Gameunjang steamed some rice that she brought and offered it to the granny's family, named Matungi (Yam Diggers), who ate only boiled yam. They refused to eat the steamed rice, saying

the food came from a beggar of unknown ancestry, but when the third Matungi gobbled it down, the others followed. Gameunjang got married to the third Matungi, and one day, she went out to the yam field with her husband to find that all the pebbles that they had thrown out into a hole were nuggets of gold and silver. They suddenly became rich, transporting the gold and silver nuggets on the black cow to acquire land and cattle, and also took them to the market to be sold. Gameunjang, in the meantime, knew that since she had left home, her parents had turned into blind beggars. So she hosted a feast for beggars for three months and ten days, and when her parents came by towards the end, she set up a separate table for them and asked them to tell her the story of their past. Her parents recite the story of their life, how they had met as beggars, then became rich after giving birth to three daughters. When Gameunjang, after listening in tears, confessed that she was their youngest daughter, her parents open their eyes in shock. Gameunjang told them that she was the God of Destiny, explaining how destiny worked. And Gameunjang lived with her parents in prosperity.

The shamanic myths of Chogong, Igong and Samgong, recited as part of Jeju Island's grand ritual, are organically connected and the story of Gameunjangagi revolves around what comes between life and death—in other words, about wealth and poverty, good fortunes and bad. The motifs found in this myth, of the third daughter, of fortune, yam digger, gold, beggar feast, and blindness, also appear in many other folk narratives.

"Song of God of Destiny Samgong" and other similar tales of acquiring fortune (*balbokseolhwa*) share a plot structure that starts with a woman leaving home after a conflict with the father about financial hegemony, then meets a man of a lower cultural rank and acquires great wealth with gold. These tales end before the heroine has children, for the main plot revolves around acquiring wealth.

Origin of Guardian Deity of Naju Grain Reserve

나주기민창본풀이

The shamanic myth “Najugiminchangbonpuri” narrates the origin of the ancestral deity of the An family of Seonheul Village in Jocheon, now part of Jeju City on Jeju Island.

The myth has been passed down by many shamans of Jeju Island, but the following version by shaman An Sa-in is the most complete:

Once upon a time, three brothers of the An family in Sunheung arrived on Jeju Island and each went to live in a different village. The youngest settled in Seonheul Village of Jocheon District, and years later one of his descendants moved to Jocheon Village, where he became a rich man with dozens of ships big and small. He was referred to by the villagers as Shiplord An. At the time, Jeju was stricken with a severe seven-year drought, leaving the people starved. As the Jeju County Magistrate searched for a solution, he heard that Shiplord An was rich enough to feed all the people on the island for three days, and called him in to discuss means of relief.

Shiplord An readily accepted the magistrate’s request to offer aid, and piled his merchant ships and fishing boats with money from the cellar and set out to the mainland to purchase rice. His ships reached Yeongam, South Jeolla Province, where he searched all over for rice. Eventually An bought all the old rice stored in Giminchang, the state grain reserve, of Naju, and as he set sail after loading the grains on his ships, he caught a glimpse of a young lady, wearing braids tied with silk ribbons, board his ship, but could not find her anywhere on the vessel.

The ship was approaching the horizon near Jeju when suddenly a gust blew and a sea wave, as high as a mountain, crashed in, leaving a hole at the bottom of the gunwale and sinking the ship. Shiplord An prayed to the heavens to save the people of Jeju, and a huge snake appeared, coiling

up its body to fill the hole and the boat resurfaced and sailed on. An thought, “This snake on the ship must be the ancestral deity of my family,” and upon the ship’s safe arrival at the port in Jocheon Village, he lit some incense and invited the snake god to his house. The snake crawled to An’s house, where it slithered around the fenced grounds, then left, crawling into a cave called Saekotal near the Jocheon Port.

That night the snake god appeared in Shiplord An’s dream and said, “I am the guardian deity of the State Grain Reserve in Naju. I have followed the rice that I was guarding, but in your home I could not find a place to hide my body and have decided to be enshrined at Saekotal, where I shall be worshipped by Shiplord An, who shall serve as high shaman (*sangdangol*); by Shiplord Song serving as middle shaman (*jungdangol*); and by Shiplord Bak serving as low shaman (*hadangol*). You shall worship me as your ancestor by staging memorial rites on seasonal holidays, ancestral memorial services on death anniversaries, and annual New Year shamanic rituals (*bellonggengi*), and I shall make you a very rich man with all the fishermen and divers under your command.” The snake god was henceforth worshipped as the An family’s guardian deity and as a guardian god that oversees fishing.

This myth narrates the origin of the guardian god of Naju Grain Reserve and how the deity came to be worshipped by the An family of Jeju and the island’s shamans. The myth also sheds light on the relationship in Korean shamanism between ancestral gods (*josangsin*) and the worship of Eop (God of Property); and that between ancestral gods and village gods (*dangsin*). Snakes are worshipped as ancestors as a form of Eop worship, and the worship of Bugunchilseong (Outer Seven Stars) on Jeju Island, which takes the form of the conical straw bundle (*jujeori*), is a modification of the mainland version of Eop worship.

Origin of Gwenwegit Shrine

케네깃당본풀이

The shamanic myth “Gwenewgildangbonpuri” narrates the origins of a village god on Jeju Island, a genre categorized as *dangsinbonpuri*. The narrative revolves around Socheonguk, a man of immense appetite who could swallow whole cows and pigs; his wife Baekjutto; and their sixth son Gwenwegitto. Alternate titles include Halloyeongsan Gwenwegitdangbonpuri (Song of the Origin of Gwenwegit Shrine on Mt. Halloyeong); and Songdangbonpuri (Song of the Origin of Songdang, Progenitor of Jeju Village Gods)

Socheonguk is born into the world at Gobuni Peak in the village of Hasongdang (Lower Pine Shrine). Upon hearing of his birth, Baekjutto, born on the white sandy shore of the heavenly kingdom Gangnamcheonjaguk, sets out to find him, believing that he was destined by the heavens to be her husband, and they marry, giving birth to five sons. When she becomes pregnant with their sixth son, Baekjutto recommends that Socheonguk takes up farming, and he takes nine *seom* of rice seeds and nine *seom* of millet seeds and a plow, and starts plowing the field with his ox. Baekjutto brings to the field nine jars of soup and nine jars of steamed rice, but Socheonguk says that he will eat after plowing some more, and Baekjutto heads back, leaving the food by the field. As Socheonguk keeps on plowing, a monk from Taesan Temple comes by and pleads that he is starving. Socheonguk offers him his food, thinking the monk cannot possibly eat up all the food, but the monk gobbles it down until everything is gone and runs away. Unable to bear his hunger, Socheonguk butchers his ox and grills it, but he still is not full after eating the whole ox, and goes on to devour someone else’s black cow. Finally full, he places the heads and hides of the two cows by his side and plows the field with his belly. Baekjutto comes back to hear about what has happened, and calling her husband a cow thief, demands that they

split up their household, and steps up above the winds.

Socheonguk steps down below the winds and takes the daughter of Jeongdonggalche as his concubine, returning to his former living of hunting with a gun. Baekjutto, in the meantime, gives birth to their sixth son Gwenwegitto, and when he turns three, carries him on her back to see Socheonguk. As she puts down the child in front of his father, the child pulls at his father’s beard and shoves his chest. Socheonguk, denouncing that the child was still behaving badly after separating his parents when he was still in his mother’s belly, locks up the child in a steel chest and throws it into the East Sea. The chest enters the Dragon Kingdom, where it gets caught in coral branches, stirring up a whirl of clouds and gusts of strong wind. At this, the king of the Dragon Kingdom calls his three daughters to look outside and it is only his youngest daughter who sees the steel chest. When the chest is brought in, once again it is only his youngest daughter who can open it. Finding a young man, fine as jade, sitting inside the chest filled with books, the king asks which kingdom he is from and why he is here. The young man answers that he is from Joseon’s southern kingdom of Jeju, and that he was on his way to suppress a rebellion in Gangnamcheonjaguk but was washed up by a storm to the Dragon Kingdom. Thinking that this young man was a renowned commander, the king invites him into the chambers of his first daughter, then of his second, but the young man does not respond, and only when he is invited into the youngest daughter’s room does he finally enter it.

One day the youngest daughter brings to him an abundant tray of food, but the young man does not even look up, and when asked why, he answers that he may be from a small kingdom but he eats only whole pigs and cows. At this, the king treats his son-in-law to whole pigs and cows every day, which quickly exhausts the food supply in his kingdom, and fearing that his kingdom is headed toward a collapse, he locks up the son-in-law in the steel chest

with his daughter and sends up the chest to the water's surface. When the chest reaches the white sandy shore of Gangnamcheonjaguk, once again a whirl of clouds stirs up, along with gusts of wind. By night, torches light up the land and by day the sound of reading aloud shakes up the celestial world, causing a commotion in the heavenly kingdom of Gangnamcheonjaguk. After hearing rumors, Cheonja the heavenly ruler orders his subjects to find out what is going on, and learning that the events have been caused by a steel chest on the shore, he brings the chest to his palace, where he opens it to find a woman and a young man fine as jade sitting inside. When Cheonja asks which kingdom they are from and what has brought them here, the young man answers that he is from Jeju Island, a southern state of Joseon, and that he has come to defeat the barbarians from the north and bring peace to the world. At this, Cheonja takes the young man by the hand and invites him into his palace, where the young man is given a steel helmet and armor, swords and arrows, along with millions of troops, and sent out to the battlefield. At his first battle, the young man kills a two-headed general; at the second a three-headed general; at the third a four-headed general, which leaves no generals to fight against, thereby resulting in peace in the world. Cheonja lauds the young man as a martial hero like no other in the world, and offers him a part of his land and his seas, which will allow the young man to live on taxes. The young man, however, declares that he will return to his homeland and heads back to Jeju Island of Joseon Kingdom, accompanied by millions of troops on a newly constructed warship, piled with coral and food.

As the ship approached Jeju Island, the young man fires canons, creating a noise loud enough to shake the world, and his father Socheonguk and mother Baekjutto ask the maidservant where the noise is coming from, to which she answers that their sixth son, sent off to die in a steel chest at age three has returned to overthrow his father. At

this, the father runs off in fear to Gobuni Peak in Hasongdang Village, where he dies and is enshrined; and the mother runs off in fear, her hair let down long and loose, and dies at Dangoreum (Volcanic Cone Shrine), where she is enshrined. Their sixth son, recalling that his father had been a good hunter who enjoyed meat, gathered the top hunters from each village to hunt a hoard of wild beasts to offer as sacrifice for a ritual in his worship. The sixth son sends back the troops to their homeland and climbs up Mt. Halla, where he seeks out an auspicious "lair (*hyeol*)" of mountain and water energy as a location for his enshrining, then upon descending, announces that he has been bestowed the holy shrine of Gimnyeong Village by command of Okhwang (Jade Emperor) and has come to bring to all the people the power of managing the wind and rain. When the people ask where he is to be enshrined, he answers that it shall be at the Lower Gwenwegit Shrine; when they ask what he would like to eat, he answers that he shall eat whole cows and pigs, at which the people respond that they were too poor to offer him cows and that they shall butcher a pig to worship him. And so it was that Socheonguk's sixth son was enshrined at Lower Gwenwegit Shrine, where people held rituals to worship him, offering the sacrifice of whole pigs.

This shamanic myth shares with "Samseong-sinhwa (Myth of Three Surnames)" a family progenitor myth and the founding myth of Tamna, the only known ancient kingdom that was founded on Jeju Island, several similarities: marriage between an indigenous male deity and a female deity from the outside world; the husband taking up farming at the recommendation of the wife; the female deity bringing with her five grain seeds, along with calves and ponies, and starting a life in farming. In this narrative, the protagonist Gwenwegit's life follows an arc of birth, abandonment, rescue, marriage, martial achievements, return and enshrinement, which make up the archetypal structure of a hero biography.

Origin of Igong

이공본풀이

The shamanic myth “Igongbonpuri” from Jeju Island narrates the origin of the Flower Supervisor of Seocheonkkotbat (Flower Garden of the West), who oversees the divine flowers including life flowers and death flowers. It is speculated that Korea’s unique Buddhist narratives influenced the novel genre and shamanistic mythology, giving birth to the classical novel *Tale of Allakguk* and the shamanic myth “Origin of Igong.” A similar narrative has yet to be found in Buddhist documents outside of Korea.

Poor man Kimjingung and the immensely rich Imjingung both beget a child after offering conception prayers (*gijachiseong*). Kimjingung begets a son, whom he names Wongangdoryeong (Bachelor Wongang, also known as Saradoryeong); Imjingung begets a daughter, whom he names Wongangami (Goddess Wongang); and the two promise the two children will wed when they grow up. Bachelor Wongang and Goddess Wongang eventually marry and are expecting a child, when Bachelor Wongang is suddenly appointed as the Flower Supervisor of Seocheonkkotbat (Flower Garden of the West). The two set out together for the new post, but the pregnant Goddess Wongang is unable to continue the journey. Bachelor Wongang names his yet-to-be-born child and resumes alone on the road to the Flower Garden of the West, leaving Goddess Wongang in the care of rich man Jangja. Jangja tries to assault her, but she resists and gives birth to a son. Goddess Wongang and her son Hallakgungi suffer severe exploitation in Jangja’s home, and when Hallakgungi turns fifteen, he presses his mother to tell her about his father, and upon learning who he is, Hallakgungi sets out to find him, leaving his mother behind in Jangja’s home. Jangja chases after Hallakgungi but fails to catch him, and tortures Goddess Wongang, killing her in the end. Hallakgungi arrives at the Flower Garden

of the West, where he meets the Flower Supervisor and upon receiving confirmation from the Flower Supervisor that he is his son, Hallakgungi is assigned the mission of bringing his mother back to life with *dohwansaengkkot*, the resurrection flower, and to take revenge on Jangja with *suremelmangaksimkkot*, the flower of destruction. Arriving at Jangja’s house, Hallakgungi exterminates Jangja’s entire family, and gathers his mother’s scattered bones to revive her, and together they head to the Flower Garden of the West, where Goddess Wongang becomes Jeoseungeomeom (Underworld Goddess) and Hallakgungi inherits from his father the Flower Supervisor post.

“Song of the Origin of Igong,” recited as a shamanic epic, can be categorized as a filial piety epic, about a son who finds his father to continue the heavenly legacy as a son and seeks the revenge of his mother; or as a social epic about the suffering of women and class conflict. Set against the mythological backdrop of the Flower Garden of the West, this shamanistic myth narrates the story of how Goddess Wongang and Hallakgungi became part of the family of the Flower Supervisor, while touching on the logic of patriarchal family transmission and gender roles based on male superiority.

In Jeju mythology, flowers are closely associated with life: Buldohalmang, the goddess in charge of the conception and birth of new life, oversees *saengbulkkot*, or the birth flower, which signifies primordial life in a biological sense; the Flower Supervisor in the “Song of the Origin of Igong,” also oversees *aksimkkot*, or the destruction flower, which is associated with punishment, and his flowers serve as tools of sorcery, sources of authority that maintain and strengthen cultural order.

This myth, therefore, reveals important shifts in the history of Korean mythology, from goddess-centered narratives to those based on male superiority; from narratives that emphasize primal life to those that also focus on sociocultural authority.

Origin of Jijang

지장본풀이

The shamanic myth “Jijangbonpuri” narrates the origins of Jijang, a goddess who possesses the power of the death curse (*sal*) and also the capacity to save the souls of haunted spirits and guide them to the underworld.

Husband and wife Namsan and Yeosan possessed immense wealth but were unable to conceive until late in life when they made a huge donation to the temple and offered prayers to Buddha with food to appease the souls of all creatures on land and at sea (*wonbulsuryuk*) and finally gave birth to a beautiful girl, whom they named Jijang. Starting when Jijang turned four, her grandfather, grandmother, father, and mother each died a year apart, making her an orphan left in the care of her mother’s brother, suffering ill treatment, going around the village begging with a dog bowl. There were signs of heavenly grace, however, like an owl that came and blanketed her by opening its wings, which help her endure the hardships. Despite the abuse and poverty, word spread of Jijang’s goodness and beauty, and she was married at the age of fifteen. She soon gave birth to a son and her father-in-law handed her all his wealth. However, starting the following year, her grandfather-in-law, grandmother-in-law, father-in-law, and mother-in-law each died a year apart, followed by her husband and son. Left all alone, Jijang went to her sister-in-law’s house to live, but encountering abuse and ill-treatment, set out again on her own. On the road, she met a Buddhist monk and asked him to read her fortune, and was told that her first and last trimesters were auspicious, and that she should hold an underworld entry ritual (*saenamgut*) to appease the grievances of her dead family.

Jijang chopped wood to build a house, gathered mulberry seeds and silkworm eggs to weave silk, with which she made a bridge for greeting shamanic deities, ribbons for shamanic instruments, and a sack for collecting rice donations. Then she shaved her

head, and dressed in monk’s attire, of beard-lichen hat and long gray robe, and carrying a wooden gong and her sack, went around collecting rice donations. She pounded the collected rice in a mortar and steamed it in earthenware, and she was now finally ready to hold an underworld entry ritual for her family, who had died tragic deaths. After staging the ritual, she read the fortunes of her dead family to find out what they had become in the underworld and learned that they had all been reborn as birds.

The plot of “Song of Jijang” is closely connected to death, including attempts at chasing away deadly fate, and the myth is sometimes interpreted as a narrative about the origins of Sa, the devil in charge of bringing illnesses and other calamities. However, although Jijang possesses the power to incur death, she ultimately brings the dead back to life, which makes her a deity in charge of saving haunted spirits and guiding them to the underworld. This myth also offers hints to understanding the origins and motifs of the underworld entry ritual *saenamgut*, held around the country, and also of the bodhisattva Jijang Bosal, worshipped in Buddhist temples. Within the realm of Korean folk literature, the narrative is one of the most widely spread tales of women’s ordeals, which is assumed to have served as the basis of folk songs like “Sijipsarinorae (Living with the In-Laws),” similar in narrative structure and plot.

Origin of Martial Hero Deity

군웅본풀이

The shamanic myth “Gunungbonpuri” narrates the origins of the shamanic god Gunung (Martial Hero Deity).

In this narrative, Grandpa Gunnong is the Heavenly Emperor Jeseok and Granny Gunnong is the Earthly Empress Jeseok; Father Gunnong is Wang Daejo Wang Janggun (Great Royal Ancestor Martial King) and Mother Gunnong is Huiseogenang; their

eldest son Wang Geun, second son Wang Bin and youngest son Wang Sarang.

Father Gunnong Wang Janggun was a widower who made a living as a lumberjack. One day a young man in a straw hat (*choripdongi*) came by and said, “I am the son of the Dragon King of the East Sea. The Dragon Kings of the East and the West Seas are at war, but we are losing, and I have come to request your assistance.” At this Wang Janggun resposned that there was nothing he was afraid of except for one thing, which was the sea, and the young man told him not to worry and carried Wang Janggun on his back into the sea, whereupon the sea split up to make a path that led to the Dragon Palace. The Dragon King of the East Sea, happy at Wang Janggun’s arrival, commanded, “Tomorrow while engaged in battle with the Dragon King of the West Sea, I shall feign a defeat and dive into the water, and my foe shall act triumphant on the water, whereupon you are to kill him with an arrow.” In battle the following day, when the Dragon King of the East Sea dived into the water, as he had said the Dragon King of the West Sea acted triumphant, and Wang Janggun shot him with an arrow, killing him. The Dragon King of the East Sea leaped out of the water, joyous, and asked, “How can I reward you?” and the dragon king’s straw-hatted son whispered in seceret to Wang Janggun that he should answer, “I don’t want anything else but your chest,” explaining that inside the chest was his sister, who would bring to Wang Janggun’s all the comforts that he needed. Wang Janggun told the Dragon King he wanted the chest, and the King had no choice but to give it to him. Wang brought back the chest to the human world and each night, a woman as beautiful as the Moon Palace Fairy (*Wolgungseonyeo*) came out of the box. She became his wife and brought him all the clothing and food that he wanted. In three years she gave birth to three sons—the eldest Wang Geun, second Wang Bin and youngest Wang Sarang—and they all lived in prosperity. One day Wang’s wife, the Dragon King’s daughter, told them that she was returning to the Dragon Palace since she was not a



Shamanic painting of Martial Hero Deity Gunung.
National Folk Museum of Korea

human, and that they should continue to live in prosperity as rulers of Gunnong, and left.

The characters in this narrative share the surname Wang. Mother Gunnong is named Huiseogenang, similar in sound to Wisukwanghu (Queen Wisuk), the royal title of the mother of Goryeo’s founding king Taejo, birth name Wang Geon, which is also similar to Gunnong’s eldest son Wang Geun. This myth, therefore, is associated with the tale of Jakjegeon, about the progenitor of Goryeo and his ancestors, the narrative incorporated into the shamanic myth about the origin of Martial Hero Deity Gunung, which makes it an importance reference in the study of the relationship between folk narratives and shamanic myths in Korea. This myth also shares structural similarities with evil-

repelling type folk narratives, another important element in the study of Korean narrative traditions.



Shaman performing for Martial Hero Deity Gunung during village ritual. Bucheon-si, Gyeonggi-do, 1998, National Intangible Heritage Center

Origin of Seven Stars

칠성본풀이

“Chilseongbonpuri” is a shamanic myth that narrates the birth and the deification of Chilseongsin (Seven Stars), a snake god that oversees the fortunes of a family. It is recited as part of household ritual to pray for success in business, or rituals held to chase away trouble related to snakes.

The plot can be summarized as follows:

State Official Jang Seol-ryong and his wife Song Seol-ryong are unable to conceive into their later years and by praying to Buddha at a temple, they give birth to a daughter. One day while her parents are out, she is impregnated by a monk. As a punishment her parents put her in a metal box and throw it into the sea, and she drifts on the water until she reached Jeju Island, where she tries to climb on shore but village gods (*dangsin*) appeared wherever she went, keeping her away. She finally reaches the shore at Hamdeok Village, where she is discovered by divers and fishermen, who saw that the child and

her babies had turned into snakes, and turned away, condemning them as dirty, ugly creatures.

In response to this, Chilseong (Seven Stars) brought them a bad omen and they worshipped Chilseong as ancestral god Josang, and upon worshipping Chilseong, the divers and fishermen acquired great riches. When the villagers found out, they all began to worship Chilseong, abandoning the shrine for the village guardian deity (*bonhyangdang*), which in turn caused Seomulhalmang, the guardian deity of Hamdeok, to persecute Chilseong. To seek shelter, Chilseong fled to Jeju Fortress, but at Gwandeok Pavilion, visitors harassed them and they headed to Sanji Stream, where they met the daughter-in-law of the Song family from Chilseong Street and followed her home. The Song family began to worship Chilseong as their ancestral god and Chilseong made them very rich. Chilseong later scattered to different places: the youngest was enshrined as the outdoor deity Batchilseong; the mother as the indoor deity Anchilseong, protecting the grains in the house to make the family rich; the rest respectively deified and enshrined as Harvest Guardian, Court Guardian, Prison Guardian, Orchard Guardian, Shed Guardian and State Office Guardian. Since then Chilseong has come to be worshipped on Jeju as a common god.

The depiction of featured deities as snakes makes this *bonpuri*, or shamanic origin myth from Jeju, an exception among the island’s origin narratives of the common gods. The people of Jeju view snake sightings as a bad omen, and causing harm to snakes is considered taboo, believing that such acts will result in grave punishment.

This myth can also be interpreted as a depiction of how the ancestral god Josang transformed into a common god, with some characteristics borrowed from other *bonpuri* categories, of village guardian gods or ancestral gods. “Chilseongbonpuri” also serves as an important source in the research of a wide range of topics, including the relationship of influence among shamanic myths from around the peninsula; influence among the various types

of Korea's shamanic myths; and the shifts in the transmission of snake worship.

Origin of Shaman Ancestor Goddess Chogong

초공본풀이

"Chogongbonpuri" is the myth of the origin of shaman ancestor goddess Chogong, recited as part of *keungut* (grand ritual) on Jeju Island.

The following is a summarization of the narrative, the first section of which refers to a version recited by the shaman An Sa-in, and the section about the goddess Yujeongseungttanimagi (Minister Yu's Daughter) to a version by Yi Jung-chun:

Daegam (State Official) from the kingdom of Imjeongguk under heaven and Buin (Lady) from the kingdom of Gimjینگuk of the underworld were rich and aging but childless. At the words of Great Monk Juja from the land of Dodan on Hwanggeumsan (Golden Mountain), they offer a large donation to a Buddhist temple and give birth to a daughter, whom they name Nogadanpungjajimengwangagissi (Fall Maple Long-Awaited Daughter). When the girl turns fifteen, her parents are called up by Okhwang (Jade Emperor) of the celestial kingdom to serve a post, and as they leave, they lock their daughter in a cage, ordering a maidservant to take good care of her, promising her that her serf documents will be returned to her, and this she will be freed, upon fulfilling her task. News of the daughter's beauty spreads and three thousand scholar aristocrats offer a reward of three thousand coins to anyone who can bring back a donation from her. Great Monk Juja volunteers, and tricks her into opening her cage door to receive the donation of rice, at which moment he rubs the daughter's head three times. When her parents return, they learn that the daughter is pregnant with the monk's three sons and try to kill her, but not having the heart to murder five lives, they chase her out with the maidservant, along with

a black cow loaded with baggage. The daughter and the maidservant journey through numerous high mountains and bridges and waters to finally reach the land of Dodan on Golden Mountain, where they meet Juja. After passing a test of winnowing rice grains, the daughter gives birth to triplets in the land of Buldo. The three brothers grow up amid hardship and take the state official examination, at which they score high but are rejected due to the fact that they are the sons of a monk, then overturn the result in an archery test, their arrows landing on the palatial gate Yeonchumun. Three thousand scholars who have failed the state examinations offer the maidservant that if she can keep the triplets from succeeding in the exam, she will be given back her serf documents, then they tie a silk money pouch around Nogadanpungjajimengwangagissi's neck and lock her up inside Samcheoncheonjeseokgung (Palace of Three Thousand Heavenly Emperors) of the underworld. The maidservant tells the triplets that their mother is dead, at which they weep, saying that passing the state examination is now meaningless, but they soon find that her grave is empty and they head to their father to save her. Juja tells his sons that in order to save their mother, they must undo the fate assigned them in their previous



Shaman Go Sun-an reciting the Origin of Shaman Ancestor Goddess Chogong. Jeju-si, Jeju-do (2011, Gang Jeong-sik)

life, making them a shamanic instrument engraved with the characters “天地門 (Gate of Heaven and Earth)” and staging the rituals segments Chogamje (First Invitation), Chosinmaji (First Greeting) and Siwangmajije (Ten Kings Greeting Ritual), following which he gives them instructions for saving their mother. The three brothers encounter Neodoryeong (Bachelor Neo), son of Neosame, and together they make drums and gongs, which they take to Samcheoncheonjeseokgung and play for fourteen days, and their mother is released from the underworld palace. The brothers build a golden temple for their mother, inside which they stored all their shamanic props and ritual vessels and asked their mother to guard them. Then they made sammengdu, a set of shamanic props comprising daggers, divination bowls and discs, and rattle, which they left in the temple hall. They then set off to seek revenge, carrying the divine sword *siwangdaebanji*, which they had made, and as they stepped inside the underworld palace Samsiwang, they encounter the goddess Yujeongseungttanimagi (Minister Yu’s Daughter).

Minister Yu’s Daughter, at age seven, was given the shamanic divination tool *yukganjebi* and since then suffered from temporary blindness every ten years, until age sixty-seven when she completely regained her ability to see, along with which she acquired divine insight. She helped bring back to life the infant child of Jabokjangja in the neighboring village, instructing that if the girl survives, the family should hold a shamanic ritual after ten years. The year Minister Yu’s Daughter turned seventy-seven, she was asked by Jabokjangja to officiate a ritual, but she did not know how. She fainted, and in her unconscious state arrived at a shrine in the land of Seogangbepo. The triplets at the underworld palace Samsiwang, upon hearing of the arrival of Minister Yu’s Daughter, pulled her up with the silk money pouch and fed her medicinal food and drink, after which they stamped her with the royal seal *eointain*, presented her with three thousand

shamanic books, and instructed her. Minister Yu’s Daughter came back down to the shrine, where she read all the shamanic books, then she was given, by Nogadanpungjajimengwangagissi, three thousand banners, ten thousand ritual vessels, and musical instruments and metals, and she went with Bachelor Neo and the three brothers to Jabokjangja’s home in the neighboring village and staged a shamanic ritual. She arranged a ritual table as elaborate as a welcoming banquet for a state official, and greeted all the gods, as had been written in her books. The ritual procedures as laid out by Minister Yu’s Daughter in her first ritual have been preserved in present times.

“Chogongbonpuri” narrates the origins of Korean shamanistic practices, including the first shaman; the various different rituals; how shamanic props and instruments came to be; the origins of the shrine where shamanic props, instruments and vessels are kept; and the identity of Korea’s first *gangsinnu*, or possessed shaman. As a work of folk literature, this shamanic myth is a heroine’s tale and also a tale of female ordeal. It also falls under the category of the father-seeking tale, in which a son born in the absence of his father, sets out as an adult in search of him.

Origin of Smallpox Goddess Manura

마누라본풀이

The shamanic myth “Manurabonpuri” from Jeju Island, recited as part of the island’s *keungut*, or grand rituals, narrates the origins of Manurasin, the goddess of smallpox, which was very common among children, and greatly feared due to the socially debilitating effects of the pockmarks that the disease left behind.

The following is a version of the myth as recited by shaman An Sa-in:

One day, the goddess of childbirth Saengbul-

halmang (Samsinhalmeoni) crossed the bridge at Seocheongang, the river flowing between the world of the living and the underworld, and headed toward a four-way intersection, in order to bring new life to all the people of the world. At the intersection, she encountered Daeyeolsangsin (Great Deity of Smallpox), leading a parade of fancy, colorful banners and 30,000 clerks and servants, on her way to bring smallpox to children, carrying a book of their names and faces. Saengbulhalmang knelt and begged to the deity to please let the children to whom she has given life to not suffer too much from smallpox. Daeyeolsangsin glared at the goddess, bawling angrily that a woman, considered an inauspicious being, was standing in his way, and he made the children given life by Saengbulhalmang suffer severe smallpox, their faces ending up ugly as a gourd. Angry at what happened despite her humble pleading, Saengbulhalmang impregnated the smallpox god's wife using her life flower (*saengbulkkot*), keeping her from giving birth fourteen months into her pregnancy. As his wife lay dying, Daeyeolsangsin had no choice but to beg Saengbulhalmang for forgiveness and built a bridge of kites for her to cross Seocheongang to his house to help his wife's delivery.

The myth is recited as part of Boldumaji, the Jeju ritual for praying for conception, safe delivery, and healthy childhood, held in worship of three goddesses: the childbirth goddess Mengjnguk Daughter Baby (also called Saengbulsin, Samseunghalmang); East Seas Dragon King Daughter Baby (Jeoseunghalmang, Gusamseunghalmang), who brings disease or death to children; and Manurasin, the goddess who gives children smallpox.

The narrative structure of this myth comprises conflict between female and male deities, male deity's contempt and insulting attitude toward the female deity, and revenge by the female deity, assumed to provide psychological relief and compensation for women in traditional society, suffering under male oppression.

Origin of Three-Heads-and-Nine-Tails

삼두구미본풀이

The shamanic myth "Samdugumibonpuri" tells the origins of Samdugumi, or Three-Heads-and-Nine-Tails, an earthly monster who is neither human or ghost, its appearance resembling a white-haired old man. The tale belongs to a category of Jeju Island's shamanic mythology (*bonpuri*) that is transmitted independently without association with a specific deity, ritual or ritual segment, and thus is rarely performed.

Samdugumi lured the three daughters of a poor woodsman by telling them he would play matchmaker for them to marry into rich families, then holding them captive, ordered them each to eat a human leg. The oldest and second oldest daughters hid the legs then claimed that they ate them, only to be found out and killed by the monster. The youngest daughter burned the leg and tied up the ashes in a pouch around her belly. The monster called out "Leg!" but since the response came from the youngest daughter's belly, the monster assumed that she ate it and made her his wife. She used her wits to learn what the monster feared: eggs, since they had no eyes, nose or ears, unable to give answers when he asked, and since an egg hitting the face turned sticky and could blind him; willow branches that stretched eastward, since they were the first to take in sunlight and thus were poisonous; and chunks of metal, since it was hard for him to breathe when he was hit in the chest with one, and they were unchangeable even by fire, so he could not play tricks with them. The youngest daughter earned the monster's trust, after which she was able to kill him using eggs, chunks of metal and willow branches, and she pulverized his corpse to prevent him from coming back to life, scattering the powder into the air.

Although today this narrative is categorized as independent of shamanic rituals, Jeju's funeral custom of burying the dead with raw eggs, metal pieces and willow branches suggests that the tale

is related to rituals. Another Jeju funereal custom related to Samdugumi is the placing upon the coffin of the traditional one heart knot (*dongsimgyeol*), comprising four knots with eight ears, which is to protect the corpse from the monster, believed to feed on dead bodies.

Origin of Tosan Eighth-Day Shrine

토산여드렛당본풀이

“Tosanyeodeuretdangbonpuri” is a shamanic myth of Jeju Island that narrates the origins of Tosan EighthDay Shrine in the village of Tosan in Pyoseon, in the city of Seogwipo today, where the deity Yeodeurehanjip is worshipped.

When the county magistrate of Naju, in South Jeolla Province, stepped down before fulfilling his term, a scholar aristocrat proposed that if he were appointed as magistrate, he would ensure that he would serve the entire term in office, which landed him the job. On his way to take on his post, the magistrate arrived at Mt. Geumseong in Naju, where his servants advised him to get off his horse, for the mountain possessed divine forces. The magistrate refused, however, and kept going, and his horse began to limp, and when he came across a house with a blue-tile roof, he encountered a ghost in the appearance of the goddess Agissi. The magistrate demanded that the ghost showed its true appearance, and the goddess transformed into a gigantic serpent with one mouth attached to the sky and the other mouth attached to the earth. When the magistrate set the blue-tile roof house on fire, the serpent turned into golden stones and jade stones like those used in a *baduk* board game and fell on one of the four-way intersections on Seoul’s Jongno Boulevard. Law Officer Gang and Law Officer O from Jeju, who were on the mainland to deliver local offerings to the king, came upon these *baduk* stoes, but deemed them worthless and threw them away. On their

way back to Jeju Island, their boat could not set sail due to lack of wind, and they sought advice from a fortuneteller, who told them that there was a *baduk* stone inside Law Officer Gang’s bundle. They held a shamanic ritual for the stone and wind blew on the sea, which allowed them to travel back to Jeju. When their boat reached Yeoluni, now in the village of Onpyeong in Seongsan, part of the city of Seogwipo, the *baduk* stone turned back into Agissi, who offered greetings to Lady Maengho, the village guardian goddess of Yeoluni. Lady Maengho asserted that she was the deity in charge of this village and that Agissi should head to the village of Tosan. So the goddess set out on the road, and the village god of Hacheon Gaeroyukseotto appeared and grabbed her wrist, which Agissi viewed as dirty and cut off her own hand with a knife. Following her enshrinement at Tosan Village, the goddess headed to Yongwangguk (Dragon Kingdom) to offer her greetings, and Yongwang (Dragon King) asked for what reason the goddess carried the smell of blood. When Agissi told him what had happened between her and Gaeroyukseotto, the Dragon King reprimanded her, following which the goddess wed Gaeroyukseotto. One day Agissi went to wash laundry with Neujindeokjeonghanim, she was chased by a thief who had been hiding inside a shipwreck, who raped and killed her. She was buried on Yemuteun Hill, and later her spirit descended on the daughter of Law Officer Gang in the village of Gasi, who was pounding grains in a mortar. The daughter felt faint and sought out a fortuneteller, who said that Agissi’s spirit had entered the village, which called for the grand communal ritual *keungut*. When the ritual began, the ill daughter stood and asked who the ritual was for, and her parents answered that it was being staged for her. The daughter said that if the ritual was indeed for her, they should open the chest on her father’s desk and cut the silks to undo the knot formed inside her guts. When her father opened the chest, he indeed found, in between the silks, a small snake that lay dead and dry. He drew

a snake on white paper and untied the silks to undo the knots formed inside the snake's guts, his daughter was cured of her spirit sickness (*sinbyeong*), after which Agissi was enshrined as a village guardian goddess who received a worship ritual on the eighth, the eighteenth and twenty-eight days of the sixth and eleventh lunar months. This myth is one of the most distinctive Korean folk narratives about snake worship, and also reflects aspects of village god worship and ancestral god worship.

Origin of Underworld Messenger Chasa

차사본풀이

The shamanic myth “Chasabonpuri” from Jeju Island tells the story of Gangnim's appointment as Jeoseungchasa, the Messenger of the Underworld.

A senior monk of the temple Donggaenamjeon-jungjeol, upon foreseeing the short lifespan of

the three sons of King Beomul of the kingdom Donggeyongguk, instructs a junior monk of what should be done, then passes on to nirvana. The junior monk heads to Donggyeongguk to notify King Beomul of his three sons' destiny, and recommends that the king offer a three-year prayer to Buddha. The king sends his three sons to Donggaenamjeol Temple, each carrying a bundle. When the three boys head back home after completing their three-year prayer, the junior monk warns them to beware of the land of Gwayang. But the three brothers, exhausted and hungry, enter Gwayangsaeng's house and ask for food. Gwayangsaeng's wife, greedy for the boys' possessions, murders them and throws their bodies into the pond Yeonnaemot by Jucheon River. The three boys' spirits resurrect in the forms of flowers, then as marbles, and are reborn as the three sons of Gwayangsaeng's wife. The three sons pass the state examination at 15 years of age, but upon their return from the exams, while offering a bow at the shrine, they fall dead all at once. Gwayangsaeng's



Shaman calling the dead as the Death Messenger during an underworld entry ritual.

Mt. Inwang Guksadang, Jongno-gu, Seoul, National Folk Museum of Korea

wife demands that the magistrate of Gimchi village solve this crisis, but when no resolution is offered, she curses at the magistrate, who in turn sends Gangnim to the underworld to capture the king of the underworld Yeomnawang. At a loss, Gangnim goes to his legitimate wife, on whom he had walked out on their wedding night, and when he pleads for help, she prepares for his journey and prays to the gate god Munjeonsin and the kitchen god Jowang to open the path to the underworld for Gangnim. Guided by the two gods, Gangnim enters the road that branches into seventy-eight directions, and with the help of a guide of the underworld, he reaches Yeonchu Gate. With the help of Granny Jowang, Gangnim is able to identify the king Yeomnawang, who has transformed himself, and receives from him a promise to visit the world of the living, after which Gangnim returns. When Yeomnawang indeed visits the world of the living, the magistrate of Gimchi hides in fear, and Gangnim acts as mediator between the magistrate and Yeomnawang. Yeomnawang then holds a court and rules Gwayangsaeng and his wife guilty, upon which the three brothers are reborn and return home. Yeomnawang, envious of Gangnim's talent, strips Gangnim of his Three Spirits and takes him to the underworld, where Gangnim is assigned the job of delivering to the world of the living the Red Note, which lists the order of human deaths, but due to a mistake on the part of a crow, the delivery gets mixed up, which results in a chaotic mix-up of the order of human deaths, as it remains today. At the order of Yeomnawang, Gangnim exercises his wit and is appointed Jeoseungchasa, the Messenger of the Underworld.

Death is the subject of "Song of the Origin of Death Messenger," but the narrative is distinguishable from others that center on the topic of death due to the following elements: First, various points about the origins of funerary procedures are featured; second, the focus is on Gangnim, who travels to the underworld and back; third, Gangnim's journey provides vivid details about the underworld,

which had previously existed only in the human imagination; fourth, the narrative explains the origins of death and why human deaths occur without order; and fifth, the myth emphasizes the authority and role of Chasa as a deity that oversees death. These elements characterize the narrative as a myth about the Messenger of the Underworld, and underlines a shamanistic worldview and imagination.

Origin of Village Guardian Deity of Seogwipo

서귀포본향당본풀이

"Seogwipobonhyangdangbonpuri" is the village god myth (*dangsinhwa*) of the guardian deity of Seogwipo on Jeju Island, also transmitted in connection to the shrine of the village guardian deity (*bonhyangdang*) in Seoheung.

Baramutto was travelling through the faraway land of Hongtonara Hongtocheolli Bionara Biocheolli when he encountered in a home a most beautiful daughter and married her, only to realize that the daughter he had married was not the beautiful maiden but her ugly sister, Go Sanguk. Baramutto tried for a day or two to maintain his unwanted marriage but in the end ran away with his sister-in-law to Jeju Island, and his wife Go Sanguk followed after them, furious. Baramutto and his sister-in-law arrived on the other side of *Mt. Halla*, at the volcanic cone Saloreum, and Go Sanguk soon arrived as well. The three of them were putting up a tent when an old man named Kim Bong-tae, who was out hunting, passed by them, and they stopped him to ask, "What are the names of the villages that we see in front of us?" Old Man Kim answered that they were Donghong-ri, Seogwipo, and Seohong-ri. The three of them asked Old Man Kim to lead the way to his home, where they decided to spend the night but the smell of dust and soot made them realize that humans and gods cannot be in the same place, so they headed to a place named Gasimariwedol.

Go Sanguk, feeling a deep sense of betrayal, could not forgive her husband and her sister, and the three were unable to reconcile, so they decided to divide up the land and take respective thrones. Go Sanguk tied up a rock with straw rope and slung it far, upon which the rock landed by the clay walls of the village of Hongri. The rock slung by Baramutto landed at Munseom. Go Sanguk suggested that they take the throne separately in the respective lands where the rocks landed, that she take the village of Seoheungni and her husband and sister Ualseogwi, an area that stretches from north of Seogwipo to the south, called today Donghong-dong and Seogwi-dong, respectively. Go Sanguk ordered her sister to change her family name to Ji to compensate for the

wrong that had been done her by the two of them, and divided the land and water to prohibit exchange between their respective lands. Her sister indeed changed her name to Ji Sanguk, and Go Sanguk was enshrined at Seoheungni, while Baramutto and Ji Sanguk were enshrined at Ualseogwi.

In Korean mythology, there are a number of tales of gods dividing up their venues of enshrinement due to conflict or differences in taste in food. This shamanic myth is notable in that romantic and marital relationships are the main elements of plot and the factor that determines the places of the enshrinement of the deities.

Origin of Woncheongang

원천강본풀이

The shamanic myth “Woncheongangbonpuri” from Jeju Island narrates the origins of the fortunetelling book *Woncheongang*. The title of the book comes from the name of the famed physiognomist Yuan Tiangang of Tang China, which in late Joseon came to be equated with the book title. In the myth, Woncheongang is the name of a place, while also referring to the eight characters (*palja*) that make up human destiny in traditional fortunetelling.

The following is a version of the myth as summarized according to shaman Bak Chun-bong’s records:

One day on Gangnim Plain emerged a girl beautiful as jade. A crane flew in from somewhere and put one wing under her and covered her with the other, placing Yagwangju (Marble that Glows at Night) inside her mouth. After the crane raised the girl she was asked by the villagers about her name and age, and when she answered that she did not know, they gave her the name Onari. Upon meeting Lady Baek, who was the mother of King Bagi, Onari learned that her parents were at Woncheongang and set out to find them. She came upon a man named Jangsang,



Divine tree for the guardian deity of Seogwipo.
Seogwipo-si, Jeju-do, 1959, National Folk Museum of Korea



Divine altar for the guardian deity of Seogwipo.
Seogwipo-si, Jeju-do, 1959, National Folk Museum of Korea

who, when asked for directions to Woncheongang, asked Onari to find out for him why it was that he was obliged to do nothing but read inside the fortress by the river Seocheongang. Next Onari came upon a lotus flower, who, when asked for directions to Woncheongang, asked Onari to find out why it was that blossoms bloomed only on its top branch and on no other. Next she came upon a large snake, who, when asked for directions to Woncheongang, asked Onari to find out why it was that it could not ascend to the heavens as a dragon when it already had three glowing marbles that were required for its ascension. Then she came upon a maiden named Maeil, who, when asked for directions to Woncheongang, asked Onari to find out why it was that she had to do nothing but read all the time. Lastly, she came upon the three maidservants of Okhwang (Jade Emperor), and they asked for her help, explaining that they were scooping up water as a punishment for a wrong they had committed, but their gourds had large holes, which made the job impossible. Onari filled the holes with *jeongdang* grass and pine resin, and after offering a prayer to Okhwang, scooped out the water for the three maidservants, which made them very happy. They offered to pay back Onari a hundredfold and guided her all the way to Woncheongang. Upon her arrival at Woncheongang, Onari was kept from entering by a gatekeeper, but when she broke into tears, the cold gatekeeper wept with her and reported to her parents of her arrival. Her parents asked Onari about herself, and after confirming that she was their daughter, explained that they were brought here on the day of her birth upon the order of Okhwangsang-je (Great Emperor of Jade) to protect Woncheongang, and they gave her a tour of their fortress, inside which all four seasons existed. Several days later, Onari told her parents that she would be returning home, and asked them all the questions that she had received in her travels. Her parents told her that if Jangsang and Maeil married, they would be granted glory and fortune for ten thousand years; that if the lotus flower gave the blossom on its top branch to

the first person it encountered, flowers would bloom on all the other branches; that if the large snake gave away two of its glowing marbles to the first person it encountered, it would ascend to heaven as a dragon; and that since Onari was the first person that the lotus and the snake had met, if she received the blossom and the marbles, she would become a divine woman (*sinnyeo*). On her way back home, after completing all her requests, Onari went to Lady Baek to express her gratitude, offering her one of the glowing marbles, after which she ascended to the heavens as a divine woman of the Jade Emperor. Onari was sent back down to the human world by Okhwang, in charge of traveling to each Buddhist temple and transcribing onto woodblocks the text of the book Woncheongang.

This shamanic myth reflects an ecological view of human destiny, determined not only by relationships among people but by those with flora and fauna, represented in the tale by the lotus and the snake.

Progenitor Myth

시조신화

Sijosinhwa, or progenitor myths, refer to myths that narrate the origins of a clan by depicting the process of the birth of the clan's progenitor and of his acquisition of the family name.

Within a historiocultural context, progenitor myths are closely associated with founding myths. When a clan evolves into a state, the clan's progenitor myth functions as the founding myth of the new state; progenitor myths that do not evolve into founding myths continue to be transmitted by the clan, maintaining their mythological context. In other words, while founding myths and progenitor myths possess different qualities and functions, they share the same roots. Progenitor myths can be more easily forgotten since they are transmitted within

small clans, but some attain sacred status through the process of the evolution of the clan, and when supported by family records and other official means, these progenitor myths maintain their sacred status in present times. Progenitor myths have existed not only in ancient times, but also in various stages of history through present times, reflecting the social and cultural changes of each era.

Unlike founding myths, progenitor myths are simple in plot: The progenitor is born and with this, the clan acquires a surname. The founding myths of Korea's many kingdoms, including the myths of Dangun, Jumong, Bak Hyeokgeose, Seok Talhae, and Kim Suro, and the Myth of Three Clans of Jeju Island, are chronological biographies that narrate the birth, marriage, miraculous accomplishments and death of the heroic progenitor, who in death is worshipped as a mountain god or progenitor god. Progenitor myths that have not developed into founding myths include the myths about the origins of the clan, including the Kim clan of Gyeongju (as told in the Kim Alji Myth), the Nampyeong Mun clan; the Haeum Bong clan; the Papyeong Yun clan, the Dalseong Bae clan, the Changnyeong Jo clan, the Chungju Eo clan, and the Pyeongyang Chae clan. These clan progenitor myths are categorized into box-birth types and interspecies marriage types. In the former, the progenitor's birth involves a gold chest, stone case, gold box or other container, without mention of parents and accompanied by premonitory phenomena in heaven and earth, resulting in the birth of an extraordinary child through the box, a divine medium. In these narratives, the heavenly being is emphasized as the sender of the progenitor to the terrestrial world, and the king or the old woman character functions as an agent of the heavens who finds the progenitor, nurtures him, and bestows him his surname, thereby presenting him with authority in the terrestrial world. The latter type involves the marriage of a human and another species at a specific venue, which results in the birth of a child, who acquires a new surname. Various characters

are featured as blood relation, spouse or intervener, who form different horizontal or perpendicular ties between woman and animal (or earthly mother goddess and marine father god), and between human and non-human beings.

Korean progenitor myths are viewed as sacred within the relevant clan, their existence today limited within the boundaries of blood lineage. Their status, however, exists within a mythological order since they narrate the mythological origins of the clan, through which its ancestors are deified, thereby revealing the clan's sanctity and justifying the existence of the clan. The mythological functions of progenitor myths are also in effect today, in close association with the family name system, genealogical records, and progenitor god worship rituals. Korea's family name system is especially relevant in the cultural implications of progenitor myths, since Korean surnames signify not merely blood lineage but social structures linked to ideology, culture, morals and customs.

Sacred Mother of Mt. Seondo

선도산성모

This myth tells the story of Seondosanseongmo, the goddess of Mt. Seondo in Gyeongju, North Gyeongsang Province and the mother of Bak Hyeokgeose, the founder and progenitor of the kingdom of Silla.

During the reign of King Jinpyeong of Silla, the Sacred Mother of Mt. Seondo appeared in a dream of the Buddhist female monk *Jihye*, and ordered that the main hall at the temple Anheungsa should be repaired using gold buried under her shrine, and Jihye did as instructed. The goddess was a daughter of China's royal family, and had come to Haedong (East of Balhae: ancient Chinese name for the Korean peninsula) after learning the sorcery of Taoist mountain hermits at a young age. When a black kite sent by her emperor father

settled at Mt. Seondo, the Sacred Mother settled here as well and became a divine earthly hermit (*jiseon*). The Sacred Mother lived on Mt. Seondo for a long time, during which many supernatural phenomena were observed, and the mountain was designated by the state as one of the Three Shrines. The Sacred Mother was also given the title Daewang for finding King Gyeongmyeong's hawk, which had run away during a hunt. When she first arrived at the kingdom of Jinhan, she gave birth to two divine rulers, Hyeokgeose and Aryeong. She also made her husband's court attire with silk woven by celestial fairies (*seonnyeo*), which provided proof to the people of the kingdom of her supernatural powers.

This myth of the Sacred Mother of Mt. Seondo is a variant of the myth of Bak Hyeokgeose, the progenitor of Silla, and shows a connection between the state progenitor myth and the mountain goddess faith, a characteristic of mythology from the southern regions of the Korean peninsula. The central motifs of this myth are conception in the absence of a husband, and immigration of mother and son, the first of which is connected to Korea's Daemosin (Great Mother Goddess) mythology.

Shamanic Mythology

무속신화

Musoksinhwa, or shamanic mythology, refer to myths recited by shamans as part of shamanic rituals. The term *bonpuri* is also used to refer to this genre. In ancient Korea, celestial god worship rites and state ancestral worship rites were all observed as shamanic rituals. The former includes Yeonggo of Buyeo, Dongmaeng of Goguryeo, and Mucheon of Ye; the latter includes Dangun, Dongmyeong, and Hyeokgeose rituals.

Korean shamanic mythology comprises narratives about gods worshipped in shamanism, which

can be classified as epic songs or as oral epics. Since their origins are related to rituals, these myths can function as spells or incantations, but outside the shamanic realm, they also exist simply as interesting stories.

The archetype of the Korean shamanic ritual was *keungut*, meaning grand ritual, comprising twelve segments. Shamanism is based on the belief that myriad deities oversee creation and all human affairs, and shamanic rituals were staged to pray for safety in the village and home, productive cattle and good harvest, safe births and growth of children, individual longevity, return to life from the underworld and eternal life. In each segment of a ritual, myths about individual gods were recited, which were called *bonpuri*, or song of origin. These shamanic myths are categorized as general myths; village guardian god myths; and ancestral myths. The general myths recited as part of the big ritual on Jeju Island make up the most ancient and archetypal mythology in the Korean oral tradition.

Shamanic myths that have been collected and recorded around the Korean peninsula add up to hundreds of narratives, which can be categorized thematically according to the structure of the twelve-segment ritual as follows:

1) Universal creation type: Baepodoeopchim (Shamanic Song of Landscapes and Capitals), including Cheonjiwangbonpuri (Origin of the Celestial King), Irwolnoripunyeom (Song of Sun and Moon), Senggut (Ritual for Saints), Changsega (Song of the Creation of the Universe), Sirumal (Earthenware Steamer Narrative), and others.

2) Infant birth/disease god type: Halmangbonpuri (Origin of Childbirth Goddess), manurabonpuri (Origin of Smallpox Goddess Manura), Songgut (Smallpox Prevention Ritual), Sonnimgut (Song of Smallpox Prevention Ritual), and others.

3) Acquisition of shamanic powers/shaman ancestral goddess type: Chogongbonpuri (Origin of Shaman Ancestor Goddess Chogong) and all other Jeseok-related myths from around the country, including Sijungut



Shaman Kim Keum-hwa performing the big catch ritual of the west coast.
Yeonan Pier, Jung-gu, Incheon, 2006, National Folk Museum of Korea



Shamanic paintings behind a table of offerings for the big catch ritual.
Yeonan Pier, Jung-gu, Incheon, 2006, National Folk Museum of Korea

(Ritual for Ancestral Household Deity), Samtaejapuri (Song of the Triplets), Jeseokbonpuri (Song of Goddess of Childbirth Jeseok), Gongsipuri (Song of Shamanic Ancestors) and others.

4) Flower Supervisor of Seocheon type: Igongbonpuri (Origin of Igong), Sinseonsetyeonnimcheon-gbae.

5) Human fate type: Samgongbonpuri (Origin of God of Destiny Samgong), Woncheongangbonpuri (Origin of Woncheongang)

6) Underworld or death type: Banggwangchim (Appeasing the Dead at Sea), Chasabonpuri (Origin of Underworld Messenger Chasa), Jijangbonpuri (Origin of Jijang), Hwangcheonhonsi (Spirit in the Underworld), Barigongju (Abandoned Princess Bari) and others.

7) Calamity prevention deity type: Maenggambonpuri (Song of the Messenger of Death), Jangjapuri (Song of Jangja), and others.

8) Agricultural origins/cattle god type: Segyeongbonpuri (Origin of Farming), Song of Yang San-bok from Hamgyeong Province.

9) Good harvest/prosperity god type: Chilseongbonpuri (Origin of the Seven Stars), Donjeonpuri (Origin of Money).

10) Household god type: Munjeonbonpuri (Origin of Gate God), "Seongjomuga (Origin of Household Guardian Deity)".

11) Village guardian god type: Myths recited in village rituals of Seoul and village god myths (*dangsinhwa*) from around the country, including Bonhyangdangbonpuri (Origin of Village Guardian Deity) from Jeju Island.

12) Ancestral god type: Founding myths, Samseongsinhwa (Myth of Three Surnames) of Jeju Island, Gunungbonpuri (Origin of Martial Hero Deity), myths of the emergence of the three clans and ancestral myths from Jeju, and others.

13) Others: Simcheong ritual, Song of Groom Dorang and Bride Cheongjeong, Myth of Scholar Sukyeong and Maiden Aengyeon, Chungyeolgut (Patriot Ritual) and others.

In Korean universe creation myths, major mythemes include the union of sky father and earth mother; rearrangement of suns and moons; and flowering contests. In shamanic myths about human births, deaths and rebirths, a central element is Seocheonkkotbat (Flower Garden of the West), a special mythical space that answers questions about the mysteries of human life, and the life flowers bloom at Seocheon, including life flowers (*saengbulkkot*) and resurrection flowers (*hwansaengkkot*). Korean shamanic myths about male deities are structured as father-seeking narratives, in which the son who has grown up fatherless leaves home at the age of fifteen in search of his father, while those about female deities take the narrative structure of heroic biographies that start with a noble birth/birth through prayer and proceed with abandonment, trials, achievements and deification.

Among the regions, Jeju Island is a trove of shamanic mythology in which the largest number of myths has been transmitted, followed by South Hamgyeong Province. The God of Childbirth type myths from the mainland of the peninsula, including "Sijungut (Ritual for Ancestral Household Deity)," "Samtaejapuri (Song of the Triplets)," "Jeseokbonpuri (Song of the Origin of Jeseok)" all belong in the same category as "Chogongbonpuri (Song of the Origin of Shaman Ancestor Goddess)" of Jeju, sharing the common motif of triplet sons born of a father who is a monk. "Jangjapuri (Song of Jangja)" from South Jeolla Province shares elements with "Maenggambonpuri (Song of the Messenger of Death)" of Jeju, and Chilseongpuri (Song of Seven Stars) with Munjeonbonpuri (Origin of the Gate God)" of Jeju.

The shamanic myths recited as part of ancient rituals went on to serve as inspirational motifs for many Korean literary genres, from legends and folk tales to classical novels and folk songs. The traditional solo narrative song *pansori*, for example, was a genre closely associated with shamanic myths; both recited songs that share the same

narrative structure, their performers—shamans and entertainers—also belonging to the same social class. Shamanic mythology, in other words, gave birth to a wide range of Korean cultural traditions.

Shamanic Song of Sim Cheong

심청굿무가

The shamanic myth “Simcheonggumuga” is recited as part of the Simcheong ritual or the Blind Segment in *byeolsingut*, or the ritual for village tutelary spirit, held on the east coast regions of the Korean Peninsula.

Blind Man Sim and his wife Lady Gwak, being childless, prays with devotion to mountains and rivers, and conceive a child, but soon after giving birth to their daughter Sim Cheong, the wise and virtuous Lady Gwak dies from complications and Cheong is left motherless only seven days after birth. Blind Man Sim endures extreme hardships to raise Cheong and she in return looks after her father with devotion. One day, Blind Man Sim falls into a stream and is saved by a monk in charge of donations at Mongeun Temple, who tells him that a donation of three hundred *seok* of rice will restore his vision, and Sim promises a donation, but soon regrets it. Cheong, upon learning of this, sells herself to merchant sailors from Nanjing as a sacrifice for the waters of Indangsu, in exchange for three hundred *seok* of rice, which she sends to Mongeun Temple as donation. On the day she is set to leave for the sea, the sailors come and take her and she is pushed off the ship into the waters of Indangsu, but is rescued with the help of Okhwangsangje (Great Emperor of Jade), and at Yonggung (Dragon Palace) she is reunited with her mother, who has descended from the heavens to see Cheong. Her mother ascends again a few days later and Cheong comes back to life, transported on a lotus blossom. When the Nanjing merchant sailors come across the



Shamanic Song of Sim Cheong during a ritual for village tutelary spirit. Gangneung-si, Gangwon-do, 2011, National Folk Museum of Korea

lotus flower, they take it to the emperor, who, upon encountering Cheong inside the flower, marries her. Sim Cheong, now an empress, dearly misses her father and requests the emperor to host a three month and ten day banquet for all the blind men, during which she reunites with Blind Man Sim and he, overcome with joy, regains his vision.

This myth is a shamanic song version of the classical novel *The Tale of Sim Cheong* and the solo epic *pansori* narrative “Song of Sim Cheong.” The story of filial daughter Sim Cheong is one of the most popular narratives in the history of Korean literature, along with the story of the faithful wife Chunhyang, with myriad different versions and variants across genres.

The shamanic song of Sim Cheong is observed in no other region but on the east coast, where it is recited within the community of hereditary shamans, who are all professional shamans connected by blood ties. Among the many shamanic myths transmitted in this region, including “Song of Princess Bari” and “Song of Smallpox Prevention Ritual (Sonnimgut),” “Song of Sim Cheong” is the longest and the most difficult, and its recitation is used as a gauge of a shaman’s capacities.

Song of County Magistrate Yang I

양이목사본풀이

The shamanic myth “Yangimoksabonpuri” narrates the origins of County Magistrate Yang I, who is worshipped as the shamanic ancestor of the Myeongwol branch of the Tamna Yang clan of Jeju Island.

A long time ago on Jeju Island, one hundred white horses were sent to the royal court each year as an offering. Yang I, who had arrived on the island as the newly appointed County Magistrate, wanted the horses for himself, and offered to take the horses to the capital Hanyang on behalf of the horsemen. Once arriving in Hanyang, he sold all the horses and acquired great wealth. The royal court, after finding out why the offering of horses had not arrived from Jeju, dispatched to the island Geumbudosa, an officer from the State Tribunal, and an assassin to behead the magistrate. Magistrate Yang, learning of this, escaped on the fastest boat on Jeju, which belonged to Old Man Go Dongji, but came across the State Tribunal Officer’s boat at Uldolmok strait. When the State Tribunal Officer asked where the boat was headed, Boatman Go Dongji answered, “The boat is taking Jeju County Magistrate Yang I on an excursion.” In the face of crisis, Magistrate Yang jumped onto the boat’s deck and revealed himself to the State Tribunal Officer, then slashed the assassin’s throat, defeating the officer. Magistrate Yang then told the officer that at first he was intent on stealing the horses, but in the end his heart sided with the people of Jeju, who were suffering from excessive donation requirements, and that he spent the money from the horses on helping the people. But while the magistrate was explaining, the State Tribunal Officer struck back and tied the magistrate’s hair to the mast stays. The officer then ordered Old Man Go Dongji to pull a rope, which sent the magistrate hanging by his hair from the mast, and the magistrate dared the officer to behead him. When the officer cut his throat, Magistrate Yang’s body fell into the sea, upon which it turned into blue, yellow and white dragons,

and entered Yongwangguk (Kingdom of the Dragon King). The magistrate’s head, which remained on the ship’s fore-deck, left his last wishes to Old Man Go Dongji, asking the old man to go back to his hometown and tell Tojigwan (Land Lord) Yang of Tamna, among the family surnames Go, Yang and Bu, to transmit his personal history for generations, and he would promise eternal prosperity to Yang’s descendants. When the royal court received reports about this, along with Magistrate Yang’s head, a decision was made to exempt Jeju Island’s required offering of one hundred white horses.

“Song of County Magistrate Yang I” is an ancestral myth transmitted exclusively within certain families, but Magistrate Yang’s character also exhibits clear traits of a folk hero fighting against the antagonistic forces of state authority, as represented by the King, the court and the State Tribunal Officer. Magistrate Yang’s character, in other words, is a symbol of the resistance of the people of Jeju, suffering from excessive exploitation, against the powers of the central government. He is a subversive figure who disturbs the ruling order by embezzling the offering to the king, who uses the embezzled funds to bring goods to the people of Jeju. While Yang failed to overthrow the ruling system, he was able to solve the problem by exposing the issue of excessive offering through self-sacrifice.

The myth falls under the category of hero mythology, but Magistrate Yang is distinguishable from other mythological heroes in that he was not born of extraordinary origins but develops into a hero through change. Some interpret “Song of County Magistrate Yang I” as an altered form of heroic epic that reflects the collective sense of political defeat of the people of Jeju, but it can also be understood as a mythological narrative that raises real-life problems and seeks solutions on behalf of people faced with a changing political order. Its significance within the history of Korean mythology also lies in the fact that it reveals the changing traits of clan mythology in the course political marginalization.

Song of Groom Dorang and Bride Cheongjeong

도랑선비 청정각씨 노래

The shamanic myth “Dorangseonbicheongjeonggak-sinorae” tells the story of Cheongjeonggaksi (Bride Cheongjeong) and the sacrifice she makes in order to reunite with her groom, who died on the night of their wedding. The myth is recited during *mangmukgut*, a ritual for appeasing the dead observed in Hamgyeong Province, where Groom Dorang and Bride Cheongjeong are worshipped as deities that oversee the human soul.

Bride Cheongjeong’s father was Hwadeokjung-gunhwangcheolsa and her mother Lady Guto. It was arranged that she would be married off to an aristocratic family and the groom’s name was Dorangseonbi. When the groom arrives at the bride’s house for the wedding, he feels as if something were grabbing the back of his head and he falls ill, losing consciousness. The bride calls a senior shaman to host a ritual, after which the shaman says the groom’s illness is due to impurities in the groom’s wedding gift of three-colored silks. When the silk fabric is burned, the groom regains partial consciousness, but his illness shows no signs of recovery and in the middle of the night, the groom sets out to return home, leaving word to his bride that if the following morning, on the hour of *osi* (13th of the 24th periods of the day), a man with short hair arrives from the other side of the mountain pass, it will mean that he is dead.

From then until the hour of *sasi* (11th of the 24th period), the bride offers devoted prayers to the Heavenly Lord Hanul and to Buddha, along with a bowl of *jeonghwasu* (fresh water from the well), asking for her groom’s survival. But that night, on the hour of *haesi* (23rd of the 24th period), a short-haired man indeed comes and delivers news of the groom’s passing. The bride lets down her hair and heads to her in-laws, where she sustains herself on water and weeps for three days. Even after the

groom is buried, the bride continues to weep and the mournful sound of her keening reaches the ears of Okhwangsangje (Great Emperor of Jade), who orders the Saint of Hwanggeumsan (Golden Mountain) to look into the matter. The saint comes to Bride Cheongjeong and begs for money, and the bride responds that she will give him all the money he asks for if only she could meet her groom just once. Moved by her devotion, the saint gives the bride a hollowed-out whole gourd and tells her to fetch fresh water from the well and go pray at the groom’s grave for three days, on her bedding spread out in front of the grave, dressed in her wedding gown. After three days of devoted praying, the groom appears before her, but when the bride tries to hold his wrist, he disappears. The bride calls out in a loud voice to the divine monk, praying that she see her husband again. At this, the Saint of Golden Mountain instructs her to pull out strands of her hair and tie them into rope with three thousand knots, then take the rope to the Geumsang Temple on Mt. Annae, tie one end on the prayer hall of the temple, the other in mid-air, and tells the bride that after making a hole in each of her palms, if she can manage to withhold her screams even when three thousand little girls pull up and down with all their might, she will be able to meet her husband. The bride does as instructed by the divine monk and finally her husband appears, but when she tries to hold him, he disappears again. The bride weeps in sorrow and the divine monk appears again to give her new instructions, to squeeze oil from five *mal* of sesame, perilla seeds, and castor beans, and rub the oil on her hands until all the oil is gone, then pray at the temple after lighting her ten fingers. The bride does as instructed and prays at the temple with her ten fingers aflame, at which Yeomnadaewang (Great King Yeomna) of the underworld commands Groom Dorang to go and put out the fire at Geumsang Temple, and the groom appears at the temple from behind the Buddha, but as the bride again tries to hold him, he once again disappears. When the

bride appeals again, the divine monk instructs that if she successfully builds a pass on Mt. Annae to Geumsang Temple without using any tools, she will be able to meet her husband. The bride works with her half-burned fingers to make a path, weeding and sorting out rocks and evening the soil, but faints upon reaching the peak of the mountain. After a long time, she regains consciousness and resumes work on the path, when she encounters a boy in a straw hat heading up from the other side of the mountain, working on making a path, and the boy turns out to be the husband that she has so longed to meet. Determined to never part again, she pretends not to see him until he comes close and she holds him tight, not letting go this time. The groom recognized his bride and tells her, “Your devotion has moved the heavens and the Great King Yeomna has ordered me to build this pass, and when it is completed, I shall be born again into the human world. Now that the pass is completed, we can begin our life together.”

On their way back home, Groom Dorang and Bride Cheongjeong come across a bridge. The bride is the first to cross, after which the groom follows but a sudden gust wraps around him, pushing him off the bridge and into the water below. The groom calls up to the bride, “To be with me, you have to return home and take a strip of silk cloth, three *ja* and three *chi* in length, and tie one end on the needle juniper tree planted by my great-great-great grandfather, and tie the other end to your neck to end your life. It is only in death, in the underworld, that we shall be together. Such fate has befallen me as a punishment for my grandfather’s crimes of material greed and murder.”

Realizing that this is how she should die, Bride Cheongjeong does as her groom instructed and kills herself. The Great Emperor of Jade orders the Buddha of Geumsang Temple to write a letter instructing that Bride Cheongjeong is the most devoted human under the heavens and that she should be sent to the best place there is. In the

underworld, the bride reunites with her husband and enjoys immeasurable happiness, then is reborn into the human world, where she is deified.

The literary theme of this shamanic myth seems to be focused on spousal love, Bride Cheongjeong’s deep devotion moving even the heavens, and a marriage formed in the human world continuing for hundreds and thousands of years, resulting in the worship of ancestral gods or progenitor gods. From a religious or cultural perspective, the focus seems to be on the deep devotion of the human heart, even though the purpose may vary. The motifs of path-building, or of tying one’s hands to a stake with rope, originate from Buddhist narratives, symbolic acts that signify the pain that must be endured and the devotion that must be offered by Buddhist followers in order to reach the Western Pure Land. The reflection of these Buddhist elements in a shamanic myth shows that human devotion was deemed just as important in shamanic prayers. On terms literary, religious, or cultural, Koreans believed that human devotion could result in great spiritual powers, which allowed even the weakest or lowliest beings to endure great pain, and reach the Western Pure Land, travel back and forth between this world and the underworld, and reunite with the dead. The Song of Groom Dorang and Bride Cheongjeong is a vivid rendering of the deep universal characteristics of Korean emotions.

Song of Heoungaegi

허웅애기본풀이

“Heoungaegibonpuri” is a shamanic myth from Jeju Island that narrates the story of how humans came to be prohibited from travelling between the human world and the underworld. The tale belongs to a special category of shamanic mythology from Jeju, *bonpuri*, which is transmitted only through the recitation of a few shamans and through written

records. They are passed down independently without association with a specific deity, ritual or ritual segment, and thus are rarely performed as part of shamanic rituals.

The plot of “Song of Heoungaegi” can be summarized as follows:

Heoungaegi, who was a mother to many children, was one day summoned by Jeoseungwang (King of the Underworld). In the underworld, she wept with worry for her children, and the king gave her permission to travel to the human world by night to take care of the children and return to the underworld by morning, so Heoungaegi was able to spend each night with her children. An elderly neighbor became suspicious of the fact that the motherless children appeared neat and cared for, and the children explained to her that their mother visited every night. The neighbor told the children that she would keep their mother from returning to the underworld, and tied up her feet with a string to the children’s, asking them to signal with the string when their mother arrived. When she received their signal, the elderly neighbor took Heoungaegi into hiding and kept her from going back, but in the end the King of the Underworld took Heoungaegi’s spirit. Since then the human world and the underworld was divided and it became impossible for humans to travel back and forth.

A version of this myth recited by the shaman Gang Eul-saeng incorporates the Kongdegi and Patdegi narrative and is rich in detail:

Kongdegi (Bean Girl) lives a hard life under her stepmother who cares only for her own daughter Patdegi (Red Bean Girl). When the stepmother orders Kongdegi to feed the cow while weaving hemp rope, the cow eats up the hemp and then produces dung of hemp rope. Patdegi tries to do the same but fails and butchers the cow and eats up the meat and Kongdegi takes care of the broth and bones according to instructions left by the cow. As the stepmother is leaving to attend a shamanic ritual, she orders Kongdegi to rinse the oil-drenched grains

and to fill a cracked jar with water. With the help of a bird and a crow, Kongdegi manages to rinse the grains and fill the jar, and after dressing up in a robe prepared by the cow and braiding her hair, she heads to attend the shamanic ritual. At the ritual, the black leather shoe that Bachelor Cheongeu has put out turns out to fit Kongdegi’s foot, and they wed and live happily, but Kongdegi falls prey to Patdegi’s wicked scheme and dies when she drowns in Yeonhwa Pond. Kongdegi is reborn as a butterfly and comes home, but Patdegi burns her in a bronze brazier, which turns her into a bead and is thrown inside a chest. When other people cannot see, Kongdegi appears in front of Patdegi and haunts her, and eventually she is discovered by her husband and explains to him what has happened. Her husband kills Patdegi and pickles her corpse with salt, which he feeds to her mother, and kicks out her mother. Kongdegi has children and at the end of a happy life, enters the underworld, where she spends all of the hours in tears, thinking of her children. Yeomnadaewang (Great King Yeomna) of the underworld learns of this and permits Kongdegi her to travel to the human world at night to take care of her children. Thanks to this arrangement, Kongdegi’s children grow up in good hands, but a scheme by her mother-in-law to keep her in the human world results in Kongdegi being captured to be taken to the underworld, no longer permitted to travel back. This turn of events has resulted in ill relations between all daughters-in-laws and mothers-in-laws. Most other versions of this myth has no associations with the Kongdegi and Patdegi story, centering only on the story of a mother who dies and is taken to the underworld, leaving behind her young children, but returns to the human world each night to take care of the children, then dies again and can no longer travel back and forth between the two worlds.

“Song of Heoungaegi” focuses on how Heoungaegi brought about the division of the human world and the underworld, with characteristics of primitive mythology, which depicts humans as beings capable

of travelling between the two worlds. This myth is still performed today not as part of shamanic rituals but by storytellers, a good example of the influence of mythology on Jeju Island's storytelling tradition.

Song of Household Guardian Deity

성조무가

The shamanic myth “Seongjomuga” narrates the origins of Seongju (Household Guardian Deity), the highest among the household gods in Korean folk belief, and is recited as part of *seongjugut*, the ritual for worshipping the household guardian deity.

The plot of “Seongjumuga” follows the course of the deification of Seongju, also involving various events related to house building, which help explain the origins of this deity.

The narrative also centers on the union between man and woman, with Seongju taking as his wife various different respective female deities in different versions of the tale, including Jisin (Earth God), Samsin (Goddess of Childbearing), and Jeseok (Goddess of Childbirth). It is a rare case in Korean mythology in that an entire tale is dedicated to telling the origins of household gods. The relation between Seongju, Jisin, Samsin, and Jeseok, as depicted in “Seongjumuga,” reflects the hierarchy of Korea's various household deities. In the version of the myth transmitted in southern Gyeonggi Province, the protagonist Hwanguyang, after chastising his imposter Sojinnang, turns the couple into Jangseung (Village Guardian Post) and Seonang (Village Guardian Deity), which indicates that the two are deities of lowly status in Korean shamanism.

“Seongjupuri,” a version of this myth transmitted in Dongnae of South Gyeongsang Province, does not share much in common with the south Gyeonggi version besides the general structure of narrating the origins of Seongju. In “Seongjupuri,” King Gukban and Lady Okjin of Seocheonguk

(Heavenly Kingdom of the West) pray for a son and after having a precognitive dream of conception, in their later years give birth to Seongjo. At age fifteen, Seongjo makes a request to Okhwangsangje (Great Emperor of Jade), for pine seeds, which he plants on a deserted mountain at Jihagung (Palace Underground). When he turns eighteen, he weds Lady Gyehwa, but he treats her poorly and neglects state affairs, for which he is sent on exile to Hwangto Island, where he faces severe hardships. Seongjo ties a letter written in blood to a blue bird to send to Lady Gyehwa, who, upon receiving the letter, shows it to her mother-in-law Lady Okjin, and finally Seongjo is brought back from exile. Upon his return, Seongjo is happily reunited with Lady Gyehwa and the couple goes on to have five sons and five daughters. At age seventy, Seongjo surveys the pine trees that he



Shaman worshipping the household guardian deity during the ritual for the village tutelary spirit of the east coast.

Yeongdeok-gun, Gyeongsangbuk-do, National Folk Museum of Korea

had planted, and gets the tools to build a palace and houses for his subjects. Upon completion, Seongjo takes the position of the resident household guardian deity Seongju and his wife Lady Gye-hwa the possessing spirit Seongju, their sons and daughters Otojisin (Five Land Gods) and Obangjisin (Gods of the Five Directions), respectively.

“Seongjudeurineunmalmun (Narrative for Seongju),” transmitted in Andong, North Gyeongsang Province, has a looser plot, but also tells the origins of Seongju. In this version, Seongju is born in Jeseokgung (Palace of the Goddess of Childbirth) with the name of Yugwangdeok, but commits a crime in the heavenly kingdom and is sent on exile down to the human world. Seongju set out to build a house, choosing an auspicious site with the help of a geomancer, and getting it ready for construction by hiring many workers. He made various different tools and headed out to cut lumber, but something repeatedly came up and interrupted his work, and in the end his ax

was stuck to a tree, unmoving. When he referred to a fortuneteller, a mountain god ritual (*sansinje*) was recommended, and upon the staging of the ritual, his ax fell off the tree and he was finally able to get lumber and return home. At this time Seongju began searching for a wife, and he met three fairies descending from the heavens on exile to the land below. He married them and was enthroned as the Household Guardian Deity. His three wives were deified as Samsin, Jeseok, and Jowang (Kitchen Deity), and helped humans lead good lives. This Andong version is distinctive in narrating the origins of household deities other than Seongju.

Song of Jangja

장자풀이

The shamanic myth “Jangjapuri” narrates the story of Jangja, who tries to deceive the underworld, and is recited as part of the segment *gopuri* (untying the knot) in the grievance cleansing ritual *ssitgimgut* of the Honam region of the southwestern coast.

The many versions of the tale’s plot can be summarized as follows:

1. Samajangja is a miser who is not generous even in worshipping his ancestors: A related anecdote, similar to that also featured in legend of Jangjamot (Rich Man Pond), shows Jangja reacting in an abusive manner, breaking a gourd as a means of threat when a monk comes requesting donations, but his daughter-in-law treats the monk with generosity and hospitality. Other variations of the tale feature Jangja consulting a fortuneteller, who lists all his wrongdoings and brings him his due punishment.

2. Samajangja has a dream of his death: This dream includes signs such as a spoon breaking or a table collapsing. Samajangja asks his family to interpret his dream, and everyone in the family misreads the dream, except for this daughter-in-law, who realizes that his death is imminent.

3. After consulting a fortuneteller, Samajangja



White ritual paper and pine twig as sacred entity for Seongju.
Mungyeong-eup, Mungyeong-si, Gyeongsangbuk-do, 2002, Korea

performs acts of goodwill and prepare to offer hospitality to the Messenger from the Underworld (Jeoseungsaja): At the advice of the fortuneteller, Samajangja shares his wealth with others and prepares to greet the Messenger from the Underworld, preparing food and staging a shamanic ritual.

4. Samajangja succeeds in avoiding death. Or his scheme is revealed and he greets his death: While the first three plot lines are common to all versions of the myth, the conclusions vary, and can be divided into two types, by whether Samajangja lives or dies. The former can be characterized as a tale of prolonging one's life, Samajangja is able to continue living as a result of the preparations he made, thanks to the help of the Messenger from the Underworld who takes with him to the underworld someone else in Jangja's place—someone with a similar name, Umajangja, for instance; someone the same age as Jangja; or even a horse. In some regions, Jangja is immediately forgiven by the Underworld Messenger, skipping the section on his deception. In the latter type, Samajangja makes schemes to have another person be taken by the Underworld Messenger, but in the end he is found out and is taken to the underworld to be punished, which can be categorized as an afterlife tale. In other words, the central motif of this narrative can be summarized as Samajangja's attempt to prolong his life and its consequences.

"Song of Jangja" is based on a deeply realistic view of the world. Samajangja's attempts at deceiving the underworld to extend his life reflect a positive outlook on human reality, and also a proactive attitude that although death is a dreaded fate, humans can make the effort to evade death. It is a distinctively Korean view that human destiny can be altered through hard work. The old adage might go, "Everything in life is decided by its Eight Pillars," referring to fate according to traditional divination, but in "Song of Jangja," fate is something that can be altered, the individual defeating even supernatural powers.

When the fortuneteller tells him that he must

pay for his bad deeds by sharing his wealth and saving others, Samajangja follows his instructions, fueled by the desire to continue his existence in the real world.

"Song of Jangja" reminds people of the distance between the dead and the living, helping them overcome their fear of death, and understand that death need not be feared, and that the underworld is an extension of the world of the living.

Song of Origin

본풀이

Bonpuri refers to epic poems that narrate the origin of a shamanic god, or to the segment in a shamanic ritual that features a recitation of the epic about the origins of the deity worshipped in the ritual.

A shamanic ritual (*gut*) is a multi-dimensional performance that involves a variety of elements including epic recitation, greeting of the gods, and dramatic play to entertain the gods, each closely related to the shamanic gods worshipped in the ritual. Among the various elements, *bonpuri*, or recitation of the song of origin, is the most important.

Bonpuri, as a literary genre, can be categorized as a shamanic myth, while as a performance it is an oral epic recitation.

Classification of *bonpuri* as a literary genre, based on content, generally follows criteria applied to narratives preserved on Jeju Island and accepted by scholars in the field: Origin narratives of common gods that oversee all the phenomena of the heaven, earth, and the human world; narratives of village guardian gods; narratives of ancestral gods; and others grouped under special narratives.

These origin narratives have developed as part of the shamanic mythology tradition, but share roots with national myths and possess common traits with ancient founding myths, framed within the chronological narrative structure of a hero epic.

Bonpuri is a distinctively Korean oral literature genre, rarely found in other cultures around the world, and is still very much alive today, preserved in the form of the shamanic ritual segment.

Song of Sun and Moon

일월노리푸념

The shamanic myth “Irwolnoripunyeom,” recited as part of the sun and moon ritual (*ilwolsinje*) in Gwanbuk region of North Hamgyeong Province, narrates the origins of the sun and moon gods.

Myeongwolgaksi (Maiden Myeongwol) Hae-danggeum and Gungsanseonbi (Scholar Gungsan) hold a humble wedding three years after their first exchange of words. Gungsan is so captivated by Maiden Myeongwol’s beauty that he cannot leave her side, and deprived of income, they come close to starving. Maiden Myeongwol draws a portrait of

herself for Gungsan to take to the woods with him to chop lumber. Gungsan is chopping wood, the portrait hanging on a tree, when a gust of wind blows and sweeps away the portrait, which lands at the house of Scholar Bae. Bae, upon witnessing Maiden Myeongwol’s beauty, takes a boat full of gold nuggets to Gungsan and proposes a *janggi* board game match. The two men play the match, Gungsan wagering his wife and Scholar Bae wagering his boat full of gold, and Gungsan loses three games in a row. Faced with losing his wife, Gungsan is unable to eat or drink, and Maiden Myeongwol proposes that she will disguise a maidservant as to look like her, while she disguises herself as the maid, dressed in a ragged skirt and fetching water with a limp in one leg, but Scholar Bae sees through this and asks for the maidservant who is fetching water. As Bae gets ready to take her away, Maiden Myeongwol secures five days wait, during which she butchers a cow to make slices of dried beef and fills Gungsan’s quilted pants and jacket with the meat slices, along with a bundle of needles and a



Mural of the Sun and Moon deities in Ohoe Tomb No.5 from Goguryeo.
6th century, National Folk Museum of Korea

skein of silk thread. Then she asks Scholar Bae to take Gungsan with them, and along the way, she leaves Gungsan on an island. On the island, Gungsan sustains himself on the beef jerky inside his clothes, and by fishing with the needles and thread. Gungsan also feeds the fish he catches to a baby crane, left behind on the island while the mother crane has ascended to the heavens. When the mother returns and sees that Gungsan has kept her baby alive, she carries Gungsan to the mainland. In the meantime, Maiden Myeongwol is living with Scholar Bae but without smiling or speaking, and Scholar Bae asks her what her wish is, to which she answers that she would like to host a three-day banquet for beggars. Gungsan attends the banquet but is seated at the wrong table and is given nothing to eat for three days. When Myeongwol finds him lamenting, she sets up a separate table for him and shows him a beaded robe, explaining that if he can pick up the robe by the collar and put it on with the back collar up, it will prove that he is her husband. Gungsan is able to put on the robe and ascends to the sky then comes back down, following which Scholar Bae also puts on the beaded robe and ascends to the sky, but not knowing how to take off the robe, is unable to come back down, and turns into a black kite. Gungsan and Maiden Myeongwol are reunited, spending their life together, after which they turned into the sun god and moon goddess.

“Song of Sun and Moon” is the myth of a man and wife from the earthly world turning into the sun god and moon goddess, and it is assumed that the association between the sun and moon from the celestial world, and a man and woman from the human world, originated from the yin-yang thought that the sun and the moon are associated with water and fire of the terrestrial world, and the female and the male of the human world. This mytheme has been widely transmitted in Korean mythology, from the myth of Jumong and the legend of Husband Yeono and Wife Seo of Silla, and the folk tale, “Brother Sun and Sister Moon.”

“Song of Sun and Moon” is a domestic myth

in theme, its narrative structure starting from the birth of a family and followed by the trials that the family goes through, and ending with the completion of the family; in performance, it can be categorized as a shamanic myth, recited as part of a ritual segment for entertaining the audience. The male protagonist is foolish and incompetent while his female counterpart is wise and competent. The plot suggests that the family is faced with trials as a result of Gungsan’s foolishness and greed, while the trials are overcome by Maiden Myeongwol’s chastity and wisdom. This characterization, based on the superiority of women, seems to reflect the perspective of women in the shamanic community. Most Korean shamanic myths, in fact, feature female protagonists who resolve crisis in the community, from families to states, which reveals the matriarchal view of family as union of man and woman, as opposed to the patriarchal view of family that focuses on the father-son relationship.

Song of the Creation of the Universe

창세가

“Changsega” is a creation myth performed as part of shamanic rituals by Kim Ssangdoli, a shaman from Hamheung of Hamgyeong Province.

Kim’s performance of this song was recorded in 1923 by folk scholar Son Jin-tae and included in his 1930 book *Chōsen shinka ihen*:

The sky and the earth were one and unseparated, and one day the sky swelled up like a cauldron lid, forming cracks, upon which Mireuk (Maitreya) erected copper columns on four corners of the earth, thereby separating it from the sky. At the time, there were two suns and two moons, Mireuk took one of each and made Bukduchilseong (meaning Seven-Star Dipper of the North; Ursa Major), Namduchilseong (meaning Seven-Star Dipper of the South; Sagittarius), and all the other stars, big

and small. Mireuk then gathered arrowroot vines to weave hemp and make for himself the monk's robe *jangsam*. In search of the origins of water and fire, Mireuk followed the instructions of a mouse to climb Mt. Geumdeong, where he struck a pebble against pig iron to make fire and climbed Mt. Soha where he discovered a spring. Then he held up a golden tray and a silver tray in each hand and prayed to the sky, upon which he was given five golden insects and five silver insects, which turned into men and women, who formed five couples and led to the flourishing of the human race. Mireuk served as the ruler of mankind when Seokga (Sakyamuni) appeared and demanded that Mireuk give up his position, which kicked off a contest to rule the human world. Mireuk turned out superior in the beginning, upon which Seokga proposed a competition of blooming flowers on one's lap while in sleep, and while Mireuk slept, Seokga stole the flowers on his lap and won the competition. Mireuk handed over his position to Seokga and disappeared, and due to Seokga's unjust victory, unjust elements began to appear in the human world.

Creation myths begin with the separation of heaven and earth, and in this myth, "Changsega," Mireuk plays the role of the deity that presides over the creation. The division of the sky and the earth by the four copper columns reveals the hemispherical dome cosmology, "*cheonwonjibang* (round sky, square earth)." The narrative then explains how the sun, the moon, and the stars came to be. The motif of reducing the numbers of the sun and the moon is found in creation myths around the world, but this one is notable in that the extra sun and moon were not completely eliminated but turned into stars.

The bronze mirror used as a prop by a Korean shaman is called *myeongdo* or *goneul*, and is engraved on the back with the sun and the moon and the constellations, which characterizes it as a cosmological mirror, revealing the shamanistic view of the universe that the sky is spherical, like a cauldron lid, and contains the sun and the moon and the stars.

According to this myth, the world was peaceful under the rule of Mireuk (Maitreya), but Seokga (Sakyamuni) arrived and took over the human world by playing a trick. In other words, humans were good and honest, but the unjust deity that ruled the world gave birth to evil and sin, thus human sin originated from corrupt deities.

This myth, from Korea's northern regions, feature as competitors Mireuk and Seokga, two giant gods, which is a distinctive departure from the creation myths of other regions. In the myth, the two gods already existed in the beginning of the universe, with no mention of lineage, which means they do not need to acquire sacred characteristics through the lineage of their parents.

The recording of Kim Ssangdoli's "Changsega" contains all the elements of a creation myth, which proves useful for examining the mythological significance of the narrative, and serves as an important reference material in the field of comparative mythology.



Shamanic painting of Sun, Moon, and Star deities.
National Folk Museum of Korea

Village God Myth

당신화

Dangsinhwa refers to the myth of the village god (*dangsin*) worshipped in the village's communal rituals, which narrates the story of the deity's enshrinement at the village shrine.

On Jeju Island, these narratives are called *dangbonpuri* (village god origin myth), while in inland regions they are called *maeulsinhwa* (village myth): The former tells the story of a village god's origins while the latter of a god worshipped in village shrines deemed as sacred within the boundaries of naturally formed villages.

Village Myth

마을신화

Maeulsinhwa, or village myths, tell the sacred story of a village's beginnings, as well as the origins of village gods (*dangsin*) and miracles that demonstrate their divine powers.

Village myths are passed down as an integral part of village rituals (*dongje*), sometimes recited during the rite as in the case of "Dangbonpuri (Song of the Origin of Village Guardian God)" from Jeju Island, and they are continuously revised and renewed along with the evolution of the various forms of village god worship. In Korea, the communal worship of local deities took on formal structure for the socio-cultural consolidation of naturally formed communities, which came to serve specific functions as villages in the 16th century.

While myths of Korea's national or family progenitors are generally preserved in written form, records about village founders rarely exist, or have been lost in the course of oral transmission over time. This was probably due to the rise and fall, or the migration, of different ruling groups in the community. Even in the case of clan villages, which

are comprised solely of direct descendants of the village progenitor, records about the founding figure have usually been incorporated into genealogies or family anthologies that focus on glorifying ancestral achievements.

Village myths that survive today largely feature haunted spirit deities (*wonhonsin*) who have come to be worshipped by communities via motifs of dream appearances or harassment. Haunted spirit deities emerged as village gods as collective memories of village founders faded over time; they can be kings or generals, but in most cases they are nameless deceased individuals, which is a distinctive feature of Korean village myths.

In communities where traditional village rituals are preserved, the divine powers of the village god are emphasized in these myths. The narratives often depict anecdotes about troubling events that have been solved by moving the village shrine, or of misfortunes that have befallen individuals for failing to observe taboos related to village shrines or rituals, and have equal significance in the community as myths about the deification of village founders.



Prayer invocation during Village God worship ritual in Gayang-dong. Gangseo-gu, Seoul (2005, Oh Mun-seon)



Prayer invocation during *Poje*.
Seogwipo-si, Jeju-do, National Folk Museum of Korea

OPEDIA

LEGENDS

CREAN

ERATURE

L E G E N D S

전설

Jeonseol, or legends, are a type of folk narrative (*seolhwa*) that tell of events believed to have taken place at a specific time and place, and orally transmitted with evidence of their verity.

Korea's earliest legends from the Three Kingdoms period were documented over 800 years in *Samgungnyusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*) and *Samguksagi* (*History of the Three Kingdoms*), which were preceded by *Gusamguksa* (*Old History of the Three Kingdoms*) and other records that have been lost to history. The two remaining books, both published in Goryeo, contain a large number of legends about historical figures from the Three Kingdoms period and Unified Silla, including royalty, martial heroes, revered monks, loyal subjects, filial sons and faithful wives.

Biographical legends of early Goryeo have been compiled in *Goryeosa* (*History of Goryeo*), while legends about historical figures and geographical names from late Goryeo have been collected in *Pahanjip* (*Collections of Writings to Break Up Idleness*), *Bohapjip* (*Collection of Writings to Relieve Idleness*) and other anthologies. In Joseon, many geographical surveys began to be published, including *Sejongsillokjiriji* (*Geographical Appendix to the Annals of King Sejong*), *Donggukyeojiseungnam* (*Augmented Survey of the Geography of the Eastern Kingdom*), detailing not only geographical facts but also oral traditions, thereby resulting in the documentation of a vast range of legends from around the country, from those about geographical names to those about historical figures related to the founding of the ancient kingdom Gojoseon and about filial sons and faithful wives, which gained popularity with the spread of Confucianism. Late Joseon saw an increasing number of collections of folk tales, called *yadamjip*, which contributed to compiling biographical legends of a more diverse range of figures. Local legends were also compiled in village records (*eupji*), which began to be published in each region in late Joseon.

Legends are believed to be truth by members of the community, who assert the verity of the stories as they transmit them. The plot is narrated as actual events that take place against the backdrop of a specific time and space, as seen in the typical opening of a legend that might go, "A long time ago during the reign of King Sukjong lived a scholar in the neighborhood of Namsangol in Seoul..." Legends also present concrete evidence to support the verity of the depicted events, as observed in their narrative structure of Topic—Context/Plot—Evidence—Commentary. Context/Plot makes up the narrative core, offering factual exposition and sometimes expanding into an imaginative storyline with a distinctive narrative arc. Without evidence, however, legends lose their identity and their power as orally transmitted literature weakens.

Legends are often told in different versions according to the storyteller. For example, a fight between two dragons taking place in a pond can be narrated by one as a fight between the wife dragon and the concubine dragon, while another storyteller might depict it as a fight between two dragons competing to ascend to heaven. This is the result of fading memories and interpretations that change over time. In regard to the verity of these narratives, it is not always the case that the storytellers believe the legends that they deliver. Legends are narrated as if they were true stories, but their verity is open to debate.

Legends are generally transmitted within a specific local region or village, narrating the origins of place names, geographical features and folk customs. Some legends, however, are spread around the country, of which there are two types: those that originated from a specific place but gained wide recognition and those that deal with universal situations or features. An example of the former type is the “Legend of Rich Man Choe from Gyeongju,” transmitted nationwide, beyond the city of Gyeongju, due to the reputation of the prosperous Choe family; the latter is exemplified by the “Legend of Rich Man Pond,” which can be associated with any pond around the country.

Legends can also be classified by subject, into nature legends, cultural legends and character legends. Nature legends explain the origins of nature, including geographical features, natural phenomena, particular forms of flora and fauna, and the shapes of names of mountains and rocks; cultural legends are about the origins of folklore like the Jeongwoldaeboreum (Grand Full Moon) customs of the first lunar month, and of man-made structures like temples, steles and fortresses; and character legends include those about historical figures like heroes, monks and people with extraordinary abilities and those about symbolic characters like the supernatural baby Agijangsu and the brother and sister with supernatural powers who compete against each other.

As in history, legends emphasize their verity through evidence related to a specific time and place. In some cases legends have served as supplements to written history. This function is also reflected in the fact that much of prehistorical records rely on legends. In most cases, however, the narratives move back and forth between fact and imagination. “Agijangsu (Mighty Baby)” legend, for example, is a literary narrative rather than a transmitted account of a real event: the baby’s wings and supernatural powers, and the dragon horse are all symbols that reflect the collective longing for a hero for the masses. The tragic ending of this legend expresses the pain of the defeated aspirations of the people to open a new chapter in history. At the same time, the story is a paradoxical revelation of the anticipation for a holy savior who will change the course of history,

which shows that legends go beyond merely reflecting and supplementing written history.

In legends, human characters often confront unexpected situations and fall into despair, which is in contrast to humans in mythology or folk tales. While in the former, human characters are faced with unexpected challenges, which are quickly overcome by his supernatural powers or with help from supernatural beings, in the latter, the protagonists are ordinary folks who overcome challenges with optimism. The human protagonists in legends, however, are born with extraordinary powers but are unable to exercise those powers due to restrictions posed in reality, which leads them to failure. This is why legends generally arrive at tragic endings, which creates in these narratives a distinctive aesthetic.

Legends based on specific locales are usually well known to their inhabitants and offer them a sense of solidarity. At the same time, regional legends bring together the various aspects of the region's socio-cultural identity. Some local legends help complete the history of villages and other local communities, left out in written history, which highlight the history of the central region and the ruling class. Legends, to conclude, play a significant role as references in oral history.

Arang Shrine

아랑각

The legend of Aranggak narrates the story of Arang Shrine, located in the bamboo grove near the pavilion Yeongnamnu in Miryang, South Gyeongsang Province, and the haunted spirit of Maiden Arang.

The narrative was transmitted orally in the verse form of *gwachesi* (state examination verse) among the literati of the Yeongnam region in late 19th century, in various different versions. A version of the poem is included in *Dongyahwijip* (Collection of Tales from the Eastern Plains) and the tale is also documented in story collections like *Cheongguyadam* (*Tales from the Green Hills*).

Arang, the beautiful daughter of the magistrate of Miryang, was lured by her nanny to go on a night outing to watch the full moon, and was raped and killed by a man who had been her secret admirer. Since this incident, each newly appointed magistrate dies on their first night in Miryang. When a courageous new magistrate encountered the ghost of maiden Arang on his first night on the post, he learned that his predecessors had all died from the shock of confronting this haunted spirit. Arang told the magistrate her grievance and the following morning, he assembled his entire staff in the courtyard of the government hall. Arang transformed herself into a butterfly and sat on the clerk who had



Yeongnam Pavillion.

Miryang-si, Gyeongsangnam-do, Korea Tourism Organization



Yeongnam Pavillion.

Miryang-si, Gyeongsangnam-do, Korea Tourism Organization

killed her, resolving her grievance.

The myriad variations of the tale share the following plot: A Miryang magistrate's daughter Arang loses her mother while young and is raised by her nanny, who one day takes her on a night outing, during which Arang is tragically killed. The magistrate, in despair, resigns and leaves for his hometown, or falls ill and dies. The maiden's name or last name, the venue of the murder, the name of the murderer differ by version. Arang is depicted as a courtesan in a version that demonstrates a striking departure in plot, recorded in the form of a transcription of an oral recitation from 1923. The male character who encounters Arang's ghost has varying names and status in the many different versions of the tale, and meets the ghost under different circumstances: a former military official expelled from public office twenty years ago; Yi Sangsa, knowledgeable and spirited but unsuccessful in society; Bae Ikso, a young man; Lord Yi, who travels through the scenic places around the country after failing to be appointed to public office past the age of forty—all unfortunate men deprived of social recognition, who, after resolving Arang's grievance, achieve success in the world. Resolution of Arang's grievance and the mourning of her spirit also take on various different forms: In some versions, Arang appears as herself and leads the people to where she is buried; in others she transforms into a red banner or a butterfly to reveal the murderer, who confesses where he buried Arang.

The legend is one of Korea's most widely

recognized haunted spirit (*wongwi*) narratives. Arang, who was denied her own voice while alive, acquires the ability to cross the boundaries of the human world and the supernatural world as a ghost, and upon returning to the human world, resolves her grievance. The resolution, mediated by a male nobleman / literati, is interpreted as the return of a victim of male violence to the Confucian patriarchal social order; or as Arang becoming an agent of her destiny by arranging a public mourning for herself. Both interpretations share the perspective that the haunted spirit is given her voice in the story, accusing and criticizing male violence and the patriarchal order.

Auraji

아우라지

The legend of Auraji narrates a love story that takes place against the backdrop of Auraji, a conflux where two rivers meet, and a wharf located in the village of Yeoryang in Jeongseon, Gangwon Province.

At Auraji, two streams, one female and one male, come together: Goljicheon, with its slow and gentle waters originating from Mt. Taebaek and flowing through Imgye to Yeoryang, is the female stream; Songcheon, originating from Mt. Balwang and flowing through Mt. Nochu and Gujeolli to Yeoryang, is the male stream, its waters fast and strong. The name Auraji comes from the Korean verb “eoureojida,” meaning, “intermingle in harmony.” The streams are located near Mt. Goyang, believed to be where the related folk song “Jeongseon Arirang (Arari)” originated.

A long time ago, there lived a maiden in the village of Yangji in Yucheon, and a bachelor in Yeoryang, Auraji flowing between the two villages. The maiden and the bachelor grew to love each other picking camellia blossoms in Ssarigol (Bush Clover Valley) in Yucheon, where the forest was thick with camellia trees. One day the two part, having promised to meet again the following morning, but when the bachelor arrived at the wharf at Auraji, the river has been swollen by rain during the night and crossing is impossible. He sings a song to express his feelings: “Dear Boatman of Auraji, oh would you bring me a



Auraji.

Jeongseon-gun, Gangwon-do (2010, Simon)

boat / the camellias that bloomed early are all falling.” In response, the maiden on the other side of the river sings: “Fallen camellias will be wrapped up in fallen leaves / But all year long I miss my love so, too much for me to bear.” The songs served as the origin of the folk song “Arari.”

It is believed that the legend was developed in an attempt to provide context for the lyrics to “Arari.” In another version of the tale, transmitted in the area around Auraji, the bachelor drowns while crossing Auraji in a raft and sings the song in death. There was also a real-life incident of a maiden throwing herself in the river, lost in despair after the loss of her drowned fiancé. Such tales were developed due to the many drowning incidents at the conflux, and a statue of a maiden was erected to console the haunted spirits of the drowned women, after which, it is believed, the drowning accidents stopped.

Baengma River

백마강

The legend of Baengmagang (White Horse River) narrates the story of the ancient kingdom Baekje’s fall, brought upon by a general from Tang China, who killed Baekje’s king, who had transformed into a dragon.

When the Silla-Tang allied troops launched an attack on Baekje, they were stopped by Baekje’s king, who had turned into a dragon to guard Sabi River. General Su Dingfang of Tang, upon learning that the dragon’s favorite food is white horse meat, hooked a white horse onto a fishing pole and caught the dragon on a rock by Sabi River. The river has since been called Baengmagang, or White Horse River, and the rock where the general’s knee prints remain is called Joryongdae (Dragon Fishing Rock).

Some variations identify the king as King Uija or King Mu. In the King Uija versions, the king guards Baekje as a human king by day and as a



Baengma River.

Buyeo-gun, Chungcheongnam-do, Korea Tourism Organization

dragon by night. In the King Mu versions, King Uija is taken to Tang as a hostage, and his father King Mu explodes with fury, stirring up a storm. The character who battles the dragon is generally Su Dingfang, portrayed as the son-in-law of the Baekje king, and it is the king’s daughter who tells him about the white horse, which enhances the tragedy of the narrative. In some of the King Mu versions, this role is played by the king’s beloved concubine. The dragon’s death effects not only the Baengma River but all the way to the Gongju area.

This tale transforms King Mu’s river dragon legend into Su Dingfang’s dragon fishing legend, switching the protagonist from Baekje’s king to a general of Tang China, and focusing on Su’s success in entering Baekje by exercising his wisdom and courage to kill the dragon king.

The legend is transmitted around Baekje’s ancient capital of Buyeo, and reflects the perception of the local people about the fall of Baekje, supported by evidence in the region’s geography.

Bak Mun-su

박문수

This legend narrates the story of Bak Mun-su (1691-1756), who served as secret inspector (*amhaengeosa*) in Joseon and had a reputation as a man of justice.

A significant number of folk tales about Bak Mun-su are documented in written form, but the number is incomparable to oral narratives, which outnumber tales about any other figure. The oral tradition includes not only accounts of Bak's achievements but also traditional narratives that have been combined with Bak's character. In folk literature, the name Bak Mun-su is often used as a generic name for secret inspector characters, so legends that involve Bak cannot simply be categorized as stories about an individual character.

The most central element in a Bak Mun-su legend is his adventures as a secret inspector, which begins with anecdotes about how he succeeded in the state exams. In one of the anecdotes, Bak is on his way to take the exam when he meets a woman dressed for mourning, who appears ominous. He lodges at her house and upon learning that she is engaged in an extramarital affair, Bak leaves, determined to solve the issue on a later date, when he encounters a young nobleman who offers him the contents of the test. This helps Bak pass the state exam and become a secret inspector, upon which he learns that the woman in mourning dress had conspired with her lover to kill her husband, and that the young man who had given him the test question was the haunted spirit of the dead husband. Bak Mun-su embarks on a brilliant career as an inspector, and one day he visits a poor home where he receives kingly hospitality from a brother and sister, during which he learns that the siblings are being abused by the sister's rich fiancé. Bak reveals his identity and offers to become the sibling's guardian, helping them find good spouses. Then one day Bak is accompanying a monk and in conversation learns that the monk was in fact a criminal in hiding, who had raped and killed a woman. Bak arrests the unforgivable man and resolves the grievance of the dead woman. In another anecdote, Bak loses consciousness in the mountains and his life is at stake, when a woman finds him and pumps her breast milk to feed him. When he comes to, Bak

heads to the woman's house to reveal his inspector identity and claims to be her blood relation to bring her family success and fortune.

Bak is not, however, always portrayed as capable of solving all problems. Once he fails to protect an innocent man chased by rogues, and a boy pretending to be a magistrate as part of a game, admonishes Bak that all he had to do to save the man was to act blind for a minute. The boy follows Bak, solving problems for Bak with great wisdom and courage. Once in a remote village deep in the mountains, the two are surrounded by villainous servants threatening violence on their master, and the boy exercises his wit to escape the village and contact the authorities. Bak is also sometimes portrayed less as a problem solver but more as an object to be taken advantage of: For example, a rich but lowly butcher pretends to be a relation of Bak's and with Bak's help, comes to be accepted as a virtuous nobleman.

Bak Mun-su legends found in written literature portray Bak in a different light. References to Bak



Portrait of Bak Mun-su,
Cheonan Museum

include anecdotes of him helping an old man who has fallen while carrying a load of salt up a mountain and of Bak saving the life of a man suffering a sudden seizure attack by feeding the man to a female spider. One of the most widely observed folk tales about Bak in books is that of his success in the state exam, which was due to his agreeing to engage in intimate relations with an ugly maidservant who fetches water. Some tales also say that he passed the state exam by stealing another applicant's answer sheet. Bak Mun-su's role as patron of a brother and sister experiencing misfortune is found in both oral and written narratives.

Bak Mun-su is one of the most popular folktale characters based on a real person, portrayed as a powerful man possessing the authorities bestowed by the king who hides his identity to perform his righteous duties, emphasizing that he was someone who stood on the side of the ordinary folks, a trait that is highlighted even when Bak is depicted as one who needs assistance or is taken advantage of. Thus even his mistakes are perceived as acceptable human folly. Bak's character reflects the people's expectations in noblemen and high officials, "a friendly and human individual who stands on the side of the people and exercise his authority righteously," which gives the character a timeless appeal.

Bang Hak-jung

방학중

This legend narrates the story of Bang Hak-jung, a quick-witted servant of Yeongdeok, North Gyeongsang Province, and his tricks and pranks.

Bang Hak-jung is believed to have been a real-life character from late 19th-century Joseon who lived in Yeongdeok, which is said to be the home of his descendents and his tomb, but the only known information about Bang is the stories of the tricks he

performed on his master.

Bang is a typical sly servant character, who engages in taking food from his master's table to eat or sell; tricking a woman pounding sticky rice to steal rice cake; getting himself tied up inside a sack to be thrown in the water then tricking someone to change places, making him die on his behalf; rewriting his master's letter to marry the master's daughter; and making his master's family drown in the water.

Among the many variations is the tale "Hadeonbangseok (Done Pillow)." Bang Hak-jung is following a group of scholars to Seoul, during which the scholars, in an attempt to leave Bang behind, offers that they will take him on the road if he succeeds in sleeping with a woman who is working in the field. Bang goes to the woman and pointing to a pair of scissors and a pillow, tells her that in the village where he is from, scissors are called "*ssipssigae* (fucker)," and a pillow "*hadeonbangseok* (done pillow)," then he hid the scissors under the pillow before returning to his group. While working, the woman looks for the scissors and calls out to Bang, asking where is the *ssipssigae*, to which Bang replies that it is under "*hadeonbangseok*," deceiving the scholars into believing that Bang had "done" it with the woman.

Another variation involves revenge taken on someone who refuses Bang's request for a favor. Bang meets a tobacco vendor on his way to the market and asks him for some tobacco but the vendor will not give him any. Determined to teach the vendor a lesson, Bang hurries ahead of him and coming across a field where people were working, kisses one of the women there then calls out to the tobacco vendor behind him, "Brother, come along quick," before running away. The men working with the woman, thinking the vendor is Bang's family, beats up the vendor and takes all of his tobacco.

Bang is a character who plays tricks not only on his master but on anyone, regardless of gender, age or status. The tales started out focusing on his relationship with his master, but over time Bang's

targets began to include lowly people like himself, going as far as to cause another person's death in the course of Bang securing his own survival. Many tales also involve sexual harassment of women, breaking the taboos of Joseon's society where women were not even permitted to be in the presence of men. These acts characterize Bang as a trickster, who traverses the boundaries of rules, customs or perception. "Tale of Eo Bok-son," included in the anthology *Sindangongan (Crimes Solved by Ghostly Forces)*, is about a similar character of a different name, and provides a glimpse into how the society responded at the time to trisksters. The protagonist of the story succeeds in drowning his master and his family, after which he suffers from nightmares and an illness, and in the end guilt drives him to confess his crime and face execution.

In conclusion, Bang Hak-jung can be defined as a character who offers a new perspective on the world by attacking not only the privileged class but the prejudices that live in all of us.

Bangi

방이

The legend of Bangi portrays the namesake character, who happens to acquire a magic club, and his younger brother who tries to acquire one as well but is punished.

The narrative is recorded in the 9th-century Chinese anthology *Youyang zazu (Miscellaneous Morsels from Youyang)* and its follow-up volumes as the tale of a man of Silla.

Bangi asked his rich younger brother for silkworms and grain seeds, but the mean younger brother gave him steamed seeds. When one of the silkworms that Bangi took turned out to be as big as an ox, the younger brother came and killed it, but silkworms from all over began crawling to Bangi's house, and one of the grain seeds grew to be taller

than one *ja*. One day a bird flew in and snatched the grain plant and Bangi chased after the bird into the mountains. Soon night fell and children dressed in red appeared and played with a club that gave them whatever they wanted. When the children left, leaving the club behind, Bangi brought the club home, which made him a rich man. Bangi's younger brother, jealous, tried to get a magic club as well, but was caught by the children in the mountain and came back with his nose stretched as long as an elephant's.

The legend of Bangi combines several different themes, including brotherly conflict and conflict between good and evil, between rich and poor. Bangi chases after the bird taking one grain that he has left and this struggle for survival brings him luck. His rich brother's actions, however, are rooted in greed and results in punishment.

The narrative structure is based on the motif of imitation between brothers, which reflects the strong family ethics of the time. The legend dates back to Silla and in late Joseon, developed into the narrative song *pansori*, titled "Heungboga."

Bear Wharf

곰나루

This legend narrates the origins of Gomnaru, a wharf in Ungjin-dong in Gongju, South Chungcheong Province, with a plot involving the marriage between human and animal.

A long time ago, on Mt. Yeonmi (Swallow Tail), near what is known today as Gomnaru (Bear Wharf), was a huge cave, inside which lived a huge female bear. One day the bear kidnapped a man who was in the mountain to chop wood, and the two lived together in the cave. The man, unable to escape the bear's captivity, survived on the food hunted by the bear, and the two eventually had two offspring. The bear began to trust the man and no longer blocked the entrance of the cave, which enabled the man

to escape one day while the bear was out hunting. The bear spotted the man running toward the river, and ran after him with their two cubs, calling out to him to come back. But the man crossed the river, ignoring the bear, upon which the bear threw herself in the river with the two cubs and died. From then on, people called the wharf that the man arrived at across the river Gomanaru, or Gomnaru, meaning Bear Wharf.

There are not many variations of this legend, but many versions have been recorded from around the country. A study interpretes this legend as a mythological variation associated with Dangun myth, especially in relation to the human-animal marriage motif, and bear mythology from Manchuria and Siberia regions, where many myths associated with bear rituals are observed. There are also views that this legend is a variation of the many tiger folk narratives transmitted across Korea.

The mythological characteristics of the Bear Wharf legend are based on the cultural transfer of the ancient peoples of Asia, the process of which makes for important research in this field, especially regarding China's Neolithic Hongshan culture. Similar place names also exist today in Japan, which reflects the influence of Korean culture, mainly that of Baekje, on ancient Japan.



Bear Shrine.
Gongju-si, Chuncheon-gnam-do, Cultural Heritage Administration

Bedbug Temple Grounds

빈대절터

This legend gives an account of a temple that closed down due to bedbugs.

In a village at the foot of Mt. Jiphyeon in Sancheong, South Gyeongsang Province, there was a large temple that closed after suffering damage from too many bedbugs. When one of the monks that had left returned to the temple site, there were bedbugs heaped together on a column, which made him leave again. Several years later when another person visited the temple site to cut grass, he was shocked by a huge centipede on a tree and died. Then one day the monk who had left the temple had a dream in which a woman appeared and said, "I am struggling to guard the temple all by myself," admonishing the monk for deserting the temple. While the monk offered prayers in front of the Buddha the centipede lurked behind him then tried to swallow the monk, upon which the monk woke from his dream.

Among the many variations of this legend, the simplest can be summarized as, "There were too many bedbugs at the temple (or hermitage) and the monks had to set fire on the buildings and leave." Added to this basic plot line are motifs that reveal the temple's name or the identification of the site or a villager's testimony that heaps of bedbugs are still found under the rocks on the site.

This legend should be understood not merely as a story involving bedbugs but within the Korean tradition of dragon and snake folk tales. First of all, the presence of the centipede on the site of a temple ruined by bedbugs suggest that the word "*bindae*," meaning bedbugs, might be a distorted form of similar sounding nouns "*gindae*, *jindae* or *jinjai*," which all mean "snake" in various Korean dialects. Secondly, the relation between centipedes and snakes or serpents can be found in folk tales about "the monster serpent *imugi* that turns into a centipede inside a cave," or of a centipede turning

into a woman, or of “the temple that closed after a centipede harmed the monks.” Third are tales about a serpent and a monk, or about a centipede and a monk, which include tales of “a serpent (or centipede) that ate up the monks each year and was killed by the temple’s patron” or of “a temple in ruins after the monk is eaten up by the centipede.” Fourth, many of Korea’s dragon and snake tales feature dragons, snakes or centipedes as deities that demand human sacrifice, which expands from maidens, young men and the elderly to magistrates and monks, a phenomenon due to an attempt to emphasize the evil traits of the dragons and snakes. The motif of the centipede hurting the monk in the bedbug temple legend can be understood as a human sacrifice motif in dragon and snake tales.

Boyang

보양

The legend of Boyang narrates of the story of a monk from the temple Unmunseonsa during late Silla and early Goryeo, who ordered the serpent Imugi to bring rain and protected the dragon from the wrath of the celestial emperor Cheonje.

When the monk Boyang was returning from China, Seohaeyongwang (Dragon King of West Sea) bestowed upon him a golden silk robe and ordered his son Imok (Imugi) to escort Boyang. Upon arrival, Boyang, in accordance with the Dragon King’s orders, built a temple named Jakgapsa in the spot that magpies were pecking. At nightfall, upon Boyang’s orders Imok made it rain, which the celestial emperor Cheonje deemed was out of Imok’s bounds, and tried to kill him. Boyang made Imok hide under the table and when the celestial messenger demanded for the serpent, Boyang pointed at a pear tree, which in Chinese characters is a homonym for Imok. The celestial messenger struck the pear tree with lightning before ascending to the heavens, and Imok caressed

the pear tree back to life.

Variations of the Boyang and Imok legend are transmitted orally around Miryang and the temples Unmunsa and Daebisa, in Cheongdo, Gyeongsang Province. The various versions sometimes include other motifs but most revolve around the narrative element of “the serpent *imugi* that fails to become a dragon.” The most widely known version is the one from Cheongdo, about the serpent *imugi* that is believed to live in the pond Sirae Hobakso. A monk found it suspicious when a senior monk disappeared each night, and followed him to the reservoir Daebiji, where he jolted and shook, in a struggle to turn into a dragon. As the monster serpent soared to the sky, his true identity revealed, he hit Eoksan Rock, located to the south of the temple, with his tail, leaving a pointed tip.

The pond where the monster serpent *imugi* is believed to live is called Hobakso, which means Mortar Pond. According to the book *Dongguk-yeojiseungnam* (*Augmented Survey of the Geography of the Eastern Kingdom*), putting a tiger head inside the pond brought rain, which signifies that the pond served as the venue for rain rites (*giuje*). The version of the legend transmitted today also accounts that after his identity was revealed, the serpent has since lived in Hobakso. Related legends that followed grew more distant from the influence of Buddhism and the serpent’s limitations, despite his ability to bring rain, was increasingly emphasized.

Brother Sister Fortress

오누산성

The legend “Onwisanseong” narrates the story of a brother sister contest to build a fortress.

The origins of this legend lie in the motif of competition in mythologies, including the race between Mireuk and Seokga in the shamanic myth “Changsega (Song of the Creation of the

Universe)”; the battle between Daebyeolwang and Sobyolwang (Big Star King and Small Star King) and “Cheonjiwangbonpuri (Origin of the Celestial King Cheonjiwang)”; the race for the throne between Talhae and Suro; and the fight over the palatial site between Jumong and King Songyang.

A long, long time ago there was a fortress that had been left incomplete. There a widow lived with her son and daughter, both mighty and large, which made it impossible for the two of them to live in the same house, so one day they decided to hold a race, and the winner would slash the throat of the loser. The son was to travel on foot to Seoul and back in wooden clogs, and the daughter was to complete the construction of the fortress, transporting rocks in her skirt. Later, the daughter was almost finished with the fortress, but there were no signs of the son’s return. The mother, who wanted the son to win, made hot red bean porridge for the daughter with the intent of slowing her down, and while she was eating, the son returned, resulting in the son’s victory and the daughter’s death. In some versions, the son commits suicide after realizing that he had won by foul play, and the mother kills herself as well.

There are variations of the legend that feature as competitors a husband and a wife; a daughter and a daughter-in-law; two generals; a master and a servant; a chaste widow and a widower; male troops and female troops; strongmen and women laborers. Some take place in the supernatural realm, with Taoist hermits, fairies and Bodhisattvas competing against each other. Competition methods also vary: the son engages in pagoda building, bridge building, brook digging, house building, reservoir building, cave digging, and mountain climbing; the daughter in sowing seeds to make garments, bridge building, pagoda building, water fetching, and tree planting. There are also various other methods of distraction by the mother, including feeding the daughter roasted beans, rice and beans, crispy rice, or rice cake; ruining the completed fortress or pagoda;

hiding the daughter’s spoon; and giving the daughter additional work.

The race that takes place between the siblings contest who is faster, stronger, or goes further. It poses the same time limits on both the son and the daughter, and the female is assigned a more laborious task, while the male’s assignment is focused on distance. As time passed, however, the female’s assignment shifted toward less laborious work, including garment making, cooking and water fetching.

The narrative can be interpreted as a contest between heroes for the throne, taking place in the course of the succession of the goddess mother’s divine authority. The conflict and antagonism is unclear in the tale, but death is inevitable for the one who is defeated, in the race to become the agent of a new order under divine authority. In one variation, the daughter possesses powers that surpass her brother’s, but nevertheless, the sister dies and the younger brother wins. Versions such as this, which protests against the daughter’s death, reveal a strong negative perspective on the social order of the status quo, on a society that does not recognize one’s abilities, and on the chaos that results. Other variations seek some sort of resolution, one of which is the daughter’s covert contribution to the emergence of an extraordinary warrior, reflecting public anticipation for the strong warrior’s social role. This is why no implications or anticipations are given about the resurrection of the sister, who possesses extraordinary capacities but has met a tragic death.

This legend transports the heroic confrontation motif into a domestic setting, depicting conflict through the race between kin. The sibling relation seems to symbolize the shift from matriarchal society to patriarchy, and the sibling competition should be interpreted, not only as confrontation between male authority and female authority but between Celestial God and Earth God, and also as a fight for power within the hierarchy of a human world.

Brother Sister Pagoda

남매탑

This legend narrates the story of Nammaetap (Brother Sister Pagoda), erected to commemorate a Buddhist monk and a maiden who became sworn siblings and pursued religious discipline until they died on the very same day.

According to oral transmission, the protagonist of this legend is Monk Sangwon of late Silla. Sangwon was engaged in religious discipline in a tent put up near the current location of Nammaetap when he happened to meet a maiden, together with whom he practiced religious devotion and entered nirvana upon obtaining enlightenment. The narrative can be categorized as a tale of religious discipline aimed at the propagation of Buddhism.

A tiger that had a bone caught in his throat came to seek help from a monk in meditation. The monk pushed his hand down its throat to pull out the bone and the tiger was gone. A few days later the tiger brought him a wild boar, upon which the monk said, "This is a place of religious discipline, where it is unacceptable to destroy life," and sent the tiger back. A few days later the tiger brought an unconscious maiden and disappeared. The monk nursed the maiden back to health and urged her to return home, but the maiden offered to serve him in return for saving her life. The monk answered that he had entered priesthood and had no need to be served, and the maiden decided to enter priesthood herself in expression of her gratitude. The monk and the maiden formed ties as sworn siblings and together pursued religious discipline for the rest of their lives. They entered nirvana on the same day, and it is said that a large number of *sarira* pearls was found in their cremated remains, a sign of enlightenment. During the reign of Silla's King Seongdeok, Master Hoeui refurbished the meditation venue (currently Cheongnyang Temple) and built a pagoda in their honor, naming it Nammaetap (Brother Sister Pagoda).

A variation of this legend replaces the animal



Brother Sister Pagoda at Cheongnyang Temple.
Gongju-gun, Chungcheongnam-do, Korea Tourism Organization

bone inside the tiger's throat with a lady's hairpin, and the monk, upon taking out the pin, admonishes the tiger for killing. Details surrounding the maiden also differ: In some versions, the maiden encounters the tiger on the road by chance, while in some she is captured by the tiger on the eve of her wedding.

This legend can be categorized as a temple origin tale related to Cheongnyangsa, and also a tale of attaining Buddhahood, featuring a monk who gets involved with a young maiden but is not distracted and in the end enters nirvana.

Bulguk Temple

불국사

The legend of Bulguksa narrates the story of the construction of Bulguk Temple and the grotto Seokguram.

The story is recorded in the section titled "Dae-seonghyoisebumo (Daeseong's Filial Piety for Two Generations of Parents)" of *Samgungnyusa (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms)*.

In the village of Moryang, a woman named Gyeongjo had a son named Daeseong, for his large head and broad forehead. One day Monk Jeomgae of Heungnyun Temple came and told them giving one would bring them fortunes ten thousandfold, and



Yeonhwa and Chilbo Bridges at Bulguk Temple.

Bulguksa, Gyeongju, Gyeongsangbuk-do, Korea Tourism Organization

Daeseong persuaded his mother to offer a donation. Later Daeseong died and was reborn as the son of Minister Kim Mun-ryang, holding in his hand a letter written in gold (*geumganja*), containing the name Daeseong. When he grew up he sought his mother from his previous life and supported her. Then one day he hunted a bear on Mt. Toham and spent the night in the village at the foot of the mountain. That night the bear appeared in his dream and confronted him about the killing, which frightened Daeseong and making him sweat profusely, dampening his beddings. The bear demanded that Daeseong build a temple in its honor and Daeseong consented. When he awoke from his dream, Daeseong announced a ban on hunting and built Jangsusa (Temple of Longevity) on the site where he had caught the bear. Daeseong's devotion grew even stronger and he went on to build Bulguk (Buddha's Kingdom) Temple for his parents in his present life and Seokbul (Stone Buddha) Temple for his parents from his past life, respectively assigning two enlightened monks Sillim and Pyohun to each temple. While building the stone Buddha, the workers were carving a stone

to cover the grotto, when the stone suddenly broke into three pieces. Daeseong was enraged and while he was dozing, Cheonsin (Celestial God) descended and completed the grotto before ascending. Daeseong awoke and rushed to the southern hill, where he burned incense as an offering to Cheonsin. According to temple records at Bulguksa, Minister Daeseong began construction of the temple in the tenth year of King Gyeongdeok's reign (751), and the temple was completed under government supervision after Daeseong's death on the second day of the twelfth lunar month in the tenth year of King Hyegong (774)

The legend of Bulguksa comprises narrative elements of temple origin, spiritual transfer and rebirth, found in ancient mythology and tales: The bear dream motif is related to the tale of King Geodeung's birth which was followed by a bear-related sign received by King Suro; the motif of spiritual transfer is found in the story of Silla warrior Jukjirang's birth following an eminent monk's death; and the rebirth motif is believed to have been inspired by the tale of King Talhae, who climbed Mt. Toham and built a stone tomb, where he stayed



Principle Bonjonbul at Seokguram Grotto in Gyeongju.
Bulguksa, Gyeongju, Gyeongsangbuk-do, Cultural Heritage Administration

for ten days. The letter written in gold (*geumganja*) that Daeseong has in his hand when he is reborn is a significant detail, in that such letters refer to divine letters in Taoism, or to royal orders, which means that Daeseong was a king.

In comparison to the fame enjoyed by Bulguksa Temple and Seokguram today, this legend has not received notable attention, but its significance as a tale that narrates the life of the individual Kim Daeseong in relation to the construction of Bulguksa.

Cane That Grew Into a Tree

지팡이가 살아난 나무

This legend narrates the story of a monk's cane that grew roots and turned into a tree after the monk pushed it into the ground to make it stand.

A childless wife made an appeal to a monk who was passing through the village. The monk erected his cane by pushing it into the ground and said, "If you who offer your devotion to this tree, you shall

conceive a child." As time passed, the cane sprouted new buds and leaves and grew roots, turning into a huge tree worshipped as the village guardian.

Trees are living beings, often standing as a symbol of life or sorcery powers. Tree legends reflect the common belief that trees breathe and live like people. The motif of the tree as the origin of life is featured in many Korean creation myths and progenitor myths, including Dangun mythology, in which the divine altar tree Sindansu serves as the venue of Dangun's conception and of the creation of sacred spaces.

Cheoyong

처용

This legend narrates the story of Cheoyong, the son of the Dragon of Donghae (East Sea), who served in the royal court of Silla, and was deified as the gate god Munsin after he defeated the smallpox deity Yeoksin who assaulted Cheoyong's wife. The

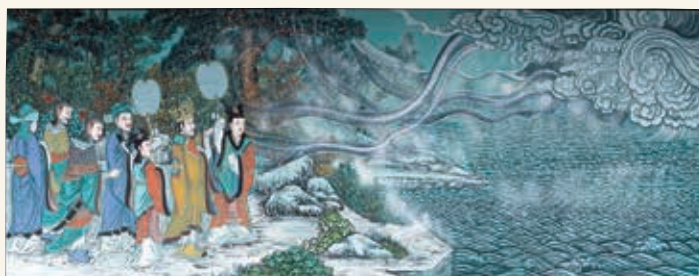
tales takes place against the backdrop of the reign of King Heongang (875-886), the 49th monarch of Silla.

King Heongang was returning from a visit to Ulsan when suddenly a thick fog surrounded him. The weather officer reported that the fog was caused by the Dragon of Donghae, and the king ordered that a temple be built in his honor. (The temple is believed to be Manghaesa or Sinbangsa.) At this, the fog lifted and the Dragon of Donghae appeared with his seven sons, dancing and playing music. One of the seven sons, named Cheoyong, followed King Heongang to Seorabeol to assist him in state affairs. The king arranged a beautiful woman to be his wife and appointed him to the ninth-rank official position of *geupgan*. Then one day Cheoyong's wife was raped by Yeoksin (Smallpox Deity), and upon witnessing this, Cheoyong began singing and danced as he retreated. The song is known today as "Cheoyongga (Song of Cheoyong)." This made Yeoksin fall to his knees in surrender, and pledged that he would never enter a gate that bore Cheoyong's face. Since

then, people pasted drawings of Cheoyong's face on their gates to chase away calamities and to invite auspicious events.

This account, recorded in *Samgungnyusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*), evolved through oral transmission into the legend of Cheoyong Rock in Ulsan. On Jeju Island, it was believed that Yeoksin surrendered to Cheoyong, who was Yongsin (Dragon God). In North Gyeongsang Province, there are tales of a martial hero named Cheoyongnang who defeated Heungnyong (Black Dragon) that appeared on the waters off Yeongdeok and caused trouble.

There are many speculations about Cheoyong's identity, ranging from Yongsin (Dragon God), or a shaman or a member of the Silla elite corps Hwarang, to the son of an influential family, or a Muslim merchant, and the narrative is often interpreted in relation to Yongsin worship, Korean shamanism or the Hwarang ideology. The relationship between Cheoyong, his wife and Yeoksin make for a dramatic plot, which could be read as a sorcery to overcome the epidemic of



Mural at Manghae Temple depicting:

1. The sea shrouded in a thick fog.
2. The temple established for the Dragon of the East Sea.
3. The temple established for the Dragon of the East Sea.
4. Dragon of the East Sea appearing after the fog with his seven sons.

Ulju-gun, Ulsan, 2004, National Folk Museum of Korea

1	3
2	4

smallpox, or as an adaptation of an actual sexual scandal.

The legend possesses great literary, folkloric and artistic significance, not only as a back story to the verse “Cheoyongga,” but also as a traditional performing arts number for “repelling ghosts and inviting auspicious events.”

Chilsan Sea

칠산바다

The legend of Chilsanbada (Chilsan Sea) narrates the story about the village of Chilsan turning into a sea, and how only those who followed the instructions of a visionary survived. The tale is related to the great flood legend and also to the settling of certain clans in specific regions.

A long time ago, an elderly man who lived in the village of Chilsan offered devotions in front of a rock shaped like a human and received a message in his dream that if the rock had a nosebleed, everyone should leave this village. He told the villagers about the message, but no one believed him, some even painting pig blood on the rock to ridicule the old man. When the old man saw the pig blood on the rock, he urged everyone to leave the village, but his grandson was the only one to follow him, everyone ignoring him. So he set out with only his grandson, then encountered a salt vendor, who recognized the old man as a visionary and joined them. That same evening, Chilsan village turned into a sea, and the old man and his grandson turned out to be the sole survivors.

The legend takes the form of a place name origin tale; a character tale; and a taboo tale. The main motif is the establishment of a taboo and how it is observed. The taboo here takes the form of instructions that are conditional, and the failure to observe the taboo results in unfortunate consequences that serve as punishment.

Chisul Mountain Pass

치솔령

The legend of Chisullyeong narrates the story of Bak Je-sang, who went to Japan at the order of Silla’s King Nulji in 402 to rescue the king’s brother, and upon getting captured by the Japanese, maintained his loyalty and died. Chisullyeong was the mountain pass where Bak’s wife awaited him until she turned into a rock.

King Mulji sought to bring back his two brothers, Mihae and Bohae, who were being held hostage in Japan and Goguryeo, respectively. Bak Je-sang was sent on the mission to Goguryeo and brought back Bohae. But when, upon his return, he saw how much the king missed Mihae, Bak headed straight to Japan without even stopping by his home. Bak’s wife, hearing of this, headed for the pier, but Bak was already on board, waving from afar. In Japan, Bak won the king’s trust and succeeded in helping Mihae escape, but when the angry king interrogated him, trying to win him over, Bak did not relent, for which he was burnt at the stake. When Mihae arrived safely back in Silla, King Nulji appointed Bak’s wife as Gukdaebuin (Great Dame) and wed Bak’s daughter to Mihae. Bak’s wife, while weeping and awaiting Bak on Chisul Mountain Pass, turned into Chisulsinmo (Divine Mother of Chisul) and protected Silla from Japan. There, her body turned into *mangbuseok*, or husband-awaiting rock, and her soul turned into a bird and flew away. This bird was called Bijo and the temple where the bird flew to was Euneuram.

This plot summary is based on the narrative as documented in *Samgungnyusa (Memorabilia of Three Kingdoms)* and also the orally transmitted version. The former centers on Bak Je-sang and states that his wife became the Divine Mother of Chisul, while the latter is told from the viewpoint of Bak’s wife and her transformation into a rock and a bird is explained in relation to place names near Chisullyeong. In other words, the two versions

highlight a different perspective, developed over the course of transmission: The written version emphasizes the virtue of loyalty in Bak, which expands into his wife's loyalty and chastity, whereas the oral version expresses the emotions of a wife who has no choice but to await her husband, serving a important cause, the rock and bird used as symbols to reflect the wife's resentment of the wait that has been imposed on her.

This legend also upholds the patriotic spirit as represented by Chisulsinmo (Divine Mother of Chisul), believed to protect the village in times of Japanese invasion.

Choe Chi-won

최치원

This legend narrates the story of Choe Chi-won, a son of amazing powers born to a woman who was kidnapped by a golden boar.

In the village of Munchang in Silla, each time a new magistrate arrived to take his post, the wife disappeared, kidnapped by a mysterious being. The newly appointed magistrate Choe Chung tied a spool of silk thread to his wife's dress. One day his wife indeed disappeared and the magistrate followed the trail of thread, which, disappointingly, disappeared into a narrow gap between two rocks. But villagers explained to him that the rocks opened up late at night, and indeed when night fell, they did, and Choe stepped inside between the rocks, where a whole new world unfolded, filled with fragrant scent and all kinds of music. In the middle of beautiful dancing women Choe Chung found a golden boar, lying with his head on his wife's lap, upon which Choe announced his arrival to his wife. She asked the golden boar, "What is the one thing that you are frightened of?" and the boar answered that it was deerskin, and that if someone were to chew a piece of deerskin and stick it at the back of his head, it



Portrait of Choe Chi-won.

Cheongdo-gun, Gyeongsangbuk-do, Cultural Heritage Administration

would kill him. Choe's wife was carrying a deerskin needle pouch, which she stuck on the golden boar and killed him. Following her rescue, Choe's wife gave birth to a son, who was Choe Chi-won.

This legend combines motifs from the underworld enemy battle narrative and the night visitor narrative to dramatize Choe Chi-won's extraordinary qualities and the reasons why he could not be accepted in Silla.

Cowherd and Weaver Girl

견우직녀

The legend "Gyeonujiknyeo" narrates the origins of Chirwolchilseok (Seventh Day of the Seventh Lunar



Mural of Cowherd and Weaver Girl in an ancient Goguryeo tomb in the village of Deokheung.
408, Nampo-jikhalsi, Gangseo-gu, DPRK, National Folk Museum of Korea

Month), the one day of the year, according to folk belief, when Gyeonu (Cowherd) and Jiknyeo (Weaver Girl) are allowed to meet.

Each year on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month, two stars, with the Silver River (Milky Way) between them, move very close to each other, from which this legend originated. The legend is believed to date back to China's Former Han Dynasty (BCE 296–CE 8), based on the stars Niulang (Cowherd Star; Altair) and Zhinu (Weaver Girl; Vega) found in the painting of the three-legged crow in the stone memorial hall on Mt. Xiatong, constructed during Later Han (25–220). The Milky Way was discovered in China during the Spring and Autumn period (BCE 771–476) and a line of verse, believed to be the earliest reference to the legend, appears in the “Xiaoya (Lesser Odes)” section of the anthology *Shijing* (*Classic of Poetry*). It was towards the end of Later Han that a folk narrative came to be formed through the personification of the two stars,

and in the Six Dynasties period (265–589), it grew into the legend of “Weaver Girl Crosses the Silver River to Meet Cowherd.” The earliest form of this narrative is found in the book *Jingchusuishiji* (*Record of the Year and Seasons of Jingchu*). In Korea, the earliest reference to this tale is the depiction of the Cowherd and Weaver Girl with a dog and the Silver River between them in the Goguryeo murals (409) in Deokheung in the district of Gangseo, now a part of North Korea.

Jiknyeo (Weaver Girl) was the granddaughter of Haneunim (Celestial Emperor), who was known for her weaving skills and diligence. The Celestial Emperor loved her very much and arranged her to be wed to the cowherd Hadong from the opposite side of the Eunhasu (Silver River). Weaver Girl and Cowherd, however, became lazy in the sweetness of their honeymoon, and this greatly angered the Celestial Emperor, who separated them to live on opposite sides of the Silver River, allowing them to

meet only once a year, on Chirwolchilseok (Seventh Day of the Seventh Lunar Month). When the Silver River kept them from uniting even on Chirwolchilseok, the crows and magpies of the terrestrial world flew up to the sky and formed a bridge for them by lining up head-to-head. This bridge came to be called Ojakgyo (Bridge Formed by Crows) and it is believed that each year, after the Seventh Day of the Seventh Lunar Month, all the crows and magpies fly back to earth with their heads turned bald from constructing the bridge. Rain on Chirwolchilseok (Chilseoku) is believed to be the reunited couple's tears of joy, while rain on the following day is believed to be the parting couple's tears of sorrow.

The lesson of this narrative is about the duties of a newlywed couple. The yearlong separation and waiting imposed on the couple as punishment can be seen as a rite of passage, while the repetition of parting and uniting between man and woman signifies the law of universal order. This legend, along with other folk customs related to Chirwolchilseok, is evaluated to be a story of great impact on the sentiments of the Korean people.

Daksil Wharf

닥실나루

The legend of Daksilnaru (Daksil Wharf) narrates the story of Magistrate Gwon Jong of Geumsan and his failure in battle during the Japanese invasion of the year Imjin (1592), related to strategic mistakes and a haunted spirit.

The battle took place over two days in the sixth lunar month, when Magistrate Gwon, a cousin of General Gwon Ryul, set up camp of two hundred soldiers at the fortress on Mt. Seongjae, overlooking Cheonnae River, pouring mud into the river to make the water appear opaque. In just a day, however, the Japanese troops figured out the river's depth and attacked the fortress by crossing over to Daksil

Wharf, and Gwon Jong, along with his son Jun, was killed in battle.

Today near Daksil Wharf stands a stele in memory of Gwon Jong. During the Japanese invasion of the year Imjin, Geumsan Magistrate Gwon Jong assembled six hundred soldiers and took them to Jeonju to volunteer for frontline battle, but the soldiers were too old and were assigned provisions duty in the rear. When the Japanese proceeded to Geumsan, Gwon returned to his post and assembled more men, setting up for battle at Daksil Wharf, with a strategy utilizing Geumsan's geographical features. As Gwon's troops proceeded, a woman tried to stop them, but when Gwon swung his sword, the woman disappeared, and she turned out to be the haunted spirit of a maiden who had killed herself due to her unrequited love for Gwon. On the upper stream of the river Geumgang, Gwon muddied up the waters to trick the Japanese forces, but when a woman crossed the river with ease, the Japanese soldiers found out that the water was shallow and launched an attack, conquering Mt. Seongjae Fortress and winning the battle.

This legend is a well-known narrative of the battle against the invading Japanese, transmitted in the Geumsan area and set against the backdrop of Daksil Wharf in the village of Jeogok in Geumsan County. The oral tradition blames the defeat on a haunted spirit, drawing from the tale lessons about womanly indiscretion and also the dangers of a woman's broken heart.



Stele in memory of patriotic martyr Gwon Jong.

1878, Geumsan-gun, Chuncheongnam-do, Cultural Heritage Administration

Dallae River

달래강

This legend narrates the origins of the name of Dallae (Relief) River, posing questions about instinct and ethics in relation to a brother who commits suicide due to guilt over his incestuous impulses, and his sister suffering from the pain of his death.

A long time ago, a couple raising a son and a daughter met an abrupt death, and the siblings made a living farming land that was located across the river. One summer, the river rose after heavy rains and the sister, to keep from getting her clothes wet, took them off to cross the water. As her brother followed behind, he felt lust arise inside in spite of himself and was shocked that he could feel such desire for his own sister. He told his sister to follow and went ahead of her, and upon crossing the river, he was overcome with guilt as he propped his penis on a rock and crushed it with a stone to kill himself. When his sister reached the other side of the river, she found her brother dead in a pool of blood, and exclaimed, in shock and grief, “You could have sought some kind of relief, you could have talked to me, why did you have to die?” and hence the river came to be called Dallaegang, meaning Relief River.

Variations of the Dallaegang legend share the same basic narrative structure, showing only partial alterations in detail: The older sister-younger brother relationship is sometimes changed to older brother and younger sister, or in some rare cases, that of uncle and niece; the backdrop is sometimes changed to mountain pass, mountain, rock, or cave; in some versions the female sibling undresses because the river has risen too high; in others the male sibling is killed not by his own guilt but by lightning, as heavenly punishment. The range of different setting reflect the geographical features of the site of transmission, and the other altered details are also related to individual memory or regional differences.

The motif of incest is closely connected with that of the sibling marriage observed in the “Great

Flood” legend, in which mankind faces extinction due to a destructive flood and the only surviving brother and sister wed to preserve humanity after seeking permission from the heavens. While the Great Flood legend reveals a mythological worldview, in which the marrying siblings acquire heavenly permission and take on the role of the ancestors of mankind, the Dallaegang legend concludes with an emphasis on incest as ethical taboo, on basic human desire censored by a secular ethical perspective. This can be read as a variation of incest as mythological motif, reflecting the socio-cultural context of a society with enhanced ethical norms.

In other words, the significance of the Dallaegang legend in its creative transformation of the sibling marriage motif within a sociohistorical context, and in its direct confrontation of the issue of incest, of the relationship between human instinct and ethical norms.

Daughter-in-Law Mountain Pass

며느리고개

This legend narrates the story about Meoneurigogae (Daughter-in-Law Mountain Pass) in the village of Sangoan in Hongcheon, Gangwon Province.

A long time ago, a father-in-law and his daughter-in-law were climbing a mountain pass with a donkey carrying their load, and when they reached a hill surrounded by a thick forest on the ridge, where the village deity shrine (*seonghwangdang*) was located, the father-in-law realized that his straw shoes were missing. He went back the way they had come, leaving his daughter-in-law alone, but was unable to find his shoes, and when he returned, the daughter-in-law had disappeared as well. After searching for her, to no avail, he decided to head back down, but this time the donkey refused to move. Rumors were later heard that the daughter-in-law had been kidnapped by bandits or eaten by a beast. And ever since, when a wedding procession had to pass through this

mountain pass, the donkey's hoofs got stuck together or the bride would disappear, so a ritual would have to be held, or the procession would have to take the long way around.

Myriad variations of this legend tell of intimate affair between the father-in-law and the daughter-in-law; of the daughter-in-law being kidnapped by a beast or ghost; of the daughter-in-law running away wearing the father-in-law's shoes; of the daughter-in-law running away after killing her husband, then getting caught and being killed by being buried upside down; of the daughter-in-law climbing the mountain pass while selling the straw shoes that the father-in-law made and starving to death in the mountain; or of the daughter-in-law climbing the mountain pass alone and getting kidnapped by a tiger or bandits.

In folklore, shoes signify the female genitalia and feet the male genitalia, and putting on shoes, as a form of homeopathic magic, can be read as sexual intercourse, which in this legend can be interpreted as intimate relations between the father-in-law and the daughter-in-law thereby leading to the daughter-in-law's death. The donkey's hoofs sticking together is caused due to the breaking of social taboo, and the wedding procession avoiding the pass is in order to keep away from immoral acts. It seems that this motif of incest has kept this legend, which is structured like a village deity origin narrative, from developing into a village god myth.

In its current form, the legend aims at delivering a lesson about moral conduct, which is why the narrative is allegorical and symbolic, and not direct or realistic.

Deokjin Bridge

덕진다리

The legend of Deokjindari (*Deokjin Bridge*) narrates the story of the bridge's origins, built by the magistrate of Yeongam who came back from the underworld.



Deokjin Bridge.

Jeonju-si, Jeollabuk-do, Korea Tourism Organization

The magistrate of Yeongam met a sudden death and when he arrived in the underworld, Yeomnadaewang (Great King Yeomna) told him that it was not his time yet, but he could not simply send him back, ordering the magistrate to give alms to those in the underworld. Each person had a shed in the underworld where the alms that he gave in the human world are stored, and in the magistrate's shed was nothing but a bundle of straw, for he had given almost nothing. The Messenger from the Underworld (Jeoseungsaja) told the magistrate that he could borrow from the shed that belonged to a man named Deokjin, which was piled with alms, and repay Deokjin when he returned to the human world. The magistrate did as he was told, and back in the human world, went looking for Deokjin, who worked as a servant at a tavern by Deokjin River. The magistrate explained what had happened and offered to repay him with three hundred sacks of rice, but Deokjin said he could not accept them, for he had nothing to do with the matter. So instead the magistrate built a bridge for the villagers across Deokjin River, and named it Deokjindari (Deokjin Bridge).

This legend features two characters, one who is rich but miserly, and the other poor but generous and benevolent, to highlight a lesson about what constitutes a good life.

Dog Tomb

개 무덤

Dog tomb (*gaemudeom*) legends tell the tale of a dog's acts of loyalty or kindness to humans.

Since first being documented in *Bohanjip* (*Collection of Writings to Relieve Idleness*) in Goryeo, folk narratives about loyal and virtuous dogs have been a part of numerous collections, including the official *Chōsengo dokuhon* published by the Japanese Government General during colonial rule and elementary textbooks in present times. Various different versions of the tale are transmitted around the country.

The most common type of the loyal dog story is based on the narrative structure of “extinguishing a fire to save the master,” as exemplified by the “Folk Tale of the Righteous Dog from Osu.” One

day on his way back from the market, the dog's owner, drunk, fell asleep on the grass by the side of the road. A wild fire soon began to spread, and the dog ran to the stream to soak its body to splash water on the grass, eventually saving his owner but falling to his own death in exhaustion. The owner woke to find the dog dead and overcome with grief, he dug a grave and erected a tombstone for the dog, keeping the dog's story alive for generations to come.

In these tales, the dog owners are generally of low social status, weaklings who need the dog's help to stay alive or to resolve undeserved grievances. The dogs, on the other hand, are smart creatures that possess intelligence, virtue and physical power—saviors that help the owners overcome crisis. The tales usually end with the construction of a tomb or tombstone by later generations in reverence of the dog, not the owner.

Loyal dog legends are usually supported by evidence, including dog tombs or tombstones that memorialize dogs. The commentaries that accompany these evidences or documentation are based on the intent to elucidate ethical standards, and were later utilized by Confucian scholars as a means of moral edification.



Dog tomb and tombstone.

Gumi-si, Gyeongsangbuk-do (2010, Hong Sunseok)



A righteous dog memorial stele and pagoda.

Imsil-gun, Jeollabuk-do, Cultural Heritage Administration

Dokdo

독도

Dokdo legends narrate the stories surrounding the eighty-nine islands in Dokdo-ri, part of the village of Ulleung, in Ulleung County, North Gyeongsang Province.

One of the legends related to Dokdo is “Gum-eongbawi (Hole Rock),” about a rock located off the shore of Cheonbu Village, which was originally on the waters off Hyeonpo Village. An elderly villager with mighty powers tied up the rock to a boat and tried to take it to faraway waters. But the rock would not be pulled away, and the old man, angry, lifted



Dokdo.

Ulleung-gun, Gyeongsangbuk-do, Cultural Heritage Administration

one of the nearby rocks and threw it on the rock tied to his boat, which made a hole in the rock. When the boat reached the waters off Cheonbu Village, the rope tore off, leaving the rock in its current location, and the rock came to be called Gumeongseom (Hole Island) or Gongam (Hole Rock) due to the hole made by the old man.

“The Dragon That Ascended to the Heavens” is a legend that narrates the origins of the island name of Dokdo: There were numerous islands in Donghae (East Sea), and the dragon that lived on the largest island crushed all the other islands with his tail before ascending to the heavens from Seongin Peak on Ulleung Island, leaving only two islands behind, Ulleungdo and Dokdo. “The Secret of Gasan Island” is about three fishermen from Ulleung Island who went out fishing on a small boat but were washed up on a deserted island, covered with rocks. They were able to return home with the help of an Taoist hermit-like old man, who gave them fruit and guided their boat, but the fishermen were never again able to find the island.

Most legends from Dokdo are limited within the bounds of its geography, and the only archetypal narrative found here is the “Hole Rock” legend, based on the “Mountain That Moved” narrative, explaining the origins of a prominent giant rock island next to Dokdo. The old man who moves the rock in this story seems based on the creator who rearranges geographical features, more specifically the giant creator deity in Korean mythology. In the course of moving the rock, the old man loses his mighty power, which can be interpreted as the secularization and fragmentation of the creator god, a common phenomenon in Korean folk narratives.

Dragon Fight

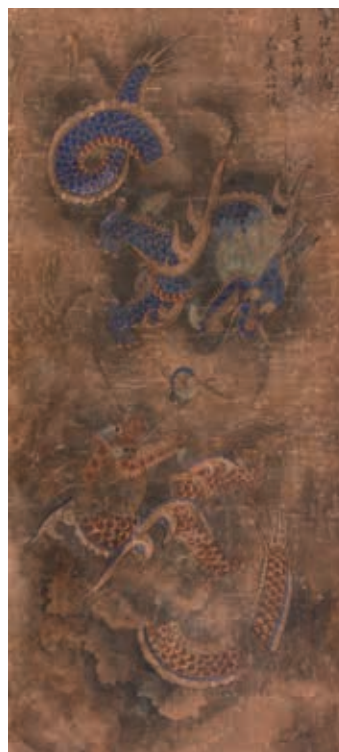
용 싸움

The legend “Yongssaum” narrates the story of a man who was asked by a dragon that lived in a pond to help in a dragon fight, and in return for assisting the

dragon's victory, was given a wide plain. The earliest remaining record of this legend is the "Tale of Dojo (grandfather of Joseon's founder Yi Seong-gye), included in *Yongbieocheonga* (*Songs of Dragons Flying to Heaven*). Other versions include the legends of Jeokji and Gonggeomji in *Donggukyeojiseungnam* (*Augmented Survey of the Geography of the Eastern Kingdom*); and the story of Yi Bu-pyeong in *Joseoneupji* (*Village Records of Joseon*), similar to the "Yugeumi Plain" tale.

A long time ago, in the village of Yongjeong in Jangyeon, Hwanghae Province, lived a man with the last name Kim, also referred to as the Archer for he was good with arrows. One day Kim had a dream in which Yellow Dragon (Hwangnyong) of the village's Dragon Pond (Yongso) appeared and told him that Blue Dragon (Cheongnyong) of the West Sea was trying to take away the pond where it had been living for hundreds of years, and asked Kim to shoot the Blue Dragon the following day when the two of them engaged in battle. Kim went to the pond the following day, but he was too frightened as he watched the two dragons fighting and could not shoot his arrow. In his dream the following night, Yellow Dragon again appeared and pleaded for help. Kim went the following morning to the pond and again found the two dragons entangled in a fight, and this time Kim shot and killed Blue Dragon. That night in his dream, Yellow Dragon appeared and said that to repay the favor, it wanted to give Kim the pond water, so that he could turn the wide stretch of waste land in the village into a rice field. Kim began to build an irrigation system with the villagers, when one day during a thunderstorm, lightning struck the mountain that blocked Dragon Pond and the plain, leaving a big cave. Water from Dragon Pond poured through the cave, turning the dry, wide plain into a rice field, measuring thousands of *jeongbo*. Thus the pond came to be named Yongso (Dragon Pond); the irrigated plain Yongjeongbeol (Dragon Spring Plain); the village Yongjeong (Dragon Spring); and the county Yongyeon (Dragon Lake).

The narrative is transmitted around the country in different variations, the plot shifting according to the result of the protagonist's engaging in the dragon battle, divided largely into the plot where he is rewarded with good fortune, and one where he fails and the battles is lost. In "Tale of Dojo," in *Yongbieocheonga*, Dojo shoots Black Dragon (Heungnyong) at the request of White Dragon (Baengnyong), who predicts that Dojo's descendents will achieve great success, which later materializes as his grandson Yi Seong-gye's founding of the kingdom of Joseon. The progenitor of the Cheongju Han clan also assists a dragon in a fight and acquires a plain, where he starts the village Daemeori in Chungju, North Chungcheong Province. An example of the type that ends in failure is the legend of Yongdang Pond, transmitted in the village of Wongu in Yeongdeok, North Gyeongsang Province, in which the protagonist makes a mistake that results in the victory of the opponent dragon, and ends in his death



Two Dragons Fighting Over a Pearl.
Onyang Folk Museum

and the fall of his family. Variations are also observed in the protagonist's means of battle, including arrow, sword, and shouting. The two dragons generally battle over the pond or to qualify for heavenly ascension, but in some variations, including the tale of the pond Gonggeomji from Sangju, North Gyeongsang Province, a wife dragon and a concubine dragon fight over the husband dragon. The character of the human protagonist has shifted from heroes like an ancestor of a dynastic progenitor, clan progenitor and renowned archer to a rich man or a servant, which reflects that the mythological significance of the tale has faded over time.

The dragon fight narrative depicts the power struggle between dragon gods (*yongsin*) to gain control over a region. Its origins lie in the mythological narrative of heroic beings acquiring land by helping a deity engaged in battle and starting a village or kingdom, which over time turned into

local legends about place name origins, reflecting the desire of ordinary farmers to own land. The depiction of the dragon as the giver of land is due to the folk worship of dragons as farming gods.

Emille Bell

에밀레종

The legend of Emillejong narrates the story of the Divine Bell of King Seongdeok the Great, also called Emille Bell, completed in the sixth year of King Hyeogong's reign (770) in Silla, and the sacrifice of a young child in its making, due to the mother's slip of the tongue in response to a monk's donation request. No official records remain of this incident, but the tale emerged in 19th-century records documented by Christian missionaries, and recordings of oral



Restoration site of the Divine Bell of King Seongdeok the Great.
1930s, National Folk Museum of Korea

narratives date back to the Japanese colonial period.

At Bongdeok Temple, the project to make a new bell kept failing, a cause for much concern. One of the monks was making rounds in the village to collect donations of money or metal scraps, when he met a woman carrying a young child on her back. The monk requested a donation, and the woman answered that she was poor and had nothing to donate, joking that he might want to take her child, her only possession. The monk returned without securing a donation and the plan to make a bell continued to fail, upon which he received a divine revelation that the bell could only be completed with a child sacrifice. The monk went back to the woman and brought the child to put him into the molten metal. When the bell was finally completed, the child's haunted spirit made the bell ring out, "emille," or "mommy."

This legend is in similar vein with the "human-column" narrative, about constructions completed by burying a person in the foundation, and also with tales of human sacrifice, offered to communicate with divine beings. It can be read as an argument for the need for great sacrifice from humans in the making of a divine bell, or as an expression of public resentment for large-scale bell-making projects.

Five Hundred Generals

오백장군

The legend "Obaekjanggun" narrates the origins of a cluster of strangely shaped rocks in the scenic area of Yeongsil on Jeju Island's Mt. Halla.

The oral transmission of the Five Hundred Generals legend is believed to have originated from a writing by Im Je, which was included in his book *Nammyeongsoseung* (*A Brief Record on the Southern Seas*). Im visited Mt. Halla in 1578 and after viewing the rocks at Yeongsil, he wrote a poem that referred to Tian Heng, from the Warring States

Period in China, and his five hundred warriors, and over time, a narrative came to be formed in Jeju about the five hundred generals.

The following is the basic plot of the narrative, as summarized in *Jejudojeonseolji* (*Record of Jeju Legends*) and *Jejudojeonseol* (*Legends of Jeju Island*):

In Yeongsil, on the southwestern skirts of Mt. Hall, there is a huge group of rocks with strange and bizarre shapes, called Obaekjanggun (Five Hundred Generals) or Obaeknahan (Five Hundred Arhats), and this is the tale of how they came to be. A long time ago, a mother lived with her five hundred sons. A bad harvest made it difficult for such a huge family to make a living. One day the mother told the sons that they should go out and acquire food to survive, and the five hundred brothers all set out to get food. The mother set up a gigantic cauldron and began boiling porridge to serve her sons when they returned. While stirring the porridge, however, the mother tripped and fell into the cauldron and died. When the brothers returned, they found the porridge in the cauldron and began to eat. The youngest of the five hundred was scooping up porridge for himself when he found strange bones in the cauldron, and upon a closer look, realized that they were his mother's. He lamented, refusing to stay on with his disrespectful brothers who had eaten their own mother, and ran off to the faraway island of Chagwi off the village of Gosan in Hangyeong-myeon, where he wept and wept until he turned into a rock. The other brothers, upon realizing what had happened to their mother, stood around weeping, until they turned into rocks. Thus today in the valley of Yeongsil can be found the four-hundred-and-ninety-nine generals and the youngest brother, on his own, on Chagwi Island, which can be viewed from the volcanic cone Bagumji in Seogwipo.

The legend of Obaekjanggun is also transmitted in connection with the legend of the giant Seolmundae, the Five Hundred Generals featured as Grandmother Seolmundae's sons. This



Yeongsil Rocks, known as Five Hundred General.
Seogwipo-si, Jeju-do, Cultural Heritage Administration

variation is spread across Jeju Island.

The narrative can be summarized as the sacrifice of a mother who, in poverty, cares for her children with love. The sons' repentance and transformation into rocks emphasizes filial piety.

Gameun Temple

감은사

"Gameunsa" is a legend associated with the remains of the Gameun Temple site in the village of Yongdang in Yangbuk, part of today's city of Gyeongju in North Gyeongsang Province.

According to temple records, King Munmu of Silla began construction of Gameun Temple in defense against Japan's military assault, but died before its completion and turned into a dragon. His son King Sinmun succeeded to the throne and in the 2nd year of Kaiyao under the reign of Gao Zong of Tang China (682), the temple's interiors were

completed. A hole was made under the temple's threshold toward the east, to prepare for the day when the dragon would enter the temple and take up residence. The deceased king's will called for his bones to be kept on an islet to serve as his tomb, naming it Daewangam (Great King Rock); for the temple to be named Gameunsa; and the pavilion where the king reappeared as a dragon to be named Igyeondae. The exact date of the temple's closing is unknown, but records show that it existed until the Joseon dynasty. Today on the temple's grounds remain the site of the hall Geumdang and two grand stone pagodas standing to the east and west. The pagodas are the earliest three-story stone pagodas from Unified Silla and were designated in 1962 as National Treasure.

There are various folk narratives related to Gameun Temple, including one of the dragon that came up to the temple through Yonghyeol (Dragon Cave); of the origins of how Gameun Temple acquired the status of a guardian of the state; of the Japanese invader who tried to steal the temple's grand

bell but dropped it in the waters off Daewangam; and of King Munmu's ascension and how in the course of his ascension he made all the islands on the East Sea disappear, with the exclusion of Ulleung Island. These narratives combine, in many variations, the motifs of the construction of a temple to guard the kingdom against invading foreigners and of a king's ascension as a dragon.

The spatial structure of the narrative, which centers on Gameun Temple, the Dragon Cave and the Great King Rock, are similar to that of the Girin Cave myth from Pyeongyang, which involves Yeongmyeong Temple, Girin Cave and Jocheon Rock. This signifies that the mythological structure of the Girin Cave myth applies not only to the myths of Goguryeo but to this Silla legend as well.



Remains of the Gameun Temple site.
Gyeongju-si, Gyeongsangbuk-do, 2004, National Folk Museum of Korea



Three-story stone pagoda at Gameun Temple.
Gyeongju-si, Gyeongsangbuk-do, Korea Tourism Organization

The legend of Gameun Temple features a king who proclaimed that he would become a dragon to guard his kingdom, and who indeed ascended to the heavens as the Dragon God (Yongsin) to serve as a deity who protects the state and oversees agricultural prosperity. This makes the legend a uniquely Korean narrative of a state guardian dragon, based on the Buddhist concept of the temple guardian dragon and the Korean folk belief of dragon worship.

General Gang Gam-chan

강감찬

This legend, in different variations, depicts Gang Gam-chan (948-1031), the renowned military commander of Goryeo known as one of the three greatest generals in Korean history, as a supernatural hero. Gang's mythical accomplishments are recorded in documents and publications including *Bohanjip* (*Collection of Writings to Relieve Idleness*) of Goryeo; *Yongjaechonghwa* (*Assorted Writings of Yongjae*) of early Joseon; and *Haedongijeok* (*Extraordinary Lives from East of the Sea*) of Joseon.

Haedongijeok, published during the reign of King Hyojong, includes a version of this legend, with mention of eradicating attacks from tigers and of the star Mungokseong, which goes as follows:

Gang Gam-chan served in the position of *pyeongjangsa* during the reign of King Hyeonjong of Goryeo, and was known as an honest and humble man and a resourceful strategist. He was appointed at a young age as *pangwan* (assist prefect) of the district of Hangyangbu, where tigers had been appearing often and attacking people. Gang wrote a document and had it delivered to two monks outside the northern gate, ordering them to leave the district, taking their packs with them. The magistrate of Hanyang refused to believe that the monks were tigers, but when Gang ordered them to reveal their true identity, the two monks took off their robe and

turned into roaring tigers. Gang implored them to leave and they disappeared, their whereabouts unknown, and the capital was freed of worry about tiger attacks. When Gang Gam-chan was born, an envoy from Song China was in the county of Siheung late at night when he saw a huge star fall on a house and sent a clerk to check, to learn that the woman of the house had just given birth to a boy. The Song envoy visited the home, where, upon seeing the baby offered a bow and said that he was the auspicious star Mungokseong, which had long disappeared. Gang died at the age of eighty-four, and people said that he turned into a Taoist hermit (*sinseon*) and ascended to the heavens.

Versions of this legend that are transmitted orally in the Gangneung area feature either a Ganggeung magistrate; a general; a lord; a wise man who chases

away foxes; a man of strong energy who eradicates ants; a general with divine powers who stopped frogs from croaking; or a geomancy expert. Gang Gam-chan's father is portrayed as a magistrate, teacher, scholar, or minister in versions from the Gyeonggi region; as a womanizer, salt vendor, or martial official in versions from the Chuncheong region; and as a minister in the versions from the Gyeongsang region. Some versions portray Gang's mothers as a fox that turned into the ninety-ninth virgin, which gave Gang the ability to understand animal sounds, and in the end the fox chases away its transformed groom; some portray her as possessing eyes that can see a thousand li away and the ability to contract distances, and as a user of talismans; some feature her attempts to acquire longevity by asking the smallpox deity Mama to give her pock marks three or five



Portrait of General Gang Gam-chan.
Nakseongdae, Gwanak-gu, Seoul, National Folk Museum of Korea



Three-story stone pagoda honoring General Gang Gam-chan. Nakseongdae, National Folk Museum of Korea



Shrine for General Gang Gam-chan at Anguk Temple.
Nakseongdae, Gwanak-gu, Seoul, National Folk Museum of Korea

times; some portray her as an ugly woman with small ears, short in height, possessing a fox face, or having the appearance of a beggar. In versions from the Gangwon region, Gang demonstrates supernatural powers in troubled situations, like saving a family by destroying a fox hole, curing a friend who has lost his soul, or breaking lightning rays, but in a village where its residents were not generous with water, he uses a talisman to dry up its wells, his act taking on a disciplinary stance.

The legend of Gang Gam-chan offers evidence of civilian worship of real-life figures of great achievement. Based on Gang's historical accomplishments as a man of outstanding powers and distinguished military merit against invading foreigners, the legend highlights his heroic acts related to ordinary people's lives and portrays him as a deified figure who chases away evil and pursues auspicious forces. Gang is also depicted as a disciplinary character who solves people's problems with his divine powers.

Goblin Reservoir

도깨비보

"Dokkaebibo" legend tells the story of the construction of a reservoir by offering red bean porridge to *dokkaebi*, or goblins.

There is also a legend related to Ma Cheon-mok, a military official during King Gongmin's reign of Goryeo, for whom a goblin built a fishing weir on Seomjin River. A fishing weir blocks the flow of the river like a fence to help catch fish, which in effect can be perceived as similar to building a reservoir.

In a "Dokkaebibo" legend, the protagonist encounters a group of *dokkaebi* and offers them red bean porridge (*patjuk*) in return for blocking off a reservoir. When the goblins complete this task overnight, the grateful protagonist makes them red bean porridge, which the goblins shared. But it turned

out that there was not enough for everyone and one was left without any porridge to eat and was furious, pulling out rocks from the part of the reservoir wall that he had constructed. However, even when there were heavy floods, the reservoir did not collapse, only suffering jets of water leaking from the spots where the rocks were missing.

The offering of red bean porridge to *dokkaebi* is significant, since red bean porridge is a dish served on Dongji (Winter Solstice), offered as a sacrificial food or sprinkled around the house as an act of sorcery to keep out bad fortune and evil spirits. The fact that *dokkaebi* ate the red bean porridge shows that these goblins were not mere ghosts or evil spirits.

Oral narratives about goblin reservoirs are transmitted around North Gyeongsang Province, mainly Danseong in Sancheong County, and Jipyong Village in Gonggeom, near Sangju, and in most cases related to place name origins. The act of building reservoirs underline the goblins' connection with water. Some variations feature *dokkaebi* catching all the fish in the reservoir and burying them in the ground, which shows that these goblins possessed supernatural powers to control water creatures, related to *dokkaebi* worship among fishermen on the southwestern coast who engaged in weir fishing.

Golden Boar Cave

금돼지굴

"Geumdwaejigul" narrates the rescue, through wit and intelligence, of one who has been captured by a golden boar.

A similar narrative is featured in "Choemun-heonjeon (Tale of Scholar Choe Chi-won)" of the 17th-century anthology *Sindokjaesutaekbonjeongijip* (*Strange Tales Collected by Sindokjae*).

There was a county where, each time a new magistrate arrived to take his post, his wife disappeared without a trace. When a wise magistrate

was newly appointed, he tied a spool of thread to his wife's dress. One day his wife indeed disappeared and the magistrate followed the trail of thread, which led to a cave where he found a golden boar with his wife. His wife learned that the one thing the boar feared was deerskin, and the magistrate, who happened to be carrying a keyholder made of deerskin, succeeded in killing the boar and rescuing his wife.

This narrative is transmitted around the country in a range of versions, in some of which it is the magistrate that is captured by the boar, or the golden boar imposes himself on the magistrate's wife and impregnates her. The latter version is widely known as the birth tale of Choe Chi-won, renowned scholar of late Silla, which allows diverse interpretations of the narrative, as both a tale of place name origin or as a birth tale.

In versions unrelated to the birth of Choe Chi-won, a hero emerges in a time of social chaos, when nothing can be done even though women are kidnapped and possessions are stolen, and restores order. The hero, in this case, is not a creator of new order but one who rebuilds and restores. In versions associated with Choe's birth, however, Choe takes on the role of the son of the golden boar, which has brought down the existing order. This demonstrates a continuing challenge on the existing order and the demand for the creation of a new order.

Great Flood

대홍수

This legend narrates the story of a great flood in ancient times, which drowns the entire world except for a single mountain peak and two siblings, who wed and become the ancestors of mankind.

A long, long time ago, a great flood turned the entire world into a vast sea, leaving only a brother and sister on a single mountain peak. When the world

was drained of all the water, the siblings came down the mountain, but there was no one left. The siblings, worried that this would be the end of mankind, each climbed two mountain peaks that stood close to each other, and the sister rolled down the bedstone (female stone) of a millstone, and the brother rolled down the runner stone (male stone), and the two stones came together in the valley. (Or in another version, they set fire to pine branches and smoke entwined in mid-air.) The siblings viewed this as a sign from the heavens and wed. With this marriage, humanity continued and the siblings became the progenitors of mankind.

Some variations of this tale feature the siblings as progenitors of a specific family; in some the incest motif is taken out and a man appears, carried by a tiger, and weds the sister. Some mountain name origin tales are variations of this legend, the great flood providing the opportunity for the creation of a new nature, as in the narrative formula that goes, "after the flood, only ____ of the mountain peak remained, which gave the name ____ Mountain." The volume units *doe* and *mal* reflected on the Chinese-character names of the mountain, as in Mt. Seungbong and Mt. Dubong.

Some geographical names reflect the use of boats during the Great Flood: Gori (Hook) Peak is said to have been used to tie boats during the flood; and Baeneomijae, which means Boat Crossing Pass. In traditional geomancy, geographical features that resemble sailing boats are called *haengjuhyeongguk* and villages with such features are believed to have survived the Great Flood, with relics of dock posts. Muneomijae (Water Crossing Pass), a mountain pass near Mt. Gyeryong in Gongju, South Chungcheong Province, is associated with the belief that a future flood will open a whole new world.

In some variations, an old woman's predictions are ignored, bringing about a collapse, which, along with the above types, make up a category of apocalypse-by-flood legends that result in the creation of a new universe, which in some cases are combined with motifs of place name origin or sibling

marriage. Apocalypse-by-flood legends involve catastrophes like great rains, floods or tidal waves, but there are always survivors and mountains and trees that remain, resulting in a new name for the mountain, which is reborn as a place for new life and a new history, created by the survivors. The surviving siblings' marriage gives birth to mankind as we know it today, or a specific clan, which signifies the beginning of a new order. The flood, in other words, does not symbolize extinction but mythological rebirth. Flood legends that focus on the apocalypse emphasize human corruption, which brings about the destruction, but even in these cases, there are always survivors. Legends of future floods, on the other hand, reflect the rejection of the current state of the world and the longing for a new one. In conclusion, flood legends, despite their fragmented narrative tradition, are references that reflect the archetype of Korean apocalypse myths and creation myths.

Great King Kim Bu

김부대왕

“Kimbudaewang” is the legend of King Gyeongsun, the last monarch of Silla who reigned from 927 to 935, and of his son Crown Prince Maui.

Both experienced the grievance of losing their kingdom: King Gyeongsun surrendered the kingdom to Goryeo for the safety of his people, while Crown Prince Maeui had to give it up according to his father's decision. The legend of the former mainly revolves around the motif of national defense while that of the latter focuses on efforts to save the state from demise.

The following is a summary of a typical Great King Kim Bu legend, featuring the king as state-protector dragon. Ulleung Island was surrounded by numerous other islands, which was why the Japanese made the island their basecamp for invasion and harassed the island's villagers. In addition the

land around the port city Pohang was blocked by a mountain, which resulted in a lack of water for farming. To solve this problem, Great King Kim Bu said that when he died, he would turn into a dragon and said he would make all the islands disappear. When he died, there appeared a huge serpent in Sonsalmaegi, which everyone called a snake, except for Yugeumi, a young boy who had come on his grandmother's back to see the serpent, who addressed the serpent as Yongnim (Dragon Lord). Upon hearing this, the serpent turned into a dragon and struck the mountain and islands, making them disappear. Just as the dragon was about to strike Ulleung Island, the heavens ordered him to stop, for the island was the kingdom's “waterway blocker (*sugumaegi*),” a deity that provides geomantic protection. Today around Ulleung Island traces can be found of the disappeared islands, and the plains where the mountain once stood are called Yugeumideul, after the child on his granny's back who recognized the dragon.

Great King Kim Bu legends generally feature King Gyeongsun as the protagonist. Early versions are the state-protector dragon types as summarized above, which are followed by variations that combine elements from Maitreya narratives, tales of supernatural phenomena and *seonangdang* (shrine for the village guardian deity) mythology. Versions transmitted in the former Silla capital Gyeongju and its surrounding areas focus on the king getting rid of the islands where the invading Japanese set up base and creating Yugeumideul by making the mountain disappear. Versions from Boryeong highlight the Maitreya faith as a means of overcoming misfortune. One day a man named Kim had a dream in which an old man dressed in the king's gold dragon robe appeared and told Kim to pull him up from the sea. What Kim found in the sea were a banner that read, “Banner of Great King Kim Bu of Mt. Ongma in Hoseo,” and a spirit tablet that read, “Spirit Tablet of Kim Bu, Great King Gyeongsun,” which the old man brought home and enshrined, and his family was rewarded with prosperity. In Siheung, there is

a village guardian shrine *seonangdang* for Great King Kim Bu and two different types of related folk narratives, one of which features Great King Kim Bu settling in Gunja-dog, Siheung, after the fall of Silla, marrying Lady An and giving birth to a son, after which he died and his wife followed suit after praying for his spirit. When Seo Hui, a diplomat of Goryeo, encountered a sea storm on his way to Song



Table of offerings set before a portrait of Great King Kim Bu.
Nam-myeon, Inje-gun, Gangwon-do (2009, Lee Hak-ju)



Shrine and stele for Great King Kim Bu.
Nam-myeon, Inje-gun, Gangwon-do (2009, Lee Hak-ju)

China, Lady An's spirit guarded Seo's ship, and Seo built the shrine in gratitude. Versions from Gangwon Province are variations of the legend associated with the Maitreya and place name origins, and feature Kim Bu's son, Crown Prince Maeui. Other versions include tales of a childless couple who entrusted their fate to Great King Kim Bu and conceived a child, which resulted in the construction of Daewanggak (Great King Pavilion), and of Oksaebawi, a rock that is believed to contain Kim Bu's royal seal.

At the center of the Great King Kim Bu narrative is the fact that he was powerless while people viewed him as a snake but when Yugeumi addressed him as the Dragon Lord he was able to demonstrate his capabilities as a dragon, which can be interpreted as an emphasis of the importance of public acceptance and support in a king's efforts to achieve greatness— more specifically, the role that public sentiment played in King Gyeongsun's surrender of Silla to Goryeo.

Great King Kim Bu is an example of individuals who have met tragic deaths after carrying grave grievances in life, worshipped as deities in Korean folk religion, and his narrative is one of folk tales based on characters from historical records transmitted in a wide range of versions depicting various different incidents.

Great Master Muhak

무학대사

The legend of Muhakdaesa narrates stories about the enlightened monk Great Master Muhak, who helped Yi Seong-gye found the kingdom of Joseon.

The Muhakdaesa legend is not comprised of a linear narrative but of several different anecdotes:

In the anecdote "Protected by the Crane," Muhak's mother, who was from Ganwol Island (or Nammyeon) in Seosan, was on her way to the market to sell seafood (or oysters) while pregnant.

She went into labor on the road, but because she had to sell her goods, she left the infant in the bushes and went to the market. She returned after selling the seafood to find that the infant had survived, wrapped in the wings of a crane. Thus the child came to be named Muhak, meaning dancing crane.

“Hole Producing Rice” tells the story of Great Master Muhak’s stay, with a disciple, at a temple on Ganwol Island. There was a rock on the temple’s grounds, with a hole that poured out rice, and while Muhak was out, the disciple, greedy for more food, made the hole bigger, which stopped the rice.

“Muhak Admonished by Farmer” is an anecdote with the most variations. Muhak helped Yi Seong-gye decide on the site for the capital Hanyang and built the palace, but the palace kept collapsing through three attempts at reconstruction, and Muhak ran away (or Muhak was wondering around Wangsimni in search of a site for the new capital). Then he encountered a farmer in the field scolding his ox, calling the animal “more foolish than Muhak.” Muhak asked the farmer for his guidance and the farmer said, the capital was shaped like a crane, and the palace was being built on its body, the weight of which made the bird flap its wings, making the palace collapse. The farmer instructed that the



Pagoda for Great Master Muhak at the Hoeamsa Temple.
Yangju-si, Gyeonggi-do, Cultural Heritage Administration

capital’s four main gates (or the city walls) should be built first on the crane’s wings before constructing the palace (or in versions where Muhak is searching for the site for the new capital, that the capital should be located 10 *ri* further out). Muhak did as he was told and was able to successfully build the palace.

This legend reflects the shifting views of the people of Joseon toward Yi Seong-gye. In the early days of the new kingdom, the story depicted a mere farmer admonishing Muhak, implying that the kingdom’s grassroots possessed greater capacities than Yi. Then as the new dynasty was becoming stable and stronger, the farmer character was transformed into a divine spirit, evidence that the people’s attitude had become more favorable and accepting.



Shamanic painting of Great Master Muhak.
Mt. Inwang Guksadang,
Jongno-gu, Seoul,
National Folk Museum of Korea

Great Monk Seosan

서산대사

The legend “Seosandaesa” narrates events surrounding the revered Buddhist monk Seosan, who fought against the invading Japanese in late 16th century by leading a troop of monk warriors under the orders of the king, recapturing the city of Pyeongyang and after escorting the king back to Seoul, returned to Mt. Myohyang to die. The legend was developed

from oral accounts of supernatural acts performed by Seosandaesa as a monk warrior.

Seosandaesa legends can be divided into two types of narratives:



Portrait of the Great Monk Seosan.
Joseon, National Museum of Korea



Sarira pagoda for the Great Monk Seosan at Daeheung Temple. Haenam-gun, Jeollanam-do, Cultural Heritage Administration

The first type features Great Monk Seosan in China, where, after a journey across the country, he arrives at the house of legendary rich man Shi Chong in Liaotong. There, he paints Mt. Geumgang on white silk for a folding screen and receives a bill worth an immense amount, after which he arrived at a village by Amnok (Yalu) River. In the evening, Seosan glimpsed into one of the houses, where a female Buddhist follower, wearing a monk's conical hat (*gokkal*), was dancing, while a maiden sang and an old man was drinking as he wept. When Seosan asked why he was weeping, the old man said, "My last name is Lu and I spent the last seven years in exile for a public crime, but today I was released to return home for my sixtieth birthday, with my son serving my remaining sentence. The family now deep in poverty, my daughter had to sell her hair to prepare food and is now dancing with a hat to cover her head, my daughter is singing—they are doing all of this to comfort me, which is why I am weeping." When Seosan heard that his wife had died but they could not afford to have a funeral for her, the monk gave his payment to the daughter for the funeral. Rich man Shi Chong's son was then a high official at the Board of Personnel (Ijo), for whom Shi was searching for a wife through a fortuneteller. The fortuneteller did a face reading of Lu's daughter and concluded that she was destined to become the wife of a great man and recommended her for marriage. Shi Chong married them immediately, and his son was appointed as Minister of Military Affairs. Lu's daughter, eager to repay Joseon for her good fortunes, persuaded her husband to send troops when an envoy arrived from Joseon requesting support forces in its fight against the invading Japanese. Shi Chong's son urged the king, which was how China dispatched troops to Joseon.

The second type of legend is about Great Monk Seosan's acquisition of a magic instrument, which he gives to his disciple Samyeongdang: Seosan visited the home of Lord Im, where he became a tutor to Samyeongdang. One day a boy began

coming over to ask the monk questions about Confucianism's Four Books and Five Classics and *Zhouyi* (*Classic of Changes*). The monk followed the boy to Seocheonseohaeguk (Heavenly Kingdom of the Western Sea), where the boy lived, and learned that the boy was the crown prince of Yongwangguk (Dragon Kingdom). Yongwang (Dragon King) treated Seosan with great hospitality since he had taught the prince. As Seosan left the kingdom, he was given a calligrapher's water dropper as gift, which was a sorcery tool that solved all problems when one's wishes were written on it. When Seosan ascended to the heavens, he gave the dropper to Samyeongdang to demand a written surrender from Japan.

A less-known tale about Seosan features a man named Son In-seok of Gyeongju, who stopped by a pub and a puppy followed him so he cared for it for ten years. On the morning of the day of the puppy's tenth year with Son, the puppy turned into a young man and said, "I am the third son of Sugungwang (Water Palace King). I was sent to the human world to spend ten years as a puppy cleansing myself of a sin committed against my parents, and now I shall return home." Son said to the young man that he would like to see the Water Palace, and they travelled together to the Water Palace, where Son met the king and was shown the palace. As Son was leaving, the king handed him a small pouch, saying, "Give this to the person who comes to look for it ten years from now." Ten years later, Great Monk Seosan came and took the pouch, which contained the Seal of the Sea (Haeindojang). Later Seosan gave the pouch to Samyeongdang, who went to Japan and used the seal to defend against the many schemes of the Japanese to kill him, returning with a written surrender from the king.

Legends about Seosandaesa portray anecdotes of the revered monk's supernatural powers, many involving his disciple Samyeongdang: Seosan knew beforehand that the Japanese would invade Joseon and trained his disciples (Yujeong, Yeonggyu, Cheoyeong and others) in martial arts to prepare for

the attacks; he led monks from around the country to fight in the war against the invading Japanese; and even in death, assisted Samyeongdang when he went to Japan as an envoy.

Gungye

궁예

This legend is a narrative about Gungye, the founder of Late Goguryeo towards the late years of the Unified Silla period.

The story is an orally transmitted version based on records documented in the section on Gungye from the Biographies volumes of *Samguksagi* (*History of the Three Kingdoms*).

When Silla's prince Gungye was born, he had a full set of teeth and a huge rainbow hung over the roof. The king deemed these signs as inauspicious and attempted to kill the baby, who was rescued by his nanny but in the course lost sight in one eye. When he grew up, Gungye learned the truth about his birth and became a monk at Sedal Temple, then founded Late Goguryeo in 896, establishing the capital in Cheolwon and taking the throne. When Wang Geon, of the provincial elite class of Songak, became Gungye's loyal subject, Gungye moved the capital to Songak and slashed the portrait of Silla's king hanging at Buseok Temple. Then he moved the capital back to Cheolwon, where he announced himself as Mireuk, the future Buddha Maitreya, and killed anyone who doubted him, including the monk Seokchong, and Lady Gang, his own wife, and their two sons. But a merchant by the name of Wang Chang-geun read from the letters reflected in a mirror he purchased that Wang Geon would take the throne, upon which a group of rebels supported Wang Geon to be their king, and Gungye was murdered by the people.

There are two different types of folk narratives about Gungye transmitted in the Cheolwon area:

The first restructures Gungye's achievements and adventures with a focus on entertainment factors; the second type highlights Gungye's fall and tragic death, along with presentations of historical evidence. Some versions depart from the account surrounding Gungye's birth in *Samguksagi*, that the person who tried to kill the baby was not the king but Princess Seonhwa, or the older brother of Gungye's mother, or other uncles or aunts. There are also versions that feature birth traits other than teeth or rainbow, including scales the size of a palm. Other variations in narrative include depictions of Gungye's impatience, which results in the reduction of the history of his palatial site from three hundred to thirty years; the plot twist of Gungye's wife engaging in an affair with Wang Geon, which results in her murder by Gungye; and of Gungye, upon being chased by Wang Geon, building a clay fortress. Many of these different versions, transmitted mainly around Cheolwon, portray Gungye as impatient and incapable of reading the geomantic traits of the lands around Cheolwon, which result in his dethronement.

Guryong Temple

구룡사

The legend of Guryongsa narrates the origins of Guryong Temple, located at street address 1029 in the village of Hakgok in Socho-myeon, in Wonju, Gangwon Province.

There are two different accounts of the temple's origins: The first, recorded in the "Chiaksanguryongsajeokgi (Chronicle of the Founding of Guryong Temple on Mt. Chiak)" in *Guryongsaji (Records of Guryong Temple)*, cites Great Monk Uisang as the founder, in the 8th year in the reign of Silla's King Munmu (668); and the second, in "Guryongsasajeok (Account of Guryong Temple)" records that it was founded by State Preceptor Doseon, a revered monk of late Silla.

The current location of Guryong Temple's main hall Daeungjeon used to be a deep pond, inside which lived nine dragons. To build the hall, Great Monk Uisang asked the dragons to move to another pond, but the dragons did not comply right away, proposing a contest to decide which party will have its way. The dragons brought about heavy rains, accompanied by thunder and lightning, flooding all the surrounding mountains. Uisang responded by dipping a hand-painted talisman in the pond, which made the water bubble and boil. The dragons were unable to bear the heat, and eight of them left for the East Sea but one was blind and had to stay behind in the pond, then ascended to the heavens. Uisang filled the pond to build the main hall and named the temple Guryongsa, meaning Nine Dragons Temple. The mountain herbs of Mt. Chiak were precious produce, sent to the capital as offerings to the king, and they were managed by the temple's head abbot. The villagers, in order to get a good price for their herbs, began offering bribes to the head abbot, which resulted in great prosperity for the temple but the temple's religious atmosphere faded as a result. One day an elderly man came by and said, "The turtle rock by the temple's entrance is causing the deterioration. The lair (*hyeol*) must be severed." And so a hole was drilled into the back of the turtle rock, but the temple continued to decline. Then an enlightened monk appeared and said, "The cause is due to the severed lair of the turtle." So it was that in order to restore the lair of the turtle rock, the Chinese



Main Dharma Hall of Guryong Temple.
Wonju-si, Gangwon-do, Guryong Temple

characters that made up the temple's name was altered to make up the homonym Guryongsa, this time meaning, Turtle Dragon Temple.

The dragons featured in the story and their reflection in the temple's name underlines the association of the legend to the dragon god faith (*yongsinsasang*), and the fortunes related to the turtle rock signify traditional geomantic faith, which make up the two ideological foundations of this narrative.

Gwangdeok and Eomjang

광덕·엄장

This legend narrates the story of two Buddhist monks: Gwangdeok, who achieved rebirth in the Pure Land (*geungnakwangsang*) through devoted religious discipline; and Eomjang, who achieved rebirth through religious awakening brought on by his wife.

The narrative is set against the backdrop of Hwangnyong Temple or Bunhwang Temple in Seorabeol during the reign of Silla's King Munmu (661-681). The meditation method of *sapgwangbeop* (contemplation of a shovel) or *jaenggwanbeop* (contemplation of a metal tool), mentioned in the legend, can also be found in the biography of the revered monk Wonhyo (617-686) and in *Haedonggoseungjeon* (*Lives of Eminent Monks from East of the Sea*).

Two friends, Gwangdeok and Eomjang, both aspired to reach the Blissful Land of Amitabha Buddha. Gwangdeok lived in the village west of Bunhwang Temple with his wife and children where he made a living weaving straw shoes, and Eomjang lived in a small hermitage on Namak as a slash-and-burn farmer. One evening Eomjang heard, from outside his window, "I am now headed West so I urge you to follow suit," and when he stepped out, he heard music from the sky and saw

light shining down from above. The following day he went to Gwangdeok's home and indeed he was dead. Eomjang held a funeral for Gwangdeok with Gwangdeok's wife, then asked her to be his wife. At night when Eomjang attempted intimate relations with her, Gwangdeok's wife admonished him, saying that Gwangdeok had never sought a physical relationship with her, focused solely on reciting the Buddhist chant and sometimes engaged in the sixteen contemplations (*sipyukgwan*). Feeling shame, Eomjang went to Wonhyo, who taught him the meditation method of *sapgwangbeop* (contemplation of a shovel) and in the end obtained enlightenment in the Pure Land of the West. Gwangdeok's wife was a maidservant of Bunhwang Temple, and one the Nineteen Nirmāna-kāya, or transformations of Buddha.

This legend reflects the belief in the Pure Land (*jeongtosasang*), widespread in Silla society during the reign of King Munmu, emphasizing the attitude of the religious follower aspiring enlightenment. The narrative also serves as the background to "Wonwangsangga (Song of the Wish to Be Reborn)," the Silla verse *hyangga* that highlights Amitabha faith.

Gyeon Hwon

견훤

This legend narrates the events surrounding the birth of Gyeon Hwon, founder of Late Baekje, who was born to a virgin after an intimate encounter with a man transformed into a snake.

The tale is documented in the section on Gyeon Hwon of Late Baekje in the "Gii (Records of Marvels)" section of *Samgungnyusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*), and a similar story can also be found in *Cheongguyadam* (*Tales from the Green Hills*) under the title "Geomulmaeyasaengmyeongju (Monster who Visited Each Night in Search of

Shiny Marbles),” and also in the Japanese book *Kojiki (Record of Ancient Matters)*, in the section “Sujintennō (Emperor Sujin).”

According to the version of the legend recorded in *Samgungnyusa*, “The daughter of a wealthy man in the northern village of Gwangju said to her father, “Each night a man dressed in purple comes to my bedroom and leaves after copulating.” The father told her to pin a threaded needle onto the man’s shirt and she did as was told. In the morning, the father followed the thread and found the needle pinned to the body of a huge worm. The daughter soon showed signs of conception and gave birth to a boy, who grew up to become Gyeon Hwon, the founder of Late Baekje. In *Samguksagi (History of the Three Kingdoms)*, the tale is recorded as follows: “Gyeon Hwon was from Gaeun Prefecture in Sangju. His surname was originally Yi, but later made Gyeon his surname. His father was Ajagae, a farmer who later referred to himself as a general. One day while Gyeon Hwon was still an infant wrapped in swaddling cloth, his mother left him in the forest while she took lunch to his father who was working in the field, during which a tiger came and nursed him, and upon hearing of this, people found it strange. The boy grew to be a big and tall man, with an unusual appearance and an outgoing character.”

The identity of the night visitor (*yaraeja*) varies according to the many versions of this legend, from worm and otter to wooden pestle, *insam* (ginseng) root, or dragon. When the visitor is depicted as a pestle, no son is born; the visitor as an otter results in a son with blonde hair, who is named Norachi and grows up to become the father of founding king Taizu of Qing China; and the visitor as dragon gives birth to a son who grows up to become a king of China, referred to as *tianzi* (son of heaven). It is when the visitor is depicted as a worm that the son grows up to become Gyeon Hwon, founder of Late Baekje. The most common method of killing the night visitor is to use salted water. A version of

the legend transmitted in Jeongeup, North Jeolla Province, the mother is impregnated by the night visitor and gives birth to a boy, but poverty leads her to go to work, leaving the baby in the grass, and a tiger comes and nurses Gyeon Hwon. A version from Andong features Gyeon Hwon of Late Baekje attacking Andong but is turned into a worm and is chased out by chariots driven by the Three Supreme Masters (Samtaesa) Gwon Haeng, Kim Seon-pyeong and Jang Jeong-pil, depicting the origins of Andong’s folk custom *chajeonmori* (chariot battle).

The legend of Gyeon Hwon shows traits of both myth and folk tale, depicting the life of an offspring born from a woman and a night visitor, who grows up to become a king, a founder, or village deity.

Hanyang the New Capital

한양도읍

The legend of “Hanyangdoeup” narrates the story of how the capital of Joseon came to be located in Hanyang and the construction of its palaces, most of which are related to Muhakdaesa (Great Master Muhak, 1327-1405). Muhak, whose secular family name is Bak, was born in Hapcheon, South Gyeongsang Province. He entered priesthood at the age of eighteen. When King Gongyang of Goryeo offered him the position of *wangsa* (royal preceptor), Muhak declined, but he accepted Yi Seong-gye’s request and assisted Yi in founding the new kingdom Joseon.

Narratives about the new capital Hanyang include ones that portray Yi Seong-gye as a father figure to Muhak, and the tale about the origin of Seokwang Temple on Mt. Seolbong in Gangwon Province, build after Muhak’s interpretation of Yi’s dream as a message that he would be king. There are also several tales that depict his conflicts with Jeong Do-jeon during the palatial construction.

One of the most widely spread oral narratives



Map of Hanyang

18th century, Seoul Museum of History

about Muhak and the construction of Hanyang's palaces goes as follows: Following his enthronement, Yi Seong-gye travels across the country with Muhak to decide on the location of the new capital. Gangwondo, where Mt. Geumgang was located, boasted beautiful scenery but was too mountainous to build a capital. When they arrived in Gyeonggi-do, they were impressed with the landscape created by the river Hangang flowing from east to west, curtained by two mountains in the backdrop, Namsan and Samgaksan. The energy channel of Mt. Samgak extended to Mt. Inwang, which broke into Mt. Bonghwang, making up an ideal location. They finalized the decision to build a capital here and began construction, but each time a building went up, it kept collapsing, so Muhak set out to the province of Chungcheongdo in search of a new site. On his way, Muhak encountered a farmer in the field

scolding his ox, calling the animal "more foolish than Muhak." Muhak asked the farmer what he meant and the farmer said, "You have found in Gyeonggi-do a place for the capital but you are abandoning it, so how could there be any being more foolish than Muhak?" Muhak answered, "The site is auspicious but the buildings would not stay up," and the farmer said, "The capital was shaped like a crane, and the palace was being built on its back. You should put weight on its wings prior to construction." Muhak offered the farmer a deep bow and upon returning, built fortresses to press down the crane's wings, after which the palatial construction proceeded without trouble.

Most of these narratives portray Muhak as incompetent, which is viewed as a reflection of the public's resistance of the new dynasty and its founder Yi Seong-gye.

Heavenly Son Rock

천자바위

This legend narrates the origins of Cheonjabawi (Heavenly Son Rock) in Ungcheon, in Changwon, South Gyeongsang Province.

A geomancer was looking for a good location for his father's grave and found an auspicious site (*myeongdang*) on the waters off Cheonjabong (Heavenly Son Peak). There he saw an otter, who was half-human-half-beast come in and out of a cave by the sea and followed it, to learn that the creature was the child of the daughter of a gentryman from Ungcheon, kidnapped by an otter. There were two caves and the geomancer was able to recognize that from one would emerge a Chinese emperor (*cheonja*, or *tianzi*, meaning "son of heaven"), and from the other a feudal lord. So he made the otter's son use the underwater cave for his ancestral tomb, but the otter's son was pushed by the waves to walk backwards, which resulted in the otter's son being enthroned as the first emperor of Ming China (birth name Ju Won-jang, or Zhu Yuanzhang), and one of the geomancer's descendants taking the throne as the first king of Joseon (birth name Yi Seong-gye).

This narrative is structured as a contest between the ancestors of Yi Seong-gye and Zhu Yuanzhang, an allegorical comparison of the political and martial powers of the two dynastic founders. The *myeongdang* motif, centering on the success of a family due to finding an auspicious site for their ancestral tomb, is expanded in this legend into the realm of dynastic foundation.

Heo Jun

허준

This legend narrates the story of the revered doctor Heo Jun, including his training and his extraordinary capacities as a man of medicine.

Heo Jun led a difficult life after losing his parents as a newlywed. One day his wife suggested that he start a business at the market, handing him money she earned as a seamstress. On his third day at the market, heo met a white-haired old man, and asked that he be taken in as disciple. The old man agreed to teach him medicine, on the condition that Heo would continue his training for ten years. During his eighth year in training, while his teacher was away, Heo saved the life of a child in critical condition. Upon his return, the teacher admonished Heo for saving the life of a child who was destined to die, and ordered him to leave. Heo Jun had no choice but to return to his hometown, where he started treating people and gradually gained recognition as an outstanding physician. One day he received an invitation from the emperor of China, and during his journey, he met a tiger that had a hairpin stuck inside his throat. Heo took out the pin for the tiger and in return, received acupuncture needles, a whetstone, and a magic cloth that could bring the dead back to life (*hoehonpo*). In China, when he was agonized after failed attempts at trying to cure the princess whose lower body had turned into a snake, his former teacher appeared in his dream and after admonishing him for not completing his ten-year training, offered him instructions for treating the princess. Heo's treatment succeeded, and Heo received the title "Gun" from the Chinese court.



Exemplar of Eastern Medicine.

Heo Jun and Bong Gyo-chan, Kyujanggak, Seoul National University

Unlike other legends about famous men of medicine, including Yu Ui-tae, narratives about Heo Jun focus on his travel to China. During his journey to China to treat the princess' illness, Heo acquires strange and new medical instruments. In some variations, Heo loses these instruments to a Chinese doctor in return for a book, which he studies to complete his monumental book *Donguibogam* (*Exemplar of Eastern Medicine*). Such depictions reflect the public's understanding of Heo's medical practice and philosophy at the time: The notion that Heo established new grounds in Korean medicine through the study of Chinese medicine was dramatized in the form of his travels to China.

Heo Jun legends comprise two narrative threads. The first focuses on his training under the guidance of a teacher, whose identity varies from a mountain god (*sansin*), a Taoist ascetic, to the revered doctor Yu Ui-tae. All variations share the same plot, of Heo leaving his training before its completion. Heo's incomplete training seems to be related to his tragic last years, during which he went through dismissal from office and exile, in which the public is perhaps trying to justify by Heo's lack of training. The second thread centers on Heo's medical accomplishments, which, in the tales, are achieved not on his own but with the help of a patron. This is also connected to Heo's incomplete training, and reflects the notion of the public at the time, about the limitations of medicine.

Heo Mok

허목

This legend narrates the story of Heo Mok (pen name Misu), a scholar and politician from mid-Joseon.

One of the most wide-spread tales about Heo Mok's characteristics as an eccentric prophet and devoted public official is the narrative "Extermination of the Snake," comprising three separate anecdotes.



Portrait of Heo Mok.
Joseon, National Museum of Korea

The first takes place during Heo's service as magistrate of a county in Gyeongsang Province, when, upon learning about the practice of offering a nineteen-year-old maiden each year as sacrifice to the village guardian deity to ensure safety, Heo disguises himself as a maiden and slayed the giant serpent that entered the village shrine. In the second anecdote, Heo's older brother has a son late in life, but Heo sees that the child is a reincarnation of the serpent that he slayed, and warns his brother that the child needed to be killed, or the entire family would be annihilated. Heo's brother, however, refused, and Heo was able to avoid harm by breaking away from the clan. The third anecdote features Heo Mok's final words to his son, instructing him to bury his corpse in a secret place and use a fake corpse for the funeral and burial, to be replaced by the real one after three years. When Heo's son opened the grave three years later, he found that the fake corpse had been torn to pieces by the snake.

Oral narratives about Heo Mok are transmitted around the country. In Samcheok, there is a tale about Heo Mok erecting the East Sea Stele in Cheokju to bring under control the damages from tidal waves, and foretelling that his successor, who belonged to an opposing political faction, would destroy the stele,



Original manuscript for East Sea Stele in Cheokju.
1661, National Museum of Korea

prepared an extra one to prevent damage in the a community. Another example is about a royal order to capture alive a hundred pheasants, which Heo accomplishes by requesting the help of the mountain spirit of Mt. Duta, and sends the birds to the palace inside a sack, protected by a talisman. There is also a tale in which Heo Mok offers stones to relatives and friends who have come to him seeking help, and the stones turn out to be jade (or precious metal).

Legends about historical figures portray them not as historically accurate but as reflections of the public's imagination and desire, which is evident in the narratives about Heo Mok as an official who solves problems for the people. In other words, the socially oppressed class of Joseon longed for a local civil servant who was fair and wise, just in his judgment and possessing supernatural powers to resolve their hardships.

Hermitage of Five-Year-Old

오세암

The legend of Oseam narrates the story of a small temple that came to be named the Hermitage of Five-Year-Old after a five-year-old child who was left alone in the temple in snowy winter but survived with care from the Avalokitesvara, the bodhisattva of

compassion, and gained enlightenment.

A monk brought his young nephew, who had lost his parents, to a hermitage to raise him. The year the boy turned five, the monk left the child behind and descended to the village to prepare for the winter. After acquiring food, the monk tried to head back, but was kept back by a snow storm, and could do nothing but wait for the thaw. When the snow finally began to melt in early spring, the monk hurried up the mountain, and the child opened the door and greeted him. The monk asked how he had survived, the child said the mother (Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva) had brought him food everyday. At that moment, a fairy in a white gown appeared with the wind and caressed the boy's head as she handed him a book of scriptures, then turned into a blue bird and flew away. The hermitage came to be called Oseam, after the fact that the boy achieved enlightenment at the age of five.

In the legend, the boy receives care from the



Avalokitesvara.
Joseon, National Folk Museum of Korea

Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva while stuck in an extreme situation. The snow brings to the child isolation and hardship, but at the same time, symbolizes purity and truth, within which the child is able to encounter the the bodhisattva of compassion. The child's deprivation is resolved through the loving care of the monk and the bodhisattva, and the hardship imposed on him helps the isolated child grow into an independent soul. The course of the child's separation from the monk and his encounter with the Avalokitesvara, leading to his enlightenment, can also be interpreted as the path toward finding one's true self, the path toward self-realization.

Horse Tomb

말무덤

"*Malmudeom*" legends narrate the tale of a soldier who attempts to test the powers of his horse but kills it by mistake, then builds a tomb for the horse.

The protagonists of horse tomb legends are generally unknown generals, but in some regions, the narratives feature historical heroes like Heukchisangji, Gyeon Hwon, Choe Yeong and Yi Seong-gye. Similar anecdotes are associated with most narratives about the training of famous generals, including militia leaders Gwak Jae-u and Kim Deok-ryeong, who fought against the invading Japanese in the 16th century, and those who sought revolt including Jeong Yeo-rip, Yi Mong-hak and Yi Gwal.

Also called *chimadae* (horse memorial) legends, the narratives feature a general of outstanding capabilities, training his martial skills with an excellent steed. One day during training, he makes his horse race his arrow in order to test its capacities, and when the general arrives at the goal on the horse and does not see the arrow, he slashes the horse's throat, thinking the horse lost the race, but just then, the arrow hits the horse. The general repents that he has lost a great horse due to his mistake, and builds a



Dragon Horse Tomb.

Gokseong-gun, Jeollanam-do, Academy of Korean Studies

tomb for his horse.

In some variations of this tale, the horse is depicted as a heavenly horse or a half-dragon-half-horse, which promises an expansion of the general's abilities. There are also variations that combine the brother-sister-contest motif, in which the horse arrives first but the haunted ghost of the general (Kim Deok-ryeong or some others) catches the arrow to bring about the death of the horse.

Horse tombs legends, depicting situations where a general must kill a good steed, portray soldiers as limited figures who kill the horse that would expand their capacities, at a time when soldiers were not able to function as active agents of history. On the other hand, the killing of a loyal horse in the hands of a rash general is also a satire of unbridled power of the immoral and authoritarian ruling class.

Hu Zongdan

호종단

This legend narrates the story of Hu Zongdan, who was sent by the Chinese emperor to cut off the auspicious "lairs (*hyeol*)" on Jeju Island. Hu, who is called Go Jong-dal on Jeju, is a legendary figure who came to Goryeo during the reign of King Yejong, and is known to have dominated the mountain and water energies on the island.

Chinese emperor Qin Shi Huang learned that

Jeju Island, off the Korean peninsula, possessed a geomantic energy that would produce someone threatening to him. He called in Hu Zongdan and ordered him to cut off the auspicious lairs of land energy on the island. Hu arrived at the shore in the village of Jongdal, where he protest the use of his name and cut off the water lair called Muljinggeo, and moved on to the village of Hwabuk, where he tried to cut off the water lair called Haenggimul but failed. He continued on to Saemimul in Seoheung, then Geoseunsaemi and Nadansaemi in Tosan, where the snake, which served as a guardian deity, prevented him from destroying the lairs. As Hu went all around the mountain, piercing a metal stick into the auspicious lairs to cut them off, Jeju Island was no longer able to produce mineral water or kings.

According to historical records, when, after putting the island under his control, Hu reached Biyang Island (or Chagwi Island) to return to China, Mt. Hall's guardian deity Gwangyangdangsin turned into a hawk and sat on the ship's mast, which suddenly stirred up a northern wind, capsizing Hu's ship. This resulted in the island's name Chagwi, meaning, "blocked, unable to return," and Goryeo's royal court enshrined Gwangyangdangsin as King Gwangyang, sending offerings to Jeju each year for a ritual in his honor.

Jeju Island is known for its abundant supply of springwater, and when one the village springs stops producing water, the villagers blame Go Jong-dal for cutting off the water lair. The legend reflects the Jeju islanders' sense of victimhood and resistance against outsiders, and also their attempt to overcome this mentality through religion.

Husband Yeono and Wife Seo

연오랑세오녀

The legend "Yeonorangseonyeo" is the story of Yeono and Seo, husband and wife of Silla, whose departure

to Japan resulted in the loss of sunlight and moonlight in Silla, restored by a ritual offering Seo's silk.

This tale was documented in the anthology *Suijeon (Tales of the Bizarre)* in the 11th century, but the oldest remaining version is the one included in the chapter "Giyi (Records of Marvels)" in *Samgungnyusa (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms)* from 13th century. The legend is also recorded in the collection *Pirwonjapgi (Miscellaneous Writings)* from the 15th century.

In Silla lived Yeono and his wife Seo, and one day while Yeono was working on the sea, he was carried by a rock to Japan, where people believed that he was a divine being and enthroned him. Seo went looking for her husband and upon finding his shoe on the rock, she rode it and it took her to Japan where her arrival was reported to the king and Seo was made queen of Japan. After the couple's departure, Silla lost the light from the sun and the moon. An official who examined the phenomenon reported that it was due to the move of the energy of the sun and the moon from Silla to Japan, and attempted to bring back Yeono and Seo, but Yeono declined, saying that they were in Japan by heavenly order, and that the problem would be solved if silk fabric woven by Seo was taken to Silla for a ritual. When the Silla court did as told, light was restored to the sun and the moon. The silk fabric was designated as state treasure and kept in a royal cellar named Gwibigo, and the ritual venue was named Yeongilhyeon, or Dogiya.

A Japanese variation of this tale, titled, "Amenohiboko," is documented in many books including *Nihon Shoki (The Chronicles of Japan)*, *Kojiki (Record of Ancient Matters)* and others. The version in *Nihon Shoki* records that Silla's prince Amenohiboko came to Japan bringing seven treasures including the bead *hahu tono tama*, which the people of Tajima believed to be divine objects. The *Kojiki* version takes on a more concrete mythological structure: In Silla, a woman of lowly status was sleeping in a swamp when sunlight shone on her genitals, which resulted

in her giving birth to a red bead. A man of lowly status, upon witnessing this, pleaded with her to give him the bead, but Silla's prince Amenohiboko took it away from him. The bead turned into a beautiful woman and the prince made her his wife, but the prince soon treated her unkindly, and the wife took a boat to Japan. The prince followed her and did not reach Japan, instead settling in Tajima, where he married another woman. The connection between this narrative and the legend of Yeono and Seo can be found in the name Amenohiboko, with its reference to the sun; in the plot where both husband and wife cross the sea to Japan; and in the fact that both couples settle down in Japan.

Previous research on this legend has focused on its traits as mythology of solar and lunar arrangement; as a narrative of the migration of the sun god; and as a symbolic narrative of exchange between Korea and Japan. The existence of a similar narrative in Japan has resulted in research proving that the Japanese sun god and goddess are Yeono and Seo, which serves as proof of influence between the mythologies of Korea and Japan. This theory can also be applied to interpretations of the narrative centering on the migratory pattern of the sun god or the sun and moon god. An example is the interpretation that the legend is a symbolic depiction of mass

immigration from Silla's Yeongil region to Japan and the resulting transmission of sun god worship. This is supported by the association of the names of the ritual venue, Yeongilhyeon and Dogiya, with words that means "sunrise." There has also been research focusing on the procedures of ancient celestial god worship rituals, based on the interpretation that Yeono and Seo were not only deities but also officiants of celestial worship rituals. The use of Seo's silk in the ritual shows the process of accepting silk as a divine object through metonymy, an example of the development of religious worship objects.

As the only remaining legend about ancient Korea-Japan relations, the narrative can also be read as a historical text, with motifs borrowed from creation myths used as symbols.

Husband-Awaiting Rock

망부석

Mangbuseok legends narrate the story of a faithful wife who stands waiting on a hill, awaiting a husband who does not return, until she turns into a rock.

The most widely known among *mangbuseok* legends is that of the husband-awating rock on Chisul Mountain Pass, about the wife of Bak Je-sang, a loyal subject of Silla during the reign of King Nulji, which transmitted in both written and oral forms.

In the tale, when the husband is sent out to sea on a ship, the wife climbs a tall mountain ridge everyday to await his return, but after a long times passes, he still does not return. The wife who awaited for him with such devotion and longing in the end turns into a rock and people came to call it Mangbuseok, or Husband-Awaiting Rock.

The above is a summary of the legend of Bak Je-sang's wife, and variations include "Buk-pyeong Mangbuseok," similar in plot; "Mt. Wora



Monument overlooking Ilwol Pond, where rituals centered on Seo's silk fabric took place. Pohang-si, Gyeongsangbuk-do, Cultural Heritage Administration



Husband-Awaiting Rock on Chisul Mountain Pass.
Ulsan-si, Gyeongsangnam-do, Cultural Heritage Administration

Mangbuseok,” involving a son who has left home to look for his monk father; and “Black Kite Mangbuseok,” of Yeongil, North Gyeongsang Province, about the wife of a minister during the reign of King Gyeongae of Silla, who awaits her husband, left for Japan as an envoy.

The motif of a wife awaiting her husband and turning into stone can be interpreted as a devotion that transcends time, but also connotes an emotion of resentment and grievance for the husband who fails to return. The phenomenon of a human turning into stone can be interpreted as an undying will and determination to overcome human mortality; or paradoxically, as an escape from the social oppression and taboo that implores women to remain faithful. A wife’s persistent waiting is a motif also featured in the Jeongeup Temple legend. *Mangbuseok* legends, in conclusion, reflects the contradictory attitudes of Koreans toward the grievances of women and their unchanging love.

Hyetong

혜통

This legend narrates the story of Buddhist monk Hyetong from mid-Silla, who trained in Esoteric Buddhism in China under the Indian priest Śubhakarasiṃha and upon his return, demonstrated his supernatural powers.

When Hyetong was a young man, he ate an otter that he had hunted and threw out the bones in the yard, upon which the bones returned home and conceived five baby otters. Shocked by this incident, Hyetong repented and entered priesthood. He visited Tang China, where he studied the discipline of Esoteric Buddhism under Śubhakarasiṃha. When the daughter of Tang emperor Gao Zong fell ill, Hyetong cured her by chasing away the aquatic dragon Jiaolong. But he soon learned from Jeong Gong, Silla’s envoy to Tang, that the dragon had run away to Silla, where it was causing trouble, and Hyetong returned to Silla, eradicating Jiaolong and curing King Sinmun of an abscess on his back. But Jiaolong again transformed itself into a willow tree, which resulted in the execution of Jeong Gong. Hyetong was involved in the incident as well, but he escaped death by using his supernatural powers, and after curing the illness of King Hyoso’s daughter, he was appointed to the post of *guksa* (state preceptor). Jiaolong, after resolving his grievance against Jeong Gong, went to Mt. Gijang, where it became a bear deity. Jiaolong continued to cause harm, however, and only after Hyetong traveled to the mountain and persuaded the dragon not to kill living beings, which put a stop to the trouble. Hyetong followed in the footsteps of monk Milbon in spreading Esoteric Buddhism, travelling far to save people and reform all living beings, and at the same time using his wisdom and intelligence to found temples to resolve hatred and grievance. Chongjiam on Mt. Cheonma and Juseokwon in Moak both belong to this sect.

Through the conflict and confrontation between Hyetong and Jiaolong, this legend emphasizes the

superiority of Buddhism. The narrative also shows how Esoteric Buddhism was introduced to Korea, and the establishment of Chongji Sect in Korea and its relationship to Hyetong.

I-Am-Also-Chestnut Tree

나도밤나무

This legend narrates the origins of the indigenous tree *nadobamnamu*, which literally means, “I am also chestnut tree,” associated with a man’s tragic fate avoided by planting a thousand chestnut trees.

Duke Yi Won-su saw the birth of a son at a late stage in his life and treasured him greatly. The son would grow up to be the great Neo-Confucian scholar Yi I, pen name Yulgok, meaning “chestnut valley.” One day, a Taoist ascetic who happened to be passing by took a look at young Yulgok’s face and commented that it was physiologically auspicious, but his signs said that he was destined to be eaten by a tiger, a fate that could be avoided by planting a thousand chestnut trees. Duke Yi followed these instructions and took great care of the thousand trees and when Yulgok turned twenty, a stranger came around and demanded Yulgok’s life, which the duke refused, saying that he had done everything required of him, planting one thousand trees. But when he and the stranger counted the trees, they were one short of a thousand. At that moment, a *nadobamnamu* tree (*meliosma myriantha*) stepped up and claimed that it was also a chestnut tree, upon which the man turned into a tiger and died. Hence Yulgok was able to avoid being eaten by a tiger and grew into a great scholar.

This narrative is based on the common belief that one can take certain actions to avoid bad fortune even if it is destined. It is also related to tree worship, rooted in the faith that humans and trees are connected by a mystical force. The act of planting and protecting chestnut trees can be viewed as similar to giving birth to and raising one’s children.

The planting of chestnut trees to avoid bad fate seems to reflect the custom of using chestnut wood in carving ancestral spirit tablets. The chestnut motif is also associated with Yi I’s pen name Yulgok, which gives this narrative the traits of a character legend.

leodo

이어도

This legend narrates the story of Ieo Island on Korea’s southern coast, which at one point in history was referred to as Scotra Rock, after the sinking of the British merchant vessel Scotra in nearby waters in 1900.

A long time ago, a man got himself a concubine and went off to live on a deserted island. His wife pleaded to her father-in-law to build her a boat to go after them, and he went to Seonheul village (today a part of the city of Jeju on Jeju Island) to chop wood to build one. The wife, her mother-in-law, and father-in-law set out together on the boat, the wife rowing as she sang, “*Iyeodo sana, iyeodo sana.*” When the boat reached the island, the escaped couple was thriving, with a growing family. But when his wife and parents urged him to return with them, he had no choice but to relent. So the entire family was traveling back on the boat, when they encountered a storm and died. (Some versions add that a village in Chungcheong Province commemorated him with a ritual.)

To the people of Jeju, Ieo Island has long been thought of as a utopia or a symbol of the other world, or the underworld. They believed that despite all the hardships and obstacles encountered in their daily lives, beyond this sea of despair lay an island of pleasure and riches, a paradise on the seas south of Jeju. To the women of Jeju, leodo was an island of hope, a place they pictured in their minds in times of painful separation from their loved ones. In many folk songs sung by Jeju women, especially ones that

addressed death and separation, the lyrics make a reference to Ieodo.

Ieo Island, in other words, is a place where reality and ideals coexist: It is where life takes place, where women divers gather food, as well as the backdrop of legends and songs. The name also reflects the Chinese character “嶼 (*yeo*),” meaning an island that disappears and appears with the ebb and flow of the tide.

Impossible-to-Kill

불가사리

The legend of Bulgasari narrates the story, from late Goryeo, of a frightening monster that kept growing as it ate up all the metal around.

Bulgasari is an imaginary monster, sometimes found painted on folding screens or chimneys due to the folk belief that it provided protection against disasters and fire. The book *Songnamjapji* (*Trivial Learnings by Songnam*), from late Joseon, records that “In the final years of Songdo (Goryeo’s capital) lived a monster that ate up all the metal scraps, and people tried to kill it but could not succeed, and thus named the monster ‘Bulgasal (Impossible-to-Kill).’ Even when it was thrown into fire, it flew back to the village, its whole body aflame, and burned down all the houses.”

One day the government issued an order to arrest all Buddhist monks, who fled their temples and were on the run. One of the monks went to his sister’s home and asked for shelter. The sister offered to hide him in the wall closet, but suggested to her husband to report her brother to the authorities in exchange for riches. The husband, enraged by his wife’s scheme to sell off her own brother, killed her and set the monk free. The monk, while he was locked inside the closet, had made a grotesque beast-shaped object out of steamed rice grains and fed it needles. Surprisingly, the monster kept eating more needles

and kept growing, and when there was nothing left to eat in the house it came outside and ate up any kind of metal scrap, growing bigger and bigger. In an attempt to catch this monster, the government assembled people to shoot it with arrows or slay it with swords, but all failed. Finally, they tried to melt the monster with fire, but the monster went all around the village, its body set on fire and setting fire to everything. In some variations, the monster is killed by an eminent monk.

The name Bulgasari is also interpreted, in a different set of Chinese characters, or in the variant form of the name Hwagasari, as “Killed-by-Fire.” Some versions cite as the reason for arresting the monks in the narrative the promiscuous acts of the Buddhist monk Sindon who took over the state affairs in late Goryeo, which were revealed when he took advantage of too many women and fathered too many children. In the variations of the legend in which the monster is eradicated by fire, the reason for the arrest of monks was due to the policy to uphold Confucianism and suppress Buddhism (*sungyueokbul*), and the monster is created by a divine monk in an attempt to criticize the government for locking up innocent monks. Some variations portray Bulgasari as a monster created by the runaway monk to thank his brother-in-law for saving his life from his greedy sister. The method of eradicating the monster is similar in most variations: After luring the monster with a scrap of metal, its tail is set on fire using flint, which turns the monster into charred rice, accompanied by tremendous noise.

The legend of Bulgasari warns against material greed through the character of the sister who tries to sell off her brother. The sibling relation maximizes the story’s dramatic conflict, as well as enhancing the ethical effect of the story as a cautionary tale. The narrative can also be read as a foretelling of the fall of a dynasty and the birth of a new one. It is a rare monster tale in the Korean oral tradition and related to a range of political, historical and religious discourses.

Imugi Brings Rain

비 내린 이무기

The legend “Binaerinimugi” narrates the story about the monster serpent *imugi* that brought rain to humans against the orders of the celestial emperor Cheonje.

Imok often transformed himself into a dragon in a pond. A monk followed Imok and learned of his true identity. One year there was a severe drought that would result in bad crops. The monk asked Imok to “bring rain to end the drought to prevent a bad harvest.” Imok refused at first, saying that violating the orders of Okhwangsangje (Great Emperor of Jade) would bring him death, but when the monk persisted, Imok in the end brought rain and asked the monk to help him escape the Jade Emperor’s punishment. The monk made Imok hide under the flat stone flooring, after which the Jade Emperor’s

messenger came asking Imok’s whereabouts. The monk pointed at the jujube tree outside the temple and called it Imok. Thanks to the monk’s help, Imok was able to stay alive and he continued to live in the pond, bringing rain whenever there was a drought.

This legend is similar to the “Boyangimok” tale recorded in *Samgungnyusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*). Overall, the two narratives are almost identical, except for the name of the pond where Imugu lives, which varies by region.

It is believed that the monster serpent *imugi*, following a given period of training, ascends to heaven, accompanied by thick clouds and a tremendous amount of rain. In this legend, however, the dragon does not ascend to the heavens and continues to live inside the pond, and Imugi is portrayed as a friendly creature that chooses to help people even if it requires self-sacrifice.

The name Imok is recorded as “梨木”, meaning pear tree, in *Samgungnyusa*, while in the oral tradition, the man is called “李木”, meaning prune tree, both pronounced Imok, which serve as evidence for the origin of the term *imugi*, which came to refer to monster serpents.



Dragon and Clouds.
National Folk Museum of Korea

Jeon Bong-jun

전봉준

This legend narrates the story of the revolutionary Jeon Bong-jun (1855-1895) who was executed for his role as leader of the Donghak Rebellion. Jeon was born in Gobu (present-day Jeongeup), North Jeolla Province, and entered the Donghak (Eastern Learning) faith in 1890 at the age of thirty-five, emerging as the leader of the rebellion four years later. He was in hiding in Sunchang when an insider informed the authorities, which led to his arrest and execution. There are two different narratives transmitted in the oral tradition about Jeon: The first is about the tragic death of Jeon’s father, which motivated his role in the

rebellion, and the second is about his arrest, blamed on his confusion about the name Mt. Gyeryong.

Donghak leader Jeon Bong-jun is referred to as Nokdujanggun (Mung Bean General), and the mung bean flowers that appear in the lyrics of the folk song “Seya Seya Parangseya (Bird, Bird, Blue Bird)” is believed to refer to Jeon.

The first narrative related to Jeon cites the death of his father as the cause that drove him to start a rebellion. Jeon's father Jeon Chang-hyeok, while serving as the superintendent (*jangeui*) at the Gobu Hyanggyo (County School), protested the tyranny of Magistrate Jo Byeong-gap, for which he received the punishment of severe flogging, and died after a month. Jeon Bong-jun, angered by the death of his father, led the Donghak Rebellion, calling for the purge of corrupt officials and revenge for his father. This tale reduces the rebellion into a personal campaign, a perspective that is reflected in the use of the term Donghangnan (Donghak Uprising) as opposed to Donghakhyeongmyeong (Donghak Rebellion).

The rebellion was joined by over a hundred thousand men, overpowering the military, but when the military received relief from Japanese troops, Jeon was defeated at Ugeumchi in Gongju. Following his defeat, Jeon fled to the village of Geumseok in Sunchang, but a former Donghak member informed the authorities of Jeon's hideout, which led to Jeon's arrest. Prior to his arrest, Jeon had a dream in which a mountain god (*sansin*) appeared and warned him to stay away from Mt. Gyeryong, located near the village of Geumseok, but Jeon mistook the name as Mt. Gyeryong of South Chungcheong Province, which led to his arrest and death. The folk tale redirects the blame for Jeon's arrest from the betrayal of a subordinate to the confusion over a name. The fact that Mt. Gyeryong was highlighted as the location of the new capital in *Jeonggamnok* (*Prophecies of Jeong Gam*) reveals public distrust of the popular book's prophecies.

Jeong Man-seo

정만서

The legend of Jeong Man-seo tells the story of a loafer known for his tricks and wordplay.

Jeong Man-seo of Gyeongju in South Gyeongsang Province, was a man who enjoyed making money by tricking people. One of his most widely known tricks is the one about offering to get a zither for a courtesan and after taking her money, bringing back a wooden pestle painted black, calling it “*geomeun-geo* (black thing),” a near homonym for the zither, “*geomungo*.” An even more preposterous example is the story of Jeong's fake funeral. Having run out of money, he pretends his own death, making his wife hold a funeral to collect condolence money. Some versions of this story features a reversal in roles, in which Jeong performs a keening, saying his wife has died, to collect money from his friends.

Jeong not only deceives people to make money but also likes to make mischief. One day while passing the town belfry, he yelled, “Toll the curfew!” It was not time for curfew, but the alarmed bell ringer tolled the bell. The supervising official came after him, furious, and the bell ringer pleaded, pointing at Jeong Man-seo, that this man had told him to toll the bell. The official arrested Jeong and held an inquisition, at which Jeong answered innocently that he was looking for his son, whose name was In Gyeong-cheol, which sounds similar to “*Ingyeong cheora* (Toll the curfew).” The fact was, of course, that Jeong did not have a son named In Gyeong-cheol. Legend has it that Jeong had a son name Beom, and the anecdote related to this son demonstrates Jeong's offbeat sense of humor. Jeong was drinking at a tavern when one of his servants came running with news of his son Beom's death. Jeong showed no sign of grief, however, and made a joke, asking who the hunter was that had caught the tiger, also “*beom*” in Korean.

Jeong Man-seo is one of Korean folk culture's tricksters, liminal characters who do not merely play

tricks but transcend the boundaries or conventions of human society. He is also a loafer-type character, who wanders around without possession, no cares about making a living. He can also be called a scoundrel, since he makes money by tricking people, but Jeong's actions suggest that he was not simply a scoundrel: He sometimes finds pleasure purely in making mischief, even if it does not bring him gain, and when he responds with a joke to the news of his son's death, it seems like an attempt to use laughter to overcome painful reality, defying the perspective of ordinary people. Jeong's competence as a trickster is clearly demonstrated in the anecdote about the fake funeral, for it is far more difficult to deceive close acquaintances in one's hometown than strangers in an unfamiliar place—Jeong was able to pull it off only because he was an ace trickster unbound by social conventions or taboos.

Jeong Man-seo shares many similarities with other trickster characters from Korean culture including Kim Seon-dal and Bang Hak-jung, but possesses clear differences as well. Compared to Kim Seon-dal, who was a careful schemer, Jeong is more random and reckless. Another of Jeong's distinct characteristic is his use of wordplay and his eloquence: verbal skills are found in other tricksters as well but Jeong's clearly stand out, especially when it comes to puns.

There are various reasons behind the long life of the tale of Jeong Man-seo, which has been passed down for ages, the biggest being its element of fun and humor. In the many versions of this tale, courtesans are often featured as greedy women, and the story of these characters being hoaxed out of their money offers a cathartic experience.

Jigwi

지귀

This legend narrates the story of Jigwi who dies from the pain of his unrequited love for Queen Seondeok

of Silla, and turns into a fire ghost (*hwagwi*).

In Silla, during the reign of Queen Seondeok, there was a man Jigwi (Ghost of Determination), who was enchanted by Queen Seondeok's beauty and longed for the day when he would finally meet her, growing more and more emaciated as his love for her grew. News about Jigwi spread, eventually reaching the queen, who called Jigwi to meet her at a temple, where she had gone to offer prayers. Jigwi waited for the queen under the temple's pagoda and fell into a deep sleep. As she headed back, the queen approached Jigwi and left her bracelet next to him. When Jigwi finally awoke, he found the bracelet and realized that the queen had indeed been there, which further intensified his burning love for her, which in the end killed him and turned him into a fire ghost.

In Korean folklore, fire gods (*hwasin*) were worshipped as shamanic gods, as seen in this tale, in which the fire inside Jigwi's heart flares up the pagoda and the streets. Fire gods, which include the kitchen god Jowang, the fire house god Hwajusin, the brazier lightning general god, and the lightning official god. The Jigwi legend is a literary reinterpretation of the tradition of holding rituals to fire gods to prevent fires, mixing the motif of romantic love into the narrative. The tale spun off myriad ghost stories under the title of "Jigoe."

The narrative has a plot unique to the Korean oral tradition, originated from Buddhist tales from India, which were introduced in Silla, and interwoven with historical facts and with indigenous folk belief.

Josin

조신

This legend narrates the story of Josein, who had a dream while asleep in front of the statue of the Avalokitesvara, the Goddess of Mercy, at Naksan Temple, and attains enlightenment. The tale is recorded in *Samgungnyusa* (*Memorabilia of Three*

Kingdoms), in the section titled, “Two Saints of Naksan; Avalokitesvara; Ananyagamin; and Josin,” in the chapter “Tapsang (Pagodas and Buddhist Statues).”

Josin was working as a gardener at Sedal temple when he became enamoured with the daughter of Magistrate Kim Heun. He prayed to the Avalokitesvara at Naksan Temple for their union, but upon hearing news of her marriage, he sat in front of the Avalokitesvara to express his blame, but soon fell asleep. In his dream, he saw himself married to the magistrate’s daughter, with five children between them, but they were struggling in poverty, wandering across remote regions. Their dire hardship cost the lives of their children one by one, and when the wife begged him to separate, he eagerly agreed, which was when he awoke from the dream. Josin repented



Avalokitesvara at Naksan Temple
Yangyang-gun, Gangwon-do, Korea Tourism Organization



Naksan Temple
Yangyang-gun, Gangwon-do, National Folk Museum of Korea

in front of the Avalokitesvara and diligently carried out good deeds, but his whereabouts in his later years are unknown.

The meaning of this legend lies in the significance and structure of the dream, interspersing reality with non-reality. In Buddhism, the universe is a void (空, *sunyata*), therefore, both reality and non-reality are all illusions, and humans should not be attached to either, for the truth of *pratītya-samutpāda* (dependent origination) is revealed only by going back and forth between the two. This Buddhist truth is evident in the legend of Josin: The reality of loving a woman of higher status is unrealistic, while the non-reality of his dream of wandering with his large family is depicted realistically. After experiencing a world that comprises many layers of reality and non-reality, Josin finally learns how to see the truth, and founds Jeongto Temple with his own money, where he carries out good deeds, but nothing is known about his later years. His story offers us a glimpse of the perspectives and torments of the Buddhist intellectual trying to accompany the people in their painful realities. This is what makes the legend a transcendental narrative, unlike most other accounts of spiritual experience, and also a unique narrative that rises above many other Korean tales influenced by Avalokitesvara encounter tales or the *chuanqi* (“tales of strange events”) genre of Tang China. The dream cycle structure of the Josin narrative, which goes from reality to surreality to reality again, was clearly influenced by the *chuanqi* genre, and in turn influenced later works like the biographical novel *Choe Chi-won*, the *mongyurok* (“account of dream wandering”) genre in classical novels, and the novel *Guunmong* (*A Cloud Nine Dream*).

In conclusion, the Josin legend marked a milestone in the history of Buddhist literature in Korea, intricate in its narrative structure and vivid in its depiction of social reality. The story is firmly grounded in local tradition and the social instability of the late Silla and early Goryeo years, through which universal themes, both personal and

collective, are explored. The narrative also takes up an important place in the history of Korean literature in the study of the Chinese-character-based literature of the time and also of the origin of the novel form in Korea.

Kim Byeong-yeon

김병연

This legend narrates the story of Kim Byeong-yeon (1807-1863), a poet from late Joseon.

The Kim Byeong-yeon narrative opens with the poetry contest he entered at age twenty at the provincial government office in Yeongwol, Gangwon Province. The contestants were assigned to respond in verse to text that criticized Kim Ik-sun, magistrate of Seoncheon who surrendered to Hong Gyeong-rae who staged an uprising. Kim Byeong-yeon learned, after the contest, that Kim Ik-sun was his grandfather, and set out on the road, for he had not only insulted his own grandfather through his poem but also because as the descendant of a traitor, he would never be able to enter government service. The legend unfolds over the years until Kim's death at age fifty-seven. In the tales, Kim Byeong-yeon is also referred to as Kim Sakkat, or Kim Rip, after the conical bamboo hat *sakkat*, which he always donned.

The following is a summary of the tale, "Punishing the Monk Who Pulled Out the Teeth of Students":

One day Kim Sakkat, dressed in rags, stopped by a village school as he approached Mt. Geumgang. The school's students had all lost their teeth, so he thought this was a regional custom, but soon learned that it was a monk from a nearby hermitage who had pulled out everyone's teeth. The students were visiting the hermitage when the monk engaged them in a writing contest, pulling out their teeth each time they lost, and soon all the students had lost all their teeth. Kim, infuriated by the monk's act, visited



Memorial stele for Kim Sakkat.
Yeongwol-gun, Gangwon-do, 2005, Simong

the hermitage the following day, where the monk, judging from Kim's ragged clothes, proposed a poetry contest. When Kim kept winning, the students pulled out the monk's teeth, and the monk begged for forgiveness, promising he would never engage in such contests, upon which students offered Kim great hospitality.

These Kim Sakkat narratives are based on the motif of classical poetry. Poetry is Kim's means for escaping crisis, helping folks in hardship, and punishing bad people. Through his poems Kim makes predictions or even brings the dead back to life. His poems are mainly satire that ridicules the world, often through vulgar language. On the other hand, in some of the tales Kim is the one being admonished by women or children. Some tales do not feature any poems, including the one about Kim seeing through a fox that had turned into a granny and killing it; and the one of Kim losing an argument with a boatmaiden.

Kim Sakkat legends are transmitted around

the country and are not region-specific, focused more on the characters. Their biggest trait is that social narratives that address social issues and contradictions through the narrative device of a vagabond's journey. Also central to the structure is poetry, which functions as the starting point of the narrative. Formally, Kim Sakkat narratives are a hybrid of prose and verse, containing satire and humor. Kim Sakkat can be seen as a cultural hero who stands on the side of ordinary folks and gives them voice, reflecting his own desires, as an outcast, for a healthy society.

Kim Deok-ryeong

김덕령

This legend narrates the story of Kim Deok-ryeong, a renowned general who became a hero for his brave acts during the Japanese invasions in mid-Joseon.

Kim's life and acts are recorded in *Yeollyeosil-gisul* (*Narratives by Yeollyeosil*) and story collections like *Dongpaenaksong* (*Tales of the Eastern Kingdom for Repeated Recitation*) and *Daedonggimun* (*Strange Tales of the Great East*). Oral narratives about Kim are transmitted in regions around his hometown Gwangju and also across the country. Stories about his courage were well known during the Japanese invasions of the year Imjin (1592), and following his execution due to accusations of his involvement in the Revolt of Yi Mong-hak, tales surrounding his undeserved death took on legendary status, spreading widely.

Kim Deok-ryeong was born of lowly status near Mt. Mudeung. A renowned figure in China had once identified an auspicious location that would produce a hero, where Kim Deok-ryeong's father happened to bury his ancestor, after which Kim Deok-ryeong was born. From a young age, Kim was agile and brave, even chasing after a tiger to rescue his friend. He was so strong that he prevailed as a champion in

wrestling competitions across the country, winning all the oxen offered as prize. Kim's older sister, concerned of his bragging, disguised herself as a man and entered a wrestling contest, defeating Kim. When Kim learned that he had lost to his sister, he proposed a life-and-death contest against her, in which he was given the task of climbing Mt. Mudeung in a single day, while his sister had to weave hemp and make a coat. Kim returned from the mountain but his sister had deliberately left the coat incomplete, and Kim claimed himself as winner and killed her. When the Japanese invaded, the villagers asked Kim to go to war and defeat the Japanese. Kim was in mourning for his sister, however, during which it was taboo to kill living beings, and Kim used his supernatural powers to threaten and chase away the enemies without killing them. For this he was charged with the crime of failing to kill off invading enemies and was taken to the king's court as a traitor. The court's officials attempted to execute him, but no sword could kill him. Kim demanded a plaque from the king that read, "Kim Deok-ryeong, Loyal Subject of All Ages," and upon receiving the plaque, told his executors that striking him on the scale behind his knee would kill him. After killing Kim by following the instructions, the court officials tried to carve up the plaque but the engraved letters grew even clearer.

This summary puts together various different versions of the Kim Deok-ryeong legend. Most of the details mentioned above are transmitted in the Gwangju region, and the "Horse Grave" legend, about the mistaken killing of a horse that was faster than an arrow, is also sometimes transmitted as part of the narrative on Kim Deok-ryeong. Tales about Kim transmitted through written books, however, are vastly different from the oral narratives. Included in the anthology *Dongpaenaksong* (*Tales of the Eastern Kingdom for Repeated Recitation*) are these tales about Kim Deok-ryeong making an escape while being taken away by breaking open the carriage and having a drink with a friend before returning; of an old man in the mountains who used

the superpowers of his young son to guard against Kim's arrogance; and of Kim's triumphs in hunting down runaway slaves.

Within the oral tradition, Kim Deok-ryeong is acknowledged as the top martial hero during the Japanese invasions, and it is believed that Kim was so courageous that if he had been able to engage in battle, he would have easily ended the war. Kim's execution due to the court's wrongful accusations of his involvement in the Yi Mong-hak Revolt is historically accurate, and the legend, as an archetype of the tragic historical hero tale, reflects a critical historical view that the kingdom's ruling class killed a respected general for their political gain.

Kim Hyeon Moved by Tiger

김현감호

"Kimhyeongamho" is the legend of Kim Hyeon and a tiger maiden, who sacrifices herself to save Kim's life.

It is said to have been documented in the 11th-century book *Suijeon (Tales of the Bizarre)*, and the earliest remaining record is *Samgungnyusa (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms)* of the 13th century.

Kim Hyeon met a maiden during a pagoda circling (*tapdori*) prayer ceremony and engaged in intimacy, but the maiden turned out to be a tiger, and her brothers threatened to kill Kim. The maiden, in order to save Kim's life, said that she would hurt people and that he was to kill her instead of her brothers, asking him to build a temple to remember her. A tiger soon appeared in town and when Kim Hyeon tried to capture it, the tiger turned into the maiden. She asked that the injured people be treated with bean paste from Heungnyun Temple and the sound of trumpet playing, then took her own life. Kim Hyeon entered government service and built a temple, naming it Howonsa (Tiger's Wish Temple) and until the day of his death telling the story of the tiger maiden.

A variation of this legend, also included in



A pagoda circling prayer ceremony. Haein Temple, Hapcheon-gun, Gyeongsangnam-do, Korea Tourism Organization

Samgungnyusa (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms), features a man named Sin Do-jeong, who marries a tiger maiden but she runs away, unable to endure that life. Recorded in *Bohanjip (Collection of Writings to Relieve Idleness)* is a tale titled "Tiger Monk," of a tiger boy who begged a monk that he be allowed to die in his brother's place, then was reborn as a human and became a monk. The variations all feature an encounter or union of human and animal, focusing more on romance rather than Buddhist faith.

As a fantasy tale of transformation or inter-species romance, and also as a sacred tale of Buddhist divinity, the Kim Hyeon legend is also interpreted as an analogy of the monarchy and its opposing forces. The narrative weaves the motifs of encounter with the uncommunicable "other," self-sacrifice of an animal, and the construction of a temple to memorialize the animal, to develop a fantasy tale into a sacred tale.

Kim Seon-dal

김선달

This legend narrates the story of swindler Kim Seon-dal from Pyeongyang.

Kim Seon-dal is believed to be a figure from the

19th century. The most widely known folk narrative about him is that of Kim selling water from Daedong River:

One day Kim Seon-dal went out to Daedong River and passed out money to people fetching water, asking them to return the money the following day. As scheduled, he went out to Daedong River the following day and retrieved the money that he had passed out, saying, "Please pay for your water." When a passerby, who happened to be a rich visitor from afar, became curious and asked Kim what he was doing, Kim replied that he was selling the water from Daedong River. The passerby, feeling greedy, purchased the right to sell water from the river from Kim for a huge sum, and the following morning, went out to Daedong River and demanded money from people fetching water. Only when no one would pay him he realized that he had been fooled.

There are many other variations of this narrative, of Kim Seon-dal making a fortune through deceptive schemes, which includes one of Kim selling red bean porridge that had gone bad by telling people that the porridge had been flavored with vinegar. When Kim Seon-dal's family made too much red bean porridge on Dongji (Winter Solstice) and the leftovers began to go bad, Kim took the porridge to the market, advertising the sales of vinegared red bean porridge and non-vinegared porridge, the vinegared porridge priced higher than the non-vinegared. If someone ordered non-vinegared porridge, looked down on the customer, saying an unrefined country bumpkin like him/her would never have tasted vinegared porridge. No customer wanted to be looked down upon as a country bumpkin, which made them all order the vinegared porridge, and in the end Kim Seon-dal was able to sell all the porridge that had gone bad.

In some versions, Kim's schemes aim not at making money but acquiring free food, usually by posing as someone else at the inn: Kim puts on the clothes of a monk who is asleep next to him and goes out to eat dog meat; or he puts on the clothes

of a mourner and goes to a courtesan's tavern to enjoy the entertainment, which he promises to pay for the following morning, leaving the mourner's head dress as collateral. The following day, it falls on the monk or the mourner to not only pay for the food and service that Kim enjoyed, but also to suffer embarrassment.

Kim Seon-dal's talent lies in seeing through the minds of other people. In other words, Kim was able to deceive people with groundless statements about paying for water from Daedong River or spoiled porridge being a delicacy because he knew and used the psychology of the greed of the ignorant outsider or the insecurities of country folks. Kim's schemes of posing as a monk or mourner are based on his traits as a character capable of crossing the borders of status or class. He is aware of the fact that people often perceive others not as individuals but as a monk or a mourner, which he takes advantage of.

The Kim Seon-dal legends are trickster narratives that offer entertainment while jolting and attacking the existing social order, and Kim can be seen as a character contributing to the collapse of the medieval order and the preparation of a new order for the modern times. He is also portrayed as a hero of the people fighting for the lowly class, since the targets of his schemes are often rich men or those of high social status.

Kim Yu-sin

김유신

This legend narrates the achievements and adventures of Silla general Kim Yu-sin.

When Kim Yu-sin was a youth warrior (*gukseon*) of Silla, he had a colleague by the name of Baek Seok, who was a spy from Goguryeo, sent to assassinate Kim. The Goguryeo court believed that Kim was the resurrection of Chunam, a fortuneteller who had died an undeserved death in the hands of

the Goguryeo king. Kim Yu-sin, however, learns of this scheme from the three state guardian deities transformed into women, and executes Baek Seok.

Another anecdote narrates the relationship between Kim and his friend and fellow warrior Kim Chun-chu. When Kim's sister Bo-hui has a precognitive dream of conception, her younger sister Mun-hui buys the dream from her, then Mun-hui has the chance to sew back the ribbon on Kim Chun-chu's robe, after which Mun-hui is impregnated. Kim Yu-sin makes a fire to announce this and Queen Seondeok marries Kim Chun-chu and Mun-hui. Later when Kim Chun-chu takes the throne as King Muyeol, Kim Yu-sin assists him in many of his accomplishments, the most significant being their victory in their battle against Su Dingfang of Tang China, uniting the Three Kingdoms.

Kim Yu-sin was raised by a strict mother who emphasized good education. One day Kim Yu-sin happened to spend the night at a courtesan's tavern and when his mother learned of this, she appealed to him in tears and Kim pledged to himself that he would never again set foot in such an establishment. Then one night when Kim was very drunk, his horse took him to the tavern, and when Kim awoke, he slashed the horse's throat and walked back on his feet.

These anecdotes construct Kim's character as a hero protected by the heavenly forces, possessing courage, strategic ability and self-control. Historically, his outstanding achievements in the process of the unification of the Three Kingdoms made him a hero of mythological status, and the narratives portray him as a perfect hero who encompasses both the sacred and secular worlds.

Variations of the legend includes origin tales related to songs or temples, including the song "Gwancheonsa," which was sung by the courtesan who witnessed Kim's killing of his horse; and of the temple Cheonbangsa, which originated from Kim's promise to build a thousand temples when during his battle against Su Dingfang, Kim prayed to the



Tomb of Kim Yu-sin.

Gyeongju-si, Gyeongsangbuk-do, 2003, National Folk Museum of Korea

heavens to lift the heavy fogs. But when the steep mountains made it difficult to construct the temples, Kim rearranged a thousand rocks into the shape of a temple.

King Munmu

문무왕

The legend of Munmuwang tells the story of Silla's 30th monarch King Munmu, eldest son of King Muyeol, who completed the unification of the Three Kingdoms. The narrative weaves together King Munmu's last words that in death he would become a dragon to protect the kingdom, and historical sites and relics including Gameun Temple, Daewang Hermitage, Igyeon Pavilion and Manpasikjeok (Pipe That Calms Ten Thousand Billows). The dragon in this legend is later combined with the dragon of Korean folklore, related to wealth, and the dragon as state protector.

As he lay dying, King Munmu left a will that he be buried on a huge rock in the middle of Dongahe (East Sea). While alive, the king had repeatedly said to Monk Jieui, "When I die, I shall turn into a huge dragon and uphold Buddhism as guardian of the state." The monk would respond, "Would it be acceptable for Your Majesty to be reborn as a beast to become a dragon?" to which the king answered, "I have long nurtured a resentment for



Islet that serves as the Tomb of King Munmu of Silla.
Gyeongju-si, Gyeongsangbuk-do, National Folk Museum of Korea

worldly glories. If I am reborn into the terrible fate of a beast, it would suit my wishes perfectly.” His son King Sinmun, who inherited the throne, built Gameun Temple on the shore of the East Sea for his deceased father. According to temple records, King Munmu began construction of the temple in defense against the invading Japanese troops but died before completion and became a dragon. His son King Sinmun completed the interior of the temple in the 2nd year of Kaiyao under the reign of Gao Zong of Tang China (682). A hole was made under the temple’s threshold toward the east, to prepare for the day when the dragon would enter the temple and take up residence. The deceased king’s will called for his bones to be kept on an islet to serve as his tomb, naming it Daewangam (Great King Rock); for the temple to be named Gameunsa; and the pavilion where the king reappeared as a dragon to be named Igyeondae.

In Korean culture, the dragon came to be perceived as a state protector, a concept that combined dragon worship in folk religion and the dragon as protector of Buddhism. The legend of King Munmu carries on the state protector dragon narrative but is distinctive in that the king proclaims himself as the state protector dragon, a uniquely Korean motif.

King Sansang

산상왕

The legend of Sansangwang narrates the story of the enthronement of King Sansang, the tenth king of Goguryeo who reigned from 197 to 227, and the birth of his son. King Sansang, as the younger brother of the ninth king Gogukcheonwang, took the throne only after immense political complications, from which a significant number of narratives were developed. A partial account of the events is recorded in *Samguksagi* (*History of the Three Kingdoms*).

When King Gogukcheon passes away, Queen U does not reveal his death immediately, heading instead to the king’s brother Balgi and tells him that he should inherit the throne. Balgi, however, declines, citing heavenly fate and propriety. The deceased king’s other brother, Yeonu welcomes the queen and eventually follows the queen to the palace. The following day, Queen U announces that Yeonu will inherit the throne in accordance with the king’s will, and Balgi leads the military to seize the palace. When the people did not offer him support, however, he flees to the Yodong (Liaodong) peninsula, where he borrows troops from the governor and launches another attack on Goguryeo, but Yeonu’s younger brother Gyesu defeats them and Balgi kills himself while fleeing the battle. Yeonu ascends the throne and takes Queen U as his queen, since it is due to her that he was able to become king.

On the twelfth year of King Sansang’s reign (208), a pig that was to be offered as sacrifice at the ritual for the celestial god (*cheonje*) runs away all the way to the village of Jutongchon, where a beautiful maiden about twenty years of age catches the pig. The king, thinking it strange, goes to see the maiden and after promising her that he would not abandon her, takes her to bed. The following year, the queen learns of his affair and sends troops to the village, but upon finding out that the king’s offspring is growing inside her, the queen does not dare kill her.

Rumors of the pregnancy reach the king, who goes to confirm that the child is indeed his, and when in the ninth lunar month a son is born, the king accepts the child as a gift from the heavens and names him Gyoche and makes the mother his concubine. In the seventh year of his reign (213), King Sansang appoints Gyoche as the crown prince.

The narrative of King Sansang's enthronement focuses on justification, which is also evident in the emphasis of propriety and loyalty in the depiction of Balgi's death.

Succession of the throne in ancient kingdoms was the result of political dynamics between different power groups, but in the course of developing narratives and historical records, the discourse of heavenly appointment emerges, which can be observed in this legend as well. This story also shows that rituals of the Buyeo people involved using divine pigs as a means to read heavenly intent.

Lady Suro

수로부인

The legend of Surobuin narrates the story of Lady Suro of Silla, recorded in the "Surobuin" section of *Samgungnyusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*). The narrative also provides a backdrop for "Heonhwaga (Flower Dedication Song)" and "Haega (Song of the Sea)," two works of verse from Silla.

In the reign of King Seongdeok (702-737), Sunjeonggong was headed to Gangneung to take the post as magistrate, when his wife Lady Suro expressed that she wanted the royal azalea blossoms on a steep cliff, a thousand *gil* tall. No one dared step forward, but an old man walking past with his ox picked the flowers for her and also composed for her "Heonhwaga (Flower Dedication Song)." When the party reached Imhaejeong, a pavilion by the sea, a dragon suddenly appeared and pulled Lady Suro into the sea. Another old man told Sunjeonggong,

"Gather the villagers and have them sing as you strike the hill with a stick, and your wife will return," and he did as instructed, and Lady Suro reappeared.

This legend is generally interpreted as the depiction of a ritual, the characters that surround Lady Suro viewed as deities. Other interpretations include a sexually-oriented approach and a political approach, viewing the characters as historical figures.

The narrative comprises two events: the first about picking the flowers on the cliff, which is related to "Heonhwaga"; and the second about the dragon's abduction, as portrayed in "Haega." The events might appear separate, but viewed as ritual depictions, the events provide us with a significant glimpse into the phenomenon of ancient ritual and sorcery.

Legends of Animals and Non-Living Objects

동물·사물전설

This category of legends narrates stories about real or imaginary animals and objects.

In Korean culture, animals are portrayed as agents of divinity or sorcery, playing the role of medium between humans and gods; between the world of the living and the underworld; between the self and the universe. Tigers and dragons are the most commonly featured in folk narratives, followed by horses, cows, snakes, chickens, turtles and dogs. These tales explain the origins of an animal's appearances or traits; depict their intelligence, wit or foolishness; or narrate stories of competition, transformations or of their relationships with humans, often involving animals repaying their gratitude.

Tales of animals, both real and imaginary, include those of dragons competing for ascension; of the monster serpent *imugi* who ascends to the heavens after helping a human; the ferocious

three-legged dog Samjokgu, capable of defeating a thousand-year-old fox; the metal-eating monster Bulgasari (Impossible-to Kill); and the lesser cuckoo (*jeopdongsae*) with the mournful cry, associated with the story of a daughter-in-law who starved to death.

The diverse animals featured in Korean culture deliver a vast range of universal cultural information as a complex set of symbols and signs, which serve as the key to solving ancient cultural mysteries.

Non-living subjects portrayed in Korean legends range from complex and large-scale elements like natural phenomena, geographical features, historical remains and relics, to specific singular objects like a marble, calligraphy brush, pipe, or ruler. Among legends about geographical features, many narrate the origin of place names, and a large number of them are also associated with dragons.

The following are some examples of legends about specific objects, usually related to sacred tokens that serve as evidence of a national progenitor's legitimacy and authority: Gojoseon's founder Dangun received from his father Hwanung the Three Seals of Heaven (Cheonbuin); Silla's King Jinpyeong always wore a golden belt embroidered with jade (*geumsaokdae*), which he claimed was sent by Okhwangsangje (Great Emperor of Jade); King Sinmun of Silla acquired from a dragon Manpasikjeok (Pipe That Calms Ten Thousand Billows), which provided his kingdom protection from the invading Japanese; and the legend of Yi Seong-gye's golden ruler (*geumcheok*), acquired through a dream, which brought Yi, a man of ordinary standing, nobility and honor.

Legends of Artists, Healers and Visionaries

예인·재인전설

This category of legends narrates stories of historical figures with outstanding talent or abilities as artists,

healers, or geomantic visionaries.

Legends of dancers and musicians have been transmitted throughout Korean history, including the tale of Ureuk of Gaya who invented the twelve-stringed zither *gayageum*; of Wangsanak of Goguryeo who invented the six-stringed zither *geomungo*; and King Seong of Joseon who promoted the innovation of court music *aak*. Artist tales began to proliferate in mid-Joseon, notably narratives in which artistic talent brings both good fortune and bad. An example is the tale of the village head of Dancheon, a talented pipe player, who was captured by bandits but was released after his pipe playing moved his captors' hearts. In another story, a talented jade pipe player was kept in captivity on an island by a spirit that was moved by his playing, and died there. Another narrative type features performers of special talent, including the story about a dance game of imitating bees and butterflies flying from flower to flower (*tamhwabonghwa*) by taking graceful steps amidst children standing with their arms wide. There are also tales of performers skilled in making music with their fingers or by whistling.

Supernatural stories of healing began to spread when the work of traditional physicians began to gain recognition following the publication of renowned physician Heo Jun's book *Donguibogam* (*Exemplar of Eastern Medicine*). Many reflect the public's aspiration to achieve worldly success through miracles including the legend of Heo Jun learning medicinal art, from a young man, which he used to heal King Seonjo's illness and then being appointed the royal physician; and the tale of Yu Sang, famous for treating smallpox, engaging in an argument with a divine being in his dream, which helped him heal the king's illness and landed him the position of a high official.

Legends related to traditional geomancy (*pungujiri*) date back to Silla, the earliest of which is the tale of Seok Talhae, who became king through his scheme to take over Hogong's house, located on an auspicious site. Monk Doseon, of late Silla, is

believed to have contributed to the foundation of the kingdom of Goryeo by finding an auspicious site for the birth of Wang Geon, who unified the Late Three Kingdoms, which resulted in the wide transmission of geomancy narratives. The tales surrounding the founding of Joseon are also associated with geomancy, as practiced by Monk Muhak. In Joseon, most geomancy narratives center on the search for auspicious grave sites, which reflects the desire to seek success and fortune through geomancy in Joseon's closed social structure in which success by merit was almost impossible. The work of renowned geomancer Yi Ji-ham and his brother Yi Ji-beon contributed to the proliferation of geomancy narratives in mid-Joseon. Other famous geomancers of the period include Yi Ui-sin, Jeong Ha-gyu, Bak Sang-ui, Yi Gi-ok and Yi Yu-pil. The narratives feature divine evidence of auspicious sites; testimony of acquiring good fortune by choosing an auspicious site; competition between geomancers; schemes to acquire an auspicious site; geomancers making trouble or experiencing indignity.

Legends of Flowers and Trees

꽃·나무전설

This category of Korean folk narratives tells stories related to flowers and trees that reflect the history, sentiments and cosmology of the Korean people.

Korea's earliest tree legend would be the Dangun myth, which revolves around Sindansu (Divine Altar Tree), which functions as the shamanic pole, or cosmic tree in the imaginary sacred district Sodo or in the village guardian shrine *seonangdang*. The name Dangun means "son of *dan* tree," referring to a tree in the birch family. The Yi dynasty of Joseon also emphasize that they were descendants of the pear tree, as reflected in the slogan, "the son of the tree conquered the kingdom," which is closely associated with the Korean worship of trees.

The following are some of Korea's earliest legends about flowers and trees:

Documented in "Sillabongi (Records of Silla)" of *Samguksagi (History of the Three Kingdoms)* is an anecdote about Queen Seondeok and a painting of peonies sent by Emperor Taizong of Tang China, to which the queen responded, "The flower is beautiful but there are no butterflies depicted in the painting, thus it must be that the flower carries no scent." An indeed, when they planted the seeds sent along with the painting, the flower had no scent, which proved to everyone of the queen's brilliance.

"Hwawanggye (Warning to the Flower King)" is an interesting legend, written by the monk Seolchong at the order of Silla's King Sinmun. On a bright spring day, the peony took the throne as the king of all flowers, and as thousands of colorful flowers entered the Flower King's fragrant palace, the beautiful and sensuous rose offered to the king, "I have come with a respect and admiration for Your Majesty and his virtues, which I have long nurtured, and ask in all sincerity not to abandon my wishes and to spend a night with this humble subject." At that moment, the granny flower, a poor scholar who had not been able to enter public office, approached with a humble bow, and expressing wish to serve the king, advised that His Majesty should not be blinded by a sensuous woman. The Flower King, however, was already distracted by the rose and would not listen to the granny flower, even though he knew that the flower was right. The granny flower responded, "This humble subject believed that the wise and intelligent king would recognize true loyalty, but from up close, I now see that is not the case. Intimacy with a sensuous and seductive woman is the path to one's demise," and turned to leave, when the king realized his mistake and apologized to the loyal granny flower. When Seolchong told this tale to King Sinmun, the king said, "It is a meaningful story, which should serve as a guideline for the king's conduct. I order you to put it to writing and bring it to me."

Cheoljjuk, or royal azaleas, are indigenous to Korea, and many legends and poems about this flower are observed in the oral and written tradition. The “Surobuin” section of *Samgungnyusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*) is an account of the story of the beautiful Lady Suro of Silla, who in the reign of King Seongdeok was headed to Gangneung with her husband Sunjeonggong when an old man picked royal azaleas and offered them to her, along with the song “Heonhwaga (Flower Dedication Song).”

Another legend about the peony, referred to as *hamjibak* (gourd bowl) for its large blossoms, dates back to the Goryeo kingdom. King Chungryeol married the daughter of emperor Shizu of Yuan China. One day the queen was strolling the gardens of Hyanggak (Fragrant Pavilion) in Sunyeong Palace when she spotted a peonies in full bloom and ordered a lady-in-waiting to pick one for her. The queen held the blossom for while before breaking into tears, and soon she fell sick and passed away. She had recognized in the beautiful peony blossom the transience of life, which had brought her to tears.

Another flower legend from Goryeo is the narrative about the lotus. King Chungseon was visiting the Yuan capital Yanjing when he engaged in an intimate relation with a lady in the palace, but sadly had to part when he left for Goryeo. The lady cried endless tears of sadness and the king presented her with a lotus blossom as a token of their love, upon which the lady offered him the following poem: “The lotus blossom that you picked for me the day you left was first red but soon it fell off the stem and now the shade of its withering petals are like that of a man.”

Most flower legends equate flowers with women, while in tree legends, the trees often symbolize masculinity, as in the legend of the castor aralia tree (*eomnamu*) that guarded King Danjong of Joseon even in death, and the myth of Dangun, depicted as the son of an iron birch tree (*bakdalnamu*).

Legends of Folk Customs and Their Origins

풍속유래전설

This category of legends narrates the origins of folk customs, including seasonal customs.

Legends are accompanied by specific evidences that support their verity, which contribute greatly to the believability of the tales. Most narratives associated with the origins of folk customs were formed on the basis of the customs, with the legends expanding the basis of the customs.

These legends are set in a specific place and region, and are supported by evidences that are not always historical but also natural, including constellations, rain and wind. Some examples are tales about Chirwolchilseok (Seventh Day of the Seventh Lunar Month), involving Gyeonu (Cowherd) and Jiknyeo (Weaver Girl), and Taejongu (Rain on King Taejong’s Memorial). According to *Dongguksesigi* (*A Record of the Seasonal Customs of the Eastern Kingdom*), Joseon’s King Taejong died on the tenth day of the fifth lunar month, and it always rains on this day. On his deathbed, Taejong had told his son Sejong, “We have been experiencing severe drought, and even in death, I shall bring rain on this day in times of drought,” and as promised, there was always rain on this day.

Many other legends about folk customs are documented in books, including the tale of *sondolbaram*, cold harsh winds that blow around the twentieth day of the tenth lunar month. While this legend is of Korean origin, many legends transmitted as part of written literature originated from China, including the legend of Jie Zitui and the origins of *hansik*, or the cold food feast; the legend about red bean porridge on winter solstice; the tale of Gyeonu (Cowherd) and Jiknyeo (Weaver Girl); and the tale of Danohyang.

Some are based on historical origins that date back to the Goryeo dynasty, including the legends related to the ritual for village tutelary spirit (*byeolsingut*) from Hahoe, the folk game



Human bridge crossing on Grand Full Moon.
National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage



Tug-of-war in the village of Gijisi.
Chungcheongnam-do, Korea Tourism Organization



Carriage battle.
Andong-si, Gyeongsangbuk-do, Korea Tourism Organization

notdaribapgi (human bridge crossing) on Grand Full Moon; and *chajeonnori*, or carriage battle. The legend about the custom of *juldarigi* (tug-of-war) in the village of Gijisi is related to traditional geomancy, which are quite common in villages where the communal ritual *dongje* is held.

These legends add authenticity to folk customs, helping to build social conventions around them. For example, the tale of *sondolbaram* is associated with the fishermen's practice of avoiding the sea when harsh wind blows on the tenth lunar month, and the legend about the Hahoe ritual mask dance persuades the people of the necessity of the folk custom.

Legends of Fortresses and Bridges

성·다리전설

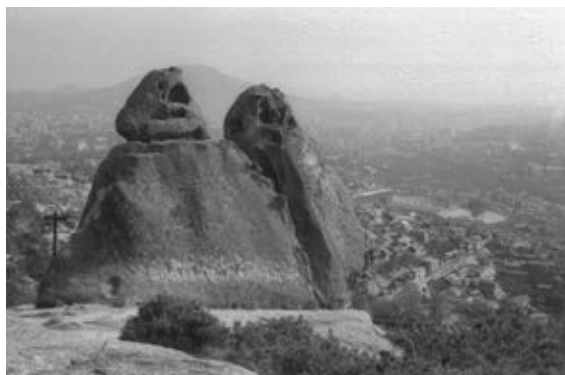
This category of legends narrates the origins of a fortress or bridge.

Fortresses and bridges have served as important structures throughout history, many of which, from across the country, are recorded in the geographical compendium *Donggukyeojiseungnam* (*Augmented Survey of the Geography of the Eastern Kingdom*), published in Joseon the 12th year of King Seongjong's reign (1481). Fortresses were first built of wood, then clay fortresses and stone fortresses were developed, and bridges also evolved in a similar manner. The process of constructing these structures gave birth to an array of narratives. Some of the oldest existing fortresses on the Korean peninsula include Samnangseong (Jeongjoksanseong) on Ganghwa Island, believed to have been built in the ancient kingdom of Gojoseon by Dangun's three sons; and Gijunseong, which is believed to have been built by Gijun, the last king of Gija Joseon, who, after being expelled by Wiman, came to in Iksan, North Jeolla Province, where he constructed his capital on Mt. Mireuk.

Seoul boasts many legends related to its city



Fortress on Namhan Mountain.
Gwangju-si, Gyeonggi-do, Cultural Heritage Administration



Seonbawi on Mt. Inwang.
Jongno-gu, Seoul, 1960, National Folk Museum of Korea

walls. Great Monk Muhak wanted to place Seonbawi, a rock on Mt. Inwang that bore the shape of a monk, within the bounds of the city wall, but Jeong Do-jeon opposed. While the decision stalled due to the disagreement, snow fell overnight. The following morning, they found that snow had fallen only on the other side of the rock, which they took as a sign from the heavens and finalized the city boundaries, on which Seoul's city walls were built. Muhak, failing see his intent through, lamented, "From now on, the role of Buddhists will be reduced to carrying book bundles for Confucian scholars."

In the many variations of the "brother sister Contest)" legend, observed around the country, fortress construction is featured as part of a competition between the siblings.

Also found across the country are structures

referred to as “halmiseong,” or grandmother fortress, whose name originates from the legend of the giant goddess Magohalmi, or Grandmother Mago, believed to have built these fortresses by assembling rocks from other mountain or transporting the rocks in her skirt. Most of these fortresses, located in remote mountainous regions, are believed to have been built in Goryeo.

Magohalmi built not only fortresses but bridges as well. When she went to the mountain Geumsan in Namhae, she crossed the sea without lifting her skirt, and there, she built a bridge by transporting rocks in her skirt, but the construction came to a stop when the rocks fell through the holes in her ragged skirt. She also tried to build a bridge to Jeju Island, but fell while transporting rocks from Mt. Jiri in her skirt, and the rocks all piled up on Mt. Geumo, which remains rocky in present times.

The legend about Chucheon Bridge in Jeonju, North Jeolla Province, is about a devoted son who saves his dying father by crossing the stream with his bare feet on a cold winter day to get medicine. Moved by this story, the villagers built this bridge at the stream. Another legend about a bridge is a variation of the Jangjamot (Rich Man Pond) legend, which features a monk who was humiliated when he went seeking donation from a rich village and sought revenge by changing the name of a bridge, which cut

off the vein of land energy in the village, resulting in its demise.

Thematically, legends of fortresses focus on issues related to the state or the region, while bridge legends on issues of individual morality. The legends of Samgang Fortress on Ganghwa Island and Gijun Fortress in Iksan emphasize the regional connection of a mythological character, in this case the three sons of Dangun and Gijun, the last king of Gija Joseon. The legend of Seoul's city walls reflects the political and religious conflicts associated with the founding of Joseon, while the tale of Brother Sister Fortress reveals the ideology of male superiority.

Legends of Heroes and Commanders

영웅·장수전설

This category of legends include tales about extraordinary figures of outstanding intellect and physical capacity.

The heroes and commanders depicted in these tales are characters who lead their world toward change and rebel against the existing order or ideology, at times experiencing setback. Those who succeed are remembered as heroes, and those who fail and despair as tragic commanders. These commanders, or warriors (*jangsu*), unlike mythological heroes, are depicted in legends as outcasts of the ruling order, as exemplified by the tale of King Songyang, who is defeated by Jumong.

Commander legends can be divided into three groups:

The first group features leaders of reform movements or revolutions, including Yi Monghak, Na Seong-dae, Jeong Yeo-rip, Yi Gwal, Hong Gil-dong, Mang I and Mang Soi, and Sunseok; the second group features military commanders who meet undeserved deaths and become deities or religious leaders, and this group includes Jang Bo-go, Choe Yeong, Nam Yi, Sin Rip, Im Gyeong-eop, Choe



Rainbow Stone Bridge at Seonam Temple.
Suncheon-si, Jeollanam-do, National Folk Museum of Korea



Sacrificial foods offered at the shrine for General Choe Yeong on Chuja Island. Jeju-si, Jeju-do (2009, Mun Mu-byeong)



Shamanic painting of General Choe Yeong. National Folk Museum of Korea

Je-u, King Danjong, and King Gyeongsun; third are militia leaders who fought for the country in times of crisis, including Kim Deok-ryeong, Go Gyeong-myeong, Kim Cheon-il, Choe Dam-ryeong, Jeong In-hong, Gwak Je-u, Jo Heon, Great Monk Yeonggyu, Great Monk Samyeong, Great Monk Seosa, Sin Dol-seok, and Jeon Bong-jun.

The legends possess the narrative structure of biographies with the following plot: A long time ago, a baby is born with potential of supernatural powers, but because his powers are latent, unlike mythological heroes, he is able to grow up without being abandoned, or killed, as in the case of Agijangsu (Mighty Baby). In his developmental years, he works hard to cultivate his abilities, but breaks the taboo of hiding his latent powers, so is discovered, but not by his parents, instead by his teacher. Abandoned by his teacher, he continues to grow in terms of physical and martial capacities, but not in terms of wisdom or maturity. Thus as a commander, he fully exercises

his skills and powers, but his impatience, jealousy and insensitivity lead to the elimination of those who can help complement his lack of wisdom, and in the end, despite his military success, he is defeated in his confrontation with the world. His defeat, however, does not result in complete destruction, but the legend ends with the possibility of a new hero, by locating an auspicious grave site, or by other means.

This chronological structure weaves together various dramatic episodes, including geomancy or conception dream episodes related to the protagonist's birth; episodes about learning and strength competition in depicting his development years; episodes that illustrate his character during his military years; and episodes in which the protagonist denies his approaching death.

Commander legends brought about a great expansion in the genre of tragic tales in Korean literature, reflecting the will of the suffering public to overcome the hardships of reality.

Legends of Mountains, Peaks and Trails

산·봉·령전설

This category of legends narrate stories about mountains, including peaks and trails.

Myriad legends are transmitted about the many well-known mountains around Korea, including Mt. Geumgang, Mt. Halla, Mt. Gyeryong, Mt. Jiri, Mt. Taebaek, and Mt. Seorak, including local tales about nearby mountains. In Korean folk tales, mountains sometimes represent the sentiments of the people who populate them: For example, the collective sentiment of the Honam region are depicted through mountains in narratives about Yi Seong-gye, the founder of Joseon, sending Mt. Jiri on exile, from Gyeongsang Province to Jeolla Province, for refusing to assist in the founding of the kingdom, or of denying government positions to Mt. Mudeun for similar reasons. There are also narratives about national founders or victorious generals who were assisted by mountain gods (*sansin*).

Around the country, there are mountain peaks named Guksabong or Ongnyeobong, which are associated with folk narratives. The name Guksabong can be transcribed in Chinese characters in various ways, according to the related stories: 國思 means national concern; 國祀 means state ritual; and 國師 means state preceptor, a high government post given to eminent Buddhist monks. The name Ongnyeobong, or Jade Maiden Peak, is related to stories of the Ongnyeo (Jade Maiden), the daughter of Okhwangsangje (Great Emperor of Jade), who was sent to the human world as punishment after committing a sin in the celestial kingdom, and these peaks are believed to be where Ongnyeo was sent, possessing a high level of *eum* (female) energy. Ongnyeobong legends generally involve incest between father and daughter, and Ongnyeo's tragic death contributes to preserving the values of the human world.

Legends about mountain trails and mountain passes are numerous, found in all parts of Korea. The name Dallaegogae (Relief Pass) and its related tale



Mt. Halla.

Jeju-si, Jeju-do, Cultural Heritage Administration



Alta for the Celestial God on Mt. Taebak.

Taebaek-si, Gangwon-do (2009), National Folk Museum of Korea



Daegwallyeong Guksadang Shrine.

Gangneung-si, Gangwon-do, Cultural Heritage Administration

are found across the country. The legend of Bakdal Mountain Pass is a sad love story between a scholar named Bakdal and maiden Geumbong, whom he meets in a mountain village on his way to the capital to take the state exam, which has inspired many poets and writers. The legend of the mountain pass

Daegwallyeong narrates the origins of Dano Festival of Gangneung. For Koreans, mountain passes serve as metaphors for the many twists and turns in our difficult lives, and in legends they are depicted as venues of tragic or damaging events, as in the folk song “Arirang.”

The significance of mountains in Korean culture was enhanced throughout history by the influence of traditional geomancy (*pungsujiri*), in which mountains were important factors to consider in choosing an auspicious site for homes and villages.

Legends of Natural Creation

자연창조전설

This category of legends narrates the origins of nature and natural phenomena of the world, including the sun, moon and stars; terrestrial features like mountains, rivers, ponds, rocks and caves; the sea, islands and bays; flora and fauna. It also includes tales of origins of geographical features.

Some of the most widely observed narratives of natural creation include those of mountains or islands that floated from one location to another, or of mountains that survived a great flood. There are also many tales of the natural creation that involve the giant goddess Magohalmi (Grandmother Mago), whose immense body inspired the mythological imagination about mountains or rocks formed from rocks or mud that she was carrying, or about rivers formed by her urine. These narratives can be categorized as creation myths, but over time the significance of their divine elements has diminished, and are seen as closer to legends of the bizarre, rather than the supernatural. “Yeono and Seo” also contains mythemes related to the creation of the sun and the moon, but is categorized as a legend about the origins of the place name Yeongilhyeon, centering on the event of restoring the sun and moon in the kingdom of Silla. The same applies to the narratives “The Island

That Floated” and “The Mountain That Walked,” which are related to mythological events like the creation of the earth and sky or the great flood.

In the course of oral transmission, these legends took on additional elements of playful imagination or social meaning. Mt. Gyeongju in Miryang, South Gyeongsang Province, is believed to have been created when Magohalmi set out from Gyeongju, carrying a mountain, which fell on its current location when the rope tore. Another similar example is the legend of Ulsan Rock, which, while headed to Seorak, stopped in its current location upon the completion of Mt. Seorak. These two tales evolved into variations with an added motif of villagers from two neighboring regions fighting over the location of the mountain. Another variation features a woman who sees the mountain floating in the river and stops it with her laundry beater, which blocks the waterway and results in the decline of the village. This variation is observed across the country and reflects a negative social image of women. The female character depicted as an agent not of creation but of interruption of creation is in similar vein as the negation of the sanctity of the creator goddess Magohalmi.

Legends of natural creation, in other words, can be viewed as universe creation mythology, which have lost their divine aspects and reestablished as local legends in the course of oral transmission, but still possessing universal mythemes, including the great floor, mountain moving, and creator goddess.

Legends of Otherworldly and Renowned Figures

이인·명사전설

This category of legends narrates stories of men with otherworldly abilities or outstanding knowledge or character. Korea has a long tradition of civil rule, and scholars possessing knowledge or character have

enjoyed great respect. Many of their names and achievements have been recorded as official history, and other tales of interest or fascination have been preserved as part of unofficial history or the oral tradition.

In contrast to “Legends of Heroes and Commanders,” this category comprises stories of civil officials, scholars and writers, some of whom were outcast from the government system, living their lives in rural isolation. The term “*iin*” literally means eccentrics, but in this case, the protagonist generally possesses foresight and insight, or other extraordinary abilities.

Historical figures featured in legends cover a broad range of characters, from Seol Chong and Gang Su of Silla, to Hwang Hyeon of late Joseon. There are a large number of narratives about figures from mid- and late Joseon, including Seo Gyeong-deok, Yi Hwang, Yi I, Yi Ji-ham, Song Ik-il, Seo Gi, Yi San-hae, Heo Mok, Song Si-yeol, Yi Seo-gu, Yi Won-ik, Yi Jun-gyeong and Chae Je-gong. From earlier periods, figures like Jeong Do-jeon, Hwang Hui, Maeng Sa-seong and Seong Sam-mun from early Joseon are featured in a significant number of tales, as are those from late Goryeo, including U Tak, Jeong Mong-ju and Won Cheon-seok. Choe Chi-won, from late Silla and early Goryeo, is a major presence in the oral tradition as well.

This category can again be divided by the protagonist’s character or ability:

The first group comprises those with extraordinary foresight or near-divine abilities, and includes Choe Chi-won, Seo Gyeong-deok, Yi J-ham, Song Ik-pil, Jeong Ryeom, Heo Mok, and Yi Seo-gu, who all display otherworldly capacities or engage in eccentric acts. Choe Chi-won, for example, was a prominent writer of his time, but in folk narratives, is depicted as the descendent of a golden pig who possesses supernatural powers.

Second includes those of noble character who gained influence through their problem-solving skills: Jeong Do-jeon, who was a political strategist with lowly roots; virtuous officials Hwang Hui

and Maeng Sa-seong; renowned scholars Yi I and Yi Hwang; respected councillors Yi Hang-bok, Yu Seong-ryong and Yi Won-ik; the righteous Bak Mun-su. Loyal subjects Jeong Mong-ju, Seong Sam-mun and Kim Sang-heon also belong to this group.

The third group is that of renowned writers and artists, including Kim Byeong-yeon, Jeong Gi-ryong and Yang Sa-eon.

These legends dramatize the diverse characteristics and abilities of intellectuals from history, pushing the boundaries of reality to test the capacity of human intellect and character. They also reflect how the public viewed intellectuals and what expectations they held and the qualities they found admirable in these figures, which include insight into the essence of human affairs, foresight into the future, acceptance and tolerance, and the capacity to solve the problems of the ordinary folks.

Legends of Pavilions, Steles and Tombs

누정·비각·묘충전설

Pavilions, steles and tombs stand as evidence for people and events, which are depicted in the folk narratives about these structures.

In the Korean oral tradition, pavilions and gazebos are often featured as the venue for historical events, usually involving the friendships of renowned men of letters. For example, the pavilion Hwaseokjeong in Paju, Gyeonggi Province, was where the Confucian scholar Yi I pursued his studies since youth and continued to meet with fellow scholars later in life; and Segeomjong, in Seoul, is known as the place where Joseon politicians responsible for the restoration of King Injo pledged solidarity, washing their swords in the stream.

Steles and tombs carry the sacred energy of renowned historical figures or those who have died tragic deaths. Related narratives include ones about steles that commemorate loyal subjects like the



Segeom Pavillion.
Jongno-gu, Seoul (2012, Simong)



Hwaseok Pavillion.
Paju-si, Gyeonggi-do, Cultural Heritage Administration

monk warrior Samyeongdang a stele which emits sweat whenever a major event occurs, or ones about conception prayers offered at the tombs of those who have died tragic deaths, which resulted in the birth of sons. Some tales highlight the belief that circling a stele of jumping over a grave can help fulfill one's wishes. Narratives about the tombs of animals like horses or dogs generally emphasize the animal's actions related to symbolic figures: For example, some tales are about the tomb of a horse that belonged to a courageous general, or the grave of a dog that sacrificed itself to save a human. These narratives aim at emphasizing the bravery, loyalty or loneliness of horses and dogs, often surpassing those of humans: An example is the tale of a general who made a bet on a race between his arrow and his horse, then mistaken that his horse had lost the race, killed it.

The pavilions, steles and tombs in these narratives function as emblems of the communities that they represent, serving to solidify unity or to mark the borders of the community.

Legends of Place Names

지명전설

This category of legends narrates the origins of the names of villages and the various related place names.

A number of place name legends are found in *Samguksagi* (*History of the Three Kingdoms*), the earliest among them being the tale about the origins of the name Changwon, now a major city, which came from the fact that Crown Prince Haemyeong, during King Yuri's reign in Goguryeo, killed himself with a spear, which is *chang* in Korean. There are also records of villages populated by people known for their filial piety, with names like Hyogari (Village of Pious Families) and Hyoyangbang (Village of Pious Nurturing). Documented in *Samgungnyusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*) are legends of origins of place names like Wolmyeongni (Moonlight Village), Jaemaegok (Jaemae Village), Yulli (Chestnut Village) and Jupochon (Port of First Arrival).

Village names reflect the experience and culture of the villagers, and oftentimes there is more than one legend related to a name. For example, the village Aeogae in Seoul, means "child hill," which is associated with three different meanings: that of "little hill"; that of a hill where infant corpses were sent to; and that of a hill that functions as a geomantic supplementation (*bibo*), to keep the child of Buaak (Mountain Carrying Child on Its Back) from running away by comforting it with cake.

Village names can change with new turns in history. For example, the village Sirim (First Forest), now part of the city of Gyeongju in North Gyeongsang Province, was changed to Gyerim

(Rooster Forest), to reflect the myth that a white rooster crowed when King Alji of Silla appeared.

Place name legends can be categorized into nature name legends and historical name legends. The former includes the story of Samsongni (Three Pines Villages) or that of Daeyulli (Great Chestnut Village), while the latter includes the tale of Jeongjeonggol, in Goryeong, North Gyeongsang Province, an onomatopoeic name that reflects the sound of the twelve-stringed zither *gayageum* played by the legendary composer Ureuk, and Piggeutmaeul (Blood End Village) in Yeongju, North Gyeongsang Province, where it is said that the blood of those killed in the violent revolt to restore King Danjong reached.

Village name legends associated with geographical features are mythological, for they narrate the creation of the village and its surroundings, and are reflected in names like Gumi (Turtle Tail), Masan (Horse Mountain) and Baeneomijae (Boat Crossing Pass), observed around the country. At the same time, some village name legends are more locally specific than any other narratives in the oral tradition, for they serve as references in defining the identity of the communities; what distinguishes each village from others. Fragments of communal history, left out from official records, are reflected in these place names, contributing to supplementing official history and to rearranging historical truths according to the oral tradition.

Legends of Ponds and Springs

연못·샘전설

This category of legends narrates the geographical history, or name origins, of ponds and springs.

In legends from *Samgunnyusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*), springs and wells are depicted as spatial symbols that speak for the sanctity of the characters: In the tale of Yonaejeong, the spring proves that Talhae is a divine being; in

the tale of the origin of Hyegongjeong, the spring demonstrates Monk Hyegong's supernatural powers; in the tale of Geumgwangjeong, the spring reveals the enlightened spirit of Monk Daehyeon. The section "Segye (Royal Lineage)" in *Goryeosa* (*History of Goryeo*) documents the tale of Yongnyeo (Dragon Lady), wife of Jaekjegeon, father of Goryeo founder Wanggeon, digging a well, and also of Yongnyeo travelling to and from Seohaeyonggung (Dragon Palace of the West Sea) via the well Bukjeong, located in the eastern hall of Gwangmyeong Temple. *Sejongsillokjiriji* (*Geographical Appendix to the Annals of King Sejong*) includes the origin tale of Beomeo Temple on Mt. Geumjeong in Busan, where golden fish swam inside a stone well. These tales are also recorded in *Donggukyeojiseungnam* (*Augmented Survey of the Geography of the Eastern Kingdom*), in addition to various other origin tales including that



Seochul Pond.
Gyeongju-si, Gyeongsangbuk-do, Korea Tourism Organization



Ilwol Pond.
Pohang-si, Gyeongsangbuk-do, 2004, National Folk Museum of Korea



Geum Spring on Mt. Geumjeong.
Geumjeong-gu, Busan, Korea Tourism Organization

of two wells Geumseongjeong and Churajeong in Gyeongju, where dragons are said to have emerged.

References to ponds are more varied. *Samgungnyusa* includes the story of Gonyeon, which King Geumwa emerged from; the tale of Manpasikjeok (Pipe That Calms Ten Thousand Billows), in which one of the pipe holes were thrown into Yongyeon, turning it into a dragon that flew away; and the tale of Sageumgap (The King Shoots an Arrow into the Zither Case), with reference to the pond Seochulji from which an old man emerged with a manuscript. *Sejongsillok* records the legend of Bagyeon, in which Yongnyeo (Dragon Lady) and Lord Bak have an encounter, and tales about various ponds where dragons live and which serve as venues for rain rites. *Donggukyeojiseungnam* includes these tales and those of many other ponds: Ilwolji, which served as the venue for the ritual to bring back the light of the sun and the moon, offering silk woven by Seo;

the tale of Yangeoji, about a fish raised on rice that delivers a letter to consummate marriage; the tale of Jeokji, about a pond that turned red from the blood of the black dragon, shot by Dojo, Yi Seong-gye's father; the tale of Gonggeomji, about a man who gets involved in the fight between three dragons and marries a widowed dragon; the tale of Bujayeon, in which a soldier son and his father drown together; of Yongyeon, in Goksan, Hwanghae Province, where a woman approached Yi seong-gye by floating a willow leaf on a gourd of water; and Jagyeon, where Monk Naong is believed to have been born.

In late Joseon, village records (*eupji*) began to be compiled around the country, which helped document many of the orally transmitted legends. These narratives provided motifs for myriad literary works. One of them is the dragon fight motif, about a human who aids a dragon in battle after which the dragon repays him by providing irrigation, turning

waste land into rice field. This motif highlights the divine power of the dragon as an overseer of water and also communication and exchange of gratitude between humans and animals. The tale of Jangja Pond emphasizes the significance of water as a medium of punishment and purification, through the ending in which Jangja's house turns into a pond as a result of evil deeds.

In these tales, ponds and springs are spaces that contain the life force of water, symbolizing femininity and maternity in shape, and serving as the home of the dragon, the divine overseer of water, indicative of the importance of dragon god (*yongsin*) worship in Korea.

Legends of Revered and Divine Monks

고승·이승 전설

These legends narrate stories about Buddhist monks revered for their religious discipline and accomplishments or for divine powers.

Samgungnyusa (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*) contains the earliest records of Korean tales about the spiritual experiences or divine powers of revered monks, including "Monks Gwangdeok and Eomjang," "Dosolga (Song of Tusita) by Monk Wolmyeongsa," "Hyeoseongga (Song of the Comet) by Monk Yongcheonsa," "Monk Hyetong Defeats the Dragon," and "Martyrdom of Monk Yeomchok (Ichadon)." Books like *Haedonggoseungjeon* (*Lives of Eminent Monks from East of the Sea*) and *Dongsayeoljeon* (*Biographies of Buddhist Masters from the East*), on the other hand, concentrate on recording historical facts about revered monks rather than their supernatural experiences or divine accomplishments.

Tales included in Buddhist folk tale anthologies feature monks whose devotion to religious discipline result in the attainment of the status of the enlightened Buddha, exemplified by narratives like "Oseam (Hermitage of the Five-Year-Old)"

and "Nohilbudeuk and Daldalbakkak" from *Samgungnyusa*; those who predict their own deaths; those who obtain *abhijna*, or a state of knowing and supernormal abilities, examples of which include monks like Samyeongdang and Wonhyo. Another widely observed type of the revered monk tale narrates the supernatural experiences or divine accomplishments of monks and they include the story of the monk Bodeokhwasang, who, upon witnessing the introduction of Taoism during the reign of King Bojang of Goguryeo, lifted his temple into the air and moved it to the temple Godalsa in Jeonju; that of Monk Yangji and his walking stick, which went around on its own to collect donations; of Monk Jajang who brought a pack of bandits to surrender at Magok Temple; of Great Monk Hyeon of Bomun Hermitage on Mt. Cheongbyeong who built pillars out of sand; of Buseol, a secular monk at Hermitage Wolmyeong in Buan who was a filial son and through devoted discipline obtained enlightenment; of Great Monk Naong of Silleuk Temple who tamed a dragon horse who threatened the villagers with wild behavior; of Great Monk Muhak, a disciple of Naong's who advised Joseon's founder Yi Seong-gye on the location of his new capital Hanyang; and of Monk Jinpyo who ate meat stew at the urging of bandits but was saved by vomiting up the food.

These tales, created and transmitted by Buddhist followers moved by the divine acts and powers of the revered monks, serve to enhance religious effect and to emphasize faith among followers.

Legends of Rivers and Waterfalls

강·폭포 전설

In mythology, rivers are wombs in which mankind is born. Yuhwa, the mother of Goguryeo's founder Jumong was the daughter of Habaek, the river god, and it is on the banks of Amnok (Yalu) River that



Bagyeon Waterfall.

Gaeseong-si, Hwanghae-do, Korea Tourism Organization

she has intimate relations with Haemosu, resulting in the conception of Jumong. Rivers also serve as the border between two different worlds. Jumong crosses the river with the help of fish and terrapin, and founds Jolbon Buyeo. The shamanic goddess Princess Bari experiences many hardships before crossing the river to Secheonsoeyeokguk (Kingdom of Western Territories Under Western Heavens), where she acquires the elixir of life.

Waterfalls mark important points where the flow of water is interrupted. In Korea, waterfalls, with their remote and mystical scenery, have served as the backdrop for folk narratives about Taoist fairies (*seonnyeo*) and dragons. Most narratives about waterfalls are related to their origins, that they were formed when the dragon that lives in the pond under the fall, referred to as the dragon pond (*yongso*) ascended to the heavens. In the tale about Bakyeon Falls, Scholar Bak, visiting the fall, is enchanted by its scenic beauty and weds Yongnyeo (Dragon Maiden), who lives inside the pond under the fall. When her son does not return home, Scholar Bak's mother is grief-stricken and jumps to her death at the falls. Since then, the falls have been named Bakyeon, after the family name Bak. Under Buri Falls in Cheonghakdong was a place Taoist hermits and a dragon lived. As Cheonghakdong became widely known, visitors increased and population grew, turning the once quiet and beautiful village



Yongchu Valley.

Hamyang-gun, Gyeongsangnam-do, Cultural Heritage Administration

of hermits into a busy, noisy place. The dragon that lived in Yongchu was responsible for controlling the winds and rainfall to create a mild climate that helped everything grow, but as the village grew crowded and noisy, the dragon ascended to the heavens, in the process of which mountains cracked and water routes changed course and the waterfall was created. The powerful gush of water signifies cleansing, and in folk narratives waterfalls often function as purifying forces.

Rivers in folk narratives are also viewed as the border between human life and death, reflecting human perceptions of the divide between the human world and the world of gods. Waterfalls, created by the heavenly ascent of a dragon, serve a function similar to rivers. Along with wells, seas and ponds, rivers and waterfalls are viewed as the sacred home to water gods, and have been worshipped since ancient times through state rituals.

Legends of Rocks and Caves

바위·굴전설

This category of legends narrate the stories of rocks or caves in relation to local history or to their function as landmarks.

The subject of these legends are rocks and caves as

natural geographical features, which are introduced in myriad folk narratives, including Dangun and Jumong myths, and the legend of Lady Suro, in which a rock that is perceived as a turtle.

Most rock legends start out from the shape of the rocks. For example, Ulsan Rock, on Mt. Seorak first got its name from the two syllables associated with the rock's shape: *ul*, from *ultari*, meaning fence, and *san*, meaning mountain, but soon a legend began to form in connection with the city name Ulsan. Yongduam on Jeju Island, means Dragon Head Island, a name given due to its shape, but a legend developed, based on the strong man narrative. Mireuk (Maitreya) rock legends and *mangbuseok* (husband-awaiting rock) legends are some of the most widely-spread rock legends, while brothers legends, brother-sister legends and mother-son legends have formed wherever a set of similar-sized rocks is lined up. Rocks are also often associated with local generals or warriors as evidence of their powers, featured as part of anecdotes of a warrior lifting the rock or using the rocks to play the game *gonggi*. Some rocks are referred to as a renowned general's helmet. Another type of rock legend features rocks that contain inside of them secret records or weapons or a pair of bellows used to make weapons. Legends about sex organ rocks (*eumyangseok*) are spread across the country, and rocks that resemble the male sex organ (*namgeunseok*) are often named Chotdaebawi (Candlestick Rock) or Sakkatbawi, after the conical bamboo hat *sakkat*.

Some legends feature both rocks and caves, one of which is the Hwanseon Cave legend from Samcheok, Gangwon Province: A fairy (*seonnyeo*) was bathing in the dragon pond (*yongso*) under Chotdaebawi (Candlestick Rock) when she saw people looking at her and hid inside the cave, at which point a rock tumbled down and blocked the cave. But she returned to the heavens and the cave came to be called Hwanseongul, meaning the "cave of the returned fairy."



Yongduam.

Jeju-si, Jeju-do, Cultural Heritage Administration



Mokpo Gatbawi.

Mokpo-si, Jeollanam-do, Korea Tourism Organization



Hwanseon Cave in Samcheok.

Samcheok-si, Gangwon-do, Cultural Heritage Administration

Legends of Temples, Pagodas and Statues

사찰·탑상전설

This category of legends narrate the divine and supernatural origins of temples, pagodas and statues

and other Buddhist structures, many of which are recorded in the 13th-century book *Samgungnyusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*).

These narratives are categorized as legends due to their connection to real places and place names, but many of the stories feature religious and mythological subjects including experiences of mysticism and divine powers to narrate the origins of Buddhist structures and objects.

These tales can again be divided into narratives depicting supernatural phenomena brought about by transcendental beings; mystical events incited by the strong yearning of ordinary beings; the divine presence of revered and virtuous monks; and new names given to existing structures or statues through divine experience.

The typical narrative starts with a mystical experience, which results in the construction of a divine space. Therefore the two main elements of these legends are spatial specificity and mystical experience. Because the narrative comprises specific details about the structures and their origins, these legends are considered the most realistic and historical among folk narratives, despite the fact that the experiences depicted are mystical and fantastic.

In Korea, legends about religious structures were mostly developed between Unified Silla and Joseon, which make these narrative rich sources of historical, social and cultural context. The spatial indicators in these legends function as points where religious mythos and historical logos overlap, where religious faith is born and historical realities occur.

Legends of the Sea and Islands

바다·섬전설

This legend category encompasses a comprehensive range of local or generic legends transmitted in the coastal regions or islands, which directly or indirectly involve the sea.

These legends can be divided into the following categories:

The first category comprises legends about Yonggung (Dragon Palace) and Yongwang (Dragon King). “Dragon King of the Southern Coast and His Three Sons” is a tale from Jeju Island that reflects the ecological conditions of the island. “Legend of Bachelor Bak,” from Haenam, South Jeolla Province, about Bak, who loses his wife, Yongnyeo (Dragon Maiden), who negotiates a truce between the battling Cheongnyong (Blue Dragon) and Hwangnyong (Yellow Dragon).

Second are legends about the origins of names of sea rocks and other geographical features: The legend of Jangsabawi (General Rock), from Jeolyeong Island in Busan, tells the story of a rock shaped like the shoe of a general; the legend of Yongnyeobawi (Dragon Maiden Rock), of a seaside village named Galmok in Seochon, South Chungcheong Province, is a love story between Bachelor Bak and Yongnyeo (Dragon Maiden); Maebawi (Hawk Rock) legend of Geomun Island in South Jeolla Province tells the story of a hawk who helps Yi O-bok, a fisherman, from being captured by the sea ghost Sinjjigaet; and the Doksuribawi (Eagle Rock) legend, of Bin Island in Cheonsu Bay, South Chungcheong Province, is a tragic love story between a bachelor named Samman and the shipowner’s daughter.

Third are origin legends transmitted on islands or along the coastal regions: “The Legend of Sisters,” from Seogwipo on Jeju Island narrates the origin of the island’s clementine trees, that a cat from the Dragon Palace died and turned into a tree that bears golden fruits; the legend of Fisherman Tae, from Myeongcheon, Hamgyeong Province, narrates the origin of *myeongtae* (pollack), comprised of a syllable each from the village name of Myeonchon and the fisherman’s name; the legend of Yongyeon (Dragon Pond), of Mt. Chuwol in Damyang, South Jeolla Province, tells the story of a bamboo pipe found on Mt. Bongnae, which had risen out of the sea, bringing peace.

Fourth are legends about historical figures: the legend of Bak Se-tong's family, who enjoyed high government posts for three generations with the help of a wise turtle, is transmitted in the village of Geomuyeok in Yeongdeok, North Gyeongsang Province, in connection with the origin of the village name; the progenitor legend of the Chu family; the legend of General Im Gyeong-eop and the origin of croaker fishing; the legend of Tian Heng, a former king of Qi China who arrived with five hundred men and settled on an island off the western coast; that of Xu Fu, sent east by Qin Shi Huang of ancient China in search of the elixir of eternal life, transmitted on Jeju Island and the western and southern coasts.

Fifth are legends that narrate about and are transmitted on the myriad islands of Korea: the Samseonghyeol (Three Family Name Cave) legend from Samseongsa, Jeju Island, narrates the origins of the three last names Go, Bu and Yang, which came from the three deities Go Eul-na, Bu Eul-na, and Yang Eul-na, and also the origins of Tamla Kingdom; the legend about the origin of Chilgi Island, transmitted in the village of Dojang, off the shore of Wando, South Jeolla Province, acquired by a strongman from Dojang in a wrestling match; and the Jujeonjaseom (Kettle Island) legend from Busan, which warns against fire.

Lesser Cuckoo

접동새

There are two narratives related to the bird *jeopdongsae*, or the lesser cuckoo, in the Korean oral tradition: One narrates the tragic story of a maiden harassed by her stepmother, who died and became a lesser cuckoo; and the other of a man who became a lesser cuckoo when he was driven to death by his grievance of losing his bride to the king. *Jeopdongsae*, with its mournful cry, the sound of which is reflected on its

name, is featured prominently in traditional verse to capture sentiments of sorrow or grievances.

A long, long time ago, a mother died leaving behind nine sons and a daughter. Their stepmother resented the daughter and constantly harassed her. The daughter was set to wed, but unable to bear the stepmother's ill treatment, met an abrupt death after preparing all her bridal gifts. Her nine mournful brothers were burning their dead sister's bridal gifts in the yard when the stepmother tried to stop them, not wanting the gifts to go to waste. The brothers, furious, pushed her into the fire, and the stepmother turned into a crow and flew away. Their dead sister turned into a lesser cuckoo and came to see her brothers each night, crying its mournful cry.

The second tale features a poor millet farmer who married a pretty bride who lived inside a snail shell (*ureonggaksi*) and served him well. One day the bride was bringing his meal out to the field, when the king sent a secret inspector (*amhaengeosa*) and took her away. The farmer found his snail bride but was unable to bring her back and when his grievance killed him, he turned into a lesser cuckoo.

The *jeopdongsae* narrative belongs to the category of folk tales about humans being reborn as birds, which include the lesser cuckoo, bluebird, seagull, crow and chicken. In most of these tales, the protagonist dies an undeserved and untimely death, and his or her haunted spirit is reborn as a bird. The bird is depicted as a divine animal that can travel between the celestial and terrestrial worlds, and between the world of gods and the world of humans, a belief based on the shamanic view that the soul of the dead borrows the body of the bird to fly over the terrestrial world, and that emotional communication is possible between souls.

The *jeopdongsae* narrative also belongs to the stepmother tale (*gyemodam*) category, with its typical narrative structure of the ill-treated daughter being reborn as a bird, and her older brothers punishing the stepmother by pushing her into the fire.

Li Rusong

이여송

This legend narrates the story of General Li Rusong, who led Ming China's relief forces to Joseon during the Japanese invasion of the year Imjin (1592).

When Joseon's envoys traveled to China to request relief forces to fight against the invading Japanese during the Imjin war, the king refused because it was farming season. One of the envoys pleaded with tears, using a handkerchief rubbed with red pepper, as instructed by the Confucian scholar Yi I, which moved the king and resulted in the dispatch of Li Rusong. Li, however, tried to avoid going to war by insisting that he would not go to war unless he was equipped with a pair of chopsticks made of bamboo with tear-streak patterns (*sosangbanjuk*), which his older brother, who was a fool, brought to Li, sending him off to Joseon. In Joseon, Li nurtured ambitions to become king, but his older brother took Li to his son, who broke Li's sword with bamboo from Joseon, making Li surrender and return to China.

The above summary makes up the general narrative structure of the legend referred to as "Li Rusong's Wild Demand and Humiliation." Variations feature a wide range of different demands including the bamboo chopsticks mentioned above, from dragon liver to the best rice grains under heaven. In some versions Li claims Joseon's King Seonjo is not worth of the throne, testing him with an abrupt handshake. A number of different historical figures, including Yi I, Yi Hang-bok, Yu Seong-ryong and Yu Un-ryong, provide solutions to Li's demands by acquiring the demanded item or offering a map to help him in battle. Li's wild acts continued after the end of the war, attempting to become king, blocking the auspicious "lair (*hyeol*)" on major mountains, or beheading Maitreya statues. These acts are blocked by the mountain god (*sansin*) or a boy in a straw hat (*choripdong*). In some variations, Li's damage cannot be stopped, leaving only three auspicious spots in Joseon, which results in the loss of talented people in Joseon, but when Li

returns to China, he is reprimanded for blocking the auspicious lairs of his own ancestors.

The legend of Li Rusong clearly reflects the negative attitude of the common folks about foreign military troops entering the war and being stationed in the country. Through the dramatization of international conflicts of interest, and of relief forces turning into aggressors and plunderers, the ordinary folks tried to overcome the hardships of war.

Lovesick Rock

상사바위

The legend "Sangsabawi" narrates the origins of the rock in the title, believed to have come to existence due to an unrequited love. Transmitted across the country, the tale was formed in a time when medieval social order dominated over human nature.

In a village lived an elderly widower and a girl by the name of Piri (Pipe). Piri treated the man with respect and the old man cared about her as well. When Piri moved away, the old man was left with an empty feeling. One day, he saw a phantom image of Piri and realized that he loved her. The old man climbed a mountain that overlooked the village where Piri lived, and overcome with guilt, hung himself. The old man turned into a rock, gazing down at Piri's village,



Yongchu Valley.

Hamyang-gun, Gyeongsangnam-do, Cultural Heritage Administration

and Piri began to have nightmares every night, of a snake wrapping itself around her body. And one night the old man appeared in her dream and confessed his suffering, of being unable to forget her even in death, and asked for forgiveness. Piri, feeling pity for the old man, climbed the rock and jumped down. Then another rock appeared next to it, and people came to call it Sangsabawi, or Lovesick Rock.

Myriad variations of this tale are found in various different regions: The version from Nonsan is about the tragic love between a farmer's daughter and the magistrate's son, which results in the woman's death, followed by the man being swept away to the rock by a whirlwind and joining her in death; the version from Muan tells the story of a rich maiden and a poor fisherman who dies at sea and turns into a snake, sweeping the maiden who is awaiting him at the rock, into the sea with him; the version from Yongchu Valley in Hamyang features a maiden who dies from her unrequited love for a boy monk and turns into a snake, pushing the monk down the rock; in the version from Mt. Imyeong in Namhae, a poor bachelor who loves the magistrate's daughter dies and becomes a snake, wrapping himself around the maiden's body and a shamanic ritual is held to tear the snake away and kill it; in the version from Cheongju, a maiden who engaged in intimate relation with General Sin Rip sits on a rock praying for his victory but falls off and dies upon news of his death; and the version from Namhae tells the story of servant Dolsoe who falls sick from his unrequited love for the widow he serves, after which the widow accepts his love.

Sangsabawi legends revolve around the plot of love that is unrequited due to social, ethical and cultural limitations and boundaries, or even when the lovers come together, reality stands in their way, pushing them toward death. The myriad different versions all address, through the love stories, criticism of the medieval social order, which oppresses humanity.

Many of the legend's variations include the main

motif of the "Sanganbaem (Lovesick Snake)" legend, which is believed to reflect the phenomenon of narrative development of snake to rock, to establish a more lasting evidence for the tale.

In the variation from Namhae, as summarized, the grievance of lovesick Dolsoe is resolved by the widow's acceptance of his love, and does not end in Dolsoe's death, nor is the rock a venue of tragedy. It seems to reflect a weakened medieval ideology, which allows the protagonists to overcome the barriers of social status and consummate their love.

Lovesick Snake

상사뱀

"Sangsabaem (Lovesick Snake)" is a legend about a protagonist who dies from the pain of his or her unrequited love and turns into a snake to express his or her suppressed emotions to the object of affection.

When Jo Wol-cheon was nineteen years old, he went to the home of Lord Oseong to study reading. Watching the young man pass by her home each day, the local clerk's daughter Wori fell in love with Wol-cheon. Unable to suppress her emotions, Wori wrote a letter and placed it on the road where Wol-cheon passed everyday, but when she saw him tear up her letter and scatter the pieces on the water, she fell sick with despair. As her daughter became critically ill, the clerk went to Lord Oseong and explained, asking for his help so that his daughter could have a chance to meet Wol-cheon. The following day, when Wol-cheon arrived for his lesson, Lord Oseong made a request to Wol-cheon to go see Wori, but Wol-cheon declined at first, saying there was no way an aristocrat and a commoner could understand each other, but when Lord Oseong insisted that it was more important to save a person's life, Wol-cheon reluctantly conceded. Upon hearing word of Wol-cheon's visit, the clerk's family made preparations and waited. Wol-cheon arrived at the house in the

evening, but could not work up the courage to step inside, standing outside Wori's door late into the night, and finally in at dawn he went inside and sat next to her, caressing her face once, his hand wrapped in many layers of silk handkerchief. This was when Wori died, overcome with despair that she was such a lowly being, too vulgar for him to touch. The following day, Lord Oseong saw that the maiden had turned into a lovesick snake and was following Wol-cheon from behind. Lord Oseong hollered at the snake to move away from Wolcheon, then locked up the snake inside a brush cap and handed it to Wolcheon, warning him that he should not let anyone see it, not even his brothers. One of Wol-cheon's brothers, however, opened the cap and the snake leaped out, hurting everyone in the family. It is said that there was always a snake wrapping its body around the portrait of Wol-cheon, enshrined at Andong Hyangsa.

Lovesick snake legends can be categorized according to the gender of the agents of transformation. Narratives featuring a male snake are closely related to "Sangsabawi (Lovesick Rock)" legends, generally summarized as the story of a man of a lowly class in love with an aristocrat woman, who transforms himself into a snake and wraps himself around her body, which pushes the maiden to attempt a ritual to undo the lovesickness but fails, resulting in death for both. In narratives with a female snake, the object of the woman's affection is a historical figure, which varies widely, from civil officials like Jo Wolcheon, Jo Nam-yeong and Jeong In-hong, to military officials like Yi Sun-sin and Gang Gam-chan, and the tale's ending also changes according to the chosen figure.

The common motif shared by all variations of the lovesick snake legend is the despair experienced by a protagonist of low social standing in love with someone of a higher standing. The despair gives birth to a haunted spirit, which becomes the agent of shape-shifting. In other words, conflict involving social class is a major factor in the haunting of spirit, and shape-shifting serves as a means of individual



Sculpture of the Princess of Cheongpyeong Temple and Lovestick Snake. Chuncheon-si, Gangwon-do (2007, Lee Hong-u)

expression, which is prohibited in reality. While the male snake versions strongly criticize the gap between the social classes, the female snake versions highlight the rigid and judgmental moral views of the male characters.

This legend exposes forbidden human desires through the motifs of death and shape-shifting, using snake imagery to illuminate issues of social hierarchy and power dynamics that stand in the way of true love.

Masip Cave

마십굴

The legend of Masipgul narrates the origins of the name of Masip Cave, in Suan County, Hwanghae Province.

In Suan, Hwanghae Province, lived a poor woodsman by the name of Masip, with his good wife. One day Masip was chopping wood when he found a young hunter unconscious in the forest and carried him home. The young man, brought back to health by the couple's nursing, turned out to be the son of the County Magsistrate. He quickly forgot about his gratitude towards the couple, however, and set his mind on seducing Masip's beautiful wife. When she rejected him, he ordered his men to kidnap

her on a palanquin, then told Masip, pointing to a cliff, that he would return his wife if Masip drilled a cave in the cliff, 50 *ri* deep. Masip got work on the cave with a hammer and a chisel, and on the one hundredth day, the rock opened up to a cave, 50 *ri* deep. Masip entered the cave and came out the other end, which led to the backyard of the Magistrate's mansion, where Masip found his wife and escaped into the cave. The Magistrate's son sent men after them but the cave collapsed over them, and the Magistrate's son rushed to the other end of the cave, where he started a fire to blow in smoke, but water, instead of the couple, poured out of the cave, and drowned the men. Masip and his wife was never again seen. Today, fresh water still flows out of the cave and it is said that on the rocks remain a hundred scratch lines engraved by Masip.

Variations of the protagonist Masip's name include Malsip and Malssip. There are also variations of the tale in which the Magistrate's son dies not from the water but from the collapsing cave when he chases after the couple with the villagers.

This legend reflects the spirit of resistance against the ruling class, and one of North Korea's most widely known folk narratives. The fact that Masip and his wife never came out of the cave highlights a critical view of the society and its contradictions. The story's literary qualities are enhanced by its vivid narrative elements, including the confrontation between the ruling class and the ruled; twists in good and evil; awe-inspiring mysteries of nature; and a sad tale of love.

Mighty Baby

아기장수

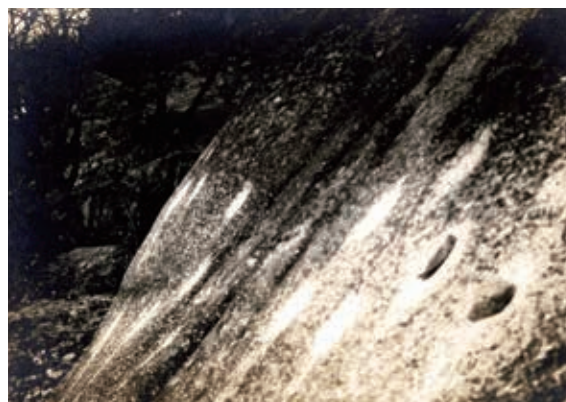
The legend "Agijangsu" narrates the story of Mighty Baby, who meets a tragic death for being born with extraordinary abilities into a lowly family.

It is unclear how far the tale dates back to,

but a warrior born with wings under his arms is documented in *Samguksagi* (*History of the Three Kingdoms*), from 12th century. A story similar to the Agijangsu legend is also included in the "Ancient Relics of Gangneung" section of *Joseoneupji* (*Village Records of Joseon*). The tale was transmitted widely in mid- and late Joseon, as seen in the connection made between the Agijangsu motif and legends about anti-establishment figures from Joseon, and public anticipation of the emergence of the enlightened hero ("jinin"), related to rebellions in late Joseon.

In the village of Yongsan in Miryang, South Gyeongsang Province, a son was born in a poor farming family. When the mother returned after selling grain-pounding labor, the baby, less than three weeks old, had flown to the ceiling. She told her husband about what had happened. He said that it will be very harmful if the authorities found out, and that they should kill the baby. They put the baby in an oil press, under a boulder and one *seom* of rice stalks, but the baby did not die. Two *seom* of rice stalks made the oil press rock. When three *seom* of rice stalks were placed on him, the baby trembled in fear and finally died. Following the baby's death, Yongma (Dragon Horse) emerged from Yongbawi (Dragon Rock) and circled the air, before drowning in a pond named Botangdeul. It is said that the rock is still stained in blood.

This narrative, transmitted around the country,



Mighty Baby Rock.
1930s, National Folk Museum of Korea

has myriad variations. The basic plot involves parents killing their extraordinary child in fear of potential harm, under varying circumstances and through varying methods of death. In some versions, when the parents are distressed that the baby is so strong he cannot be easily killed, the baby instructs them that they need to tear off the wings from under his arms. In some, Agijangsu flees to pursue a grand plan but the mother's mistake or betrayal leads to his death in the hands of the authorities. In the variations that feature mighty baby Uturi, it is Yi Seong-gye, founder of Joseon, who kills the baby, which reflects the public opposition to Yi's revolt that led to the founding of the new kingdom. Some versions cite a badly positioned ancestral tomb, which in some cases are blamed on the daughter-in-law, as the reason behind the birth of the mighty baby. In some cases the mighty baby does not die and survives until youth or middle age.

The baby's wings and the Dragon Horse are symbols of otherworldliness, which show that Agijangsu's origins are related to the heavens. An extraordinary child born into an ordinary family was often viewed as a sign that he would grow up to commit treason. In the legend, fearing the damage that the baby might cause, the people around him get rid of the heaven-sent hero, and the tragedy of the story is heightened by the fact that it is his own parents that commit the murder. Infanticide by the parents signifies the absence of minimum space to accommodate the child, with the parents symbolizing the public. The episode of the emergence of the Dragon Horse and its death reflects the public protest for the unjust and undeserved death of Agijangsu. The versions in which the baby dies in the hands of state authorities depict Agijangsu's potential being crushed by the ruling powers, highlighting the negative worldview and despair of the public. But even these versions in the end blame the baby's death on the mother, which can be interpreted as the public's self-reflection about their inability to accommodate their own hero.

Agijangsu is a Messiah-like character, reflecting the public's yearning for a new world order. He is an incomplete hero who meets a tragic end, but he is continually revived in legends of anti-establishment heroes throughout Joseon, which in a sense makes him an undying, eternal hero. The same analysis can be applied to the disappeared baby featured in some versions, reflecting the public's anticipation of a savior who will one day reemerge to liberate them from the hardship of this world.

Mireuk Temple

미륵사

The legend of Mireuksa narrates the story of the foundation of Mireuk (Maitreya) Temple in Iksan, North Jeolla Province.

In the kingdom of Buyeo, there was a widower who had intimate relations with a dragon and gave birth to a son, who demonstrated high intelligence at a young age. He was named Madong or Seodong, both meaning "yam child," since the family was poor and made a living by digging yams. Seodong heard rumors about the beauty of Princess Seonhwa, the third daughter of Silla's King Jinpyeong, and headed to Gyeongju, where he taught children playing on the street a song about Princess Seonhwa secretly meeting Seodong every night for an intimate encounter. This song spread quickly across Gyeongju and the king, stunned, sent away the princess on exile. Seeing off the princess, the queen gave the princess one mal of gold. As the princess set out on the road, there was a young man following her, who turned out to be Seodong. The princess accepted this as a sign of destiny and went with Seodong. She presented the gold to Seodong and he said that there was plenty of gold on the mountain. The princess followed him and indeed saw gold everywhere. With the help of Monk Jimyeong's supernatural powers, Seodong sent the gold to King Jinpyeong

and earned the king trust, taking the throne as King Mu of Baekje. One day King Mu and the princess were on their way to Mt. Yonghwa to see Monk Jimyeong, and coming upon a huge pond at the foot of the mountain, there appeared the Mireuk (Future Buddha Maitreya) Triad. The two offered bows in worship, and decided to fill up the pond to build a temple. King Jinpyeong also provided help, sending workers, and the temple was called Mireuksa.

This legend is widely known for its association with the *hyangga*, a Silla verse form “Seodongyo (Song of Seodong).” There were many conflicting accounts about Baekje’s King Mu and Princess Seonhwa. Some claim that Mireuk Temple was built not by King Mu but King Dongseong (479-501) or King Munyeong (501-523) of Baekje. King Dongseong, in an attempt to prevent Goguryeo’s southward invasion, had requested of Silla an alliance by marriage in 493, and thereby wed the daughter of Silla royalty Biji. According to records of

the sarira enshrinement, uncovered in the process of disassembling the Mireuk Temple Site Stone Pagoda in 2009, the person who constructed the temple and enshrined the sarira in the pagoda is specified as the daughter of Minister Sataekjeokdeok. The year of construction is recorded as the year Gihae (639), which coincides with the reign of King Mu, from 600 to 641.

Iksan was part of the kingdom of Mahan, founded by King Gijun (King Mugang), the last ruler of the ancient kingdom Gija Joseon, and also served as the site of a royal villa during Baekje. These historical facts seem to have combined to form the legend of the Mireuk Temple.

Mountain That Walked

걸어온 산

These folk narratives tell the origin of the current geographical location of mountains or islands.

Tales of mountains that walked are generally structured as three or four lines of exposition about how a mountain moved from one place to its current location. The narrative plot can be summarized into the three following stages: “moving,” “stopping” and “mountain passage toll conflict.” The “moving” section depicts from where and how the mountain moved, which includes walking or floating amidst a flood or being carried by a giant, perhaps the most widely observed, indicating a close connection of these tales with Korea’s giant tales. The “stopping” occurs when a woman stops the moving mountain with words or by striking the mountain with a wooden club or poker, which results in the disappointing consequence of the mountain failing to become the kingdom’s capital. The woman who stops the mountain is similar in appearance and in action to the heroine of Korea’s giant woman folk tales, who uses a whip to pile rocks at the site of the construction of a fortress, during which she



Stone Pagoda at the Mireuk Temple site in Iksan.
Iksan-si, Jeollabuk-do, Cultural Heritage Administration



Mt. Mai.
Jinan-gun, Jeollanam-do, Korea Tourism Organization

hears that the fortress has already been completed, and she leaves the rocks in a pile. This leads to the speculation that the character of the woman who stops the moving mountain with words or tools is a modified version of the giant woman characters, formed in the process of the giant woman tales spinning into different variations. The third stage of “mountain passage toll conflict” involves a wise boy thanks to whom the long-observed practice of mountain tax collecting is abolished once and for all, and is depicted as a match of wits surrounding who should lead the mountain. A majority of moving mountain tales simply tell how a mountain moved from one location to another, which means that the motif of the “mountain toll conflict” was not included in the tale’s original narrative structure. In other words, this motif was later added to enrich the narrative and to reduce the unrealistic aspects of the

legend.

Further evidence of the moving mountain legends’ association with giant tales includes the fact that in many versions, the mountain does not move on its own but is moved by the giant, or as a consequence of the giant’s actions. It is assumed that the giant element of the tale was gradually eliminated as an attempt to make the tales more realistic.

Regional variations of these moving mountain tales are similar in content, with the exception that versions from Korea’s inland regions mostly feature mountains that move or float, while those from islands feature mountains that move to islands. An unusual case is the Mt. Mai legend from Jinan, North Jeolla Province, in which Mt. Mai not only moves on its own but also grows larger, a narrative element that seems to have been developed independently in the course of transmission.

Mt. Baekdu

백두산

Mt. Baekdu legends refer to tales about the mountain and its environs and residents.

As the tallest mountain on the Korean peninsula, Mt. Baekdu is the sacred origin of the Korean people, a spiritual place that inspired myriad folk tales, from the progenitor myth of Gojoseon and the founding myth of Goryeo to present-day narratives. Mt. Baekdu legends are recorded in the form of ancient books, travelogues or recordings of oral recitations.

One of the most widely known among Mt. Baekdu legends is the story of the origin of Cheonji. A mean-spirited black dragon appeared in the sky and blocked water routes, drying up the land. A man named Baekjangsu (White Warrior) was visited by a princess who helped him to become the mightiest man under heaven, and together they were able to defeat the black dragon, and with the restored water, made Cheonji, the crater lake on top of Mt. Baekdu. In “Tale of the Stone Needle That Sewed Back Cheonji,” a great flood on Mt. Baekdu caused the Cheonji to overflow, killing everyone except a mother and her son, born after the death of his father. But soon the mother died from starvation

and the son was saved by the great-granddaughter of Yeogwasssi (Nuwa) of heaven who descended to earth. The great-granddaughter carved a stone needle out of a rock from Mt. Baekdu, which she used to sew back Cheonji to contain the lake, and thus brought peace to the world. The son and the granddaughter wed, after which people once again began living on and around Mt. Baekdu.

The Cheonji legend shows mythological traits, in that a princess intervenes in the fight between an evil black dragon and a good white dragon, helping the white dragon in his effort to make life possible for the people. This signifies that Mt. Baekdu and Cheonji are sacred places that bring life. The tale about the stone needle offers hope that man can survive even the great flood. Another variation of the Mt. Baekdu legend is “Tale of Leaving Home to Acquire Skill,” in which Mt. Baekdu is a woman who borrows seven sons from Cheonsin (Celestial God) and sends them into the world to each acquire a skill, portraying Mt. Baekdu as protagonist or a heroine with a human character. “Tale of *Insam*” is a story of hunting for wild ginseng on Mt. Baekdu, signifying that the mountain is a spiritual place that provides divine medicine that cures people. “Tale of a Beast and a Hunter” portrays the relationship



Cheonji Lake on Mt. Baekdu.
Yanggang-do, Korea Tourism Organization

between the people and animals of Mt. Baekdu.

Mt. Baekdu legends, first of all, reveal the distinctive characteristics of the mountain and its people; secondly, they are mythological narratives about the origins of various northern peoples; third, they portray Mt. Baekdu as a subject that sustains the Korean spirit; fourth, in these tales, Mt. Baekdu becomes Mt. Taebaek to form Korea's founding myth.

To Koreans and Korean-Chinese as well, Mt. Baekdu takes up a religious and spiritual status. As the setting for the myth of Korea's progenitor Dangun, Mt. Baekdu is the place where history began for the Korean people, with its tall, mystical peaks serving as the pathway to the sky, its rich resources protected by the mountain god (*sansin*), and as a safe shelter where people can hide from danger.

Mt. Chiak

치악산

The legend of Chiaksan explains the origin of Mt. Chiak in Wonseong, Gangwon Province, borrowing the plot structure of the animal-returns-favor narrative (*boeundam*).

A long time ago, a young man from the country set out to Seoul for his state examinations and came across Mt. Jeokak in Gangwon Province. He heard the shrill cry of a pheasant (or magpie) and saw two birds about to be eaten by a serpent, its body wrapped around them. (Or in some variations, he sees a magpie nest on a large tree, inside which are baby birds, and a serpent is crawling up the tree toward the nest.) The young man shot the snake with his bow and arrow and saved the birds. He continued on his journey until night fell and he began looking for a place to sleep, when he found a house and asked if he could lodge for the night. A woman showed him to his room, and the young man, tired after a long day, fell into a deep sleep, but he woke feeling breathless, to find a huge serpent wrapped tight around his body and about to

swallow him. The serpent said to him, "I am the wife of the serpent you killed today and I shall eat you up to seek revenge. If you want to live, toll the bell three times, and I shall release you." As soon as the serpent said these words, the sound of bells ringing was heard, three times in a row. The serpent, looking glad, released the young man and disappeared (or turned into a dragon ascended to the heavens). At daybreak, the young man went searching in the direction of the bell sounds, and found a bell tower, at the bottom of which were the two pheasants (magpies) that had begged him to save their baby birds. The young man realized that the birds had died while tolling the bell to repay his favor, and gave up his plans for public office, building a temple in the mountain and spending the rest of his life there, praying for the soul of the birds that had died for him. Since then, the names of the mountain has been changed from Mt. Jeokak to Mt. Chiak. The temple that the young man founded is today called Sangwonsa (or the young man passed the state exam and became known as virtuous public official.



Copper bell at Sangwon Temple.

Mt. Chiak, Wonju-si, Gangwon-do, Korea Tourism Organization

Over twenty different versions of this legend from across the country have been recorded, which vary greatly in many details including the identity of the protagonist; species of bird; tool used for killing the serpent; what becomes of the female serpent; from where the bell sound came; and what became of the protagonist.

This legend is a typical narrative of an animal returning a favor owed to a human. In this case, the two birds sacrifice themselves to repay a human who saved their lives. The narrative focuses on sanctity and the Buddhist concept of redemption, in the way the birds, born to lead their lives in the air, sacrificed themselves to end the violent bloodshed and purify this world and its ways of the strong preying on the weak, to bring peace and reconciliation.

Mt. Geumgang

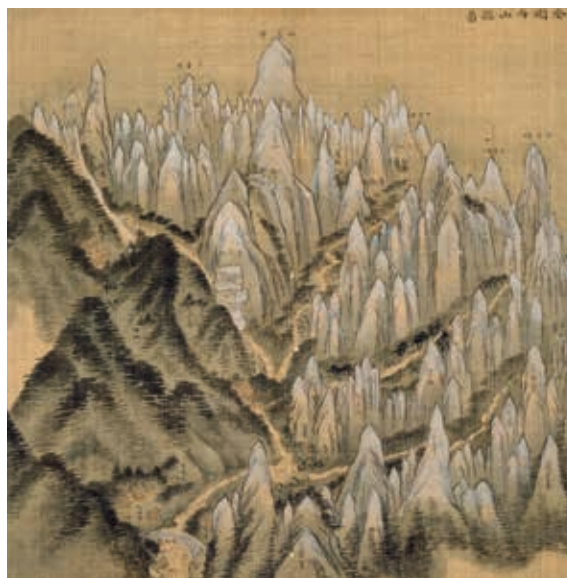
금강산

The legends of Geumgangsan are set against the backdrop of Mt. Geumgang, located on the northern tip of the Taebaek Mountain Range, and transmitted in this region, which today are part of Goseong, Geumgang and Tongcheon counties in Gangwon Province.

Mt. Geumgang is renowned for its scenic beauty and also as a mountain that carries the spirit of the Korean people. According to ancient legends, China's Qin Shi Huang sent men and women to Mt. Geumgang in search of magic potions that promised longevity and eternal life. Taoist hermits and fairies often descended on the peaks and valleys, where they wandered, along with rabbits and all sorts of animals, and entranced by the scenic views, many of them forgot to return to the heavens and turned into rocks. Even Okhwangsangje, or Pure August Jade Emperor, the highest Taoist deity and ruler of the



Mt. Geumgang.
Gangwon-do, Korea Tourism Organization



Painting of Mt. Geumgang in the Album of Mt. Geumgang in Autumn in the Year of Sinmyo.
Jeong Seon, 1711, National Museum of Korea

heavens, became enchanted by the scenery of Mt. Geumgang and turned into a rock, it is said. When the Jade Emperor reached Guryongyeon (Nine Dragons Ponds) after looking around the scenery, he took off his crown and jumped into the water. At that moment, the mountain god that guarded Geumgangsan appeared and took the emperor's crown, saying, "It is a horrible crime to bathe in the water that people drink from," and the Jade

Emperor, deprived of his crown, hardened into a rock halfway up Sejon Peak. Mt. Geumgang is also the home to many different deities, and the many famous rocks around Korea, including Ulsan Rock of Mt. Seorak, are believed to have stopped in their way to Mt. Geumgang because the mountain was already crowded with 12,000 peaks.

Each of Geumgang's peaks possesses a folk tale of its own, it seems, for there are myriad folk narratives related to Mt. Geumgang and its numerous temples, hermitages, ponds, and waterfalls. These folk narratives are mainly about the many geographical features that make up Geumgang's beautiful scenery and their names, and many involve motifs about supernatural phenomena, disease-healing, filial piety and love. Although the divine characteristics of Mt. Geumgang make up a part of these tales, they are not categorized as mythology, since the divine or heavenly beings, including the Jade Emperor, hermits, fairies and the heavenly rabbit, are featured to emphasize not their divine qualities but the extraordinary beauty of the mountain—for example, failing to return to the heavens due to their enchantment with the scenery and turning into a rock. Some narratives related to Mt. Geumgang mix historical events, in which the mountain's supernatural powers keep out foreign invaders or impure beings. These tales include the story of Goryeo troops chasing after Silla's Crown Prince Maeui who were forced to turn away at Mt. Geumgang; and of Sujeong Peak that protected villagers from Japanese invasion.

In these narratives, Mt. Geumgang is the center of the universe, a paradise of the highest order, where not only heavenly beings but visitors from Yonggung (Dragon Palace), the Sipdaewang (Ten Great Kings) of the underworld, and myriad Buddhas stayed behind, choosing not to leave. Mt. Geumgang, in other words, is where the human world and the world of gods intersect, where the beings from these two different worlds interact—a mountain that exists within a sacred place and time.

Nam Sa-go

남사고

This legend narrates the story surrounding Nam Sa-go (1501-1571), a geomancy expert who served as a royal astrologist during the reign of King Seonjo in mid-Joseon. Nam Sa-go was known in his time as an eccentric capable of Taoist magic, whose supernatural deeds were recorded in various books including *Dongyahnwiji* (*Collection of Eastern Folktales*), *Daedonggimun* (*Strange Tales of the Great East*), and *Gyesandamsu* (*Miscellaneous Tales from Mt. Gyesan*). Oral narratives about Nam are transmitted around his hometown Uljin in North Gyeongsang Province and other regions as well.

In the oral tradition, Nam sa-go is depicted as a man of outstanding abilities but also of excessive greed, which makes him commit foolish acts. The most widespread among Nam Sa-go legends is the type summarized as “Nam Sa-go Moves His Father's Grave Nine Times.” Variations transmitted around Gyeongsang Province include the narratives “Nam Sa-go Uses Tricks to Steal from Cucumber Vender” and “Na Sa-go's Tricks Restrained by Yi Hwang.” Another widespread variation is the tale about how Nam Sa-go, as a young student, became a geomancy expert when he swallows a large pearl that belongs to a flower-like beauty who appears in front of him.

Records portray Nam as a man of supernatural power who predicted major events like the enthronement of King Seonjo and the factional conflict between Dongin (Easterners) and Seoin (Westerners); the revolt of Jeong Yeo-rip; the Japanese invasions in the year of Imjin (1592) and that the Japanese would not be able to cross the Han River when they invaded again in the year Jeongyu (1597). In the oral tradition, however, Nam's eccentricities result in failure in the end, due to his overconfidence, trickery or greed, a failure which reflects the common belief that human defiance against heavenly will always end in disaster.

Nam Yi

남이

This legend narrates the story of Nam Yi (1441-1468), a military official from early Joseon.

Nam Yi made a name for himself early in his government career, appointed as the Minister of War at the age of twenty-six, but was soon accused by Yu Gwa-jang of treason and then beheaded. Nam married the fourth daughter of high official Gwon Ram, the story of which makes up a major motif in the oral tradition. Nam Yi legends are documented in *Yeollyeosilgisul* (*Narratives by Yeollyeosil*) and *Daedonggimun* (*Strange Tales of the Great East*), and oral narratives are transmitted across the country.

Nam Yi was believed to be a resurrection of the haunted spirit of a giant centipede that imposed human sacrifice but was killed by a man of supernatural powers. As a result, Nam Yi possessed a courageous spirit and the power to see ghosts. When he was a little boy, playing games on the street, he noticed a young servant taking a small box wrapped in cloth, and saw a female ghost with a powdered face sitting atop the box. Nam, suspicious, followed the servant, who entered the house of Gwon Ram. A while later Nam heard weeping from the house, and was told that the master's young daughter had suddenly died. Nam Yi insisted that he could bring the daughter back to life if he were permitted to enter

the house, and it took a long time to persuade the family, but when he finally stepped inside, he saw the ghost with the powdered face sitting on the young daughter's chest, and it ran away at the sight of Nam Yi. With this incident, Gwon Ram made Nam his son-in-law. Nam Yi's military achievements include the conquest of Jeju Island and Duman (Tumen) River, for which he was awarded 700 *li* of land on the Yodong (Liaodong) peninsula. It is believed that Nam Yi's death was the result of a trick played by the powder-faced ghost or another ghost named the Queen of Jeju Island, changing a line from one of his poems, which read, "have yet to bring peace to this kingdom," to "have yet to conquer this kingdom," resulting in accusations of treason.

It is also believed that Nam Yi was affected by the spirit of the snake during his birth; that he was born from the body of a woman warrior; or that he became strong by stealing a drink from Janggunsu (Strongman Spring). Some variations of the legend include anecdotes of Nam Yi as a man of supernatural powers, chasing away a tiger that harassed villagers, an act that landed him his government post, and by using a talisman to stop frogs from croaking in the pond.

This legend can be categorized as a haunted spirit narrative, in which the birth, marriage, military achievement and death of the protagonist are all related to haunted ghosts. Nam Yi is worshipped



Shamanic rituals during the General Nam Yi Shrine Ceremony.
Yongsan-gu, Seoul, National Folk Museum of Korea



Confucian rituals during the General Nam Yi Shrine Ceremony.
Yongsan-gu, Seoul, National Folk Museum of Korea

as a village guardian god (*dangsin*), his deification signifying a means of accepting his tragic and undeserved death.

Nohilbudeuk and Daldalbakkak

노힐부득·달달박박

This legend narrates the story of two friends Nohilbudeuk and Daldalbakkak, who pledged to pursue religious devotion and with the help of an avatar of Avalokitesvara (Goddess of Mercy), attained Buddhahood. It is believed that they were based in Mt. Baekwol in Changwon, South Gyeongsang Province, and entered nirvana in the 8th year of King Seongdeok's reign in Silla (709). King Gyeongdeok, in his 14th year of reign (755), ordered the construction of the temple Namsa on Mt. Baekwol in their honor, which was completed in 764.

Nohilbudeuk and Daldalbakkak were monks who lived with their wife and children near Mt. Baekwol. They both aspired to attain Buddhahood and wander the Lotus Universe, when one day they had a dream of a golden arm caressing their foreheads, and the two together entered the mountains. Daldalbakkak made himself a room of wooden panels on the northern pass, pursuing discipline to become the Amitabha Buddha, and Nohilbudeuk made a room with a heap of stones on the eastern pass, pursuing discipline to become the Maitreya Buddha. Three years into their religious devotion, a beautiful woman around twenty years of age came to the northern hermitage and wrote, in the verse form *sa*, the line, "Have no fury and allow me a night's stay," a proposal Daldalbakkak rejected, asking her not to intrude this pure place. The woman then went to the southern hermitage and wrote, in the verse form *ge*, the line, "I aspire to guide the way," and asked for a place spend the night. Daldalbakkak, thinking that catering to the masses is also a form of religious pursuit, let her in and he sat

up all night reciting Buddhist chants. At daybreak, the woman asked him to arrange beddings, for she was about to deliver, then after giving birth, asked him to give her a bath. Nohilbudeuk suppressed his embarrassment and did what she asked, when the bath water suddenly turned golden. The woman instructed Nohilbudeuk to take a bath in the same tub and sit on a lotus pedestal, then disappeared, saying that she was the Avalokitesvara. Daldalbakkak went to see Nohilbudeuk, assuming that he had violated religious precepts, but Nohilbudeuk had in fact attained Buddhahood. Learning what had happened, Daldalbakkak asked Nohilbudeuk to guide him as well, and bathed in the same tub of water. Hence the two monks together attained Buddhahood, and after delivering a sermon to the people who had gathered upon hearing the news, they rode on a cloud and floated away. Years later, King Gyeongdeok constructed a temple and enshrined Amitabha Buddha and Maitreya Buddha, the statue of the latter left with a stain due to the lack of gilding liquid.

This legend is one of several "two saints" narratives from *Samgungnyusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*), in which two friends achieve their religious pledge. Nohilbudeuk and Daldalbakkak both presented their stances in regard to the woman's proposal, but Nohilbudeuk's decision to attend to the wish of the masses was viewed in higher regard, a serious reflection on the different attitudes in religious pursuit and the issue of enlightenment, set against the backdrop of the Avalokitesvara faith.

Ondal

온달

This legend narrates the story of Ondal, a historical figure during the reign of King Yeongyang (?-590) of Goguryeo.

The tale of Ondal is documented in *Samguksagi* (*History of the Three Kingdoms*), *Sinjeungdongguk-*

yeojiseungnam (*Augmented Survey of the Geography of the Eastern Kingdom (Revised and Expanded Edition)*), and *Myeongsimbogam* (*Exemplar of Pure Mind*).

The following is a summary of “The Tale of Ondal,” as recorded in *Samguksagi*:

In Goguryeo, during the reign of King Pyeongyang, lived a man of funny looks but a good heart named Ondal, who supported his mother by begging for food. People called him Ondal the Fool, and the king would joke to his little princess, who broke into tears at every chance, that he would marry her off to Ondal the Fool when she grew up. When it came time to find a husband for the princess, the king made plans to marry her into the Go family of the Sangbu Go clan. But the princess refused, and the king expelled her from the palace, upon which the princess went to Ondal’s house and persuaded Ondal and his blind mother that they should wed. The princess helped the household by selling the gold that she had brought, and taught Ondal how to select a good horse, then instructed him to buy a state-owned horse put on sale by the court, and raise it. Ondal entered a hunting competition on this horse and excelled, impressing the king. When King Wu of Later Zhou invaded, Ondal went to war and greatly distinguished himself, upon which the king accepted Ondal as his son-in-law and appointed him to the high post of *daehyeong*. Ondal died in the battle to restore land that had been occupied by Silla. At his funeral, they were not able to move his coffin, and when the princess caressed the coffin, offering comforting words, the coffin finally lifted.

The focus of the narrative varies by different version. In the *Samguksagi* version, the focus is on the princess’s independent will and Ondal’s courage and loyalty; in the *Sinjeungdonggukyeojiseungnam* version, Ondal’s courage and loyalty are emphasized; and in *Myeongsimbogam*, the tale is told as a story of the princess’ goodness and wifely duties, which leads to Ondal’s success in the world.

The oral tradition also offers many variations



A stone with which Ondal used to play *gonggi*.
Chungju-si, Chungcheongbuk-do (1997, Choi Un-sik)



Ondal Fortress.
Danyang-gun, Chungcheongbuk-do (2007, Simon)

of this tale. The version transmitted in the village of Mireuk in Chungju, North Chungcheong Province, which is Ondal’s hometown, tells of historic relics, including the stones that Ondal used to play *gonggi*, and the tomb of his beloved horse. Another version features the daughter of a state councillor who volunteers to wed Ondal the Fool and live in the country. She shows him the gold she brought to discuss ways to support the household, and Ondal tells her that there is plenty of these things at the wood charcoal kiln where he works, and indeed they found a large amount of gold at the kiln, which made them rich.

The legend of Ondal offers a criticism of patriarchal conventions and morals, shedding light on the life of a woman making independent choices, and provided the subject for the classical novel *Ondaljeon* (*Tale of Ondal*).

Origin of Five-Grains

오곡밥 유래

The legend “Ogokbap” narrates the origin of the custom of eating steamed five grains on Jeongwol-daeboreum (Grand Full Moon), the first full moon of the year.

Earliest record of this custom, which dates back to Silla, can be found in the section on “Sageumgap (The King Shoots an Arrow into the Zither Case)” in the chapter “Giyi (Records of Marvels)” of *Samgyungnyusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*). In the book, the dish is referred to as *chalbap*, meaning “sticky rice,” and the term *ogokbap*, or five-grain rice, is believed to have been coined in later years.

King Bicheo, the 21st ruler of Silla, also called King Soji, travelled to the pavilion Cheoncheonjeong in the year Mujin, his 10th year of reign (488). At the pavilion, a crow and a rat came by, cawing and squeaking, and the rat instructed that they should follow the crow. The king ordered a knight to follow, and the crow reached Pichon (eastern skirt of Mt. Namsan in today’s Gyeongju) in the south, where the knight saw two pigs fighting, and while he watched, he lost sight of the crow. He was wandering on the road when an old man emerged from a pond and handed him a letter. On the envelope it was written: “If you open it two people shall die, and if you do not open it, one person shall die.” The messenger took the letter to the king, who said, “One person dying is better than two.” The king’s divination official, however, said, “Two people refer to subjects, but one person refers to the king.” The king accepted the interpretation and opened the envelope, to find a message that read, “Shoot the zither case.” When the king returned to the palace, he shot the zither case, which killed the queen and a meditating monk inside the case, who were involved in an affair. Since this incident, each year across the kingdom on the first day of the pig, the first day of the rat, and the first day of the horse in the first lunar month, a custom of discretion is observed in all facets of life. And the



Five-grain rice.
National Folk Museum of Korea

fifteenth day of the first month was designated as Ogiil (Crow Commemoration Day), observed with a ritual offering sticky rice as sacrifice. The day is also called Daldo, which means concern and prohibition.

A bowl of steamed five grains is a traditional dish eaten on Grand Full Moon. The dish also signifies extra nutrition for the cold weather and anticipation of a good harvest.

Origin of Gosure

고수레 유래

This legend narrates the origins of the folk custom *gosure*, the practice of throwing into the air a small morsel of food prior to eating outdoors, while calling out, “*Gosure!*”

In ancient records including *Hwandangogi* (*Ancient Records of Hwandan*) and *Gyuwonsahwa* (*Historical Tales from Gyuwon*), *gosure* is depicted as a practice that originated from the custom of offering food, prior to eating, to Gosi, or He with Surname Go, who oversaw farming and cattle during the reign of Dangun, Korea’s progenitor. It is viewed to as an act of prayer for a good harvest, and thus interpreted as a narrative constructed to justify or



Practicing *gosure*.

Godeok-myeon, Pyongtaek-si, Gyeonggi-do (2007, Kim Hyo-gyeong)

explain the reasons for offering food sacrifice and the spell *gosure*.

Once upon a time in a village lived a man with the surname Go, who led a difficult life with no one to depend on. People working in the field felt sorry for him and shared their food. When Go grew old, he died without any descendents and was buried in the plains, after which people began throwing their first spoon of food into the air to offer Go's poor spirit, while shouting, "*Gossine!*"

The identity of the protagonist varies according to the many versions of this tale feature. One features a woman with the surname Go who was the mother of Doseon, a Buddhist monk from late Silla, and when she dies, a burial site that will ensure a continuous supply of food for her is sought out, and people begin offering her food before eating, which is related to the traditional geomantic belief in locating burial sites (*eumtaekpungsu*). Other variations include a man with the surname Go who dies after performing charitable acts, or a boatman who meets an underserved death. The act of offering food to the dead protagonist results in compensation, usually good fortune for the person who offers the food, including rain after a long period of drought, or the healing of abdominal pain.

The study of this legend has been concentrated

on the etymology of the term *gosure*, the origins of the narrative, and its significance as a tale related to geomantic belief, defining the term *gosure* as the act of performing the offering, as the spell, and the sacrifice, in this case the first spoon of the served food.

The legend of the origins of *gosure* is transmitted around the country.

Origin of Twelve Animal Signs

열두 띠 유래

This legend narrates the origins of *sibiji*, or the twelve animal signs of the traditional zodiac—rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog and pig—and how they were selected and arranged.

A long, long time ago, the king of the heavens wished to designate official positions to animals. After considering the selection criteria, he announced that positions would be given to animals arriving first at the celestial gate on the first day of the first lunar month. Upon hearing the news, each animal



Painting of the Sun, Moon, and twelve Zodiac Animals.
First half of 20th century, Onyang Folk Museum



Rat, the first of the twelve zodiac animals.
Tongdosa Seongbo Museum



Ox, the second of the twelve zodiac animals.
Tongdosa Seongbo Museum



Tiger, the third of the twelve zodiac animals.
Tongdosa Seongbo Museum



Rabbit, the fourth of the twelve zodiac animals.
Tongdosa Seongbo Museum



Dragon, the fifth of the twelve zodiac animals.
Tongdosa Seongbo Museum



Snake, the sixth of the twelve zodiac animals.
Tongdosa Seongbo Museum



Horse, the seventh of the twelve zodiac animals.
Tongdosa Seongbo Museum



Goat, the eighth of the twelve zodiac animals.
Tongdosa Seongbo Museum



Monkey, the ninth of the twelve zodiac animals.
Tongdosa Seongbo Museum



Rooster, the tenth of the twelve zodiac animals.
Tongdosa Seongbo Museum



Dog, the eleventh of the twelve zodiac animals.
Tongdosa Seongbo Museum



Pig, the last of the twelve zodiac animals.
Tongdosa Seongbo Museum

began training for speed. The ox worked the hardest, and the rat, deciding that, being the smallest and the weakest among the animals, it would be impossible for him to arrive early, attached his body to the ox's. When the day arrived, the animals raced to the gate, and the ox, thanks to his diligence, was in first place, but the rat jumped off the ox's body and passed through the gate first. The ox was angry, but it had no choice but to take second place.

In addition to this legend, there are many other narratives related to the zodiac animals, including those about their anatomy or the different traits they possess.

There are many other tales as well that explain the order of the zodiac animals, that it was based on the number of their toes, or their most active time of the day—for instance, the hour of the rat, which falls between 11 pm and 1 am, is when rats are most active, and the hour of the ox, between 1 and 3 am, is when oxen regurgitate in preparation of the morning's plowing.

The traditional Asian zodiac was at first based on constellations, to record the patterns of natural circulation, including constellatory movement and change of seasons. In mid-Han dynasty in China, the system came to be associated with the concepts of time and direction. The association with animals first appeared in *Lunheng* (Discussion and Examination), written by Wangchong of Later Han: “寅 is of the element wood and of the animal tiger; 戌 is of earth and of dog; 丑 and 未 are also of earth, the former the ox and the latter goat, which means dog, ox and goat submit to the tiger; 亥 is of water and is the pig; 巳 is of fire and snake; 子 is also of water and is the rat; 午 is also of fire and is the horse; water triumphs over fire, so the pig eats the snake, and water harms fire, so if the horse eats rat dung, it will suffer from abdominal swelling.” Thus the twelve zodiac animals came to be organized conceptually, with a Chinese character and animal designated to each sign.

All Koreans possess an animal sign, which is believed to determine one's fate, personality and

talent, and the legend of the signs' origins provides an insight into this culture.

Origins of Hahoe Village Ritual Mask Dance

하회별신굿탈놀이 유래

This legend narrates the origin of the mask dance staged as part of *byeolsingut*, the village tutelary spirit ritual observed in the village of Hahoe. The narrative is supported by the evidence of the incomplete form of the Imae mask. Hahoe mask dance is the oldest in the Korean mask dance tradition, dating back to mid-Goryeo and designated as Important Intangible Cultural Heritage No. 69. Nine of the masks used in the dance have been designated as National Treasure No. 121. Hahoe mask dance makes up the model for the mask dance tradition in Korean farming communities, an important reference in understanding the history of Korean traditional theater.

A long time ago lived a young man named Bachelor Heo, who one day had a dream in which he received a revelation from the village guardian deity to make masks. The following day, Heo performed his ablutions (*mogyokjaegye*) and hung a taboo rope (*geumjul*) around his house to keep out outsiders, before setting work on making his masks. In the



Imae mask (photo).
1939, National Folk Museum of Korea



Hahoe mask dance troupe.

1940s, Andong-si, Gyeongsangbuk-do, National Folk Museum of Korea

mean time, there was a maiden who was deeply in love with Heo, who waited for many days to see Heo. She became too curious about what Heo was up to and stole a peek into his room by making a hole in his paper screen window, breaking the taboo. Heo, who was in a near trance state, completely immersed in his work, died immediately, spewing up blood. The last mask that he was working on, for the character Imae, was left incomplete, its lower jaw missing. The maiden, tormented by anguish, died soon after him. To comfort her spirit, the villagers worshipped her as the village deity Seonghwangsin, holding an annual ritual in her honor.

In the village of Hahoe in Andong, North Gyeongsang Province, the village tutelary spirit ritual has been observed every ten years, or on years when an oracle is received, the ritual continuing from the first day to the fifteenth day of the first lunar month. Staged as part of the ritual festivities, the Hahoe mask dance comprises the entry segment (*mudongmadang*),

in which the village deity, who has been possessed, is carried in from the village shrine on the shoulder of a shaman; the lion segment (*jujimagang*), to chase away impurities and to invite good fortune; the butcher segment (*baekjeongmadang*), in which a cow is slaughtered; the granny segment (*halmimagang*), which captures humor in the tiring and difficult everyday life; the monk segment (*jungmadang*), featuring an apostate monk; the aristocrat-literati segment (*yangbanseonbimagang*), a satire on the hypocrisies of the ruling class; the wedding segment (*hollyemadang*) to appease the spirits of Bachelor Heo and Maiden Kim; the wedding night segment (*sinbangmadang*), which is staged as a symbolic simulation; and the street ritual *heotcheongeorigut*, officiated by a shaman.

The legend of the Hahoe mask dance provides an important organic link between mythology and ritual, enhancing the authenticity and sanctity of the ritual.



Gaksi from the Hahoe Village Ritual Mask Dance.
Andong-si, Gyeongsangbuk-do, Korea Tourism Organization



Bune from the Hahoe Village Ritual Mask Dance.
Andong-si, Gyeongsangbuk-do, Korea Tourism Organization



Seonbi, Choraengi and Yangban (from the left) from the Hahoe Village Ritual Mask Dance.
Andong-si, Gyeongsangbuk-do, Korea Tourism Organization

Pious Daughter Ji-eun

효녀 지은

The legend “Hyonyeojeun” narrates the story of a dutiful daughter named Ji-eun, who cared for her mother by selling herself as a serf.

Ji-eun was the daughter of a man named Yeon Gwon of Silla, who lost her father at a young age and cared for her mother alone, postponing marriage until past the age of thirty-two. Poverty pushed her to beg or to work as a day laborer, and in the end, she sold herself to a rich family as a serf, in return for ten sacks of rice. All day long she worked at the house, returning in the evening with dinner for her mother. Her mother learned of this days later, and the two wept in sadness, which moved the hearts of passers-by, which included the Hwarang warrior Hyojongnang. He sent them clothing and a hundred sacks of rice, and paid back the rich family so that Ji-eun could marry into a good family. Other elite warriors who heard the story also sent grain, and the story eventually reached the king, who sent five hundred sacks of grain and also presented her with a house. The king also ordered a sign to be hung in the village, which read, “Hyoyangbang (Village of Nurturing Filial Piety).”

This legend, along with the tale “Sonsunmaea (Son Sun Buries His Child),” in *Samgunngnyusa (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms)*, is a narrative from early Silla that exemplifies a typical Korean tale of filial piety. Poverty as a state of deprivation is the center of focus in this tale, reversed by the heroine’s self-sacrifice, which makes up the typical narrative structure of a filial piety tale.

Pipe That Calms Ten Thousand Billows

만파식적

The legend of Manpasikjeok narrates the story of a magical bamboo pipe, which King Sinmun of Silla

acquired from a dragon from the sea.

This legend belongs to the “gift narrative” type, about humans receiving a great treasure or divine being as gift. The type also includes the stories of Husband Yeono and Wife Seo, of Cheoyong, Boyang and Imok, and Geotaji.

Naval officer Bak Suk-cheong reported to King Sinmun that a small mountain was floating toward Gameun Temple. The court fortuneteller told the king that he was about to receive a great treasure from former kings Munmuwang and Kim Yu-sin who had now become the Dragon God (Yongsin) and Celestial God (Cheonsin), respectively. On the seventh day of that month, the king, as had been recommended by the fortuneteller, went to the coast and a messenger came back to report that the mountain had the shape of a turtle, with a bamboo stake on top, which split into two during the day and became one again at night. One the second night of the king’s stay at Gameun Temple, the two stakes became one as the earth and the sky rumbled with rain and gusts, remaining dark for seven days, and only on the sixteenth day of the month, the winds died down and the waves calmed. When the king approached the island on a boat, a dragon brought him a black stake of jade and said, “If you take this and make a pipe, the sounds of the pipe will bring peace to the all under the sky.” The king offered a donation of gold



Igyeon Pavillion of Gyeongju.
Gyeongju-si, Gyeongsangbuk-do, Cultural Heritage Administration

and jade, and the royal messenger broke the stake on the island and they left the sea. As soon as the king's procession reached the palace, the king ordered that the stake be made into a pipe, which was kept at Cheonjongobang (Storage of the Divine Buddha) in Wolseong. When this pipe was played, enemies retreated, diseases were cured, rain came in times of drought, floods ceased, winds died and waves calmed, which made the pipe a national treasure and gave it the name Manpasikjeok (Pipe That Calms Ten Thousand Billows).

This legend originates from an ancient state ritual and is transmitted in recitations staged as part of the shamanic ritual *yongsingut* (dragon god ritual). From a religious perspective, the ritual is associated with Buddhism as state-protecting faith (*hogukbulgyo*), a uniquely Korean belief, combined with the worship of the dragon as an indigenous state protector. Politically, the legend depicts the events that surrounded domestic issues during King Sinmun's reign and the establishment of the authenticity of Silla's Kim dynasty. At the same time, the narrative reflects a Confucian political ideology of emphasizing ritual and music, and the development of new musical styles during Silla.

In conclusion, the legend of Manpasikjeok depicts the mystical experience of King Sinmun's acquirement of a divine token, which can be interpreted as a cultural symbol that signifies Silla's religion, ideology, politics and music following the unification of the Three Kingdoms. The legend thereby contributes to forming a comprehensive understanding of life in mid-Silla, during the reigns of King Munmu, King Sinmun and King Hyoso.

Prince Hodong and Princess Nangnang

호동왕자 낙랑공주

The legend of Hodongwangja and Nangnanggongju narrates the tragic love story between Prince Hodong

and Princess Nangnang.

When Prince Hodong, son of Goguryeo's third king Daemosinwang, was visiting the state of Okjeo, he met King Choeri of Nangnang (Lolang), who took him to Nangnang and made him his son-in-law. After Hodong returned to Goguryeo, he sent a secret messenger to the princess, telling her that if she destroys the drum in the armory, he would accept her courteously, but if not, they would have to separate. The drum was an ancient treasure in Nangnang, which beat on its own in times of enemy invasion, and Hodong wanted it destroyed. The princess took a sword to the armory and destroyed the drum, after which she alerted Hodong, who proposed to the king to invade Nangnang. Nangnang's king learned only after Goguryeo troops had reached this fortress that the drum had been destroyed, and surrendered after killing his daughter. King Daemosin's second queen was very beautiful and loved greatly by the king, and Hodong was her son. The first queen, worried that the king might ignore the line of descent and make Hodong the crown prince, lied to the king that Hodong was disrespectful to her and that he was suspected of malicious conduct. Hodong, instead of explaining himself, threw his body on his sword, killing himself.

The account according to the volume "Goguryeo-bongi (Record of Goguryeo)" of *Samguksagi* (*History of the Three Kingdoms*), goes that King Daemosin sought marriage between Hodong and the princess as part of his plan to defeat Nangnang, and sent his daughter-in-law back to Nangnang to destroy the drum.

This legend dramatized the conflict between Goguryeo and the Han people, represented by Nangnang by borrowing the motif of the battle over a divine instrument.

Along with the tale of Crown Prince Haemyeong of Goguryeo, this story is one of the very few narratives that allow a glimpse into the transition from mythology to legends and folk narratives.

Queen Seondeok

선덕여왕

The legend “Seondeogyewang” narrates the story of Deok-man, who, possessing outstanding traits as a woman and a ruler, became the 27th monarch and the first queen of Silla. Tales related to Queen Seondeok can be divided into two types: The peony tale, which depicts the qualities that made her queen; and the Jigwi tale, depicting her outstanding womanly traits. The former is recorded in the chapter “Gii (Records of Marvels)” in *Samgungnyusa*, while the latter, in varying versions, in books including *Taepyeongtongjae* (*Comprehensive Collection of Taepyeong*).

Deok-man, daughter of King Jinpyeong, was the 27th ruler of Silla, given the title Seondeogyewang (Queen Seondeok) upon taking the throne in the year Imjin, the 6th year of the Zhenguan (632) era, and ruling for sixteen years. During her reign, she demonstrated her abilities as ruler on three occasions: First, when Emperor Taizong of Tang China sent a painting of three peony blossoms, in red, violet and white, along with three *doe* of seeds, Queen Seondeok realized beforehand that the flower did not carry a scent; second, when a mass of frogs croaked for three days at the pond Ongmunji (Jade Gate Pond) on the grounds of Yeongmyo Temple, the queen deduced that troops were hiding in Yeongeungok (Female Roots Valley) in the southern outskirts, and attacked, killing them all; and third, she was able to predict the exact date and year of her own death, and ordered that she be buried in the Buddhist heaven of Doricheon (Trāyastriṃśa). These anecdotes form the peony tale type narratives. The Jigwi tales feature a man of Silla named Jigwi, who is enchanted by Queen Seondeok’s beauty and longs for the day when he will finally meet her. Upon hearing about Jigwi, the queen goes to Yeongmyo Temple to meet him, but Jigwi falls into a deep sleep under the temple’s pagoda and misses her. Jigwi becomes aggrieved



Records about Queen Seondeok in *Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*. Iryeon, 1512, Kyujanggak, Seoul National University

by, and angry about, this and sets himself on fire, turning into a fire ghost (*hwagwi*).

The Queen Seondeok legends reflect two different desires related to the kingdom’s first queen—the expectations that people of the time had for her as a queen, and those for her as a woman. The fact that there are myriad variations of the tales about her abilities as a ruler reflects the complicated view at the time of a queen’s position and ability.

The legends focus on the queen’s abilities to interpret signs, which brings light to the communication modes at the time, of signs and symbols, a trait that is observed more clearly than other narratives included in *Samgungnyusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*).

Red-for-Hundred-Days

백일홍

This legend narrates the story of the origin of the crape myrtle tree—called *baegilhong* in Korean, meaning, “red for a hundred days”—an incarnation of the spirit of a maiden who died waiting for a man who set out to slay the monster serpent *imugi*.

The narrative comprises motifs of human sacrifice, monster-slaying and maiden-rescue by a

male hero, which are also found in “Tale of Geotaji,” included in *Samgungnyusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*).

A long time ago, in a seaside village, it was the custom to offer a maiden as sacrifice to the monster serpent *imugi* that lived in the sea. One day a hero appeared and offered to take the place of a maiden who was about to be sent to sea as sacrifice, to confront the monster and slay it. As he set out to sea, the hero told the maiden that he succeeded, he would return with a white banner, and with a red banner if he failed. One hundred days later, the hero’s ship returned with a red banner and thinking that the hero was dead, the maiden stabbed herself and died. But the banner was indeed white, stained red with the monster’s blood when it was slain. From the maiden’s tomb bloomed red flowers, the maiden’s devoted hundred-day prayer for the hero’s return materialized as beautiful blossoms. The flowers stayed in bloom for a hundred days and came to be called *baegilhong*, or red-for-hundred-days.

The plot of the narrative combines several folk tale motifs, including human sacrifice, monster-slaying by a male hero, mistaken colors, and flower transformation. There are few instances in Korean folk literature of the rescued maiden sacrifice ending in death, but this legend emphasizes the love and devotion of the heroine, embodied by the crape myrtle blossoms, which, unlike other flowers, stay in bloom for a long time in the course of summer.

Reflection Pond

영지

The legend of Yeongji (Reflection Pond) narrates the story of Asadal, a mason who built the pagoda Seokgatap, and his wife Asanyeo.

The story takes place against the backdrop of



Seokga Pagoda and Dabo Pagoda

Gyeongju-si, Gyeongsangbuk-do, Korea Tourism Organization

the construction of the grand temple Bulguksa at the foot of Mt. Toham during the reign of Silla’s King Gyeongdeok (742-765), for which Councillor Kim Dae-seong brought together all the outstanding masons and craftsmen.

Mason Asadal was brought from Tang China to participate in the building of the stone pagodas on the grounds of Bulguk Temple. Dabo Pagoda was completed first and Asadal was busy day and night, working on Seokga Pagoda. When many years passed without any news from Asadal, his wife Asanyeo came to Seorabeol in search of her husband. But she was not able to meet him, since contact with women was taboo, believed to bring impurities. Asanyeo had no choice but to sit by the pond and gaze into the water day and night, waiting for her husband. Prohibited from seeing her husband despite the proximity, Asanyeo in the end saw a phantom image of the stone pagoda in the pond and jumped in, killing herself. Hence Seokga Pagoda came to be called Muyeongtap (No Reflection Pagoda) and Dabo Pagoda Yuyeongtap (Reflection Pagoda), and the pond where Asanyeo drowned was named Yeongji (Reflection Pond).

Among several different documented versions of the legend, the one included in *Gogeumchanggi* (*Record of Ancient Construction*), is the most specific and concrete and thereby considered the closest to being the prototype.

Rice-Pouring Rock

쌀 나오는 바위

The legend “Ssalnaoneunbawi” narrates the story of a rock or cave near a temple that pours out rice and the greedy monk who ruins it. The tale is recorded in *Donggukyeojiseungnam* (*Augmented Survey of the Geography of the Eastern Kingdom*) and transmitted orally around the country.

A long time ago, there lived in a temple a group of meditating monks and a senior monk. Near the temple was a rock that had a hole, from which poured out rice at each meal time, in the exact amount need to feed the number of people at the temple, so the monks were able to pursue their religious discipline without distraction. One day there was a monk visiting the temple, and there was not

enough food for him, so he thought more rice would pour out of the rock if he made the hole bigger. He dug into the hole with a wooden poker, and out of the hole came out blood instead of more rice. To this day, only water pours out of the hole.

The rice pouring out of the hole provided basic support for the monks to focus exclusively on their religious discipline. The visiting monk acted on greed instead of abandoning his worldly desires, for which he was punished. The punishment takes the form of destruction of nature, which could be viewed as heavenly penalty, reflecting a strong sense of morality.

Rich Man Pond

장자못

The legend of Jangjamot (Rich Man Pond) narrates the story of a rich man whose house was flooded in water and turned into a pond as a result of his ill treatment of a monk seeking donation, and of the rich man’s daughter-in-law, who turned into a rock for breaking a taboo imposed by the monk.

Rich Man Hwang of Gangwon Province, whose family for three generations owned enough land to harvest ten thousand sacks of rice each year, was known for his ill-treatment of monks that came by seeking donation, for example hanging the monk on his gate with a knapsack full of cow dung on his back. When the temple’s chief priest came in person to request a donation, Hwang treated him even worse for his advanced age. Hwang’s daughter-in-law, feeling sympathy for the elderly monk, sought forgiveness on his father-in-law’s behalf, offering a secret donation of rice. The chief priest told her if she wanted to live she should follow him, and never look back. The daughter-in-law set out after him, carrying her baby on her back, but when she heard a sudden roar of thunder, she looked back, which turned her into a rock right where she was



Rice Rock of the village of Jeodong.

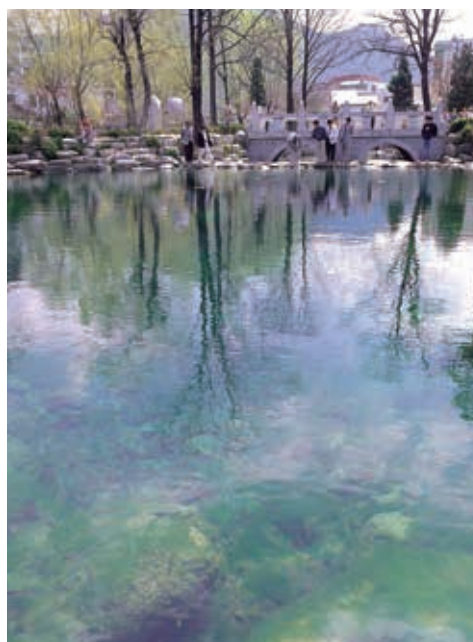
Buyeo-gun, Chungcheongnam-do, 2008, Buyeo District Office



Statue of mother and son at Jangja Pond.
Taebaek-si, Gangwon-do, 2011, National Folk Museum of Korea

standing. The rock still stands there today and the site of Hwang's house has now become Hwangji (Hwang Pond), the crossbeam of the drowned house still visible.

This legend is transmitted around the country, in association with many ponds including Hwangji on Mt. Taebaek in Gangwon Province; the reservoir Uirimji in Jecheon, North Chungcheong Province; and Gyeongpo Lake in Gangneung, Gangwon Province. In the version about the reservoir Uirimji, the daughter-in-law who follows the monk, is pregnant and survives in the end. In the case of the story of Gyeongpo Lake, the kind-hearted donor is not the rich man's daughter-in-law but his servant. In other variations, as in the versions from the village Gwirae or from Uiryeong, the daughter-in-law who turned into a rock is worshipped as the village guardian deity Seonang or as *gijaseok* (conception prayer rock). In some versions, when the rich man's house is flooded, the rich man turns into a serpent and lives in the pond, while in others, the part about the daughter-in-law is omitted. There is also a variation that uses traditional geomancy



Hwangi Pond.
Taebaek-si, Gangwon-do, Korea Tourism Organization

(*pungsujiri*) as a means of punishment, in which the monk or servants harassed by the miserly rich man lures him with a scheme to make him even richer, and persuades him to cut off an auspicious "lair (*hyeol*)," the source of all his fortune, on the grounds of his house, which leads him to collapse.

The punishment of the rich man by flooding his house suggests that the elderly monk is a deity or a near-deity, while the rich man and his daughter-in-law, while representing evil and good, are of the human world.

There are myriad different interpretations about the tragic end brought to the daughter-in-law despite her goodwill. This fossilization of the daughter-in-law seems to demand a reading of the tale that goes beyond the simple "punishing evil and rewarding virtue (*gwonseonjingak*)" theme. Her breach of taboo is a simple turning of the head, a very natural and human act, which might be interpreted as the limitations of human mortality despite the pursuit of transcendence, or as human skepticism of or resistance against human destiny as devised by the gods. Another interpretation is that the taboo imposed

by the elderly monk is a divine revelation that opens a path for humans to cross over from this world to another, or from past life to a future life, which means that the daughter-in-law's breaking of taboo and her fossilization can be seen as the consequence of her failure based on being trapped by her past life.

This narrative confirms the universality of the Korean folk tradition, its many rich variations reflecting the diverse layers of recognition about the transcendental order and the problems of human existence as experienced by common people.

Rock of Fallen Flowers

낙화암

This legend of Nakhwaam (Rock of Fallen Flowers) tells the story of concubines and court ladies during the reign of Baekje's King Uija, who jumped off the rock when Silla-Tang allied forces conquered the Baekje capital.

When Baekje's capital Buyeo had fallen to Silla and Tang China's allied forces, King Uija and his concubines and court ladies fled the fortress, reaching the rock Nakhwaam. The women threw themselves off the rock, saying, "We would rather take our own lives than die in the hands of others." Thus the rock came to be called Nakhwaam, or Rock of Fallen Flowers.



Rock of Fallen Flowers.

Buyeo-gun, Chungcheongnam-do, Cultural Heritage Administration

The legend of Nakhwaam, although based on a historical event, is transmitted in a wide range of variations, including tales like "Three Thousand Court Ladies Throw Themselves into Baengma River," many of which include motifs about King Uija's political mistakes, including the expulsion of loyal subjects, which lead to the fall of Baekje and the sacrifice of the women. It is notable that this variation features three thousand court ladies, a detail not mentioned in *Samgungnyusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*), in which the legend of Nakhwaam is recorded, which is assumed to be an exaggeration based on King Uija's debauchery toward the end of his reign.

Samyeongdang

사명당

This legend narrates the life of revered Buddhist monk Samyeongdang, who fought against the invading Japanese in late 16th century by leading a troop of monk warriors, and later went to Japan as an envoy and overcame Japan's schemes with wisdom and divine powers.

Two types of narratives are transmitted regarding Samyeongdang's entry into Buddhist priesthood:

The first type portrays Samyeongdang as a young man from a rich family, who married and had a son, then following his wife's death, remarried and married off his son, but his son was beheaded on his wedding night. The daughter-in-law was accused of the crime, and in order to clear herself of the false charge, she disguised herself as a vendor of miscellaneous goods and set out to find the murderer. After three years, she finally discovered that a slave had committed the crime on orders from the second wife. The daughter-in-law resorted this to Samyeongdang and when her husband's head was found, she was cleared of the charges. Samyeongdang gave out all his servant documents

and farming land deeds to his servants, then locked up his second wife and her children in a room and after setting the room on fire, left home to enter priesthood.

The second type begins when Eung-gyu (Samyeongdang's childhood name) who lost his parents at a young age was living with his sister Chae-un, and at age thirteen passed the preliminary stage of the state examinations, organized by the magistrate of Miryang. Eung-gyu at the time was engaged to Hyeon-ok, daughter of Hwang Yecheon, but the magistrate's daughter Dong-ok (Arang) was lovesick over Eung-gyu. When Dong-ok, distressed, refused to eat or drink, Eung-gyu went to comfort her, Dong-ok requested that they meet the following day in the bamboo grove behind the government building, a plan which was overheard by the magistrate's servant. In the bamboo grove, the servant attempted to rape Dong-ok, who was awaiting Eung-gyu, but when he failed, he killed her and left her body in the bamboo forest. Eung-gyu, in the mean time, was living in a hut by his father's grave as part of the three-year mourning ritual, when a monk came to visit him and handing him a large bead from his rosary and two books of Buddhist scripture, told Eung-gyu to come see him at the temple gate when his mourning was over. When Eung-gyu began to read the scriptures, the bead in his hand, he no longer wanted to continue the mourning and set out for Jikji Temple, leaving a note for his sister, then stopped by Hyeon-ok's house on Mt. Jeonbul, where he rested for a day. Then he headed to Jikji Temple, where he became a disciple of Revered Monk Sinmuk, earning the Buddhist name Yujeong. He soon passed the state examination to enter priesthood, and his sister and Hyeon-ok became Buddhist nuns at Tongdo Temple, but Eung-gyu's daughter Bo-bae from Mt. Jeonbul came to see him at Jikji Temple, for which Eung-gyu was expelled from priesthood. Bo-bae soon regretted what she had done and after confessing to Sinmuk, entered priesthood. The three nuns were sent by

Sinmuk to follow the nun Sinwol to an island on the southern coast to learn military tactics from Haesangsaho, or the Four Taoist Hermits of the Sea. When the Japanese invaded in the year Imjin (1592), Chae-un, Hyeon-ok and Bo-bae respectively serve Admirals Yi Sun-sin, Gwon Yul and Hong Ui as deputies, assisting in leading their battles to victory.

The first narrative type was transmitted by those who read the letterpress edition of *Imjiwaeran Samyeongdangjeon* (Biography of Samyeongdang and Japanese Invasions in Year Imjin, author unknown), which resulted in myriad variations of the motifs of "searching for husband's head" and "clearing of the bride's charges": In one, Samyeongdang learns where the head is from a fortuneteller; in another, a lamp suddenly appears while the bride is locked in her in-laws and leads



Portrait of Buddhist monk Samyeongdang.
Late Joseon, Tongdo Temple Seongbo Museum

her to the husband's head; or the bride is deserted by her husband on their wedding night because her undershirt is missing, so she builds a hut in the mountain and holds a ritual for the celestial god, and a shaman finds her undershirt and she is cleared of charges that she had an affair; and there is also a version that features Nobleman Im, who is away while his second wife beheads the two sons from Im's previous marriage and places the heads inside a taffy jar, but is discovered by Im.

The second type was transmitted orally by readers of the 1957 historical novel *Great Monk Samyeong*. Following the Japanese invasions of year Imjin, Samyeongdang is appointed by the king as envoy to Japan. When he arrived in Japan, the Japanese carried out many schemes to damage Samyeongdang, but he defended himself against them with wisdom and divine powers, and in the end returns to Joseon with a written surrender from the Japanese king. This narrative was influenced by anecdotes from the "Samyeongdang" chapter of the historical novel *Imjinnok (The Record of the Black Dragon Year)*, written by an unknown author between late 18th century and mid-19th century. One of these stories is "Riding the Steel Fire Horse," in which Samyeongdang makes the Japanese islands sink by bowing four times toward Joseon and chanting a secret spell, which brings a heavy downpour. This makes the Japanese king realize that Samyeongdang is the divine Buddha himself, and writes a letter of surrender, to which Samyeongdang responds by demanding that for ten years Japan sends to Joseon three hundred sheets of human skin taken from maidens and three *mal* of young boys' testicles each year.

Other legends about Samyeongdang includes stories of the Great Monk Samyeong Commemoration Stele, which sweats when the nation is in crisis; and of a cane that Samyeongdang planted in Buseok Temple in Yeongju, North Gyeongsang Province, which grew into a tree and still stands on the temple grounds today.

Second Senior Rank Pine of Mt. Songni in Boeun

보은속리정이품송

The legend of Jeongipumsong (Second Senior Rank Pine), which stands in the path to the temple Beopjusa on Mt. Songni, narrates the story related to the tree and King Sejo of Joseon.

The story is based on the king's visit to the village of Hoein and Mt. Songni in Boeun, North Chungcheong Province, in the second lunar month of the 10th year of his reign (1464). The anecdote about the pine tree, however, is not found in historical records and the oral transmission is based on the imagination and historical perspective of the local residents.

King Sejo, suffering from severe skin and eye disease symptoms, was seeking recuperation in noted scenic places around the country. He was headed to Beopju Temple on Mt. Songni and as the king's party arrived at the village of Sangpan via the mountain pass Maltijae, they came across a huge pine tree by the road, shaped like an umbrella, upon which King Sejo said, "It is blocking my palanquin." At this, the tree's branches, which were hung low, rose up toward the sky, making way for the king. In appreciation, Sejo bestowed on the tree a second



Second Senior Rank Pine of Mt. Songni in Boeun.
Boeun-gun, Chungcheongbuk-do, Korea Tourism Organization

senior government rank.

In some variations, the pine tree lifts the branches on the king's way to Beopju Temple, and when he heads to his royal villa, the tree provides shelter for the king from a rain shower. Another tale about a pine tree's shape is transmitted in a different region. The legend of the "Sagging Tree on Mt. Dong in Cheongdo" tells the story of a tree that lowered its branches when a minister passed by, as if to offer a bow, and its branches stayed that way since.

The legend of Jeongipumsong emphasizes loyalty for the king and the government through the pine tree as a symbol of unchanging fidelity, against the historical backdrop of King Sejo's illness and the instability of his reign. The versions of the king seeking shelter from the rain under the tree also reflect the local residents' historical perspective of the time.

Seodong

서동

This legend narrates the story of Seodong, who succeeds in marrying Silla's Princess Seonhwa, the daughter of King Jinpyeong (579-632) by means of a song, and takes the throne as King Mu (600-641) of Baekje, who went on to found Mireuk Temple.

In the kingdom of Buyeo, by a pond south of the capital, there was a widower who had intimate relation with the dragon and gave birth to a son named Seodong, meaning "yam child," since he made a living by digging yams. Seodong heard rumors about the beauty of Princess Seonhwa, the third daughter of Silla's King Jinpyeong, and headed to Seorabeol (Gyeongju), where he befriended children by handing out his yams. He taught the children the song "Seodongyo," which spread quickly across Gyeongju and reached the king, who was persuaded by his subjects to send the princess away on exile. While on the road, she was joined by Seodong, who



Gold plate with inscription removed from the Mireuk Temple stone pagoda. Mireuk Temple, Iksan-si, Jeollabuk-do, National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage

had followed her, and the two engaged in intimate relations, which made her realize that the events in the song had come true. They went together to Baekje, where Princess Seonhwa presented to Seodong gold that her mother had given her when she left the palace, and Seodong said that there was plenty of gold on the mountain where he dug yams. With the help of the supernatural powers of Monk Jimyeong of Saja Temple on Mt. Yonghwa, all the gold was transported overnight to the royal palace in Silla, which earned Seodong trust from the king, and eventually landed him the post of King Mu of Baekje. One day King Mu and his queen were on their way to Mt. Yonghwa to Saja Temple, and coming upon a huge pond at the foot of the mountain, there appeared the Mireuk (Future Buddha Maitreya) Triad. The queen asked that a temple be built there, and the king proceeded to build Mireuksa, with help from workers sent by King Jinpyeong.

Some accounts state that Seodong took the throne as King Muryeong, or King Dongseong. Revolving around the romantic love story of Seodong and Princess Seonhwa, the legend also highlights the heroine's ambitious spirit and competence. The veracity of the legend as the tale of Mireuk Temple's origins has been challenged by sarira records found in the stone pagoda on the temple's site, stating that the temple was built on the wishes of the queen, who was the daughter of Baekje's minister

Sataekjeokdeok.

Historically, the legend is related to the policy to form an alliance between Silla and Baekje through marriage. It can also be read as a love story between a man and a woman of different nationalities and social status, and the legend is widely known for its association with the *hyangga*, a Silla verse form, titled “Seodongyo (Song of Seodong).”

The folk tale “Owner of My Own Fortune” is based on a similar plot.

Serpent Cave of Gimnyeong

김녕사굴

The legend “Gimnyeongsagul,” about the cave Sagul in the village of East Gimnyeong in Gujwa, Jeju Island, narrates the story of Seo Ryeon, a judge during the reign of King Jungjong of Joseon, who slayed a giant serpent that lived in the cave.

To the east of Gimnyeong Village on Jeju Island was a huge cave in which lived a giant snake and the cave was called Baemgul, or Sagul, meaning Serpent Cave. Each year, the villagers held a grand ritual (*keungut*), offering a maiden to the snake as a sacrifice. If they did not stage the ritual, the serpent ruined all the grain fields, resulting in a famine. No noble family was willing to give up their daughter, however, and it was always a commoner’s daughter that was sacrificed, and it became impossible for commoners’ daughters to get married. Around this time a judge named Seo Ryeon was appointed to Jeju. When he heard about the serpent cave, Judge Seo was infuriated, calling the practice outrageous. He ordered a ritual to be held, offering drinks, rice cake (*ttoeok*) and a maiden as sacrifice, and he set out himself for the cave, accompanied by soldiers. The ritual continued for a long time and finally a gargantuan serpent came out of the cave and after finishing the drinks and the rice cake, tried to eat up the maiden, when Judge Seo and his men attacked

the snake with spears and swords and killed it. Witnessing this, the officiating shaman warned him, “Hurry and head to Jeju Fortress on your horse. No matter what happens, you must not look back.” Judge Seo whipped his horse and arrived safely outside the eastern gate of the fortress, when one of his soldiers said, “It is raining blood behind your, sir.” At this, Seo responded, “How on earth can it rain blood?” and looked back without thinking, and immediately he fell dead. The dead serpent’s blood had flowed up to the sky and turned into rain, in order to come after Seo.

A variation of this legend features a judge named Yi Sam-man, who kills the snake and upon arriving back at the courtyard of his office, turns back in relief, which kills him immediately. This incident resulted in the custom of pasting sheets of paper written with the Chinese characters 李三萬 (Yi Sam-man) to scare away snakes in spots where snakes are often observed, which was observed each year on the Day of the Snake on the first lunar month.

The legend of the Serpent Cave of Gimnyeong is transmitted as part of Yongnori (Dragon Segment), which reenacts the hunt for the giant serpent, in the grand rituals (*keungut*) of Jeju Island.



Serpent Cave of Gimnyeong.
Jeju-si, Jeju-do, Cultural Heritage Administration

Seven Stars of the Northern Dipper

북두칠성

The legend of Bukduchilseong narrates the origin of the constellation Seven Stars of the Northern Dipper (Ursa Major).

A widow was leading a difficult life raising seven sons, returning home in the dewy hours of early morning. Her seven sons learned that their mother returned each morning after visiting a widower and decided that they would go to the stream that their mother had to cross to come home each morning and be her bridge by crouching in the stream. As their mother crossed the stream, she prayed that the person responsible for building this bridge would become the Seven Stars (Chilseong). The mother and the widower began living together and the widower, in an attempt to get rid of the seven sons, feigns a fatal illness. A fortuneteller claimed that he would be healed only by eating the livers of the seven sons, who decided that they would sacrifice themselves and headed for the mountain. But in the mountain, a beast gave them livers, which saved the lives of the seven sons, and the later became the Seven Stars.

The first half of this legend is borrowed from the narrative of “Bridge of Filial Piety/Impiety,” and the second half is a variation of the shamanic myth “Chilseongpuri (Myth of Seven Stars),” the character of the scheming second wife changed into that of the stepfather. The narrative dramatizes the process of those providing help to deprived humans transforming into a constellation, which, by retaining the virtues from its human life, is confirmed as a constellation that is needed in the human world. It can also be interpreted that existing oral narratives about Eunhasu (Silver River; Milky Way) and Bukduchilseong merged with the story about the seven bridges in the stream to make up this tradition; or that the rain rites associated with Chilseong (Seven Stars) worship was transmitted to the Buddhist Chilseok rites or rainmaking folk rituals, with only



Shamanic painting of Bukduchilseong.
Joseon, Sun Moon University Museum

traces left in the shamanic and oral tradition. The fate of the stepfather is left unmentioned, the narrative highlighting the seven devoted sons' transformation into Seven Stars, which leads to the interpretation that building a bridge for the widow mother is an act of filial piety, while the same act can be impious to their late father, which gave the bridge the name, Bridge of Filial Piety/Impiety.

In Korean folklore, Chilseong (Seven Stars) still serves as the object of worship and rainmaking rituals on the Buddhist holiday Chilseok (Seventh Day of the Seventh Lunar Month), which is related less with the legend but more with its surrounding constellations: In the summer sky, Gyeonuseong (Cowherd Star; Altair) and Jiknyeoseong (Weaver Girl Star; Vega) are located in diagonally opposite positions, with Eunhasu (Silver River; Milky Way) between them, in the center, and also between them is Namduyukseong

(Six Stars of the Southern Dipper; Sagittarius), with Bukdunchilseong (Seven Stars of the Northern Dipper; Ursa Major) to the north of the Weaver Girl Star. Pilsu, the stars that make up the horns of the constellation Taurus, is located opposite Bukdunchilseong on the other side of the Silver River. Korean legends say that the Six Stars of the Southern Dipper and the Seven Stars of the Northern Dipper were used by Gyeonu and children to scoop up the water from the Silver River, which is associated with rain rites. It is possible to speculate that separately developed narratives about the Seven Stars were combined with the Gyeonu (Cowherd) and Jiknyeo (Weaver Girl) legend to form the concept behind the folkloric rain rite, which was further developed with the spread of the Buddhist Chilseok rituals.

Sin Dol-seok

신돌석

This legend tells the story of Sin Dol-seok, a leader of the militia Uibyeong (Righteous Army) that fought against the Japanese in the final years of the Joseon kingdom. It is a modern retelling of the narrative structures borrowed from the ancient general legends and the “Agijangsu (Mighty Baby)” tale.

Sin Dol-seok was from Bokdaemi, a small village by a small stream, populated by lowly commoners. Since his youth, Dol-seok trained on Mt. Gorae to become a warrior with special powers (*jangsu*). On Mt. Gorae was Jipdongbawi, a large rock shaped like a room, and Dol-seok came and prayed here by candlelight. During this time, he came across in the mountain a divine book from the heavens, and studied it, leaving the house each night to recite spells. Dol-seok’s father noticed this and believing that having a son with divine powers is destructive for the family, burned the book, which ended Dol-seok’s training before it moved beyond the stage of flying. Dol-seok was able to climb the

mountain three or four times a day, and he was fast as lightning. When he came down the mountain after chopping wood, he built his strength and skills by jumping over tall rocks or trees carrying the lumber on his back, and hauling rocks that weighed more than what four men were able to lift. Upon completing his training, he began to take care of whatever troubled the village. One day as he was descending the mountain, a tiger blocked his way. The tiger had been attacking and killing the villagers and Sin hollered at it, glaring, which scared off the tiger. Another time, when Sin was climbing a steep mountain pass and bandits appeared, threatening to rob him, and Sin gave them his name, it made them run away, calling him, “General.” The year he turned thirty-one years old, Sin drank hard liquor given to him by his mother’s brother, who was after Sin’s money, and was killed with an ax.

Sin Dol-seok legends comprise four sections: The birth section covers Sin’s birth, which simply offers background, without divine signs or premonitions, which reflects the modern mindset, in which the public awaits heroes but no longer accepts otherworldly heroes born with supernatural signs; the training section depicts the venue and method of Dol-seok’s skill development, in which the mountain signifies a non-human territory beyond the realm of natural geography, and the cave a space of rebirth; and finally, the death section accurately reflects historical fact.

This narrative shares many similarities with the “Agijangsu (Mighty Baby)” tale, including that between the Might Baby’s tragic death by his parents who crush him with a rock, and Dol-seok’s death by his kin, subjects or villagers.

The tale depicts Sin Dol-seok as a man of outstanding capacities who failed and met a tragic death before he could fully exercise his abilities. In the oral tradition, Sin’s failure is blamed on the fact that he was born at the wrong time, when his abilities could not be appreciated, which is the basic sentiment that underlies the legend today.

Sin Rip

신립

This legend narrates the story of Sin Rip (1546-1592), a military official from mid-Joseon, who died in Chungju fighting against Japanese invasion in the year Imjin (1592) as Special Royal Emissary to the Three Coastal Provinces (Samdodosunbyeonsa). The tale revolves around supernatural events in Sin's life and his battle at Chungju, and written versions are recorded in *Eouyadam* (*Eou's Unofficial Histories*), *Daedongyaseung* (*Collection of Tales from the Great Eastern Kingdom*) and other books.

The legend of Sin Rip can be summarized into six stages: birth—developmental years—marriage—supernatural experiences—war—death.

It is believed that Sin Rip was the son of a eunuch, born to a courtesan. Sin was begging on the streets when the Confucian scholar Yi I noticed him

and took him under his wing and Sin developed supernatural powers, taming tigers and seeing ghosts. General Gwon Yul appears in the tale as someone capable of face reading and recognizing in Sin the potential to become a great commander, makes him his son-in-law.

Supernatural experiences make up the largest part of the Sin Rip legend. In one of them, Sin gets lost while hunting in the mountains and comes across a house, inside which he finds a maiden dressed for mourning. She says that the son of a servant had killed her family and all the servants, leaving her with the choice of becoming the servant's wife or death. Overcome with righteousness, Sin stays the night in an attempt to kill the servant, who, upon showing up in the middle of the night, was shot by Sin with an arrow. The maiden pleads with Sin to take her with him, since she had nowhere to go. Sin answers that he could not, since he is a married man, and the rejected maiden sets fire to her house the following day and kills herself. When Sin reports this to his father-in-law, he admonishes Sin, saying that it was not the right thing to do. It is believed that the maiden's haunted spirit (*wonhon*) brought about a defeat by the invading Japanese. Sin was assigned by his father-in-law General Gwon Ryul to serve as military official and when Japan launched its attack, was appointed as Special Royal Emissary to the Three Coastal Provinces and set up his troops at the mountain pass Joryeong. That night, the maiden appeared in Sin's dream and said, "Commander, why have you lined up your troops deep in the wild mountains? I believe it would befit your courageous spirit to lure the enemy to the wide Chungju plains and crush them into bits like straw." And hence Sin set up his men on the hill Tangeumdae and engaged in battle, with nowhere to run to. As the fighting proceeded, Sin's troops piled their arrows high on the rocky cliff Yeoldudae, and kept on shooting, as fast as lightning. Eventually, after being defeated, Sin Rip leaped to his death.

In other variations of the legend, a range of different



Portrait of General Sin Rip.
Chungju City Hall



Tangeumdae.

Chungju-si, Chungcheongbuk-do, 2009, Chungju City Hall

characters replace the servant that kills the maiden's family, including a ghost, goblin (*dokkaebi*), the monster serpent imugi, strong man or general. The haunted spirit that leads Sin to defeat is also replaced by *sansin* (mountain god), a white-haired old man, or ghost. In some versions, Sin's death occurs when he throws himself into the river but birds intervene, and he is shot by an arrow. In other versions, Sin dies on Mt. Geumma; from being sprinkled in the eyes with red pepper; returns home to kill himself, or is lost and never heard from again. Tales about Sin in afterlife are not recorded and this tale is transmitted only as oral tradition.

The motif of the haunted spirit *wongwi* seems to reflect the need to find the blame for Sin Rip's defeat not on his capacities but on a ghost, as a means to overcome a collective sense of defeat and inferiority. Sin Rip's refusal to accept the maiden's request reflects the storyteller's criticism of Joseon aristocrat's excessive emphasis of moral cause.

Solar and Lunar Eclipse

일식·월식

The legend "Ilsik, Wolsik" is a cosmological creation narrative that tells the story of how *bulgae* (fire dogs) from the Dark World caused the phenomena of solar and lunar eclipses.

The section titled "Bulgae" from *Hangugui-seolhwa* (*Folk Tales From Korea*) narrates the story as follows:

A long time ago among the many heavenly kingdoms was Gamangnara (Dark World), whose king, concerned about the darkness surrounding his kingdom, ordered a fierce fire dog that belonged to one of his subjects to steal the sun and the moon. The fire dog tried to carry the sun in his mouth, but it was too hot and the dog could not hold on to it, and gave up. The failed attempt made the king angry, and he ordered a more ferocious dog to steal the moon. But when the dog tried to carry the moon in its mouth, the moon was so cold that its mouth froze. The dog tried many more times to bite the moon with its teeth, but in the end gave up and came back. The king did not give up, however, and continued to send more fire dogs, but they all failed each time. It is believed that during a solar or lunar eclipse, the dark sections are where the fire dogs from Gamaknara are biting the sun or the moon.

Bulgae, literally meaning fire dogs, refer to "strong and fierce dogs," or in some recorded versions, to "hairy dogs," which are likely to be the indigenous Korean dog breed *sapsari*, the name meaning "ghost-chasing dog." Dogs have long had a presence in Korean culture, starting from the tomb murals of Goguryeo, representing unrelenting strength. The challenge of the fire dogs in this legend speak for the people's yearning for liberation from the king of the Dark World—in other words, the progressive spirit of the Korean people in pursuit of cosmic glory.

Sondol Strait

손돌목

The legend of Sondolmok narrates the origins of the chilly wind that blows each year around the twentieth day of the tenth lunar month, in relation to

**Deokpojin.**

Gimpo-si, Gyeonggi-do, 2003, National Folk Museum of Korea

**Tomb of ferryman Sondol in Deokpojin.**

Gimpo-si, Gyeonggi-do, 2003, National Folk Museum of Korea

a ferryman named Sondol.

When Mongol troops attacked Goryeo, Sondol the ferryman had a chance to serve the king as he fled to Ganghwa Island. To decide which water route to take, Sondol placed a gourd on the water and suggested that they follow it, but the king, suspicious that the ferryman was setting up a trap, killed Sondol. Upon his safe arrival, however, the king regretted the killing and held a ritual for the ferryman after dedicating his tomb. The sea channel where his death took place is called Sondol Strait and the cold harsh winds that blow each year around the twentieth day of the tenth lunar month is called *sondolbaram*, and the accompanying cold spell *sondolchuwi*, which is recorded in *Dongguksesigi* (*A Record of the Seasonal Customs of the Eastern Kingdom*) and *Yeoryangsesigi* (*A Record of the Seasonal Customs of Yeoryang*). Sondol's character shows traits of those of the wind god (*pungsin*), but the records and

the folk narrative, along with a memorial stele that remains in the area, serve as evidence that Sondol was a historical figure.

Song Ik-pil

송익필

This legend narrates the friendship between two of Joseon's influential Confucian scholars Song Ik-pil (1534-1599; pen name Gubong) and Yi I (1536-1584; pen name Yulgok), based on anecdotes surrounding Song, a central strategist among the Seo-in (Westerners) faction of Joseon's Confucian literati. Song and Yi were very close and after Yi's death in 1584, the attacks from the Dongin (Easterners) faction were concentrated on Song. The tales are documented in various collections including *Gyeseojamnok* (*Collection of Miscellany by Gyeseo*), edited by Yi Hui-pyeong (1772-1839; pen name Gyeseo).

Song Ik-pil was a concubine's son, but this did not stand in the way of his friendship with Yi I. Song, as a matter of fact, sometimes tried to teach Yi as if he were superior, and this bothered Yi's younger brother, who warned Yi many times, but Yi ignored him, saying that his younger brother would never think that way if he met Song in person. One day Song came to visit Yi, but Yi was out and only his younger brother was home. The younger brother, who had been determined to put Song to shame, stood up as soon as he saw Song and bowed, realizing that Song was a great man.

Assessment of historical figures who have played a central role in factional disputes can be a sensitive issue, varying according to conflicting interests. Unlike history, which emphasizes objective assessment, literature allows subjective perspectives, differing from reader to reader, which is also the case with the Song Ik-pil legend, an element that adds an interesting touch to the story.

Song Si-yeol

송시열

This legend narrates the story of Song Si-yeol (1607-1689), a civil official from mid-Joseon. The tale is transmitted both in the oral tradition and through books, including *Gyeseoyadam* (*Tales from Gyeseo*) and *Dongpaenaksong* (*Tales of the Eastern Kingdom for Repeated Recitation*), reflecting the historical perspectives and public sentiments of his time.

Orally transmitted narratives about Song Si-yeol comprise episodes from his life, from birth to death, and can be divided into five parts: birth, growth, marriage, success and death. When his mother gave birth to Song, after having a dream of Jeopdong River and Mt. Seodae flowing into her mouth, it is said the rivers of the town of Okcheon went dry for three days. Si-yeol grew up in his maternal grandfather's home, where he was not treated well. He mastered the magic of contracting space (*chukjibeop*) as a young boy and was also able to see ghosts. When he sent his fortune paper, spelling out the four pillars of destiny (*saju*) to his perspective in-laws, the mother-in-law-to-be sent the paper back, citing his poverty, Song wrote a letter to his father-in-law-to-be, which made the father realize that Song would become a renowned figure, and gave him permission to marry his daughter. Song was known to possess eyes that emitted rays of light, which enabled him to read at night without lamps. Crown Prince Bongrim recognized that Song was an exceptional man and upon taking the throne as King Hyojong, appointed Song to a high post. On the other hand, it was said that Song was not on good terms with Heo Mok, another leading civil official. One day Song fell ill and no medicine helped his condition, so Song sent his son to Heo Mok to prescribe him a cure. The son wondered if his father's archenemy would prescribe a good cure, but he followed his father's orders and went to Heo Mok, who prescribed that they should give Song

"three *donjjung* of arsenic and strike him hard on the spine." The son returned home and suspicious of Heo, said that Heo had prescribed two *donjjung* of arsenic and a strike on the spine. The prescription helped improve Song's condition, but he did not live long, owing to taking only two *donjjung* of arsenic instead of three, it is believed. Later when Song received the death by poison penalty, one bowl of poison did not do the job and it took three bowls to end Song's life.

Tales about Song transmitted in written form depict dreams related to his birth: Upon conception, his mother dreamed of swallowing the fluorescent marble *myeongwolju*, and when he was born, his father dreamed that Confucius entered their home with his disciples. When Song received the death penalty, he was unaffected after two bowls of poison and died only after his political foes drowned him in



Portrait of Song Si-yeol.
18th century, National Museum of Korea

the sea.

While oral narratives about Song portray him as a character possessing supernatural powers and otherworldly traits, the written tales focus on evaluating him as a historical figure.

Spirits Spring

주천강

The legend of Jucheon narrates the story of a spring that produced spirits, then came to a stop one day.

In the village of Jucheon in Yeongwol, Gangwon Province, there was a spring named Jucheon, which, like the meaning of its name, produced spirits. When a nobleman went for a drink, the spring produced *cheongju* (clear filtered rice wine), while when a commoner went to get wine, produced *takju* (unrefined rice wine), even when the commoner was dressed in the attire of a nobleman. One day a young farmer from the village passed the state examinations and earned a status of an aristocrat. He returned home dressed in the attire of a high official and headed to the spring, anticipating that the spring would now produce clear wine for him, but what he got instead was the same unrefined wine. Angry, the young man blocked the spring and it no longer produced wine or water.

This legend is transmitted in around twenty villages around the country, the Yeongwol variation about Jucheonseok (Spirits Spring Rock) being the most widely known. The version documented in *Sinjeungdonggukyeojiseungnam* (*Augmented Survey of the Geography of the Eastern Kingdom Revised and Expanded Edition*) reads, “Jucheonseok originally resembled the shape of a trough, and when a clerk, who was tired of fetching water from the spring, tried to move the rock to the governor’s office, the rock split into three, one of which now remains and is called Jucheonseok.” The orally transmitted tale, however, tells a completely different

story, as summarized above. In other variations, from Yeongjongdo in Incheon, Gyeonggi Province, and Cheongdo, North Gyeongsang Province, the spring permits only one drink per person and stops producing spirits when someone (a monk in some cases) breaks the taboo and takes more than one drink.

The plot shares many similarities with that of the legend “Rice-Pouring Rock.” In the two tales, wine and rice are nature’s benefits, given to humans without having to make an effort, but greed stops humans from continuing to receive the benefits. The legend of Jucheon, therefore, can be viewed as a moral tale that depicts the heavenly punishment of human greed, based on the humble and strict sense of ethics shared by Koreans, and at the same time reflecting the shift in the caste system of late Joseon.



Jucheon River.
Yeongwol-gun, Gangwon-do (2005, Simong)

Spring of Eternal Youth

젊어지는 샘물

The legend “Jeolmeojineunsaemmul (Spring of Eternal Youth)” is a tall tale that tells the story of an old man who turned into a baby after drinking too much water from a spring that restored one’s youth and in the end was put in the care of a neighboring couple.

An elderly childless couple was living a life of hardship. One day the husband was taking a rest on his way back home from chopping wood in the mountain when he saw a bird flying. He wanted to catch the bird and followed it deep into the mountain. There, he came upon a spring and when he took three drinks from it, he transformed into his young self when he was a newlywed. By the time he returned home, it was night and his wife, without recognizing her husband, asked the young man if he had seen an old man on the way. The young man answered that he was the old man, and took his old wife to the spring for her to drink the water, after which she also transformed into her young self. The couple were living happily upon regaining their youth, when one day their greedy old nextdoor neighbor came by asking how they had gotten so young. After hearing their story, the old man learned the location of the spring and headed for the mountain. He drank too much water from the spring, however, and he turned into a baby in the end. When their neighbor failed to return late into the night, the couple went to the spring to look for him, and found a baby inside an adult’s overcoat. The couple brought the baby home and lived happily as they raised him.

In versions of the tale in which the bird chase leads to the discovery of the spring, sometimes the bird chase is aimed at selling the bird to a rich family. In versions that omits the bird, the old man takes a drink from the spring when he gets thirsty while chopping wood. Some versions omit the neighbor altogether, and in some it is the wife who takes too many drinks and turns into a baby. The



Bangadari Mineral Spring.

Pyeongchang-gun, Gangwon-do, Korea Tourism Organization

narrative is sometimes associated with a specific locale, as exemplified by the tale of an old man who goes to Mt. Geumgang to gather medicinal herbs and drinks from the spring, which makes him young and strong enough to return home without his cane. This version does not feature the greedy neighbor.

The spring of youth motif reflects the mythological belief that water is the origin of life, and in mythology, the motif takes the form of the water of life, which saves human lives.

Stationmaster O

오찰방

The legend “Ochalbang” narrates the story of Stationmaster O Yeong-gwan, who was known as a mighty strongman in the village of Daejeong near Seogwipo, Jeju Island, during the reign of Joseon’s King Hyeonjong.

When Stationmaster O’s mother was pregnant with her first child, the father fed her ten cows, but the baby turned out to be a girl. The next time his wife got pregnant, the father, worried that it would again be a daughter, he fed her only nine cows, and this time they had a son, who grew up to become Stationmaster O. The boy possessed great strength,

winning every wrestling match that he entered. With no one to challenge him, the boy became arrogant. One day he was at a wrestling competition and again he defeated everyone. When O dared someone to come forward and challenge him, a young man took him on, and this time O lost before he could exercise his power. Upon returning home, O still could not calm his anger. Seeing this, his sister said that she was the young man who defeated him, but O refused to believe it, and his sister took off his shoe and pushed it into the crossbeam of their house. O tried to pull it out, but it would not budge. His sister, however, easily pulled out the shoe, proving her strength. O finally accepted his sister's words and never again gave in to arrogance. O went on to be known around the country for his immense powers, and when he succeeded in capturing a group of notorious bandits, he was appointed as stationmaster.

Unlike other strongman legends from Jeju, Stationmaster O leads a successful life. The narrative is associated with other strongman tales, including those of Budaegak, Masksani and Jeonghundi, their competition reflecting the rivalry among the people of the regions that they represent.

Most strongman narratives from Jeju focus on the protagonist's huge appetite as his heroic trait, but this element is missing from the legend of Stationmaster O, except for the mention of the mother consuming a large number of cows during her pregnancy.

Strongman Spring

장군수

The legend "Janggunsu" narrates the story of a spring or well with water that brings great power or ability to the drinker.

The narrative is transmitted in three different types:

First is about a man who rescues his wife after

drinking from Janggunsu. The man was given a riddle when a bandit kidnapped his wife and he went all around the country asking for the answer, but found no one who knew it, until finally he came upon a young boy who gave him the answer. The man went after his wife, who lied to the bandit that the man was her cousin, then gave her husband water from Janggunsu until he was able to handle all the swords in the shed. Then after serving the bandit strong liquor, she told her husband to behead the bandit, but when the bandit's head attached itself back to his neck, the wife sprinkled ashes, which finally killed the bandit, and the husband and wife returned with the bandit's wealth and lived happily.

Second is about a man who kills monks for raping women. There was a band of monks possessing extraordinary strength, who raped women and assaulted villagers. A man learned that the monks' power came from drinking from the well on the temple grounds. He wanted to drink from the well, but it was covered with a rock, which he was unable to lift, and so he had to drink from a straw. He drank a large amount of water, which greatly increased his strength, and after blocking the well, he killed the monks, which resulted in the closing of the temple.

Third is about a boy monk who drinks from the spring. A boy monk drank from the spring at the break of each dawn, which made him stronger and stronger. The elderly senior monk at the temple believed that a strongman in the temple would bring about the annihilation of those around him, and tore the tendons on the boy monk's arms, then blocked the spring with a large rock.

This narrative shows the strong will of the people to overcome hardships, and also their limitations, as seen in variations that feature a monk or a lowly butcher who become a strongman by drinking from the spring but are stopped by the ruling class who block the spring.

Sweating Stele

땀 흘리는 비석

This legend, also called the legend of the Commemoration Stele for Great Master Samyeong, revolves around a stele that, according to accounts, broke out into sweat whenever the nation was in crisis.

A stele was erected on the site of the ancient temple Pyochungsa to commemorate Great Master Samyeong, who successfully led Buddhist warrior monks against the Japanese invasions in 1592, before being taken as war prisoner to Japan. Since its erection, the stele has broken into sweat at times of national crisis, beadlike waterdrops rolling down the granite for hours. The stele, designated as Tangible Cultural Heritage No. 15 of South Gyeongsang Province, is today located in Miryang. A legend related to a stele in Byeonggolje in North Jeolla Province, commemorating the workers who restores a reservoir, narrates that anyone who hurts oneself while honing their scythe on the stele will never heal from the injury, or that when a bad event takes place near the stele, the stele starts bleeding.

Legends of sweating or bleeding steles are transmitted around the country. Sweating steles are based on the grassroots belief in foretelling powers, while bleeding steles carry messages of warning against distortion and wrongfulness, both highlighting the powerlessness of humans in relation to factual evidence and sacred belief.



Pavillion for the Stele from the ancient Pyochung Temple.
Miryang-si, Gyeongsangnam-do, Cultural Heritage Administration

Temple of the Floating Rock

부석사

The legend of Buseoksa narrates the story of the founding of the temple.

The oldest remaining record of this legend can be found in the book *Song gaoseng zhuan* (*Lives of Eminent Monks Compiled in Song Dynasty*), from Song China. In the book's "Biography of Uisang" chapter, the anecdote is documented in detail under the title, "The Saint of Silla in Tang." The tale is also included, along with illustrations, in the book *Kegon engi* (*Founding of Avatamsaka Buddhism*) from 13th-century Japan. In Japan, the character Seonmyo is worshipped as the deity Zenmyo. In Korea, the historical events in the legend were recorded in the "Biography of Uisang" section of *Samgungnyusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*), which describes the Great Master Uisang's introduction of the Avatamsaka doctrine and the construction of Buseok Temple. The legend has also been well preserved in the oral tradition of the northern part of North Gyeongsang Province.

When the eminent monk Uisang was studying in Tang China, he was offered lodging in the home of a follower, whose daughter Seonmyo (Shanmiao) fell in love with the monk. Uisang remained unaffected, and when he completed his studies, he stopped by the home to bid farewell to the follower and headed back to Silla. When Seonmyo learned of Uisang's departure, she rushed after him to the port, carrying the robes and other gifts that she had prepared for him, but the ship had already long set sail. Seonmyo threw her box of gifts into the sea and prayed that she be turned into a dragon, so that she would be able to serve Uisang and pursue his Buddhist discipline. Following the prayer, Seonmyo indeed turned into a dragon and assisted Uisang's safe return by providing support beneath his ship. Upon his return, Uisang worked on spreading the Buddhist discipline, in the course of which he found a temple that suited his wishes, but the temple was occupied

by hundreds of followers that belonged a different school of discipline. Then the dragon Seonmyo, which had been following Uisang, appeared and in mid-air, turned into a huge rock, landing on the temple's roof, where it hung precariously. The temple's monks scattered, leaving the temple, and Uisang set his foot inside the temple, where he opened up the Avatamsaka Sutra (Hwaeomgyeong) and named his temple Buseoksa, meaning Temple of the Floating Rock.

This Buddhist legend is also referred to as the legend of Seonmyo, and is a literary dramatization of Uisang's learning and pursuit of the Avatamsaka doctrine in China and his efforts to introduce and spread it in Korea. Based on these historical facts, the legend adopts the motif of a woman's love and devotion and rebirth, narrative elements of universal



Floating rock to the west of Muryangsujeon Hall at Buseok Temple.
Yeongju-si, Gyeongsangbuk-do (1990, Bae Do-sik)



Muryangsujeon at Buseok Temple.
Yeongju-si, Gyeongsangbuk-do, Korea Tourism Organization

appeal that contributed to the transmission of the tale not only in Korea but to China and Japan.

Three-Legged Crow

삼족오

The legend of "Samjogo" narrates the story of an imaginary bird with three legs, believed to live on the sun, or to symbolize the sun.

According to Chinese records, the concept of the three-legged crow came from the observation that the black spot on the sun resembled a crow, and that the number three in traditional cosmology indicates light, or *yang* energy, or that the number three itself indicates the sun. In Korea, images of the three-legged crow have been found in murals of Goguryeo tombs No. 1 in Jinpa village and No. 1 in Deokhwa village.

There are two Korean legends that feature the three-legged crow.

First is the orally transmitted legend of Mt. Geumo, located in Gumi, North Gyeongsang Province. Mt. Geumo was originally called Mt. Daebon (Great Roots). An envoy from Tang China followed an iridescent bird to this mountain, where he disappeared. The mountain has since been called Mt. Geumo, meaning golden crow.

Second is the legend of Yeono and Seo, a husband and wife who lived on the eastern coast in the kingdom of Silla. In the 4th year of King Adalla's reign (157), the couple rode on a floating rock and went to Japan, where they were enthroned as king and queen, while back in Silla, light from the sun and the moon disappeared. An official who examined the phenomenon reported that it was due to the move of the energy of the sun and the moon from Silla to Japan. King Adalla sent an envoy to Japan and requested Yeono and Seo to return, but Yeono responded that the problem would be solved if silk fabric woven by Seo was taken to Silla for a ritual to

the heavens. When they did as told, light was restored to the sun and the moon.

In the Mt. Geumo legend, the sun bird crow is featured as a central element in the geographical name, and in the the legend of Yeono and Seo, the crow appears as a personification, as reflected in the names of the husband and wife, which both bear the Chinese character 烏, meaning crow. Considering that the sun is a celestial being that also stands for the king in the terrestrial world, the crow in the Mt. Geumo legend has been diminished, from a symbol of political power to a mere divine object.

In the legend “Sageumgap (The King Shoots an Arrow into the Zither Case),” the crow appears as a divine harbinger that delivers the message that the king is about to be killed by his subjects, which saves the king’s life. To commemorate the crow, the king designated the first full moon of the first lunar month (Grand Full Moon) as Ogiil (Crow Commemoration Day), observed with a ritual offering sticky rice as sacrifice, rooted in mythological worship of the three-legged crow.

The three-legged crow is an important symbol of Goguryeo’s cultural legacy that serves as a reference

in the relationship between sun worship in Goguryeo and mythological symbolism.

Three-Legged Dog

삼족구

The legend of “Samjokgu” narrates the story of a three-legged dog with supernatural powers.

The nine-tailed fox Gumiho turned into a beautiful woman and became Daji, consort to King Zhou of ancient China. Having won the king’s affections, Daji asked the king to build her a house out of beads, and when the king asked who was capable of building a house out of beads, Daji answered that it was Grand Duke Jiang, the great strategist. Daji was frightened by Jiang and planned to kill him on the king’s orders after proving that he was incapable of building a house out of beads. When Grand Duke Jiang was summoned to the court, he saw right away that the woman standing next to the king was the nine-tailed fox. He answered that he could build the house as the king commanded, then ran away. After Jiang’s disappearance, Daji’s evil deeds increased, killing more and more men to eat. Then one day Grand Duke Jiang acquired the three-legged dog Samjokgu and returned to the court, where the dog leaped out from inside Jiang’s robe and attacked Daji’s neck. Bitten by the dog, Daji turned back into Gumiho and died.

The reason that Samjokgu, fierce but small with only three legs, was able to defeat a thousand-year-old nine-tailed fox, was because it possessed divine powers to fight evil, just like the indigenous dog *sapsalgae*, as seen in other tales, in which it kills a rat turned into a human, or the messenger from the underworld (*jeoseungsaja*).

The tale of Samjokgu reflects the attempt of the victor to denigrate the dark history of a fallen kingdom by adding elements of the supernatural, to



Mural of Three-legged Crow in the Goguryeo tomb Ssangyeongchong.
Nampo-si, Pyeongan-nam-do, National Folk Museum of Korea

highlight the view that a kingdom that fell to a fox in human form had already been rejected by heavenly will.

Three-Year Mountain Pass

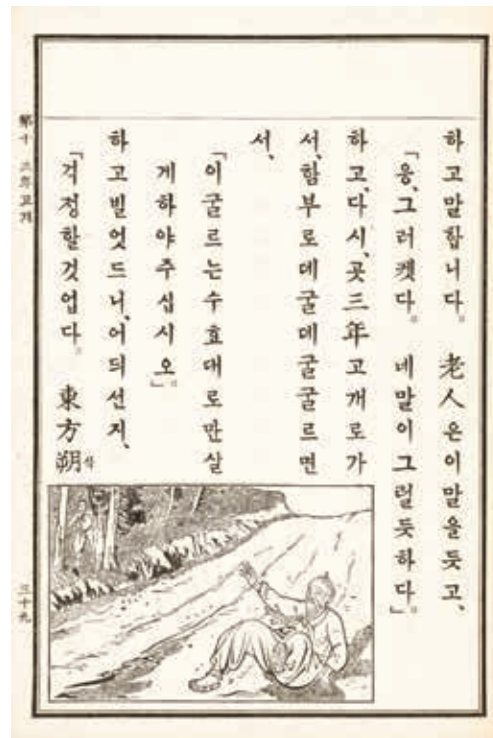
삼년고개

The legend of Samnyeongogae (Three-Year Mountain Pass) narrates the story of a mountain pass that carried a curse that if a traveller stumbled and fell on the pass, the traveller would die within three years.

An old man was walking home on Samnyeongogae, a pass across a mountain somewhere in Gyeongsang Province, when he fell down. In despair that he would die within three years, the old man called in his children to deliver his will, but his neighbor, who was a doctor, told him that falling down on the same trail would extend his life, the more times he fell, the longer he would live. Convinced, the old man went back to Samnyeongogae and rolled down the trail again and again, praying that his life would be extended. Then he heard a voice from the sky, saying, “Do not worry. Even Dongfangshuo (symbol of longevity) fell and rolled down a thousand times here on this pass.”

In this legend, the wisdom of the old man’s neighbor and offspring helps him overcome the curse of shortened life, in effect emphasizing the importance of overturning myths. The narrative was transformed, in the course of oral transmission, into a fable about expelling superstition, and in some variations, the scheme to send the old man back to the mountain is proposed by his son or grandson to emphasize filial piety.

Similar legends are also transmitted in Japan, around temples and cemeteries. The basic plot is almost identical, except for the part where the protagonist escapes the curse through sorcery, not a reversal of perception.



The Old Man who Tumbled Down at the Three-Year Mountain Pass in *Chōsengo dokuhon* (vol. 4).
Japanese Government-General, 1933, National Library of Korea

In Korea, the Three-Year Mountain Pass was for a long time included in official elementary school textbooks, which served as an obstacle to oral transmission and the narrative has not developed further. But its place in the Korean oral tradition, rich in tales about extended lifespan, wise children, and filial piety, remains significant.

Triplets Stars

삼태성

The legend of Samtaeseong narrates the origin of the Triplets Stars constellation (Orion), located northeast of Bukdunchilseong (Seven Stars of the Northern Dipper, Ursa Major).

A long time ago, by the swamps of Heungnyongdam (Black Dragon Lake), there lived triplets who had been born after the death of their father.

They each set out in search of mentors and returned after ten years of academic and talent development. Then one day wild winds blew with roaring rain, and the sun disappeared. The triplets consulted their teacher and learned that a pair of male and female black dragons from Heungnyongdam were engaged in violence in the heavens, and the end the female dragon swallowed the sun and soared up to the edge of the sky, the male dragon following her. The triplets took on the black dragons and succeeded in making the female dragon throw up the sun, which brought back light to the human world. They were able to kill only one black dragon, however, and the other one survived, returning to Heungnyongdam. The triplets ascended to the sky to guard the sun against the surviving dragon, and became Samtaeseong (Triplets Stars).

The triplets as posthumous sons is a condition related to the “vanished father-god” motif, also observed in the myths of Hwanin, Haemosu and Jeseok. The Samtaeseong legend is a tale of dragon-slayer hero, found in all cultures around the world. According to the *ohaeng* (five elements) theory, the black dragon corresponds to the north and the water element, which, in the legend, swallows the sun in the east, which, according to Saryeong (Four Spirits) worship, is represented by the blue dragon. In other words, the legend depicts a black dragon that defeats the blue dragon. The triplets’ victory over the black dragon and restoration of the sun means that the Triplets Star possesses the powers to dominate water, which would be earth, corresponding to the direction of the center and the color yellow. Samtaeseong was believed to be the divine general (*sinjang*) in charge of overseeing the birth and growth of humans, located in the center, where the guardian constellations of the four directions (Saduseong: the Dipper constellations of the east, west, north and south) meet. The mythological imagination of Samtaeseong, in the center, dominating the black dragon in the north, therefore corresponds with the constellation’s relation to Saduseong.

The narrative of Samtaeseong’s origin is also related to the constellation’s location as depicted in Goguryeo tomb murals. The triplets’ domination over the black dragon indicates a transformation or ascension from blue dragon to yellow dragon, which corresponds to the confrontation between Jumong and Geumwa (representing the water element) in the myth of Jumong. A variation of the Samtaeseong legend is similar in plot to the shamanic myth “Jeseokbonpuri,” in which the Jeseok triad is featured in the role of the



Triplets Stars.
Joseon, Sun Moon University Museum

triplets. When compared with the shamanic myth “Samtaejapuri,” recited by shaman Jeong Unhak of Pyeongyang, the characters of the triplets correspond with those of the Jeseok triad, the only difference being that the former is a myth about the deification of humans, but the latter is a constellation legend. Celestial movements are also explained by this legend, that the Triplet’s Stars appear vertically but disappear horizontally, since the triplets’ tombs are situated in a horizontal line.

Uisang

의상

This legend narrates the story of Uisang, a renowned monk from Silla. The most widely known among the many Uisang narratives is the version included in *Samgungnyusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*).

Uisang entered the priesthood at Hwangbok Temple at the age of twenty-nine. Uisang headed to China for further studies, accompanied by his friend Monk Wonhyo, but was imprisoned in Liaotong for ten days on espionage charges and had to return to Silla. On the 4th year of Queen Jindeok’s reign, Uisang encountered a ship from Tang China and travelled to Tang. Arriving in Yangzhou, Uisang was invited by the magistrate Liu Zhiren to board at the official government quarters, and he was finally able to visit the renowned monk Zhiyan at Zhixiang Temple on Mt. Zhongnan. Zhiyan said he was greeting Uisang after seeing in his dream the wish-fulfilling gem *cintamani*, and Uisang acquired a deep understanding of the philosophy of *hwaeom* (flower garland; *avatamsaka*). At the time there were men from Silla held hostage in Tang, including Kim Heum-sun (or Kim In-mun) and Yang Do, and they asked Uisang to alert the court upon his return that the Tang emperor Gao Zong was planning a massive attack on Silla. Upon receiving the warning from Uisang, Silla’s court requested the help of the divine



Portrait of Monk Uisang.

Apgok Temple, Gunwi-gun, Gyeongsangbuk-do

monk Myeongnang, who protected the kingdom by rebuilding the altar and defeating the attaching troops with mystical powers. In 676, Uisang found Buseok Temple, where he delivered sermons on Mahayana Buddhism and left behind many divine achievements. Uisang founded a total of ten temple to spread the avatamsaka discipline, and educated ten disciples, who were all deemed sages, including Ojin, Jitong and Pyohun.

The above account is a summary of the section titled “Uisang’s Propagation” in *Samgungnyusa*, which also includes the legend of the founding of Buseok Temple, the oldest remaining folk narrative about Uisang. On their way to Tang China, Uisang and Wonhyo spent the night inside a clay pit, where Wonhyo experiences a shocking encounter with a ghost, which leads him to the realization that *ilsim* (“one mind”) is the only truth, and heads back to Silla. Alone, Uisang arrived at the shore

in Dengzhou, where he was offered lodging in the home of a follower. The follower's beautiful daughter Seonmyo (Shanmiao) fell in love with Uisang, but he remained unaffected while she pledged to herself that she would forever be devoted to Uisang. When it came time for Uisang's departure, he stopped by the home to bid farewell to the follower and hired a ship to set sail. Seonmyo rushed after him to the pier, carrying the robes and other gifts that she had prepared for him, and threw her box of gifts into the sea and prayed that she be turned into a dragon, so that she would be able to protect Uisang's ship and to assist his Buddhist discipline. Following the prayer, Seonmyo indeed turned into a dragon and assisted Uisang's safe return. Upon his return, Uisang travelled around the country spreading the Avatamsaka doctrine, in the course of which he found a temple that suited his wishes, but the temple was occupied by hundreds of followers that belonged a different school of discipline. Then the dragon Seonmyo turned into a huge rock, landing on the temple's roof, which scared the temple's monks away. Uisang set his foot inside the temple, where he sermoned on the Avatamsaka Sutra (Hwaecomgyeong) day and night all year long and the temple was soon crowded with followers.

Another legend related to Uisang, about his religious pursuit at Naksan Temple to witness the Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, is recorded in *Samgungnyusa*, in the chapter titled, "Two Saints of Naksan; Avalokitesvara; Ananyagamin; and Josin." Upon his return from Tang, Uisang performs ablution for seven days to witness the Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, and the servants of Yongcheonpalbu (Eight Divine Guardians of Buddhist Discipline) led him to a cave. Uisang offered prayers and repentance and received crystal prayer beads, after which he performed ablution for another seven days and finally he witnessed the Avalokitesvara. Following the instructions of the bodhisattva, Uisang built a temple at the site on the top of the mountain, where



Hall of Worship in the Hwaecom Temple of Gurye.
Gurye-gun, Jeollanam-do, Cultural Heritage Administration

a pair of bamboo trees stood.

Folk tales about Uisang show the process of the Hwaecom doctrine engaging with the Avalokitesvara faith, two narrative strands that come together in the legend of Naksan Temple. The development of Avalokitesvara faith appears closely connected with the Seonmyo legend and the founding of Buseok Temple. In other words, their significance lies in the dramatization of Uisang's Buddhist philosophy, utilizing the narrative structures of folk legends, monk biography and temple origin tales.

Ulsan Rock

울산바위

The legend of Ulsanbawi narrates the story of how Ulsan Rock came to be located on Mt. Seorak in Gangwon Province.

In the beginning of the universe, the creator made Mt. Geumgang and assembled to the mountain all the beautiful rocks from around the country. Ulsan Rock, from Ulsan, faraway in the south, hurried on to be included, but by the time it reached Mt. Seorak, news arrived that Mt. Geumgang's twelve thousand peaks had now been completed. Disappointed, Ulsan Rock stopped its journey and



Ulsan Rock.

Sokcho-si, Gangwon-do, Korea Tourism Organization

settled down in its current location.

This narrative is a local legend transmitted in specific areas around Ulsan Rock, including Sokcho and Yangyang, and also in some parts of Gyeongsang Province, around Ulsan, the original location of the rock, according to the tale.

The structure of the narrative is typical of legends about mountains that moved, comprising motifs of moving, stopping and conflict or competition. In some variations, Ulsan Rock is moved by a strongman, also a motif found in variations of the moving mountain legends.

Unju Temple

운주사

The legend of Unjusa narrates the story of the construction of a thousand Buddha statues and a thousand

pagodas at Unju Temple, including a reclining Buddha that the builders were unable to lift up.

It is believed that Unju Temple was constructed in Goryeo, but the absence of related records and of structures that are similar in style make it difficult to verify the historical facts surrounding its construction. The identity of the temple's builder varies according to the tale's different variations, including Monk Unju, Grandmother Mago, and Great Monk Doseon, as do the motive for the construction, which indicates that the narrative has been transmitted over a long period.

A long time ago, Great Monk Doseon decided to erect a thousand Buddha statues and a thousand pagodas in Hwasun. He prayed to the sky and more than a thousand fairies, male and female, descended to make the statues and pagodas. They had until the rooster's first crow in the morning to complete the work, and then they would be summoned up to the heavens again. In order to delay the sunrise,

Great Monk Doseon tied up the sun on a rock called Ilbongam. Work proceeded as planned and when dawn arrived, almost all the statues and pagodas were completed, with only the reclining Buddha statue waiting to be lifted up. At that moment, a child monk who had been assisting Monk Doseon felt so exhausted that he made the rooster's crowing sound, and all the fairies stopped lifting the reclining Buddha and ascended to the heavens all at once. The reclining Buddha remains in the same position to this day. It is said that if the Buddha had been lifted, the capital of Goryeo would have been moved to Hwasun.

The statues and pagodas that stand on the grounds of Unju Temple today are unorthodox and unrefined in style, indicating that the temple's remains are a result of Buddhism influenced by indigenous folk belief, which is also supported by the fact that until as recent as seventy to eighty years ago, a annual communal festival was held at Unjusa not on Buddha's birthday, which was the Buddhist convention, but on the traditional harvest holiday Chuseok. Due to the absence of remaining records on Unju Temple and Thousand Buddhas and Thousand Pagodas, this legend serves as the only reference for examining their origin and characteristics.



The reclining Buddha of Unju Temple.
Hwasun-gun, Jeollanam-go, Cultural Heritage Administration

Widow Fortress

홀어미산성

The legend “Horeomisanseong” narrates the story related to the origin of Daemosanseong (Great Mother Mountain Fortress), located in Sunchang, North Jeolla Province, which dates back earlier than Goryeo.

A long time ago, in the town of Sunchang lived a widow of noble stature and discreet character, whose last name was Yang and was referred to as Yanggwabu (Widow Yang). Bachelor Seol, who lived next door, loved her and proposed marriage, and she replied that if he could make a roundtrip to and from Seoul before she completed building a fortress, she would accept his proposal. On the day of the race, Widow Yang completed her construction and was waiting for Bachelor Seol to return, but in the end she lost because she forgot about the mud left on her skirt. Despairing that she would no longer be able to maintain her chastity, she drowned herself, and people came to the fortress that she built Horeomisanseong, or Widow Fortress.

The legend is similar in motif and structure to the brother-sister contest narratives which are also related to strongman or giant tales, and giant goddess



Widow Fortress.
Sunchang-gun, Jeollabuk-do, Cultural Heritage Administration

tales as well. The defeat of the female in the contest between genders signifies the shift of the ancient society from a female-centered society to a male-centered one.

Wife of Domi

도미의 처

This legend narrates the story of the wife of Domi, who preserved her marital fidelity and chastity, refusing to submit despite pressure from the king. According to some accounts, the story took place during the reign of King Gaeru (129-166), the fourth king of Baekje, but the legend is not considered a historical event but a fable of a powerful figure imposing himself on a civilian woman. “Baekjebongi (Records of Baekje)” in *Samguksagi (History of the Three Kingdoms)* depicts King Gaeru as a humble man of moral conduct.

Wife of Domi, a man of Baekje, possessed great beauty and a discrete character, admired by everyone. One day King Gaeru summoned her and said, “They say you are a chaste woman, but if you were seduced in a dark, remote place, you would likely change your mind.” However, the wife of Domi negated the king’s words. The king tried to test the wife by sending one of his subjects to her in the king’s robe. The subject told the wife that he had made a bet with Domi in an attempt to confuse her, but Domi’s wife excused herself, telling him that she had to change her clothes, then send in her maidservant in her place. The king, infuriated after learning that he had been tricked by Domi’s wife, ordered Domi’s eyes to be pulled out and sent him back on a boat on the river. So the king again summoned Domi’s wife, but she said her body was unclean and had to change her clothes, and did not show up, running away in the night and upon reaching the river, bursting out in tears. At that moment, a boat suddenly appeared, and the

wife rode it to Cheongseong Island, where she was reunited with Domi. The couple fled to Goguryeo, where they spent the rest of their lives.

Domi’s wife stays faithful to her husband till the end, but the narrative ends with a sense of defeat, which is a departure from other folk tales, in which protagonists, after suffering hardships, meet happy endings. This seems to be a reflection of a unique worldview on reality.

This legend is usually anthologized as biography, but is not accompanied by a commentary lauding the heroine, which makes it closer in form to folk tale.

Wisteria

등나무

Deungnamu legends narrate the origin of the wisteria tree.

In a village during the kingdom of Silla lived twin sisters, or two sisters a year apart, who both loved a warrior who belonged to the elite youth corps Hwarang. When the corps were called to battle, the sisters each went to see the warrior in the middle of the night and encountered each other, thus learning of their love for the same warrior. Their hearts caught in conflict, the two sisters threw themselves in a pond and in death turned into wisteria, *deung* in Korean, their two separate bodies entangled. The warrior, upon returning from battle, learned of this and threw himself into the pond, becoming a nettle tree, *paeng* in Korean. Ever since, wisteria vines climbed nettle trees as they grew. This legend is transmitted in relation to the wisteria tree in the village of Oryu in Hyeongok, part of the city of Gyeongju in North Gyeongsang Province, designated as Natural Monument No. 89.

A different legend about the origin of wisteria is documented in *Densetsu no Chōsen (Joseon Legends)*, edited by Tamaki Miwa during the

Japanese colonial period: There was a vine growing on Mt. Baekdu, and one strand of its roots stretched toward Manchuria, another toward Korea: the former turned into wisteria and the latter turned into *chik*, or arrowroot vines.

These two different narratives about the origins of wisteria are both closely related to the Korean noun that means “conflict”—*galdeung*, comprised of the Chinese characters 葛 (*gal*), for arrowroot, and 藤 (*deung*), for wisteria. The two characters together came to stand for complicated situations where interests and emotions become entangled and conflicted. In the legend about the two sisters, the protagonists experience conflict over love, the most basic of human emotions, and unable to resolve this conflict, they choose death but even in death their appearances become visual representations of conflict.



Wisteria tree in the village of Oryu in Gyeongju.
Gyeongju-si, Gyeongsangbuk-do, Cultural Heritage Administration

Wonhyo

원효

The legend of Wonhyo narrates the religious achievements and supernatural experiences of Silla's Monk Wonhyo (39th year of King Jinpyeong's reign – 6th year of King Sinmun's reign, 617-689).

Monk Wonhyo of Silla leaves for China to pursue his studies, accompanied by Monk Uisang. One night, while seeking shelter in a cave, Wonhyo drank water in the dark to quench his thirst, from a gourd placed next to him. In the morning he wakes to find that the water was from the skull of a corpse, which leads him to enlightenment, and he returns to Silla, abandoning his plans.

Samgungnyusa (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*) documents in detail the supernatural signs surrounding Wonhyo's birth and his efforts to spread



Portrait of Monk Wonhyo.
18-19th century, Beomeo Temple, Seongbo Museum

the Buddhist faith. Wonhyo's mother had a dream of a meteor falling into her arms when she conceived Wonhyo. She went into labor while passing under a chestnut tree in a valley, and unable to make it home, she gave birth under the tree with her husband's robe draped on the tree. Thus the tree came to be called *sarasu* ("sala" tree in Sanskrit, or can also be interpreted as "silk robe tree" in Chinese characters) and the tree's fruit *sarayul*. While she was giving birth, it is also said that the sky was covered with five-colored clouds. Wonhyo was bright since a young age, capable of learning without anyone teaching him. One day, Wonhyo sang in the street, "Who shall lend me an axe without a handle? I shall use it to carve a column to support the sky." King Taejong (Kim Chunchu) heard this song, and realizing that the song expressed the intent to give birth to a sage, he made Wonhyo take Princess Yoseok to bed, which resulted in the birth of Seolchong. Following this, Wonhyo changed into secular clothing and travelled to many villages, calling himself Soseonggeosa (Buddhist follower Soseong), to spread the Buddhist faith, which resulted in even the poor and the ignorant learning Buddha's name.

Stories of Wonhyo's experience with the supernatural are also transmitted in the oral tradition. One of them is the anecdote of Wonhyo saving the lives of a thousand monks attending a service on Mt. Wutai in China. Wonhyo was meditating in a hermitage when he looked up at the sky and realized that a landslide was imminent on a mountain in China, likely to kill all the monks there. He wrote a passage on a sheet of paper and threw it toward China, where the monks heard a strange sound from the sky and stepped outside the temple. When the last monk got out of the temple, the landslide buried the temple, but none of the monks was injured. The monks opened the temple door and the letter from the heavens read, "Revered monk Wonhyo from Haedong (Kingdom East of the Sea) shall save a thousand monks." The monks that survived the landslide came to Silla and became Wonhyo's disciples.

Written legends about Wonhyo depict how he

preached the Buddhist faith to the people. Compared to other Buddhist legends, this narrative focuses on the process of Buddhism becoming a popular religion and the public's perspectives. In the oral tradition, Wonhyo is depicted as one who reforms bandits, or one who saves a temple about to be destroyed by fire, and uses his super powers to play tricks on the rich, to make them voluntarily offer donations to temples, capturing Wonhyo as a populist monk.

Yellow Dragon Temple

황룡사

The legend of Hwangnyongsa narrates the origin of the ancient temple, which was located in present-day Gyeongju, in North Gyeongsang Province.

In Silla, in the second lunar month of the fourteenth year of King Jinheung's reign (553), the king was planning to build Jagung (Purple Palace) to the south of his palace Yonggung, when Hwangnyong (Yellow Dragon) appeared. Deeming this strange, the king changed his plan and built a temple instead, naming it Hwangnyongsa (Yellow Dragon Temple). On the grounds was a stone pedestal on which Kassapa Buddha had meditated, which proved that it was the site of a temple in pre-Buddha times. India's King Ashoka, who had attempted but been unable to build a statue of the Triad Buddha, sent



Site for a statue of the Triad Buddha.

Hwangryongsaji, Gyeongju-si, Gyeongsangbuk-do, Korea Tourism Organization

steel, gold and statue models, expressing his wish that a 16-*cheok* Buddha statue, twice the size of an ordinary human, be erected on this meaningful site. The ship reached Hagok Prefecture in Silla, and in 574, King Jinheung ordered that a Buddha statue be erected at Hwangnyongsa, using the gold and steel sent from India. The following year, the statue cried a great amount of tears, soaking up the ground, a sign that the king would be passing. In the twelfth year of Queen Seondeok's reign (643), monk Jajang, upon his return from Tang China, requested to the queen that a nine-story wooden pagoda be built to keep out foreign invaders. Abiji, an artisan from Baekje, was commissioned to build the pagoda using wood and stone, under the supervision of Yongchun, the father of King Muyeol. While working on the pagoda, Abiji witnessed in his dream the demise of his home country Baekje, and was unable to continue working, when suddenly the earth trembled and in the dark emerged an elderly monk and a strongman from Geumdang Gate, and Abiji saw them erect a column. After this, Abiji became more determined and finished the pagoda. Following its completion, the pagoda was repeatedly struck by lightning, and rebuilt many times, but in the sixteenth year of King Gojong's reign (1238) in Goryeo, the Buddha statue, the temple buildings and the pagoda were all burned down during the invasion of the Mongols.

This legend shows how Hwangnyongsa, which was first built in relation to the indigenous dragon god (*yongsin*) worship, gradually became a sacred place through the increasing influence of Buddhism.

Yi Cha-don

이차돈

This legend narrates the story of Buddhist martyr Yi Cha-don of Silla, who gave up his life for his faith at the age of twenty-two (twenty-six according to some accounts).



Monument to the martyr Yi Cha-don.
818, Gyeongju National Museum

It was in 528 that the first attempt was made, by King Beopheung, to officially introduce Buddhism to Silla. There was much hesitation, however, since there were no followers among the king's subjects and they were all against the idea. Yi Cha-don noticed the king's hesitation and said to him, "It is a royal subject's honor to give up one's life for one's country, and the highest act of loyalty for a common subject to offer one's life to the king. If your majesty should behead this humble subject for accusations of falsely delivering the royal command, all the subjects of this kingdom shall submit to your majesty's orders." But the king declined, saying, "Even if it would be an act of charitable virtue on your part, I advise such blame should best be avoided." Despite the king's refusal, Yi Cha-don insisted, "It is not easy to give up one's life, but if this humble subject should be allowed to die in the evening so that a great cause would be realized in the morning, the days of Buddha shall again see the light of day and your majesty's path shall unfold peacefully." Having reached a heartfelt understanding with Yi, the king summoned his subjects, and as expected, many of them opposed the introduction of

Buddhism. But Yi Cha-don stepped forward and said to the king, “It is said that extraordinary events follow the emergence of extraordinary men. Buddhism is a faith of deep meaning, and there is no way for me to deny my belief.” As had been agreed, the king ordered that Yi Cha-don be beheaded. Yi Cha-don said, “I accept this punishment for the sake of Buddhism, so if Buddhism is indeed a divine belief, a divine event shall surely follow my death.” Then the sword slashed Yi’s neck, and blood that was white like breast milk surged from his body, and his head flew all the way to Mt. Sogeu-gang in Gyeongju, where a temple called Jachusa was built on the spot where it landed.

The legend of Yi Cha-don is a tale of spiritual experience, demonstrating the miracles of Buddhism while depicting the social and political mood at the time of the introduction of Buddhism to Silla.

Yi Hang-bok

이항복

This legend narrates the life and achievements of Yi Hang-bok (1556-1618, pen name Baeksa), a renowned civil official from mid-Joseon. Due to his meritorious acts during the Japanese invasion of the year Imjin (1592), and also to his death, met while in exile for his outspoken opinions in the king’s court, Yi Hang-bok acquired respect and a large following, which resulted in many different folk narratives about him.

Since youth, Yi Hang-bok showed extraordinary talent and wit. Together with his friend Yi Deok-hyeong, he went around making mischief, and these anecdotes are transmitted as comical stories of Oseong and Haneum, referring to their childhood names.

Despite his brilliance, Yi kept failing his state exams, which was due to the interruptions of the haunted spirit (*wongwi*) of a woman who had loved him but had committed suicide after being caned.

After Yi Hang-bok disciplined a monk who had harmed a maiden, the maiden’s spirit chased away the haunted spirit from Yi. Yi Hang-bok was capable of seeing ghosts, and when a boy, who was the first son in the family in three generations, became critically ill, Yi Hang-bok kept his side and the Messenger from the Underworld (Jeoseungsaja) was unable to take him, taking another person in his place. When Japanese invaded in the year Imjin (1592), placing the kingdom in crisis, the king sent Yi Hang-bok to China to request relief troops. While Yi Hang-bok was escorting the Chinese commander Li Rusong to Joseon, they came across Amnok (Yalu) River and Li simply pushed out his hand, without attempting to cross. At this, Yi handed the Chinese commander a map of Joseon, which impressed Li, for Yi Hang-bok had read Li’s thought that the most important thing for fighting a war was a map. Arriving at the capital, Li claimed King Seonjo’s physiognomy was not befitting of a king and refused to go to war. Yi Hang-bok made the king climb inside a jar and howl, which convinced Li Rusong that it was the sound of a dragon. Then Li further demanded a dragon’s liver and a pair of chopsticks made of bamboo with tear-streak patterns (*sosangbanjuk*), so Yi Hang-bok offered a ritual prayer (*chungmun*) by the sea, which brought the dragon to the water’s surface to present its liver, and Yi was also able to secure the bamboo chopsticks from a villager. Despite his many meritorious deeds, Yi Hang-bok became involved in factional strife in his later years and died while in exile.

Anecdotes from Yi Hang-bok’s childhood with Yi Deok-hyeong included elements of fictional humor, but also demonstrate Yi’s wit and competence, evident in stories of his victory in a riddle competition against goblins (*dokkaebi*); of he and Haneum taking care of the corpse of a man who died from an epidemic; or of his stealing of a blacksmith’s nails, which he returned, reviving the blacksmith’s household.

Many legends and anecdotes about Yi Hang-bok

are documented in books. In written literature, Yi is portrayed as a loyal subject making all efforts to save the kingdom during the Japanese invasion, and as a humorous character possessing brilliant wit and eloquence, which he uses to point out pretensions, without ridiculing or insulting the subject.

Yi Hwang

이황

This legend narrates the story of renowned Confucian scholar Yi Hwang, transmitted both orally and in written literature.

The following are some examples of folk narratives related to Yi Hwang:

When the branches of a neighbor's chestnut tree grew beyond the fence and dropped chestnuts in Yi Hwang's yard, Yi picked them up and threw them over the fence to return them to his neighbor. When his daughter-in-law was widowed, he sent her back to her family to remarry and maintained contact with her after remarriage.

On a hot summer day, two young men came to visit Yi Hwang at his Confucian academy Dosanseodang. One of them, Jeong In-hong, sat up straight and solemn without being distracted, while the other, Jeong Gu, took off his outer robe as soon as he



Dosan Confucian Academy.

Andong-si, Gyeongsangbuk-do, Cultural Heritage Administration

offered his greetings to Yi, and chattered away by the well, stripping down to his pants and wiping his sweat. Yi accepted Jeong Gu and not Jeong In-hong as his disciple.

Yi Hwang's wife was a halfwit, who asked for dried persimmons offered as sacrifice on a ritual table and used red fabric to mend a tear in a white outer coat, but Yi Hwang always treated her well. His wife had no hesitation sharing with others intimate details about their marriage, portraying Yi Hwang as a dignified scholar by day and a man of great sexual energy by night. When Yi served as magistrate of Danyang, a courtesan named Duhyang (Gwonbuhyang or Maehyang in some versions) fell in love with him, and when Yi was appointed to another post, she chose death to defend her chastity.

When a son mourning his father's death ate



Painting of Dosan Confucian Academy.

Kang Se-hwang, 1751, National Museum of Korea

dog meat while grieving was still in process, Yi Hwang defended him, expressing consideration for the mourner's emaciated state after such intense grief. The mourner was a servant's son and Yi still accepted him as a literati. In other words, Yi rejected conventions that disregarded individual circumstances and the boundaries of social class that overlooked individual talent and capacity.

In some tales, Yi is depicted as a man capable of Taoist magic and other supernatural powers, rescuing his disciple from a ghost, extending his nephew's life, foretelling the future crisis of his ninth-generation descendent and offering a solution. His eyes were so intense they made a child fall from a tree, and after swallowing a fox's marble, he acquired the magic of contracting space (*chukjibeop*).

Folk narratives about Yi Hwang developed from anecdotes from his life as a scholar, who, disillusioned after a career in public office, returned to his rural hometown where he founded the private Confucian academy Dosanseodang and focused on reading, cultural cultivation and writing, with many disciples under his wing. In contrast to the virtuous character and high intellect he possessed in real life, Yi Hwang is often portrayed in folk legends as an offbeat character. This is viewed not as an attempt to damage his reputation but to add a human side to the renowned scholarly figure.

Yi I

이이

This legend narrates the story of Yi I (1536-1584), pen name Yulgok, renowned Confucian scholar and politician of mid-Joseon. Various different anthologies from Joseon document over thirty folk tales about Yulgok, all centering on his death. *Hangukgubimunhakdaegye* (*A Comprehensive Collection of Korean Oral Literature*), a compilation of oral narratives from the 1980s, however, include



Portrait of Yi I.
Choe Won-ho, Ojukheon Municipal Museum

fifty-four folk tales about Yulgok, all of them about his birth.

One evening during the reign of King Jungjong, a noble scholar (*seonbi*) sought lodging at a tavern on the mountain pass Daegwallyeong in Gangwon Province. He was travelling from Hanyang to Gangneung to see his wife. When night fell, the tavern owner carried food and alcohol into the scholar's room and offered to serve him that night, but the scholar politely refused, and the woman left the room in embarrassment. Several days later the scholar again lodges at the tavern. This time he was travelling back to Hanyang from Gangneung. When night fell, the scholar called in the tavern owner and said he would now accept her offer, but the woman refused, saying, "I must refuse, sir. Last time, your body carried great energy, but today, the energy has been drained. You must have seen your wife, I assume." The baby conceived by the scholar's wife at this time was Yulgok.

In the above story and other legends, Yulgok is generally depicted as a saintly man possessing foresight, including the narrative of Yulgok being rescued from tiger attack (“Nadobamnamu (I-Am-Also-Chestnut Tree)”); of Yulgok’s will ordering Hwaseok Pavilion to be set on fire, which helped King Seonjo’s flight from the palace during the Japanese invasion; of Yulgok’s respectful treatment of lowly scholar Song Ik-pil; of a comparison of the bedroom lives of Yulgok and Toegy; of a courtesan who compares Yulgok, Songgang and Seoae after bedding the three men; and of Yulgok as an exorcist, which inserts Yulgok’s character into the plot structure of legends of otherworldly beings.

Yi Ji-ham

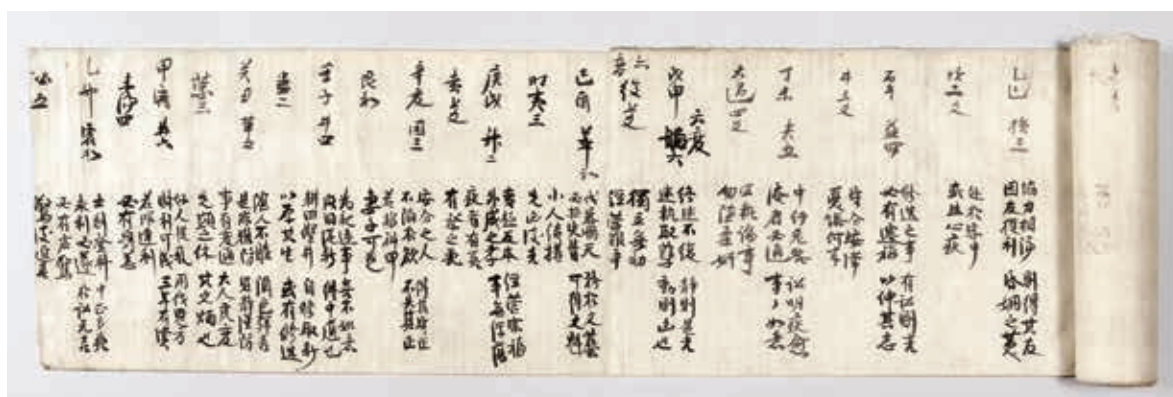
이지함

This legend narrates the story of Yi Ji-ham (pen name Tojeong), renowned geomancer and author of *Tojeongbigyeol* (*The Secret Divinatory Art of Tojeong*), and his predictions, service for the people, and supernatural abilities. The narratives are documented in various oral literature anthologies, folk tale collections from Joseon including *Eouyadam* (*Eou’s Unofficial Histories*), and *Tojeongjip* (*Collection of Writings by Tojeong*).

As a young man, Yi Ji-ham studied under Seo Hwa-dam. The wife of one of Seo’s servants fell in love with Yi and while her husband was out, entered Yi’s room. When Yi chased away the desperate wife with a cane, her husband, who had been watching in hiding, was greatly moved and reported the incident to Seo. Seo called Yi the following day and told him that his studies were now complete and that he could now go wherever he pleased, but should always keep in mind the virtues of a noble man.

When Yi Ji-ham was serving as a magistrate in Gangwon Province, he received an order from the capital to hunt boars to be sent to the court. Yi ordered a tiger that could transform into a human to capture a boar alive, and went with the tiger to the king. The king asked Yi how he captured the boar alive, and Yi answered that he had a tiger do it, introducing the tiger to the king. The king was taken by surprise and took back his order, and the people no longer had to endure the trouble of hunting for wild boars.

Yi Ji-ham had a daughter who was born with the fate of having to beg for food, and Yi could read in her face that if she became rich, she was destined for an early death. So Yi married her to a beggar, but he was heartbroken that his daughter had to beg for a living, and wrote his book *Tojeongbigyeol* for her, so that she could make a living as a fortuneteller. Her divinations turned out so accurate that Yi became worried she would soon be rich, so Yi revised his



The Secret Divinatory Art of Tojeong.
Kyujanggak, Seoul National University

book, adding deliberate errors. This is why even today, the book can sometimes lead to inaccurate divinations.

One day Yi climbed the mountain with one of the local clerks and showed him a pot of gold. The clerk asked him for a gold nugget, but Yi refused, saying the clerk's fortunes did not allow it yet. Feeling vengeful, the clerk served Yi chips of willow bark instead of the chestnuts that Yi always had after taking juice squeezed from live centipedes. Without his chestnut antidote, Yi was killed by the centipede venom.

These narratives, which portray Yi Ji-ham as a man of foresight and divine powers, and a disciplined and humble man with a caring heart for the people, reflect the hopes and anticipations of the public:

First is the hope for the appearance of a leader with otherworldly powers. In the tales, Yi uses his supernatural powers not only to escape danger but also to help neighbors in trouble, or to predict catastrophes like tidal waves or Japanese invasion.

Second is the public anticipation for a righteous official who can be regarded as true shepherd of the people (*mongmingwan*), which Yi Ji-ham proved himself to be while serving as the magistrate of Pocheon and Asan. For ordinary people, who at the time were suffering from tax extortion by corrupt local officials, this was a very specific desire for government official they could rely on that they expressed through oral narratives.

Third is to address a critique of the ruling class and their debauchery. Both in and out of public office, Yi maintained his humble way of life. Even when he served as magistrate of Pocheon, Yi wore ragged clothes and straw shoes, his meals comprising steamed mixed grains and one vegetable dish. This was a quality that the public admired and highlighted in the oral tales.

Fourth is to express the public's contradictory attitude toward fatalism. In the tales, Yi Ji-ham is an insightful geomancer who also possesses supernatural powers, but he does not exercise these abilities for his own interests, and demonstrates

acceptance toward human fate. On the other hand, some narratives reflect negative views on fatalism. For example, in "Tojeong and the Salt Vendor," Yi's foresight proves more incompetent than a mere vendor's, revealing his limitations as a foreseer of human destiny. This is an expression of the public's negative views of fatalism.

Yi Ji-ham lived an extraordinary life of legendary scope, and his entire life is veiled in mystery, which makes for the elements of a tragic failed hero. The historical significance of the Yi Ji-ham legend also lies in that it was born against the backdrop of public resistance against Neo-Confucianism in Joseon, and went through vast narrative revisions during the period when the discipline of Sirhak (Practical Learning) began to spread, along with the rising popularity of traditional geomancy and divination.

Yi Seong-gye

이성계

This legend narrates the story of Yi Seong-gye, founder of Joseon dynasty.

Folk narratives about Yi Seong-gye justify his founding of a new dynasty through stories of the virtuous accomplishments of Yi's ancestors; of divine signs like his reception of the golden ruler; of heroic acts like the defeat of the Japanese invader Ajibaldo; and of receiving help from a tiger, considered the guardian of the people. On the other hand, the public's nostalgia for the myriad grassroots heroes from late Goryeo to early Joseon and their negative views of Yi as the aggressor, are dramatized in stories of the mountain god (*sansin*) of Jirisan who rejects Yi's enthronement; of Might Baby (Agijangsu) Uturi's battle with Yu; and of Tung Duran, who loses his life to Yi.

In South Korea, legends about Yi Seong-gye are transmitted around North Jeolla Province, and



Portrait of Yi Seong-gye, founder of the Joseon Dynasty.
Joseon, Cultural Heritage Administration

most cast Yi in a positive light, except for the ones of conflicts between the mountain god of Jirisan and Uturi.

There are also tales of Yi Seong-gye defeating the evil dragon, which is a motif that was used earlier in the myth of Goryeo founder Wang Geon in the episode about Wang Geon's ancestor Jakjegeon who receives the divine message about Wang Geon's founding of a new kingdom. In the Yi Seong-gye tale, the evil dragon can be interpreted as Darughachin, the official dispatched to Goryeo from Yuan China, representing the political group from the Jurchen people challenging or resisting against Yi Seong-gye's family. On the other hand, the white dragon seems to be a mythological representation of the group of Jurchens submitting to the supervision of Yi's political allies. The legend takes place against the backdrop of Yi Seong-gye developing his power base in the northeastern region of the Korean peninsula, and the region's population splitting into two groups.



Shamanic painting of Yi Seong-gye.
Mt. Inwang Guksadang, National Folk Museum of Korea

Yi Sun-sin

이순신

This legend narrates the story of Admiral Yi Sun-sin, who emerged as a hero in the war against the invading Japanese in the year Imjin (1592), centering on the supernatural phenomena related to his birth and his naval achievements. Oral transmissions of narratives about Yi and other folk tales about the Imjin war were compiled into the classical novel *Imjinnok* (*The Record of the Black Dragon Year*). The novel, whose structure is closer to a folk tale anthology, reflects a strong sense of criticism of the ruling class and hostility toward Japan.

Yi Sun-sin's father defeated the monster serpent *imugi* that was eating up monks, and when he burned the serpent, three butterflies flew up to the sky. Following this incident, three sons were born into his family, and the father sacrificed two of the sons, for their eyes were too intense to gaze at. The third



Portrait of Admiral Yi Sun-sin.
Tongyeong-si, Gyeongangnam-do (2008, Kim Sang-su)

son was saved since his eyes were gentle, and this child was Yi Sun-sin. As a young boy, Yi overhears Taoist hermits in the mountain making predictions that the Japanese will invade Joseon and that Yi will be the one who will defeat them. As a young man, Yi resolves the grievance of a woman who fell in love with him, and the woman, in death, turns into a dragon and helps Yi fight the Japanese. And while Yi succeeds in annihilating the invading troops with a strategy that takes advantage of geographical elements, in the end he died in battle, shot by the enemy's gunfire.

Compared to the legendary status of Yi Sun-sin's military accomplishments, not many tales remain in the oral tradition, mainly due to the compilation of existing tales in Imjinnok. The oral narratives, though small in number, share distinctive elements with traditional Korean narratives of renowned generals. Yi's acceptance of his role as the hero of the Imjin



Turtle Ship from *The Complete Writings of Chungmugong Yi Sun-sin*.
National Library of Korea

war from the Taoist hermits can be interpreted as a weakened variation of the motif of the general receiving divine powers from a deity. Accounts of Yi's heroic military achievements combine historical facts—the battle of Pongdo Strait, for example—with elements of the supernatural—exemplified by the intervention of dragons that help Yi defeat the Japanese, which is a typical motif found in traditional military hero narratives.

Yi Wan

이완

This legend narrates the story of General Yi Wan, who assisted King Hyojong's policy to attack the north to take revenge on Qing China, and organized Joseon's defense system, armaments and military

power. Yi Wan was born as the second son of Yi Su-il, a participant in the violent restoration of King Injo. Yi Wan served as Royal Guards Commander (Eoyeongdaejang) and Capital Police Chief (Pododaejang) before being put in charge of Hyojong's "attack north" plan, which included the development of new weaponry and repairs and expansion of the capital's fortress.

There are three different types of narratives that feature Yi Wan: "The Thief Inside the Leather Sack and Commander Yi Wan" is about Yi Wan using his wits to help get money from a rich family for a man who has lost his ox; "Yi Wan's Wife Prepares Armor and Discovers Map," is about how Yi Wan was helped by his plain-looking wife in preparing armor and helmet to pass his state exam and receive as reward a brush case, inside which he discovers the king's attack north plans; and in "Brave Commander Yi Wan Takes Bandit's Wife," Yi stops by a bandit's hideout while hunting and takes the bandit's wife, after which the bandit came to serve Yi.

The legend depicts Yi Wan as a man of limited capacities, who was wise as a boy but in adulthood, resolved problems with the help of his wife. At the same time, in a variation that features the token motif, he is portrayed as an ideal hero who demonstrates loyalty in times of crisis. In versions with the warrior Bangul (Baktak), Yi Wan's plans to make Bangul a war hero ends in failure.

Yu Ui-tae

유의태

This legend depicts the extraordinary medical practice performed by Yu Ui-tae, a renowned physician from mid-Joseon. Folk narratives about renowned doctors were developed from public interest in physicians and the art of medicine. Between late 16th and early 17th centuries, Joseon suffered from invasions from Japan and Qing China,

and also abnormal climate, which resulted in severe famine and epidemics. Immune deficiency, caused by malnutrition and bad hygiene, brought about many different diseases. The public, deprived of medical care, developed a yearning for a healer devoted to their welfare, which gave birth to the oral tradition of physician narratives.

Yu Ui-tae was an only child, who lost his parents at a young age. Despite difficulties, he managed to find himself a wife and made a living selling wood, when one day a mountain god (*sansin*) appeared in his dream and in return for the alms given by Yu's father, handed him a gold needle and a silver needle. Yu had never practiced medicine, but he used the needles to perform acupuncture, which quickly gained him recognition. When Daegukcheonja (Celestial Prince of the Great Kingdom, or king of China) developed a boil on the crown of his head, he requests Yu's service. Yu is cooped up in a small backroom and given a week to find a cure. Yu made pills out of his own nasal mucus and the clay from the walls. The pills were then dried and pounded into powder again, which Yu rubbed onto the king's boil, which was cured after three days, and the king offered Yu great hospitality before sending him back to Joseon.

Yu Ui-tae legends can be categorized into five types: First is the good doctor narrative, in which Yu is depicted as a divine physician that can heal anyone and any disease; the second type centers on filial piety or compassion as the cure for an illness, rather than Yu's medical practice; in the third type, Yu overcomes crisis by devising a fake medicine that luckily offers a cure; the fourth type depicts Yu escaping trouble when someone comes to his rescue; and in the fifth, the acquirement of a medical instrument shapes Yu into a renowned doctor.

These narratives are based on a sense of awe for human life. The patients in the tales are in many cases the ruling class, and the cures for their illness often comprise mundane ingredients like nasal mucus and clay, which is a reflection of the critical perspective of the public regarding the monopoly

of medical service by the upper class. Yu's character covers a diverse spectrum, from ignorant man to hero and divine physician, which indicates that Yu was viewed with respect, as someone who would help the people improve not only their health but also their lives. Yu Ui-tae legends, therefore, can be summed up as a criticism and satire of the state of medical service at the time, as well as an expression of the public's will to overcome the situation.

Yugeumi Plain

유금이들

The legend of Yugeumideul narrates the tale related to Yugeumi Plain near Gyeongju, the ancient capital of Silla, in North Gyeongsang Province, about a king who turned into a dragon that reigned over water, and the child Yugeumi, who recognized him, which helped the king ascend to the heavens. Most narratives about Yugeumi Plain are transmitted around Gyeongju, with some in the Gumi area as well: The Gyeongju variations identify the king as Great King Kim Bu (Kimbudaewang, also referred to as King Gyeongsun), while the Gumi versions do not name the king.

At the time of the reign of Great King Kim Bu in Silla, Hyeongsan River flowed through half of Gyeongju, and the capital was prone to floods when

there was heavy rain. Attempts were made to dig a sluice through Mt. Hyeongje, but the high water level made this difficult. It was a great disappointment to Great King Kim Bu, who had great ambition to build a capital that would last a hundred years. He left behind these words: "When I die, I shall turn into a dragon and as I ascend to the heavens, I shall crush the mountain and open a sluice." Indeed when he died, Great King Kim Bu turned into the serpent *imugi*, awaiting his transformation into a dragon as he lay on a plain in Gyeongju. People passed by without realizing it was a dragon, but when a brilliant boy named Yugeumi saw the serpent, he called out, "Here comes Lord Dragon!" Then the serpent struck with its tail the twelve islands on Donghae (East Sea), and was about to strike Ulleung Island, when the boy said, "Ulleung Island belongs to the dragon, so please do not strike it," whereupon the serpent turned into a dragon and split Mt. Hyeongje into two before ascending to the heavens. Later, in honor of the boy who helped the king's transformation into a dragon, the plain from where the dragon ascended to the heavens was named Yugeumi Plain, and the two mountains, split from Mt. Hyeongje, came to be called Mt. Hyeong and Mt. Je.

This legend explains the origin of the name Yugeumideul through the motifs of "the king who became a dragon" and "the subject who acknowledged the king (dragon)," centering on the story of the dragon securing farming land for the people. The versions collected in the Gumi area reflect the public sentiment that for a king to serve his duties he must first be accepted by his subjects.



View of Gyeongju from Mt. Toham.
National Intangible Heritage Center

Zhu Yuanzhang

주원장

This legend narrates the story of Ju Won-jang, or Zhu Yuanzhang, the first emperor of Ming China, who, according to oral tradition, was a Korean who went

to China and became the king, or *tianzi*, meaning, “son of heaven.”

Dae-myeong was a monster serpent *imugi* that ate up people. The chief monk of Mt. Chiak killed the serpent, saying it might as well become the king of China since it would never become a dragon, and the serpent’s soul left its body and entered a humble hut. When a child was born in the hut, the monk brought him to the temple and educated him, and when his parents died, he had boiled eggs buried with the remains of the boy’s parents. The boy was Ju Won-jang. When Yi Seong-gye, the founder of Joseon, was in China, a man presented Yi with a silver goblet while Ju was presented with a gold goblet, and Yi departed for Korea. In China, the one who could make sounds from a drum woven of straw was enthroned the king, or *tianzi*, and Ju Dae-myeong posted a bulletin reading that he was the son of heaven then threw the straw drum onto the bulletin, and the drum made a sound, which made Ju the king.

This legend the inevitability of highlights heavenly destiny and the pride of Koreans. In the story, Ju’s destiny is confirmed by palm-reading and geomancy. For a long time after Ju was taken in by the monk, he did not open his palm, for on it was written characters that meant, “king; son of heaven and ruler of the great kingdom; Jun Won-jang, king of China.” In the version of the tale related to traditional geomancy, a geomancer tries to acquire for his own parents’ tombs the site reserved for *tianzi*, or, “son of heaven,” but fails, which was due less to his own incompetence and more to predestined fate. The tale also reflects great pride of a country that produced the king of China.

Tianzi, or “son of heaven,” was the most noble position in a strict caste system, and this legend reflects the view that an auspicious site or palm lines could turn even the lowliest being into king.

F O L K T A L E S

민담

Mindam, or folk tales, are fictional narratives that center on a specific character, set against a backdrop unbound by a specific time and place, passed down among the people.

Many folk tales are created by individuals, then spread among the people orally, before they are recorded in written form. Since they are orally transmitted, folk tales generally rely on a set of formulas, which includes the repetition of simple phrases; specific structures; and conventional motifs and episodes. Oral transmission also leads to myriad different versions, and sometimes to new types of narratives as well. The many versions vary in content according to the social class, gender and age of the audience.

Folk tales can be categorized by the actions of their characters: Animal tales feature animals that demonstrate human behavior and speech; tales of the bizarre are about humans or supernatural beings that act in ways that are impossible in reality; humorous tales incite laughter through the characters' ridiculous actions; and general tales tell of ordinary characters who serve as examples through good or bad behavior. These tales functioned as pastimes that could also move their listeners.

Unlike myths (*sinhwa*), folk tales center on human characters. They also differ from legends (*jeonseol*) in that they are not supported by historical evidence or other proof of verity. And while myths and legends are linked to specific regions, folk tales are spread widely, unbound by specific time or place. Animal tales, humor tales and formula tales have simple narrative structures while general tales and bizarre tales, especially fantasy tales, are more complex in structure, often taking the form of a chronology. There are exceptions, but not many, including animal tales or humor tales that are structurally complicated, which are typically comprised of a number of different episodes.

The myriad characters featured in folk tales include heroes with superior abilities; foolish adults or noblemen; supernatural beings like dragons and goblins; personified fauna and flora; and wise children or women. The tales often show the weak acting in resistance or revenge against the powerful; the boundaries of social class broken through illicit behavior; and offer vicarious satisfaction through a role reversal between the wise and the foolish. For the purpose of maximizing humorous effect, disabled characters are sometimes portrayed in an exaggerated or condescending manner, or illegal acts of swindling are condoned. Some tales are explicitly misogynistic, while some highlight women as heroines in response to gender discrimination. Folk tales often depict extremely cruel acts, which by the end are generally recovered or undone, closing the story in a positive light, as opposed to the tragic endings of legends.

The predominant function of folk tales lies in their morality. These tales serve to impose a society's conventions, systems, ideologies and faith, while also providing historical knowledge or increasing awareness of social responsibilities. Folk tales also function as a means of entertainment, recited or shared in the evenings or other occasions of leisure in the main family room; in the guest quarters; at inns and taverns; in a corner where workers gather to take a break; or at gatherings of aristocrats. Sometimes professional storytellers deliver the tales from a stage. Folk tales reflect the stories that both the audience and the storyteller would like to hear, vicariously fulfilling their universal hopes of longevity, wealth, marriage and sexual satisfaction. These fictional narratives allow individuals, albeit in their imagination, to break away from social bounds and taboos and achieve impossible dreams.

Abolition of Goryeo Burial

고려장 없어진 유래

This tale explains how the practice of *goryeojang* was abolished.

Goryeojang refers to the practice of carrying away the elderly when they reach a certain age and abandoning them in the mountains or plains and there are two folk narratives transmitted in relation to the abolition of this practice.

The first defines *goryeojang* as the ancient practice of abandoning those over sixty, leaving them to die. Once there was a man who carried his elderly father (or mother) on his back on a wooden carrier to a mountain to abandon him. He had taken along his son, and as he turned to leave, the son picked up the wooden carrier to take back home. When the father told the son he didn't need to take back the carrier, the son insisted that he had to, since he would be needing it when it came his turn to carry his father and abandon him on the mountain. This made the father realize what a terrible deed he was committing and he brought his old father back home, which led to the abolition of the practice.

The second narrative defines *goryeojang* as a state-imposed practice in the kingdom of Goryeo of abandoning the elderly. There lived in Goryeo a high government official who soon had to carry away and abandon his aging mother, but he did not have the heart to desert his own mother and kept her hidden inside a closet and took care of her. In the meantime, China sent three difficult riddles to Goryeo to investigate the kingdom's talent pool: how to distinguish between a mother horse and her offspring; how to distinguish between the top and bottom parts of a log; and how to measure the weight of an elephant. Nobody was able to come up with answers but the official mother inside the closet, who explained that the first of the two horses to eat when they were given feed was the offspring; that the top part of the log would rise to the water's surface; and that an elephant's weight

could be measured by marking the water level on a boat before and after letting the elephant on it, then determine the weight by trying to get the boat to the same water level using rocks. When the riddles were solved, the king offered a reward to the official for preventing a national catastrophe, promising to grant any wish. The official confessed about his mother, seeking pardon for his disobedience, and requested the abolition of the practice of *goryeojang*. The king accepted his wish and put a stop to the practice.

Both narratives are of foreign origin, with the *goryeojang* motif added after they were introduced to Korea. The first tale is from the Chinese book *Xiaozizhuan* (*Collection of Tales on Filial Piety*). In its original version, the tale is a simple family anecdote about a child named Yuangu and featuring the wooden carriage *yu*. The second tale is similar to the narrative included in the chapter "Kingdom of Elderly Desertion" of the Chinese Buddhist scripture *Zao Baozang Jing* (*Miscellaneous Treasures Sutra*). The narrative was spread to many countries through the sutra, and in Korea, it was adapted with changes in detail including the name of the kingdom, the conflict between the Celestial God and the king to that between China and Goryeo, and the addition of the *goryeojang* motif.

The two separate narratives seemed to have been linked by chance due to the association with the *goryeojang* motif. It is believed that because the desertion of parents was deemed unacceptable in Korea's Confucian culture, it was necessary to add the premise of the ancient practice in order to make the foreign tales more plausible for the readers.

Since the tales depict *goryeojang* as a practice that was actually observed in Goryeo, scholars have been examining the verity of the claim and have found that such practice never existed in Goryeo. The narratives are, in other words, fictional tales that emphasize human dignity by highlighting the value of wisdom and spirit over physical capacity and power. The stories also pose fundamental questions about the essence of filial piety by shedding light on the contradictory attitudes toward one's elderly parents.

The longevity of the *goryeojang* narratives in the Korean oral tradition owed to the importance of filial piety in education within a predominantly Confucian society.

Acquiring Fortune Through Thousand-Coin Divination

천냥점 치고 잘 된 사람

This prophecy tale narrates the story of a poor man who, thanks to a prophecy purchased at a steep price, overcomes a series of crisis and acquires fortune.

A young man left his wife behind and boarded a pollack fishing ship to Hamgyeong Province. Several months later, upon the completion of the fishing trip, the young man visited a fortuneteller to find out how things were at home. The fortuneteller carried out three divination readings, charging a thousand coins for each: “On your return journey, do not tie up your boat between two rocks to take a break,” “Upon returning home, rub your hair with oil that falls,” and “One *mal* of rice stalks reaps only three *doe* of rice.” The young man headed back home with the three readings written on paper and stopped at a port to lodge for the night. The rest of his party moored their boats at the pier, but the young man tied his outside the harbor, and overnight, a storm crushed all the boats in the harbor and only the young man survived. Upon returning home the young man reunited with his wife and as they slept after exchanging news, a bottle of oil fell by the pillow, which reminded the young man of the divination, and he rubbed the oil on his hair. In the middle of the night, the wife’s lover sneaked into the room to execute a murderous scheme he and the adulterous wife had planned, but when he touched the husband’s oil-rubbed hair, he thought the head belonged to the wife and killed the wife, mistaking her as the husband. Upon finding his wife murdered, the husband struggled to interpret the third divination, and consulted a neighbor who

was a well-read scholar. The scholar told the husband to go find a monk named Gang Chil-seong at a nearby temple, and the monk, whose name reflected the divination, turned out to be the murderer.

This tale is transmitted in several variations. In the first variation, the protagonist is given three divinations, “Take the wide road; If it’s ugly, say it’s pretty; If it welcomes you, crawl on your legs,” which he follows and overcomes crisis. In the second variation, the divinations are, “Do not tie the boat under the rock; Do not rinse the oil from hair; One *mal* of grains produces seven *mal* of grains,” to which several more divinations are added. The third variation is similar in plot to the classic novel *Jeongsugyeongjeon* (Tale of Jeong Su-gyeong), which incorporates the motif of the practice of groom abduction (*bossam*). In this version, the protagonist is framed of murder but proves his innocence through a divination that says that the murderer’s name is made up of “three whites of yellow paper,” interpreted as the name of a man name Hwang Baek-sam. The fourth variation features a uneducated protagonist learning to read, in the process of which the character 忍, meaning “to endure,” becomes his mantra, and facing a frustrating situation, he endures his anger



Fortuneteller's Divination from a collection of genre paintings by Gisan (reproduction). National Folk Museum of Korea

three times, and overcomes his crisis.

This narrative starts out from the fatalist view that one is born with a given fate, but the protagonist does not simply sit and wait for his fate but tries to overcome it, by means of paying three thousand coins, his entire possessions, to a fortuneteller for his divination. Running through the narrative is the popular belief that destiny can be overcome, reversed to build a happy life for oneself.

Animal Tale

동물담

This category of folk tales feature personified animals as the main characters.

The Korean tradition of animal tales goes back to Dangun myth, chronicled in *Samgungnyusa (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms)*, which features a bear and a tiger as mythological animals, competing inside a cave to become human. Other early publications of Korean animal tales include “Tale of Rabbit and Tortoise” in the chapter on Kim Yu-sin in *Samguksagi (History of the Three Kingdoms)*, and in Joseon, *Sunoji (Fifteen-Day Record)* documented many animal tales including “Groom for a Mole,” and “The Bat’s Role,” which is a version of the Aesop’s fable “The Birds, the Beasts, and the Bat.”

Korean animal tales can be divided into origin narratives, strategem narratives, narratives of returned favor, and otherworldly animal narratives.

Origin narratives generally focus on how an animal came to take on its physical features, from the tails of a tiger, rabbit or quail, to the specific features of catfish, crabs or monkeys. There are also tales about an animal’s cries. These biological features are explained from a strictly human perspective through imagination.

Strategem narratives depict weaker animals that use their wits to overthrow or triumph over stronger or dominating animals. One of the most widely known is the story of the rabbit who defeats a tiger

with its scheme. It can be read as a fool’s tale from the tiger’s point of view, but from the perspective of the rabbit, who is the weaker party, the focus is on the scheme that eventually leads it to triumph.

While other forms of animal tales exist outside of the animal tale category, narratives of returned favors are distinctive to the animal tale category, perhaps indicating that the dynamic involving returned favors can be captured more effectively when animals take the place of humans. There are myriad tales that feature a wide range of animals, each seeking to return the favor they received, including cat, dog, magpie, pheasant, stork, snake, toad, tiger, fish, mosquito and fly.

Narratives of otherworldly animals are similar to shape-shifting tales, and feature animals that are believed to possess otherworldly powers. These animals include foxes, tigers and serpents. Many animals in tales of returned favors also have otherworldly traits. These narratives can be understood as tales that have been developed within the tradition of totemism and animal god worship.

Animal tales are in the end stories about humans, told through the borrowed imagery and persona of animals. In other words, the animals in these tales make readers examine human behavior and emotions in a wide range of contexts, asking ultimate questions about human identity and subjectivity.

Animals Boast of Their Age

동물 나이 자랑

This animal fable narrates the story of animals competing over who is the oldest, which ends in the toad’s victory.

A long time ago, rabbit, turtle and toad were arguing over who was the oldest among them. Rabbit was the first to boast that he had been born during the time of the ancient celestial emperor Tianhuang. Then turtle offered that he had been born in the time of the

first creator Pangu, which far preceded Tianhuang's era. Toad, after listening to rabbit and turtle argue, began weeping. When the two animals asked toad why he was weeping, he kept on weeping, then finally said, hearing them mention Pangu and Tianhuang reminded him of his son, who died during the reign of Pangu, and his grandson, who died in Tianhuang's reign.

In some variations of this narrative, the contest expands beyond age and into various races, including rolling an earthenware steamer down the hill and catching it at the bottom; height comparison; contests on who is weaker with alcohol; who sees the sunrise first; river-crossing; and running.

The focus of the narrative is one the triumph of the weak, achieved through wisdom. The tale usually features three different animals engaged in three contests, and the winner is the last contestant, which is usually the toad. The last contestant can exercise his wisdom by listening to the other contestants prior to his own turn.

The earliest written version of this narrative can be found in the *Sipsongnyul* (Sarvāstivāda Vinaya) section of the Buddhist sutra *Goryeodaejanggyeong* (Goryeo Tripitaka), printed in Goryeo. This version features an elephant, monkey and a desert bird, and different variations in different country feature animals from their natural surroundings. The food that the animals fight over also varies: For example, the Korean version features rice cakes (*tteok*), while the Mongolian version features butter. These elements make the narrative a good reference for comparing the transmission of Buddhist tales in different countries, including Korea and Mongolia.

Archenemy Reborn as Son

아들로 태어난 원수

This tale narrates the story of a haunted spirit reborn as the sons of his archenemy, who take revenge by dying on the day of their success in the state

examination.

Narratives about the revenge of haunted spirits is found in the shamanic myth "Chasabonpuri (Origin of Underworld Messenger Chasa)" and the shamanic song "Jimgajegut (Ritual for Jimgaje)" from Hamgyeong Province. The motif of being reborn as the offspring of an enemy for the purpose of revenge appears in a wide range of narratives in the Korean oral tradition.

Three silk vendors were lodging at a tavern, when the tavern owner couple, greedy for the vendors' silk, killed all three of them and became rich. The couple went on to raise three beloved sons, who on the same day passed the state examinations but upon their return home, all died in front of their parents. The couple were so aggrieved that they asked the magistrate to investigate their deaths. The magistrate sent the messenger Gangnim to summon Jeoseungchasa (Messenger of the Underworld) and asked him what had happened, and the king of the underworld Yeomnawang explained that the three sons were reincarnations of the three silk vendors, seeking revenge for their deaths. Upon learning the truth, the magistrate ordered the execution of the couple. Jeoseungchasa, having witnessed Gangnim's intelligence, requested the magistrate permission to appoint him as the messenger of the underworld.

"Chasabonpuri" is an archetypal shamanic narrative of sending off the dead to the underworld, which serves as an importance reference for understanding how Koreans viewed death. In the tale "Janghwahongnyeon," the haunted spirits appear themselves in front of the magistrate to ask for their grievances to be resolved, where as in this narrative, the spirits take revenge into their own hands.

Auspicious Site for Heavenly Son

천자 명당

This geomancy tale narrates the story of a man of lowly status who buries his father in an auspicious

site and takes the throne as the emperor.

A farmhand working for a rich family had to find a burial site following the funeral for his deceased father. A renowned geomancer happened to stop by the rich family's house, where he asked the farmhand to get him an egg to examine a site that was believed to be auspicious. The farmhand went through the trouble of boiling the egg before bringing it to the geomancer, who went up the mountain in the middle of the night and buried the egg in the auspicious site. The farmhand had followed the geomancer to the mountain and he saw the geomancer sitting there waiting for a chicken to emerge from the site, since he did not know he had been given a boiled egg. When daybreak arrived and there still was no sign of a chicken, the geomancer wondered out loud how strange it was that nothing was happening at this auspicious site, reserved for the birth of an emperor of the great kingdom (*cheonja*, or *tianzi*, meaning "son of heaven"). Time passed and the geomancer was about to give up, when a rooster emerged from the under the ground where the egg had been buried and crowed. The geomancer told the rich master that it took time for the rooster to crow, but it was still proof that the site was auspicious, bound to give the master a son who would grow up to be the emperor of the great kingdom. The auspiciousness of the site had to be secured through a memorial rite that included a gold coffin and a sacrifice of one hundred brown bulls. The master, however, could not afford a gold coffin or a hundred bulls, and gave up the site. The farmhand asked the master to pass on the site to him, and after wrapping his father's body in flame grass (or gold-colored straw), carried it to the mountain on a bull with white (*baek*, homonym for the word for one hundred) ankles, to hold his father's funeral (or, in some versions, he offers as sacrifice one hundred lice, as big as bulls). After the funeral, the farmhand spreads a rumor that he would soon fly across the sky, and is arrested and taken to the king. While the farmhand made his appeal, the emperor

of the great kingdom also heard rumors about the farmhand and ordered his arrest. The farmhand had acquired by chance a fan that enabled him to fly and demonstrated its use to the emperor. The emperor wanted to try the fan and told the farmhand to sit in his throne. The farmhand showed the emperor how to use the fan to fly, but not how to stop, so the emperor was unable to return and the farmhand took the throne as emperor.

A variation of this tale is related to Joseon's founder Yi Seong-gye. There lived an orphan who made a difficult living as a diver who gathered seafood and had for many years been unable to hold a burial for his own father. A renowned geomancer was travelling across the country in search of a burial site for his father, when he arrived at the sea and spotted an auspicious site on the rock in the middle of the sea. He stood there hesitating, however, since the site was not easy to access, and the orphan, who had been playing nearby, asked the geomancer what was the matter. The geomancer asked the orphan about the rock (or Buddha status) underwater and when the orphan acknowledged it, the geomancer told him that it was a rare auspicious site, asking the orphan to bury his father's remains in the hole on the left side of the rock (or hang the the remains on Buddha's left ear). The orphan took along his own father's remains and buried them in the left-side hole, and the geomancer's father's remains in the right-side hole. The left hole was the site that would produce an emperor of the great kingdom (*cheonja*) and the right hole a king, and Yi Seong-gye, the geomancer's descendent, became the king of Joseon, while the orphan went to China and became emperor. It is notable that the auspicious site in this variation is located underwater. As in other versions, the protagonists possesses the ability and fortune to secure the site for himself to become the heavenly emperor, in contrast to the character and fortune of Yi, which reflects the public's perspectives on the heavenly emperor.

This narrative emphasizes the protagonist's

determination to pioneer his own destiny, which in reality is likely to be a fantasy to a poor farmhand or an orphan diver, who, in the tales, go to great lengths to take over the site that even a rich man gave up, with wit, determination and courage. In the first narrative, the farmhand uses wit and wordplay to substitute one hundred bulls for a bull with white ankles, and a golden coffin with a corpse wrapped in straw or flame grass to make it appear golden. The second narrative, on the other hand, justifies Yi Seong-gye's defeat as a result of revealing the secret of the auspicious site and offering of goodwill to the orphan. The plot moves from the discovery of the auspicious site to extortion of the site and acquisition of fortune, but the focus is on the ending, of the acquisition of the highest status possible for both the orphan diver and the geomancer's descendent.

The tale is a narrative of fortune pursuit, reflecting the desire of the people to rely on supernatural forces to realize dreams that are not attainable in reality.

Auspicious Tomb Site Promising Immediate Fortune

금시발복 명당

This tale narrates the story of a burial site that is so auspicious one's fortune is already in effect by the time he returns home from the funeral.

The belief, according to traditional geomancy (*pungsujiri*), that burying one's ancestors in an auspicious site brings good energy to descendents is related to the geomantic theory that good energy attracts and responds to good energy.

A competent geomancer was travelling to find an auspicious burial site when he sought lodging in the mountains at the home of a young charcoal maker. He was a poor bachelor, but he emptied his pantry to serve a good meal to the guest. It had been a while since he lost his parents, but he had

been too poor to find a good burial site. To repay the hospitality he received from the charcoal maker, the geomancer found an auspicious burial site for his parents, one that would bring him good fortune instantly (*geumsibalbok*). The following day, the charcoal maker held a funerary rite at the site recommended by the geomancer, and to prepare offerings for the ritual table, visits a rich widow in the neighboring village to ask for some rice. The widow had an auspicious dream the previous night and believing that they had been brought together by fate, proposed marriage to the charcoal maker. The two lived a long and rich life with many children.

Most variations of this narrative end with the protagonist's wedding, which indicates that a man's fortunes in life depended on his spouse.

The belief of geomancy was introduced to Korea by Doseon in late Unified Silla, and was adopted politically by Goryeo's founder Wang Geon. In Joseon's Confucian society, the belief was combined with ancestral worship and the emphasis of family honor, which gave birth to myriad folk narratives about auspicious sites (*myeongdang*) determining a family's fortune.

Geumsibalbok, or auspicious sites bringing instant good fortune, bring about an elevation in social status through the acquisition of wealth. While most geomancy tales center on securing good fortune for one's descendents, this type focuses on instant results, reflecting the dire reality of the low class for whom the next meal is more important than the fortunes of future generations.

Bamboo Shoots That Make Rice, Bamboo Shoots That Make Feces

쌀 나오는 죽순 똥 나오는 죽순

This tale narrates the story of a good brother who is rewarded with good fortune and a bad brother who

is punished. The narrative is based on the legend of Bangi from Silla, also called the legend of the golden bat (*geumchu*).

There lived two brothers, the younger of which was well-off, while the older, who supported their parents, was poor. With the Lunar New Year approaching, the older brother headed to the mountain to chop wood, saying to himself, “How am I going to prepare holiday food for my parents?” Just then, a log repeated his words, and the older brother took it to the market, where he sold it for one hundred coins. But the log no longer spoke and the new owner threw it out on the street. The older brother found the log and brought it home, where he buried it in the yard and bamboo shoots grew from the log, and from the shoots poured out rice, which made him rich. The younger brother heard about this from his older brother and acquired the same kind of log, which he sold at the market, only to be beaten up by the purchaser. He then brought the log home and buried it, from which grew bamboo shoots, but all that the shoots poured out was feces, piles and piles of it, which eventually buried and killed the younger brother.

This tale reflects the context of a society where the dominant status of the legitimate eldest son was no longer guaranteed. The older brother’s goodness indicates that he accepts and conforms to convention, while the younger brother resists it, and is thereby depicted as the bad one. The story brings to light brotherly values through the conflicts in character, over filial duty and material greed.

Big Bluffers

허풍선이

This droll tale narrates the story of two men from different regions engaging in a nonsensical contest of words.

A Seoul slicker and a Gyeongsangdo slicker

met for a contest of words at Yeongchang River in Miryang. Gyeongsangdo slicker asked where Seoul slicker was headed and he stepped inside the river, answering that he was headed to the banquet at Yonggung (Dragon Palace). After a long while, Seoul slicker emerged from the water, commenting that it was a grand banquet with wonderful delicacies, and handed his opponent chestnuts and jujubes that he claimed were from the banquet. Gyeongsangdo slicker, believing his opponent’s words, stepped inside the river but found nothing underwater, which marked his first defeat. Next Seoul slicker said he had to go buy a laundry stone that had been swept away by the wind, and his opponent said it had landed on a spider web in his yard, which marked his win in the second round.

Variations of this tale usually end in a tie, or Seoul slicker’s triumph after his opponent tries to imitate him. But variations that feature opponents from the plains and from the mountains, the contest always ends in a tie. The determining factor, in the end, is the protagonists’ place of origin, the tale reflecting the social hierarchy formed in different regions across Korea.

Blind Husband and Mute Wife

봉사 남편과 병어리 아내

This tale narrates a conversation between a blind husband and a mute wife comprising sexual references.

A long time ago, there lived a blind husband and a mute wife, and one day the husband heard someone yell that there was a fire and he sent the wife to go and see what happened. When the wife returned, the husband asked where the fire broke out, and the wife put his hand between her legs, and the husband understood that it was in a valley, a marsh, or an alley, varying according to different versions of the tale. The husband asked whose house was on fire,

and the wife kissed his mouth, which told him that it was house of Yeo, whose name, in Chinese character, was the image of two mouths put together. This time the husband asked how severe the damage was, and the wife grabbed his penis, which told him that all but a single column had burned down.

Different versions of this tale are identical in general plot and vary only slightly in the dialogue and the wife's action: The wife grabs the husband's penis and simulates weighing it on a scale, which tells him that it was the scale vendor's home that burned down, or she knocks on the gate, which tells him that it was the house of a man named Mun, a homonym for the word meaning "door." There is also a version in which the husband asks who was responsible for the fire, and the wife grabs the husband's testicles, which means that the husband had started the fire while grilling potatoes.

This narrative reflects a sense of optimism shared by the storyteller and the audience by creating laughter in a narrative about the disabled by using sexual references.

Blue Thread, Red Thread

청실홍실

This tale narrates the story of a man who witnesses an old man matchmaking men and women using blue and red threads and after learning of his own destined spouse, attempts to kill her to defy his fate, but in the end marries her.

A long time ago, an old bachelor was walking down the street when he noticed an elderly woman with silver hair tie two strings together and asked what she was doing, to hear that she was matchmaking. He asked who he was destined to marry and the woman answered that she was a young girl from a family on the other side of the mountain. Appalled, the bachelor tried to kill the young girl by throwing a rock at her and ran away.

Many years later, the bachelor was appointed as a magistrate and found himself a wife. At the wedding, the bride's forehead and cheeks were colored in red and that night when he asked about the coloring, the bride answered that she was trying to cover up a childhood wound she had from a rock that hit her. The groom realized that his bride was the little girl that he had hit with a rock, and realized that she was a match made in heaven.

It is believed that this tale originated from story of Yue Lao, or the Old Man Under the Moon, the Chinese deity that oversees marriage. In the Chinese version, the man rejects his match due to a difference in social status, but in the Korean version, in which the protagonist is an old bachelor, it is due to his impatience and lack of time that he rejects his match.

The tale reflects a fatalist view of life through the story of a man who tried to defy his fate by killing his destined match, an act that in the end brings them together. It also reflects the general notion that a match made in heaven brings not only a happy marriage but success and prosperity for generations to come.

Borrower of Another Man's Fortune

남의 복 빌려 산 사람

This tale narrates the story of a man destined for poverty, who visits the transcendental realm and acquires permission from a deity to borrow another man's fortune, which temporarily brings him a better life.

There was a man getting by by selling wood, and however hard he worked, his difficult life did not seem to get better. Determined to improve his life, he chopped three *jim* of lumber everyday and piled them up in his home, but every morning we awoke to find that the bundles had disappeared. To find out to was stealing his wood, the man decided to sit amidst the log bundles and watch. In

the middle of the night, a whirlwind started up and carried the bundles up to the heavens, along with the woodsman, who pleaded to Okhwangsangje (Great Emperor of Jade) to give him a better life. The Jade Emperor responded that while a man's fortune was pre-determined and could not be changed, he would take the woodsman's unfortunate circumstances into consideration and let him temporarily borrow the fortunes of a man named Chabok (meaning "borrowed fortune"), and that the woodsman should later return the fortune to him. Soon the woodsman became very rich. When time was almost running out on his borrowed fortune, a poor ceramic ware vendor and his wife visited and spent the night on their horse carriage, during which the wife gave birth to a son, and they named the baby Chabok. The woodsman decided to make his own son and Chabok blood brothers, and the two families lived together.

This narrative reflects the conflict between the fatalistic view of life and the possibility of reversing one's fate, offering a glimpse of a new way of thinking that allows one to move beyond fatalism. The good fortune that the woodsman is able to enjoy by inviting the owner of his good fortune to live with his family can be interpreted as the traditional belief that sharing one's good fortune with others helps spread it.

Boy Destined to Die Young Marries State Councillor's Daughter

삼정승 딸 얻은 단명소년

This tale narrates the story of a boy who, despite his destiny to die young, leaves home and marries the state councillor's daughter, which rids him of his bad fortune and brings him success.

A monk visited a rich home to request a donation, and the mother had her son pour some rice into the monk's sack. After receiving the donation, however, the monk would not leave, gazing into

the boy's face with regret and pity. Seeing this, the mother invited the monk inside and asked what was bothering him, to which he replied that the son was destined to die prematurely if he continued to live at home. The mother, shocked to hear this, asked for a way to save the boy, and the monk answered that the son should leave home and marry the state councillor's daughter. The boy's parents, unable to come up with a way to marry their son to the state councillor's daughter, became bedridden, unable to eat or drink. When the boy asked them what was the matter, his parents reluctantly told him about the monk's prophecy. After learning of his fate, the boy left home and after wandering the country, arrived in Seoul, where he stayed at the home of a red porridge (*patjuk*) vendor, who asked him why he was spending his days aimlessly. After hearing his story, the porridge vendor wanted to help him and asked her daughter, who worked as a maidservant at the cottage where the state councillor's daughters studied, to help out the boy. The maidservant hid the boy inside her skirt and took him to the cottage, where the boy explained his situation to the state councillor's daughters. They responded that human life should come before anything else and allowed the boy to hide in their room. Several days later, a huge tiger appeared outside the cottage and roared, but the councillor's daughters chased it away by reciting from *Zhouyi* (Book of Changes). The daughters taught the boy and helped him pass the state examination, upon which they explained what had happened to their parents and the boy was officially accepted as a son-in-law through marriage. The boy returned home with his three wives and lived happily.

The plot structure can be summarized as prophecy→ordeal→eradication of bad fortune→good fortune. The state councillor's daughters serve as shamans, female priests residing in a sacred space and capable of eradicating bad fortune by reciting from *Zhouyi*. The process of the boy's expulsion of bad fortune implies the structure and significance

of a rite of passage, from a minor to an adult of raised status, a male capable of proliferation through marriage.

The tale offers a picture of the ideal life in traditional Korea, which includes longevity, wealth, nobility, and proliferation of male offspring, and also reflects the belief that predestined fate can be reversed.

Boy Groom With a Mature Heart

속깊은 어린 신랑

This tale narrates the story of an older bride who scorned and belittled her younger groom, but when the groom covered up for her wrongdoing to protect her from her mother-in-law, grew to respect him.

A nineteen-year-old maiden wed a nine-year-old boy. When the boy groom nagged the bride to give him crispy rice instead of the steamed rice that she served him, the bride got upset and carried him to the roof, leaving him there. His mother asked him what he was doing there and he answered that he was picking squash and that he needed to know if he should pick a big one or a small one, which kept his bride out of trouble. Then one day the groom nagged the bride for beef, and the bride carried him to the cowshed and left him there. When his mother asked him what he was doing there instead of having dinner, the groom said he was cleaning the cowshed before eating, which again kept his bride out of trouble. From then on, the older bride treated the groom with respect.

This tale reflects the conflicts resulting from the custom of child marriage (*johon*), including practices like *minmyeoneuri* (prospective daughter-in-law) and *derilsawi* (prospective son-in-law), that involved the children of poor families or those of declining social status. The boy groom's wise actions in the tale is an expression of the public's determination to overcome the shortfalls of such practices.

Bride Gives Birth on Wedding Night

첫날밤에 아이 낳은 신부

This tale narrates the story of a bride who gave birth on her wedding night and the groom who took care of her, their marriage turning into a happy one and their family achieving success and prosperity.

The bride gave birth on her wedding night and the groom tore the bedding (or clothing) to wrap the baby. After taking the baby outside to hide it by the road, the groom returned and told his mother-in-law that he had a craving for seaweed soup, which he brought to his bride to help her recover from delivery. Early the following morning, the groom brought the baby in the house, pretending that he had found it by the road, and raised the baby with his bride. Only after many years the husband asked the wife how she had become pregnant. The family achieved success in public office and prosperity.

The above summary is from the anthology *Gyeammannok (Miscellaneous Record of Mundane Writings)*, with many other oral and written versions transmitted, varying in the latter half of the plot. A version in the anthology *Yangeuncheonmi (Revelation of Tales Unhard)* depicts the husband lamenting to his fellow scholars that he had not been rewarded despite practicing goodwill, as the Confucian classics had taught him. This was overheard by the king, who made the anecdote the topic in the state examination in order to help the husband pass the exam to be appointed to public office. The many oral variations, one of which is transmitted as the progenitor tale of the Hanyang Jo clan, focus on the baby growing up to return the favor he received from his stepfather.

There are other tales in the Korean folk tradition of men rewarded for taking in women in crisis, including the story of Jeong Tae-hwa, who was destined to die young but extended his life by taking in a beggar maiden as his concubine, documented in *Geumgyepildam (Tales from Geumgye)*; and the story of Yi Hui-gap, who, upon the death of a

lovesick woman, buries her in his family plot as his concubine, and is praised by his father that his action will bring good fortune to the family. The epic folk song “Gangsildoryeong (Bachelor Gangsil),” from Honam region, is a caricature account of a similar story, with the bride demanding seaweed soup following her delivery and asking the groom to name the infant.

The groom’s caring for the bride who has given birth is an act of generosity, tolerance, and sympathy for the pain of others, which he was capable of practicing regardless of how others would view it, thanks to his internal power to love freely. The success that the groom’s family achieves reflects the public’s anticipation that such virtues would be practiced not only in the home but in society.

Bride Relieves Herself on Wedding Night

첫날밤에 똥싼 신부

This tale narrates the story of a groom who uses his wit to dominate his overpowering bride on their wedding night.

A long time ago there lived a strong-minded woman whom no man wanted to marry. A bachelor came forth, volunteering to marry her, and on their wedding night, the groom secretly placed his own feces inside the bride’s underwear. In the morning, the groom chided, “Whoever heard of a bride relieving herself in bed on her wedding night!” And since then, whenever the bride showed her domineering attitude, the groom would say, “What have you got to say as a woman who relieved herself on wedding night!” Many years passed as they had and raised children, and at his 60th birthday (*hwangap*) banquet the husband told his wife that it had been him who had planted the feces in her underwear in order to dominate his strong-minded bride. Upon hearing this, his wife became angry and pulled out every strand of the husband’s beard.

Tales about taming someone through witty schemes or tricks focus on the humor of the method used, reflecting the public’s desire to solve difficult problems through wit and intelligence.

Bride With No Hands

손 없는 색시

This tale tells the story of how a maiden, whose hands are cut off and is thrown out of her home by the plotting of her stepmother, recovers through marriage and motherhood, and forms a happy family for herself.

A maiden who lost her mother was accused by her plotting stepmother of being pregnant and having attempted to abort the pregnancy using a rat, upon which her father cut off her hands and threw her out of the house. While wandering without a sense of direction, the maiden climbs up a tree to bite off the pears with her mouth, when a young scholar notices and rescues her. He kept her hidden inside the closet to take care of her, and when his parents find out, he married the maiden. While her husband was away to take his state examination, the bride gave birth to a son, but the stepmother fabricated the birth announcement letter, and the bride is thrown out of her in-laws’ with her baby. The bride arrived at a well where she leaned in to fetch a drink of water, and the baby fell into the well, upon which the bride stretched out her arms to catch the baby, and her hands grew back in an instant. The bride found lodging at an old woman’s house, where she worked as a weaver, and soon she was reunited with her husband, who had been wandering the country in search for her, and her stepmother was punished.

This tale is structured as a rite-of-passage narrative, of a persecuted maiden redeemed through marriage and childbirth. The stepmother in the story can be interpreted to reflect the new dynamic between the mother and the daughter as

the daughter begins her menstrual cycle, which marks the beginning of her rebirth as a mother and independence as a grown woman. It is notable that the narrative comprises elements of the supernatural and mythological symbols like severed hands, the pear tree, and the well: When the father cuts off the daughter's hands, the severed hands fly into the sky, or are carried away by birds, and they also grow back like magic; the pears represent food from nature, signifying that the heroine is returning to the maternal care of nature, and the pear tree can be interpreted as a *cosmic tree* (*ujumok*), which serves as the passage to a transcendental realm; and the well, or water, symbolizes healing and recovery, productivity and fertility, and the path of return from the world of the dead.

While most other stepmother tales conclude with the stepdaughter's wedding to a good man, which marks her overcoming of ordeals, in this tale, the narrative expands into childbirth and motherhood, which can be understood as a woman's second coming-of-age in life, a social initiation rite that follows her wedding and requires her to creatively adapt to the new order of her in-laws' family.

Bridge of Filial Piety-Impiety

효불효다리

This tale narrates the story of seven brothers who build a bridge for their widowed mother's nightly outings.

The story is recorded in *Donggukyeojiseungnam* (*Augmented Survey of the Geography of the Eastern Kingdom*) under the title "Bridge in Gyeongju," transmitted in Gyeongju in association with a local bridge.

In the kingdom of Silla, there lived a widowed mother of seven sons who each night visited her lover in the village on the other side of the river while her sons were asleep. The sons, thinking,

"How can we as sons be at peace when our mother is crossing the water in the dark each night?" held a discussion and decided to build a stone bridge. Upon learning of this, their mother felt shame and corrected her behavior, and the bridge came to be called Bridge of Filial Piety-Impiety.

In the oral tradition, the bridge is also called Chilseonggyo (Seven Stars Bridge) or Chilgyeo, to reflect that it is made of seven stones. In oral versions of the tale, there is no mention of the mother correcting her behavior, continuing her visits until her death, which demonstrates a vastly different attitude from the documented version. While the latter emphasizes the Confucian virtue of chastity, unaccepting of a widow's loss of integrity, the former reflects a compassionate view that transcends Confucian ideology.

The name Bridge of Filial Piety/Impiety allows the interpretation that building a bridge for their widowed mother can be an act of filial impiety from a moral perspective, but at the same time an act of filial piety when considering their mother's human desires. The tale is believed to be based on the myth of Chilseong (Seven Stars), the seven sons who, after building a bridge for their mother's nightly outings, become Bukdunchilseong (Seven-Star Dipper of the North; Ursa Major). The productivity embodied by the mother's character, maintaining a strong sexual appetite after giving birth to seven sons is associated with the fertility and prosperity represented by female goddesses. The universality of this tale lies in the deep affection shared by the mother and the sons.

Broad-Minded Husband

도량 넓은 남편

This tale narrates the story of a husband who, after witnessing his wife engaged in adultery, forgives them both and later achieves success in life.

A long time ago, two state ministers held an engagement for their son and daughter before they were born, but after both ministers died, the son's household fell into decline, and the daughter wed a man from another family. Upon hearing news of her marriage, the son disguised himself as a woman vendor selling women's items and visited her home, where her mother-in-law, impressed with the vendor's beauty, invited the vendor to stay in her daughter-in-law's room, to offer her company while the husband was away to pursue his studies. The vendor revealed his true identity and the two engaged in intimate affairs, and a few days later one of the servants found out that the vendor was a man, and alerted the husband to return. The husband stomped into his wife's room and tore the vendor's clothes with his sword, revealing that he was a man, but when he emerged from the room, he told the family that the vendor was a woman and there was no need for concern. Many years later the man encountered the husband in the king's court and expressed his gratitude, upon which the husband expressed disappointment at the man for being small-minded. The husband would go on to be a more accomplished public official than the man.

This tale depicts a man of magnanimity, forgiving of his adulterous wife and her lover in a patriarchal society that stressed a woman's chastity over all else. Through forgiveness, the husband prevented the disintegration of family and allowed a new path in life for those involved, perhaps the most ideal response possible in human relationships. The plot, of a husband forgiving his wife and her lover at the scene of their affair, is often compared to the story of Cheoyong, documented in *Samgungyusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*), despite the difference in the implied political and social circumstances. Both narratives reflect the Korean mindset, which views the husband's response as an exercise of noble character.

Brotherly Love and Compassion

의좋은 형제

This tale narrates the story of two brothers who had great love and compassion for each other.

There lived in a village two brothers who farmed on separate land. As fall arrived, the brothers each harvested their rice and stacked up the straw. The elder brother thought that since the younger brother was newly married, he would need more rice, so he sneaked out to the field in the middle of the night and moved some of his straw to his brother's stack. That same night, the younger brother had the thought that his brother would need more rice since he had a bigger family, so he sneaked out to the field and moved some of his straw to his brother's stack. The following day the two brothers went out to the field and were shocked to find their straw stacks unchanged. They once again moved their straw that night and again found the stacks unchanged, and it



The Tale of Brotherly Love and Compassion in *Chōsen*
dokuhon (vol. 5). Japanese Government-General, 1934,
National Folk Museum of Korea

was only the following night that they realized what had happened.

Another tale that involves brotherly love and rice is “Compassion Between Sisters-in-Law,” about two brothers, the elder rich and the younger poor. After the harvest, their mother poured rice from the elder brother’s batch to the younger brother’s, but the younger brother’s wife took it back to the elder brother’s, which moved the elder brother’s wife. She set up a plan and gave the rice back to the younger brother’s wife, saying it should be used to make wine for the younger brother’s birthday. During the birthday banquet, she got her husband extremely drunk, and handed over the deed for a hundred *majigi* of rice paddy to the younger brother. When her husband awoke, the wife lied to him that he instructed her to hand over the land, which her husband was quick to accept and the brotherly ties became stronger as the family prospered.

This tale is transmitted around the country in myriad variations, based on the most archetypal narrative structure about brotherly love, and serves as a significant reference about the Confucian virtues upheld by the Korean society.

Brothers Throw Away Gold

형제투금

This tale of brotherly love narrates the story of two brothers who find gold on the road but decide to throw it away to preserve their relationship.

In Korea, this narrative was first documented in “Tale of Dutiful Friend Jeong Yu” in *Goryeosa* (*History of Goryeo*), and later in other books including *Goryeosajeoryo* (*An Abridged History of Goryeo*), with many versions found in the oral tradition as well. The folk tale collection *Tianzhongji* (*All Within Heaven*) from Ming China records this narrative as a tale from Joseon that influenced Chinese narratives, under the title, “Gold Is an Inauspicious Object.”

However, *Făyuàn Zhūlín* (*Forest of Gems in the Garden of the Dharma*), from Tang China, which precedes *Tianzhongji*, includes a tale similar to that in *Goryeosa*, citing as its source the Buddhist scripture *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra* (*Great Treatise on the Perfection of Wisdom*) by Nagarjuna (384-417), translated into Chinese by Kumarajiva of Later Qin.

In the reign of King Gongmin of Goryeo, two brothers were on the road together when the younger brother found two gold nuggets on the ground and gave one to the older brother. They came across Yangcheon River (currently Gongam Wharf in Gimpo) and as they crossed the river on a boat, the younger brother threw his gold nugget in the river. When the older brother asked why, the younger brother answered, “I have always loved you dearly, but now after sharing the gold with you, I was suddenly overcome with resentment. This tells me that gold is an inauspicious object, better to be thrown away in the river.” The older brother responded, “You are indeed correct,” and threw his gold nugget in the water as well.

While the theme of this tale has been borrowed from Buddhist narratives from *Făyuàn Zhūlín* and *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra*, it has been filtered through a Confucian worldview. In Buddhism, it is believed that the desire realm is the primary source that leads humans to the Three Lower Paths, comprising beings in hell, pretas, and animals, and that the most important of the Six Paramitas—generosity, virtue, patience, energy, focus and wisdom—is generosity, or *dana*. Greed and miserliness blocks the way of goodness, and giving with a generous spirit blocks the way of evil. Generosity is practiced both as a material gift and a spiritual gift, the former of which is depicted in the Buddhist narratives. The Korean narrative “Tale of Dutiful Friend Jeong Yu,” however, emphasizes brotherly love. Jeong Yu was a historical figure who fought with his brother against the invading Japanese to protect their father. The younger brother died in battle after rescuing their father, and Jeong Yu,

in recognition of his contributions, was appointed to public office. As models of the Confucian ideal, Jeong and his brother were documented as part of official history to emphasize the Confucian virtue of brotherly love.

Brotherhood involves both intimacy and rivalry and this tale, while portraying the conflict that can arise between brothers, concludes that brotherly love must not be damaged by material greed.

Butcher's Daughter Born With Good Fortune

복 타고난 백정의 딸

This tale emphasizes the belief that good fortune relies on individual fate and not social class, and can also be supplemented through marriage.

A long time ago, there lived in Seoul a state councillor who had a son as an only child. The councillor, who was gifted in physiognomy, could tell that his son was born with the fate of a beggar. So he travelled the country and found a lowly butcher's daughter who was born with good fortune to be his daughter-in-law. After the councillor's death, however, the son expelled his wife from his home. On the road, the wife met a young charcoal maker and discovered gold at his kiln, and the two became rich. The wife followed her father-in-law's last words and held a banquet for beggars, where she reunited with her husband and returned to her marriage with her riches.

A variations of this tale narrates the story of a poor man from a family that had once belonged to the noble class, who went to the market leaving his pregnant wife at home, and on his way home, fell asleep on the road. In his dream, he overheard the goddess of childbirth *Samsin* say that his wife had given birth but because she did not offer hospitality to the goddess, his son had been given very little good fortune, while their butcher neighbor had treated the goddess very well and their daughter was given a great amount of good fortune. After his son

grew up, the poor man married him to the butcher's daughter.

The tale is based on the fatalistic view that one is destined to live according to one's given fortune, while at the same time, it also shows through the process of realizing one's good fortune through ordeals, that good fortune and bad fortune are two sides of the same coin.

Butcher's Son Passes the State Examination

과거 급제한 백정 아들

This tale narrates the story of a butcher's son who passed the state examination and entered public office, overcoming his limits within a strict caste system.

A butcher had a genius son, but his lowly status in the caste system did not permit his son an opportunity for education. The butcher thought of a plan and delivered a gift of rice and meat to a respected teacher at the local academy. Moved by the gift, the teacher offered to grant the butcher's wish and the butcher asked him to teach his son. The teacher began giving the butcher's son secret private lessons at night, and the butcher's son eventually applied to the state exams in the name of the teacher's son, and achieved successful results. The Chief State Councillor (Yeonguijeong) was impressed with the butcher's son's performance and wanted him for his son-in-law. Upon hearing about his son's success, the butcher came to visit him in Seoul, but fearing that his son's true identity would be revealed, the butcher and his son made plans to meet in secret. The butcher's son sneaked out in the middle of the night to meet his father, but his wife followed him, and after overhearing their conversation, learned the truth, which also reached the Chief State Councillor. They both condoned the situation, however, and later the Councillor educated the butcher in the ways of the aristocratic class, and the butcher was eventually

able to lead the life of an aristocrat.

The narrative reflects the society of late Joseon, when tremendous shifts began to take place in the traditional caste system. The tale's depiction of the butcher's son borrowing the identity of someone from a higher class to acquire a government position implies the recognition that class status does not determine the traits and potentials that one is born with.

Carnal Tale

육담

Yukdam, or carnal tales, take as their subject topics related to sex, including genitalia, sexual intercourse and sex life.

In Joseon, carnal tales, as with pornographic paintings called *chunhwa* ("flower pictures") were mostly enjoyed in private but some were collected, by both anonymous authors and renowned scholars, in books like *Gogeumsochong* (*Assorted Collection of Ancient Humor*). Joseon's Confucian literati claimed that "it is useful for a scholar to chase away sleep with these carnal tales so that he may concentrate on books by saints and sages," and that "while political talk can turn a scholar into a political enemy and bring about damage, carnal tales do harm to no one and can help relieve the desire for chatter."

Carnal tales can be categorized according to subject.

The first type focuses on genitalia, an example of which is "Hangorong (Old Man Laments His Bone)." An old man married off his eldest daughter to a twenty-year-old bachelor; his second daughter to a forty-year-old, due to a decline in the household; and his third daughter to a fifty-year-old as he became even poorer. His three married daughters gathered at their parents one day and the eldest daughter said that the man's organ was a "bone," while the second daughter said

it was "flesh" and the third daughter "leather." Upon hearing this, the old man lamented, "How regrettable that I am unable to allow my second and third daughters the taste of bone!" Another example is "Catching a Glimpse of a Maiden's Private Parts," in which Kim Seon-dal, who was walking past with a friend, said to a maiden washing laundry by the stream, "I have orders from the authorities to arrest you for having two private parts. Follow me," and the maiden, trying to prove her innocence, took off her clothes.

The second type is about sexual intercourse. In "Socks for Confucius," the groom on his wedding night says to his bride as they reach ecstasy, "This experience is the way devised by Confucius," and his bride says, "I shall offer a pair of socks to Confucius to express my gratitude." In "In-Laws Switch Cows," a man takes his cow to the market to buy an ox and his in-law takes his ox to the market to buy a cow, so they trade their animals, and get drunk together, and in the morning they find themselves in bed with their respective in-laws' wives.

The third type revolves around the motif of fulfilling sexual desire. In "Wish of Mother and Daughters," a mother and two daughters are fulling laundry together when the eldest daughter, past a marriageable age, says "I wish it (penis) would fall from the ceiling by the sackful," and the second daughter says, "Make it two sackfuls, one for me," and their mother says, angrily, "And none for me? Make it three sackfuls."

There are also carnal tales based on puns and other word play elements.

In the Korean folk tradition, carnal tales adopt a style that is plainspoken and ambiguous, using analogies and indirect sexual references. Devoid of explicit or graphic expression, the tales could be understood and accepted by all age groups across the social spectrum. Tales of mistakes or embarrassing situations caused by sexual ignorance or misunderstanding also served as a means of educating a young audience. But most of all carnal

tales served as a form of stimulating and humorous entertainment for all age groups.

Carp Returns Favor

잉어의 보은

This tale narrates the story of man who saves the life of a carp, who turns out to be Yongwang (Dragon King) or his son or grandson, for which the man is rewarded.

The narrative of a dragon returning a favor he received dates back to “Tale of Geotaji” in *Samgungnyusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*) and “Tale of Jakjegeon” in *Goryeosa* (*History of Goryeo*), which have been transmitted in myriad variations throughout history. In the Korean folk tradition, the carp is a dragon in transformation and symbolizes success, nobility and filial piety.

A wood charcoal vendor caught a big carp, but felt pity for the fish and let it go. One day the carp reappeared and took the vendor to Yonggung (Dragon Palace). The carp turned out to be the Dragon King’s son and the king had invited the man who had saved his son’s life. The prince knew that the king was planning to reward the vendor with a gift and told the vendor not to take interest in the other treasures and take only what the prince pointed out. As he had been told, the vendor disregarded everything else and asked if he could have a small ring. The king hesitated at first but presented the vendor with the ring, and the charcoal vendor, upon returning to the human world, married the Dragon King’s daughter, who had come inside the ring, and they lived on happily.

The protagonist, while lacking in the wisdom or drive to overcome his ordeals, possesses the capacity to feel sympathy for those in trouble or for helpless creatures, which allows him to perform good deeds. In addition, he does not anticipate his good deeds will be rewarded, which in the end brings him good fortune.

Centipede and Serpent Compete to Ascend to the Heavens

지네와 구렁이의 승천다툼

This tale narrates a competition between a centipede and a serpent to ascend to the heavens, in the course of which a poor man sets up house with the centipede woman, who, with help from the man, ascends, or becomes a human.

A man who is in despair as he is unable to provide for his wife and children went up a mountain to die, and encountered a woman, who persuaded him not to die, inviting him to live with her. He relented and lived with the woman in her house in the mountain, receiving great hospitality. However, the man became worried about his family (or the date for his father’s memorial rite approached) and wanted to head back home, and the woman first tried to stop him, but when the man insisted, the woman reluctantly let him go, but warned him “not to listen to another person” while on the road. When the man arrived back at home, he learned that the family was doing well with help received from the woman in the mountain. As he headed back, into the mountains the man encountered one of his deceased ancestors, who told him that the woman was a centipede, and that they could eradicate her by “spitting tobacco (or rice grains).” Upon returning, the man could not bring himself to kill the centipede, as he had received too much from the woman. The woman thanked the man, saying, “The ancestor you met on your way back is actually a serpent competing with me to ascend to the heavens, and now thanks to you, I will be able to ascend to the celestial world.” The serpent, on the other hand, was unable to make the ascension, or died. The man became rich with help from the centipede woman and lived happily.

There are several variations of this tale with different endings. The summary above ends with the centipede’s ascension, and in this type the centipede is a woman and the serpent is man, but

sometimes this is reversed, and their competition originates from sins committed in the celestial world, for which they have been sent down to the human world. Another type of ending is the centipede choosing to stay in the human world and live with the man, which emphasizes the sexual contact between the two rather than the centipede's virtuous deed of saving the man's life. In another type, the centipede's ascension fails due to the man's ingratitude, and the narrative ends with the centipede's death or disappearance. This occurs because the man secretly finds out the centipede's identity, with the meaning that if the sanctity of an otherworldly being is revealed, it destroys its relationship with the human.

In the Korean folk tradition, dragon deities have been reduced over time from dragon to the monster serpent *imugi* to serpent and to centipede. In most dragon-snake narratives, the dragon or serpent, in the course of his acquisition of the magic bead *cintamani* for its ascension, demands sexual contact with a woman, but in this tale, the centipede is required to save a human life as a condition for the ascension, which results in the emphasis of the competition between the centipede and the serpent.

From the viewpoint of the man, what makes the centipede's ascension possible in the end is the gratitude he feels for the woman, albeit a centipede woman, for saving his life and supporting his family, and the human bond and trust created between them as husband and wife, which reflects the importance placed on the marital bond in the society at the time.

This story has elements of the marriage-with-otherworldly-being narrative, the shapeshifting tale, and the dragon-snake tale. In Korean culture, the dragon and the monster serpent *imugi*, both a type of water deity, change over time into centipedes and spiders, going from creatures capable of ascension on their own, to creatures needing others' help, with an accompanying decline of the creature's sanctity.

Chasing Away the Thief With a Story

이야기로 쫓은 도둑

This tale tells of a story whose contents by chance coincide with the actions of a thief, which scares him away.

There lived in a remote village an elderly couple. One day the old wife felt bored and asked her husband to go buy her a story. As the husband set out with some hemp cloth to pay for the story, he met a man working in the field and asked the worker to sell him a story. The worker, unable to come up with one, saw a stork and described the bird "leaping to the ground" then "peeking here and there" then "picking up something to eat" something, then "gazing" down at the ground. The husband paid the worker and was telling the story to his wife when a thief, with his mind on stealing their cauldron, leaped over the fence and after peering here and there, picked up boiled red beans from the cauldron to eat, then gazed into the room, which coincided with the story that he was overhearing and made him panic and run away.

In variations of this story, the husband buys the story from a salt vendor who visits the house, or a student learns the story from a proxy teacher and chases the thief away while reciting the tale at home. In other versions, the animal observed in the field is a heron, pheasant or toad. There is also a version in which the thief appears again the next day, pretending to be a vendor selling meat or fruit, to observe whether the couple knows what happened, and again he mistakes the couple's words as indicating awareness of his theft, and runs away.

There is an adage, "You will end up poor if you like stories," which means that indulging in stories can make one unproductive in work, but this tale rebuts this saying by portraying storytelling as an act that can bring practical gain.

Chastity Tale

열행담

Yeolhaengdam, or chastity tales, are narratives about women maintaining their chastity and fidelity.

Chastity tales in Korea date back to the tale “Wife of Domi,” documented in the “Biographies” section of *Samguksagi* (*History of the Three Kingdoms*), in which the eponymous heroine preserves her marital fidelity in the face of King Gaeru’s seduction. Since then a wide range of chastity tales have been transmitted orally and through written words.

The term “*yeollyeo*,” or chaste woman, was first coined in the section titled “Yeollyeojon (Tales of Chaste Women)” in *Goryeosa* (*History of Goryeo*), which comprises stories of women who took their own lives to defend against the assault of foreign invaders. Other chastity tales found in written literature include narratives of women from noble families maintaining their chastity for the sake of righteousness and fidelity; of courtesans maintaining their chastity for men who have left after an affair; and of maidservants resisting the demands of sexual service from their masters for the sake of fidelity.

In the oral tradition, chastity tales take on a broader scope to include women who engage in a physical relationship with another man to save their husbands, which in effect means they maintain faithfulness on a mental level. Folk tales on the subject of chastity also offer a critique of the ideology of chastity through satirical portrayals of a widow’s struggles to maintain her chastity and the social pressure on young widows to stay celibate as a means to preserve the vested interests of the aristocracy.

Cheep-cheep-cluck-cluck

삐악삐악꼬꼬

“Ppiakppiakkkokko,” the title of which is made up

of a set of onomatopoeia of sounds made by chicks and chicken, is a tale about a couple with many children all living together in one room, who made up a secret code as signal for sexual intercourse, but are found out by the children.

A husband and wife lived in one room with five children. They slept with the children between them, which made it difficult to engage in sex. The husband, finding the situation unbearable, suggested that when he signaled “*Ppiak ppiak*,” like a baby chick cheeping, and headed left, the wife should respond, “*Kkokko*,” like a hen clucking, and head right, so they could meet halfway. One night, as the husband sent his signal and crawled left, he stepped on the youngest child’s foot, which made the child cry, and his older brother told him to stop crying, that he was already having a hard time sleeping, with mother and father going around the room for the twelfth time.

In a variation of this tale, the husband and wife simply go around and around looking for each other, without mention of the clucking signal. This version was probably transmitted by someone interested in only the humor of the couple’s situation, and not in the mode of communication devised by the couple, based on consensus, which in fact is the most important aspect of the story.

The tale also reflects the poverty and hardships endured by the people.

Child Catches Thief

도둑 잡은 아이

This tale narrates the story of a wise child who uses his wits to catch a thief.

A child from a poor family was headed to his maternal grandparents, carrying one *mal* of rice on his back, when an old woodsman snatched the sack of rice from him. The child grabbed the old man’s ax and struck his back, which pushed the old man

into a pit. The child sought lodging for a night in a cabin in the mountain, and it turned out the cabin belonged to the old woodsman. The old man began sharpening his dagger after checking that the child was in bed. The child tricked the old man's son into changing places with him and the old man pierced the dagger through the bedding and killed his own son underneath. The old man hid his dead son's body inside a bundle of firewood and took it to a rich man's home, with an aim to frame him. The child, in the mean time, returned home with the rice that the old man had stolen, and made rice cakes to sell outside the magistrate's office. One day he saw the old woodsman arrive at the magistrate's office with the rich couple who had been accused of murdering the old man's son. The child testified to the magistrate to clear the rich couple of the crime of which they had been accused, and the rich man gave land to the child for a better life.

A variation of this tale features a child who was left home alone, and when a thief tries to steal their cow, he tells the thief that his father is also a cow thief, capable of disguising cows, a lie that tricks the thief into getting arrested.

The child in the tale is capable of using his wits to escape danger and to solve difficult problems. He may not be a hero of extraordinary capacities, but he is capable of subverting the existing order dominated by adults and the powerful, and the child's triumph represents the triumph of the weak, a typical motif found in folk narratives.

Child Who Could Understand Birds

새의 말을 알아 듣는 사람

This tale narrates the story of a child who gets into trouble for his ability to understand birds but uses that very ability to overcome the crisis.

A child who could understand birds heard a crow caw by the road, saying, "I see meat over there." The

child headed in that direction and found a corpse. Shocked, he turned around, when a man appeared and accused him as the murderer who had returned to the scene of the crime. The child explained that he had simply come after hearing what the bird said, but no one believed him and had to stand trial at the magistrate's office. The magistrate decided to test if the child was telling the truth by taking a baby swallow from its nest and hiding it inside his sleeve, then asking the child what the mother bird was saying. The child listened and said that the mother bird was saying, "Why did you put my baby inside your sleeve?" The magistrate concluded that the child could indeed understand birds and that he was not the murderer. The child would later travel to China, where he solved a problem given by the emperor and as a reward was appointed as the governor of Pyeongyang.

This tale reflects the human desire for extraordinary abilities and talent, suspicions that such abilities attract from society and the desire for success in life. The child's ability to understand animals implies that he communicates and interacts with nature, as humans do in the realm of mythology.

Cinder Sweeper

재복데기

"Jaebokdegi" is a fantasy tale of a child who leaves home and works in another family's home, overcoming his fate to die and in the end achieving success in life by acquiring a vest and a bamboo flute, which enable him to fly.

A long time ago, a stepmother carried out a scheme to kill her stepson, but the boy was rescued by a butcher and taken to a state councillor's house where he was given work as a cinder sweeper (*jaebokdegi*), tending to the kitchen hearth and scooping out the ashes. One day, the boy went to the mountain to gather wood and acquired from a Taoist ascetic a vest

and a six-holed bamboo flute (*tungso*), which gave him the ability to fly. When the councillor's family was invited to a banquet, the cinder sweeper boy used these acquired objects to fly to the banquet, where people welcomed him, believing he was a Taoist high official (*seongwan*) who had descended from the heavens, and they offered him great hospitality. The councillor's youngest daughter left a mark on the official and upon returning home, confirmed that the cinder sweeper was a celestial official. In the meantime, the king passed away and his subjects decided that the person who was able to make a straw bell ring would succeed the throne. When the cinder sweeper tried, the straw bell rang and he was made king, upon which he married the councillor's youngest daughter.

In some variations of the tale, the boy leaves home to escape his fate of being eaten by a tiger or dying young, or because he loses his home. The title that the protagonist is given in the councillor's home varies according to his role, each related to housekeeping or kitchen duties: "*maridungi*," meaning floor polisher; "*agungijigi*," meaning hearth fire keeper; "*sinbadagi*," which literally means "shoe soles," and refers to the two daughters hitting of the boy with their shoes. The bamboo flute that the protagonist receives as a divine object not only enables him to fly but also solves many problems for him with its various functions: When blown from one end, the flute helps the boy escape death, and when blown from the other end, it makes the boy king. The method that the councillor's youngest daughter uses to identify the celestial official also varies, including marking the collar of his robe with a drop of blood, or cutting off a piece of fabric from his coat.

The ordeals that the protagonist endures as a cinder sweeper after leaving home is a time of extinguishing a heteronomous life and cleansing the past, a rite of passage that leads to one's rebirth as a liberated and autonomous being, an adult and true owner of one's life. The divine objects that he

acquires—vest, flute, or fan—are symbolic tools that help manifest and integrate his internal spiritual energies, enabling him to connect with the cosmos. And the cinder sweeper's enthronement as king and marriage to the councillor's daughter, possessing the discerning eye to immediately recognize his value, signifies the completion of the protagonist's self-realization.

Coin That Turned Into an Evil Ghost

사귀가 된 엽전

This tale narrates the story of long-buried coins or gold nuggets that turn into vicious ghosts (*sagwi*), but are defeated by a courageous wayfarer who also rescues a rich maiden.

A wayfarer was travelling through a mountain path when night fell and he arrived at a tile-roofed house, occupied by a maiden. The wayfarer asked for lodging for the night, and the maiden said that each night ghosts appeared and killed her family one by one, and that on this night it would be her turn, urging the wayfarer to turn back. The wayfarer, however, said he would chase away the ghosts. Deep in the night, a throng of ghosts appeared and threatened the maiden, at which point the wayfarer flung a large mortar at the ghosts, which made them run away while they explained that they were coins buried underground in a jar for many generations and had now turned into ghosts, asking the wayfarer to dig out the jar and distribute the coins to villagers. When morning arrived, the wayfarer woke the maiden, who had fainted, and dug out the jar of coins, instructing the maiden to hand out the coins to the villagers. The maiden offered the remainder of the coins to the wayfarer and asked him to take her into his care, and the two wed and loved happily.

Different variations of the tale features protagonists of a range of different identities and occupations, including a scholar travelling to take his

state examination, boatsman, servant of a rich family or even a specific name, Jangbyeongsa (Soldier Jang), their common trait being courage. In some versions, the ghosts threaten to kill the rich maiden's groom with an awl during the wedding ceremony, or to kill her if she picks wild berries and eats them.

It is assumed that this tale came to be told as part of a campaign to discourage burying one's money, which prevents circulation, and to encourage the sharing of one's wealth.

Compassion Between Sisters-in-Law

의좋은 동서

This tale narrates the story of the wife of an elder brother who, impressed with the honesty of the wife of her husband's younger brother, hands over her husband's land deed to his brother, which brings wealth to the entire family. The narrative emphasizes brotherly love by focusing on the relationship between their wives, and also highlights the notion that familial harmony depends on how well the wives get along. It is assumed that the narrative came to be formed in late Joseon, following the establishment of a firm patriarchal order.

There lived two brothers, the elder rich and the younger poor. When spring arrived, the wife of the younger brother went over to the elder brother's house to dry rice grains in the yard. While the elder sister-in-law was not looking, their mother-in-law poured rice from the elder brother's straw mat to the younger brother's, but the younger brother's wife took home only rice grains that she had brought, putting the rest back onto the elder brother's mat. The elder brother's wife witnessed this and after getting her husband extremely drunk, she took their land deed and handed it to the younger brother. Her husband, upon waking, asked what happened, and his wife told him to ask his brother, who answered that the elder brother had given him the land deed

while drunk, and the elder brother's wife supported this account, saying that her husband cannot go back on his word since "a single word uttered by man weighs as much as a thousand pieces of gold." And since then, the whole family prospered.

In some variations of the tale, the elder brother's wife hosts a birthday banquet to get her husband drunk, or the two brothers drink together for no special occasion. The elder brother's reaction after awaking also varies: when his wife pretends to be upset over the land deed, he consoles her, saying what's done cannot be undone; or when his wife confesses that it had been all her doing, he says that he would not have been against the idea in the first place. In another variation, the elder brother hands his land over to the younger brother himself after learning of the younger brother's hardships.

This tale emphasizes familial harmony through the relationship among the women who have married into the family.

Contest Between Bedbug, Flea and Lice

빈대와 벼룩과 이의 싸움

This narrative explains the origin of the appearance of bedbugs, fleas and lice.

This narrative can be categorized into three types:

The first type, simple in plot, depicts a physical confrontation among the three bugs, resulting in bedbug getting crushed and turning flat; lice getting kicked and turning blue with bruises; and flea getting slapped, turning its beak sharp.

The second type is set against bedbug's sixtieth birthday (*hwangap*) banquet. Flea was the first guest to arrive and had a drink. While bedbug went out to wait for lice, flea drank up all the liquor, which turned his body red. Lice arrived to find there was no drink left for him and attacked flea. Bedbug, trying to intervene, got stuck between them and squashed

flat, while lice turned blue with bruises from being kicked.

The third type is set against a writing contest and also features mosquito. With bedbug serving as judge, lice and flea and mosquito each compose a poem in Chinese characters. Flea wrote, “Bounce, bounce, I jump on the vast floor, fearing the encounter with a single human finger (壯板房 但見一指人).” Lice wrote, “Crawl, crawl, I slide between the strings on the trousers, fearing the encounter with a sideways human glance (腰間去 不見正口人).” Mosquito wrote, “Buzz, buzz, I fly past an ear, fearing a human hand slapping the cheek (耳邊過 每見打頰人).” Bedbug selected mosquito as the winner, and flea and lice jumped on him, angry, which started an enormous fight. The writing contest version is transmitted in many different variations. One of them features a contest that requires the bugs to use the two characters that make up the word human—人間—as the last letters of each line. Bedbug, who is judge, also joins the contest, claims, after reading all the contestants’ poems, that everyone got it wrong, and presents his own, which read, “Standing atop the cliff of a bright forehead, I saw a man carrying a torch, so I lay flat between deep walls, but not one with a straight mouth to be seen (曉頭絕壁上 前程舉火人 臥伏幽壁間 不見正口人).” The other bugs protested, and bedbug replied that they were all wrong because none of their poems ridiculed humans. This sparks a fight, resulting in the bugs’ physical traits.

This narrative stands out among the Korean oral tradition, as a humorous satire of the ruling literati that features small, insignificant creatures like fleas and bedbugs.

Country Man Tricks Man from Seoul

서울사람 속인 시골사람

This tale narrates the story of a man from Seoul who tries to trick a man from the country but gets

tricked instead.

A bumbling country man had just arrived in Seoul and was going around the stores. One of the storeowners, seeing that the man was naïve country folk, sold him a pollack for ten coins, saying it was a very rare delicacy. The country man put the fish inside a sack and asked the storeowner to keep it for him. When the country man returned, he opened the sack and said that he had a thousand coins inside but it was now gone, demanding compensation. The storeowner refused, saying he never saw that money, and a loud brawl started. A police officer happened to pass by and after hearing what had happened, concluded that the storeowner had done wrong, charging ten coins for a pollack, and ordered the storeowner to pay the country man a thousand coins.

There are many variations of this tale that feature different pairs of characters, including a poor old man and a rich old man; a witty woman and a foolish man; a trickster servant or salt vendor and a foolish man; a lender and a borrower. The various forms of deception include a puppy that excretes honey or liquor; a bugle or bat that brings the dead back to life; a tree that bears rice cake; a cauldron lid, earthenware bowl, rock or millstone that hunts pheasants; a laundry fulling block that creates meals; cow that lays eggs; playing dead inside a fake grave and poking the Seoul man’s rear; or making fake wheat.

The narrative reflects the country people’s desire to outwit or overpower city people during Korea’s shift to a modern society in late Joseon.

Country Mouse, City Mouse

시골쥐 서울쥐

“Sigoljwi, Seouljwi” is an animal tale about a country mouse that visits a city mouse and envies the plentiful supply of food in the city, but when the crowds of people make it difficult to access the food,

heads back to the country.

This tale was documented under the title “Chonjwiwasheongnaejwi” in *Isopueon* (Aesop’s Fables), published in 1921 by the Christian Literature Society of Korea, and also in *Mangogidam* (Collection of Ancient Witticisms) in 1919.

Country mouse invited city mouse to the country, but did not have much food to offer. City mouse felt sorry for the country mouse and suggested, “Would you like to come to Seoul? There’s plenty of food in the city. Come on, let’s go.” City mouse took country mouse to a restaurant in Seoul, but every time they tried to eat, throngs of people came in and they had to hide. In the end, country mouse said, “How can I eat with all these people coming in? This is why they say, a mouse inside a jar should eat inside a jar,” and headed back to the country.

This tale highlights the importance of peace of mind over material wealth, and of finding value in the life that one is given. The narrative also serves as an important reference in the study of the influence of Aesop’s fables on Korean oral literature in early modern times.

Crooked-Back Granny

꼬부랑 할머니

“Kkoburanghalmeoni” is a word-play narrative that uses the word “*kkoburang*,” meaning, “crooked and curved,” in repetition to create rhythm and comic effect.

Crooked-Back Granny walks with a crooked walking stick to climb a crooked hill. She sits under a crooked pine and makes crooked feces which a crooked-back dog gobbles up. Crooked-Back Granny strikes the crooked-back dog with her crooked walking stick and the crooked-back dog runs away with a crooked limp, yelping. In some variations, the dog protests after getting struck with the stick.

The formal structure of this narrative falls

somewhere between folk song and folk tale. It does have a plot, but is minimal and is not the major element of its transmission. The repetition of the adjective “*kkoburang* (crooked)” is the essence of the narrative, and it depends on the storyteller to use the word and its lyricism to maximize the impact.

The narrative is better known as a folk song, which was later rearranged as a contemporary children’s song. Another similar example is the tale “*Saebbalgangeojinmal* (Lie After Lie),” which is also transmitted as the folk song, “*Geojinmaltaryeong* (Song of Lies).”

Crow Drops Its Food

고기 놓친 까마귀

This animal tale tells the story of a crow tricked by a fox who flatters him about his beautiful singing, making him open his beak, making the food he was carrying in his beak fall to the ground. It was in 1896, through the publication of the Korean language textbook *Sinjeongsimsangsohak*, that Aesop’s fables were first introduced to Korea. The original version of this tale was included in the collection under the title, “Here Is a Tale of a Crow and a Fox.”

No one liked the crow, with its dark looks and voice. One day, the crow caught a chick and sat on a tree to eat it. That was when the fox, greedy for the chick, complimented the crow, saying, “Mr. Crow, you might have a dark appearance, but your singing voice is very pleasant to listen to.” The crow, who had never felt welcomed anywhere, was moved by the fox’s words. When the fox said, “It would be such a pleasure to hear your voice, Mr. Crow,” the crow was much flattered and opened his mouth. Then the chick fell from between the crow’s beaks and the fox ran away with it.

Some oral variations of the tale features a chunk of meat instead of a chick. In different versions of Aesop’s fables, the crow’s food is either fish or

cheese. There are some Korean variations in which the crow opens his mouth not to sing but to respond to the fox's flattery.

The lesson is that one should be guarded about flattery, and that seeking undeserved flattery can result in the loss of one's rightful possessions, and also that insecure people crave compliments from others, reflecting human society and how people behave and interact.

This tale serves as an important reference on the influence of Aesop's fables on Korea's early modern oral tradition.

Cucumber Planted in the Morning and Harvested in the Evening

아침에 심어 저녁에 따먹는 오이

This tale narrates the story of a wise child who tracked down his father for his wrongfully abandoned mother.

A bride was abandoned by her groom on the night of their wedding for passing gas. A child was conceived that night, however, and the woman gave birth to a son and raised him without a husband. When the husband did not return even after the boy started school, he was teased by other students that he did not have a proper upbringing under a father. One day the boy declared to his mother that he would go and find his father, asking her for cucumber seeds. He took the cucumber seeds as went around saying, "You can plant this cucumber seed in the morning and pick the cucumber the same evening, or plant it in the evening and pick it in the morning, which means this cucumber is only for people who do not pass gas." A man chided the boy, saying, "Only ticks do not fart, how can a person not fart?" and the boy said, "Then why did Father abandon Mother for passing gas?" and thus tracked down his father, and took him home.

In this tale, what the child is trying to achieve is

to overcome his father, not as a specific individual but as one incapable of carrying out his role as father, and the boy in the end establishes an idealistic father figure by taking on the role himself. The boy's search for his father also reflects the Confucian concept of filial piety and strong identification between father and son.

Cunning Servant

괴쟁이 하인

This tale narrates the story of a young servant who uses cunning tricks on his master and in the end marries the master's daughter.

A nobleman from the country set out for Seoul, escorted by a young servant driving a packhorse. The nobleman told the servant that Seoul was a scary place, where you could get your nose cut off in the living daylight. On the road, the servant played tricks on his master, claiming there was a bug in the food, only to consume it himself, or heating up the master's spoon to burn his tongue also to take over his food. Upon arriving in Seoul, the servant sold the master's horse and sat crouched with his eyes closed and his hand grabbing his nose, saying he had to sell the horse because he feared getting his nose cut off. The master, furious, sent the servant back home, with a message posted on his back, which read, "Drown this fellow and let him die." As he travelled back, the servant tricked a woman pounding rice to steal rice cakes from her, and a honey vendor to steal honey, then he asked a monk to change the message on his back, to read, "Let this fellow wed our daughter." The master, furious after learning upon his return that the servant had married his daughter, he ordered the servant to be tied up in a sack and hung from a tree by the pond, with the aim of killing him. The servant tricked a brassware vendor who happened to pass by into believing that getting inside the sack would cure his one blind eye, which caused the vendor die on his behalf. The servant then came back

to the master's house, boasting that the underwater Yonggung (Dragon Palace) in the pond was a great place to live. The master's family all jumped into the pond to head to the Dragon Palace and died, but the servant persuaded his wife to stay and they lived happily, taking over the master's estate.

This narrative is a typical trickster tale of Korea and what is interesting is that the object of trickery is, in most cases, an aristocrat. The master assumes an air of arrogance and authority, but as soon as the two set out on the road, he is helpless against the servant's tricks and when he does not admit his inferiority and continues to try to overpower the servant, in the end his entire family meets demise. The plot makes the statement that aristocratic authority does not carry much force, and that commoners possess capacities that can easily overpower them, resulting in the narrative's subversive humor and imagination. The servant also tricks his fellow commoners in the tale, which emphasizes the narrative backbone of the story as the journey of a singular individual confronting the entire world in search of his place, rather than that of a populist hero.

While this tale centers more on the commoner, compared to other Korean trickster narratives including the Kim Seon-dal and Bang Ha-jung tales, the trickster protagonist's actions are driven by the existential dynamic between the strong and the weak rather than the moral dynamic between good and evil. The tale, in other words, reflects both a prototypical awareness of human existence and a social awareness on hierarchy and discrimination.

Dancing Tiger

춤추는 호랑이

This adventure tale narrates the story of three brothers who set out on a journey carrying only insignificant household items, which they put to use to solve problems and achieve success.

A long time ago, three brothers inherited from their father a stick, a chest and a rattle. Carrying their inheritances, they set out on the road separately. The eldest brother witnessed a fox dig out a human skull from a grave and putting it over its own head to transform into a woman. The fox woman went into a house where a wedding banquet was being held and when she touched the bride, the bride collapsed. The eldest brother, while pretending to check the bride's pulse, used his stick to strike at the fox, which brought the bride back to life. The eldest brother was rewarded for saving the bride's life and he sold the stick that was used to defeat the fox and returned home. The second brother saved the life of a woman being chased by a servant by hiding her inside the chest, and returned home with the woman. The youngest brother was sleeping under a big tree when he encountered an ambush of tigers. The brother climbed up the tree and the tigers tried to follow him by stacking atop one another. The brother shook his rattle, which made the tiger at the bottom of the stack dance, making the other tigers fall and die. The youngest brother sold the tiger skin and returned home to his brothers.

Variations of this tale feature a different set of objects as the brothers' inheritance: a stick, drum and hourglass drum; a bow, hammer and hourglass drum; a millstone, drum and bugle. In some versions, the three brothers used their inherited items to scare goblins (*dokkaebi*) and acquire from them a magic bat, or overhear the goblins and save the state councillor's daughter from a critical illness and marry her. Or they use the bow to shoot at the attacking white tiger; chase away goblins with a hammer and rescue a maiden. The instrument used to make the tiger dance also varies, from an hourglass drum and bugle to a willow pipe and drum. The tale is also transmitted as separate narratives about each brother, titled "Stick Catches Fox" and "Shaman Tiger."

The brothers leave home with insignificant inheritances, going their separate ways, which means that they are facing the world with no parents, no

possessions, no connections, left to overcome their ordeals on their own. The internal strength that the three brothers carry within themselves are signified by their inheritances: the stick that defeats the fox through bold decision-making and clear judgment; the chest that saves a life through acceptance; and the rattle, hourglass drum, drum, bugle or pipe that exhibits artistic inspiration and sensibility, making the wild and instinctive tiger dance.

The individual anecdotes contained in the tale are found around the world, including Finland, France and Germany, and serve as important references in comparing the universal and specific elements in oral narratives.

Daughter Steals Auspicious Site

명당 빼앗아간 딸

This tale narrates the story of a married daughter who steals an auspicious family burial site from her parents.

A long time ago, the Choe family married their daughter off to the poor Jeong family. When the daughter returned home for a visit, she noticed that a recently acquired burial site was auspicious, which made her greedy and she flooded the site with water. Her father found the site flooded when he was about to hold the scheduled burial and had to fill up the hole and hold the burial on another site. Three years later, the daughter asked her older brother for the burial site and used it for a burial of a member of her husband's family, after which the Choe family continued to decline and the Jeong family became rich.

In some variations, the burial site is discovered to have a hole that pours water, and after hearing that filling up the hole will make the site auspicious, the married daughter takes over the site and holds a burial for her father-in-law. Some versions conclude with a happy ending for both families, while in some others, the daughter steals the wealth of her parents.

This narrative reflects the notion that married daughters are no longer family, along with the insight that all humans pursue the interest of the group they belong to, and that sometimes selfish desires trump blood ties.

Daughter-in-Law Talks Back

며느리의 말대꾸

This humorous word-play tale narrates the story of a daughter-in-law who talked back nonsense to her parents-in-law.

The mother-in-law was displeased with her new daughter-in-law because she was so short and chastised her, saying, "How can she be so short?" to which the daughter-in-law responded, "A small temple is called a hermitage," misunderstanding "*jeori*," the word for "so" as the homonym meaning "temple." The mother-in-law persuaded her husband to kick out this daughter-in-law, to which he responded, "Then we'll send her away." When the daughter-in-law heard this, she asked her mother-in-law, "Is someone plowing a new field?" Her mother-in-law, irritated, asked what she was talking about, and the daughter-in-law said, "You said we need to dig an irrigation ditch, so I was wondering if someone is plowing a new field," misunderstanding "*bonaeda*," the word for "send away" as the homonym meaning "dig an irrigation ditch." The mother-in-law responded, "What are you talking about, you fool, we're going to send you away!" And the daughter-in-law replied, "What do you mean, send me away? You split up my precious pussy and now you're sending me away?" and in the end, she was not thrown out and they continued living together.

In some regions, variations feature the father-in-law in the place of the mother-in-law. When the father-in-law, returning from an outing, chastises the daughter-in-law for failing to put away the barley left out to dry, and she answers that if the

barley grains get too hot, they will turn over on their own.

The fun of the narrative lies in the word play of misunderstandings, which incite frustration and embarrassment. Recent interpretations of the tale view the daughter-in-law's nonsensical responses are passive protests to express a sense of discontent and injustice.

Daughter-in-Law Who Brought Down the Family by Blocking Guests

손님 끊어 집안 망친 며느리

This tale narrates the story of a daughter-in-law of a rich family who, wanting to avoid the hassle of too many guests, blocked a geomatically auspicious spot, which resulted in the family's decline.

There was a rich family whose members had served in high government positions, which meant the house was always crowded with guests. The daughter-in-law, exhausted from serving such a large number of guests, inquired of a monk who had come to request donation if there was a way to reduce the number of guests. The monk warned her that "fewer guests would make the house desolate." Nevertheless, the daughter-in-law kept asking and the monk led her to an important path near the house and instructed that blocking the auspicious lair (*hyeol*) on the path would bring the result she wished for. When the daughter as she had been instructed, the trees that had been growing above the lair all bled, and guests stopped coming to the house. Then the family members began to fall ill and soon they were in decline, becoming poor and unhappy.

The tale emphasizes that more important than acquiring wealth is to manage it well, which requires consideration and generosity towards neighbors and the society at large, and is a rare example of a narrative that reveals an active perspective on money and wealth.

Daughter-in-Law Who Guarded the Ember

불씨 지킨 며느리

This tale narrates the story of a daughter-in-law of a family that has been keeping the ember in the hearth alive for generations, who tracks down the perpetrator when the ember starts to die.

A family that had been keeping the ember alive in the hearth of its house for generations had a new daughter-in-law. The parents-in-law asked her to never let the ember die, but the ember died on the first night of the new daughter-in-law's vigil. She began guarding the hearth all night without going to bed, and one night a naked boy appeared and urinated on the ember putting out the fire, and then ran off. The daughter-in-law ran after the boy with all her might, but the boy suddenly disappeared. When she dug the spot where he had disappeared, she found *dongjasam*, or little boy *insam*, the roots of centuries-old wild ginseng that resembles a boy, which she sold and made the family rich.

The tale reflects folk customs related to the family hearthfire and ember, and the job of keeping the fire going for generations, which fell on the daughter-in-law, based on the belief that keeping the ember alive ensured good fortune for the family. The narrative focuses on the confrontation between one who is trying to guard the ember and one attempting to put it out, associated with the theft of fire motif in fire origin myths.

Daughter-in-Law Who Prepared a Ancestral Memorial Table for a Wayfarer

과객 제사 차려준 며느리

This tale narrates the story of a daughter-in-law who prepared a table of offerings for a wayfarer to hold a memorial rite for his parents and was rewarded with a son for her generosity.

Visited by a wayfarer, the man of the house

asked his daughter-in-law to serve the man dinner. But instead of eating his dinner, the wayfarer said it was the anniversary of his parents' passing and that he would use the food to hold a memorial rite for them. The man of the house offered to set up a table of offerings for the memorial rite as well, but he did not want to further burden his first daughter-in-law, so asked his second and third daughters-in-law, but both refused, so he once again turned to the first daughter-in-law, who willingly prepared a table of memorial offerings for the wayfarer. When the first daughter-in-law went to sleep after finally finishing the work, she had a dream in which a fine-looking man appeared and presented her with a pair of cranes. The daughter-in-law, who had not been able to conceive for fifteen years, showed signs of pregnancy that day and went on to give birth to three sons, who all entered public office.

The narrative offers a new, more open perspective on the Confucian ancestral memorial rite, which was generally a duty imposed on the eldest legitimate son in the family. In this tale, however, a woman who is not a blood relation is rewarded for preparing the memorial table, implying that serving a stranger's parents, as well as one's own, is an important act of goodwill and virtue.

Daughter-in-Law Who Tamed Her Mother-in-Law

시아머니 길들인 며느리

This tale narrates the story of a daughter-in-law who dominates her harsh mother-in-law by using violence.

There lived in a village a harsh mother-in-law who kept chasing away her daughter-in-laws, one after another. When a new marriage was being arranged for her son, a maiden from a poor family in the village persuaded her parents and became the new daughter-in-law. She did as she was told at first and everyone thought she was discreet and

obedient. But when the husband and father-in-law were out at work, the mother-in-law would harass the daughter-in-law, and she in turn tied up her mother-in-law to a large mortar and beat her. When the men returned from work, the mother-in-law, disheveled and upset, tried to explain what had happened. But her husband and son would not listen, thinking that she had gone insane. And when they left for work again, the daughter-in-law assaulted her again. When nobody would believe her, the mother-in-law gave up and begged her daughter-in-law to stop beating her. The mother-in-law had now become tame, and the daughter-in-law took good care of her, and the family became harmonious.

In some variations of the story, the daughter-in-law dominates the mother-in-law without force but with knowledge and logic. The narrative reflects the desire of women to acquire their rightful status within the family.

Daughter-in-Law Who Tried to Act Mute for Three Years

병어리 삼년 지내려 한 며느리

This tale narrates the story of a daughter-in-law who tried to act mute when she got married.

A bride who had been taught by her parents that she should live as a mute for the first three years of her marriage literally did not speak when she began her married life at her in-laws'. Her parents-in-law, thinking their daughter-in-law was really mute, decided to send her back to her family. As the daughter-in-law headed back, accompanied by her father-in-law, she encountered a pheasant and said, "The pheasant's wings, I shall offer to Father-in-Law, the beak to Sister-in-Law, and the feet to Mother-in-Law." Her father-in-law, realizing that she could speak after all, asked her why she pretended she couldn't. She answered that it was what her

parents had taught her, and her father-in-law was impressed by his daughter-in-law's outstanding qualities, took her back to their home, where she lived happily.

In this tale, acting mute is a symbolic act that implies the many ideologies that women have endured over a long period of time. In some variations of this tale, however, the daughter-in-law's pretending to be mute is depicted not only as an oppressive ideology but as a way of life of her own choosing.

Daughter-in-Law's-Grain-of-Rice Flower

며느리밥풀꽃

The tale "Myeoneuribappulkkot" narrates the story of a daughter-in-law who tasted a single grain of rice to check if the rice was ready, for which her mother-in-law beat her to death, and by whose grave blossomed a flower that resembled her.

A long time ago, there lived a kind and dutiful daughter-in-law and her mean mother-in-law, who disapproved of the daughter-in-law and was seeking a chance to expel her. One day the daughter-in-law put a single grain of rice in her mouth to check if the steamed rice was ready to serve, and the mother-in-law accused her of eating food before the elders in the family and beat her to death. Later by her grave a flower blossomed in the shape of a pair of red lips with a grain of rice between them, and people named it the daughter-in-law's-grain-of-rice flower.

There are also variations that feature a dutiful son in addition to the two characters, who, as a newlywed, leaves to work as a farmhand in another village. The mother-in-law's reason for beating her daughter-in-law also varies. In some versions, the daughter-in-law, starved by the mother-in-law, steals a bite of rice to relieve her hunger, while in some others, the daughter-in-law is pounding grains when

a few grains fly out of the mortar and she picks them up to eat them.

This narrative dramatizes the grievances suffered by daughters-in-law, helpless within the patriarchal hierarchy. Through the flower, the haunted spirit of the daughter-in-law is given a voice, which reflects the Korean sentiment that the haunted spirit must be comforted.

Deceased Husband Shall Weep in the Underworld

옛 지아버가 황천에서 운다

This tale narrates the story of a scholar who is persuaded by a woman's poem or caning to repent his inappropriate behavior, and later uses the same approach to maintain his dignity in the face of seduction.

A scholar headed to the capital to take his state examination lodged for a night in a house where a young woman lived on her own. At night, the scholar tried to seduce the woman, and she responded by asking him to complete a couplet that began, "新人迎於今夜 (If tonight I take in someone new)." The scholar offered line after line of verse, but the woman declared them all incorrect, and soon it was already morning. The man asked what the corresponding line was, and she answered, "舊郎哭於黃泉 (the deceased husband shall weep in the underworld)," and the scholar repented his behavior. Arriving in Seoul, he was staying in the home of a state councillor, where a young widow attempted to him. The scholar responded with the same couplet question to discourage the widow. Upon hearing of this, the councillor was greatly impressed with the scholar and appointed him to a government position (or arranges his marriage to the widow).

This tale emphasizes the ethical attitude required of scholars trying to enter public service through the state exam.

Defeating the Enemy in the Underworld

지하국 대적퇴치

This fantasy tale narrates the story of a man who defeats a monster from the underworld and rescues a woman from captivity, ending with the man's marriage to the rescued woman.

The narrative takes on the typical folk tale plot structure, of the protagonist overcoming trials and ordeals, and after finally defeating the villain, arrives at a happy ending. The narrative enjoys a long tradition in Korean folk literature and has been passed down to classical novels including *Geumwonjeon* (*Tale of Geumwon*), *Guemryeongjeon* (*Tale of Guemryeong*), *Choechiwonjeon* (*Tale of Choe Chi-won*), and *Honggildongjeon* (*Tale of Hong Gil-dong*) and *Seolgwijnjeon* (*Tale of Seol In-gwi*), and also reflected on the story "Shenyangdongji (Record of Shenyangdong)" from the Chinese anthology *Jiandeng Xinhua* (*New Stories Told While Trimming the Wick*).

A long time ago, a maiden was captured by a monster and her parents searched for a warrior to retrieve her, offering as reward their possessions and their daughter. A warrior came forth, accompanied by subordinates, and he learned that the monster's lair was located in the underworld, and found a narrow door that led underground. His men tried to go down with a rope, but all failed and gave up, and in the end the warrior reached the underworld alone. He hid behind a tree by the well and when the maiden came out to fetch water, alerted her of his arrival by scattering leaves on her water jar. Guided by the maiden, the warrior made it past the gate of the monster's lair. The maiden tested the warrior's strength by making him lift a rock, and when he failed, she made him drink "power-enhancing water." With newly enhanced strength, the warrior was able to kill the monster and rescue everyone who had been in captivity, sending them up to the human world ahead of him. But the warrior's men, who had been left above, captured the maiden, abandoning

the warrior in the underworld. With the help of a deity, the warrior was in the end able to ascend to the human world, upon which he punished his men and married the maiden.

This narrative is transmitted widely across the country, with different versions that vary less in overall plot but more in specific details. The protagonist is depicted as a warrior, military official, wanderer or playboy, and the rescued maiden is sometimes a princess. In one variation, when the protagonist enters the monster's lair, he transforms himself into a watermelon to trick the gatekeeper. The most distinctive variation in plot is observed in how the protagonist finds the path to the underworld: in some versions he is guided by a Taoist hermit and in others by a magpie who has received help from the protagonist.

This narrative is one of the most complexly structured among Korean folk tales, the imaginative elements of the plot providing inspiration for classical novels, including *Tale of Guemryeong*, in which the protagonist rescues the princess from a nine-headed monster and marries her, and *Tale of Hong Gil-dong*, in which Gil-dong, after founding the state of Yuldoguk, defeats a monster inside the cave and rescues a woman from captivity and makes her his wife.

Destined to Father Many Sons

아들 많이 낳을 팔자

This tale narrates the story of a man destined to father many sons in his life, who tries to escape this fate but fails, and in the end lives happily with his many sons.

A husband was one day told by a fortuneteller that he was destined to father a large number of sons. Resisting the idea of having to worry about feeding his many sons day to day, the man left home, determined to escape his fate. On the road, he came across a rich man who had a wife and many

concubines but no children. He told the rich man the reason he left home, and the rich man asked him bed his wife and concubines to father many sons for him. After finishing his round of the rich man's women, the man entered the last concubine's room, where the concubine warned him that he would die unless he escaped from this house, and the concubine showed him the way out. Many years later, the man was reunited with the wife and concubines and their many sons, and lived happily.

This tale reflects the public's desire to have many sons and lead a good life. The man's reunion with his sons, who seek out their biological father without pressuring him about fatherly duties, reveals the importance of blood ties in the society at the time.

Destiny Tale

운명담

Unmyeongdam, or destiny tales, narrate stories of destinies decided by transcendental forces, or of destinies reversed by human effort.

In destiny tales, a human conflict with his fate provides narrative drive, based on the theme of reverence for fate that is determined by the heavens, or of modification of bad fortune, which make up two types of destiny tales.

The first type comprises tales that show human fate being realized, in which the protagonist either conforms to or resists his fate but arrives at the same conclusion once destiny plays out its course. In these tales, the protagonist either turns out unhappy as destined; happy as destined; unhappy due to a failed attempt at reversing his fortune; or happy due to a failed attempt at reversing his fortune. Some examples include: tales of characters born with the destiny to die young or be eaten by a tiger, which can never be reversed; of a protagonist destined to be rich but who keeps losing his fortune because he refuses to believe the superstition that leg-shaking

chases away good fortune, and becomes rich only after a physiognomist breaks his leg for him; of an old bachelor who tries to kill his a young girl who is his match made in heaven, but fails and in the end marries her, which narrates the origin of *yeonjigonji*, the red spots painted on the bride's cheeks and forehead as part of the traditional bridal make-up; and of a man who was leaves home to escape his destiny to bear many sons but in his travels donates his sperm, which results in many sons who come looking for him with a great fortune.

The second type comprises tales of protagonists who reverse their given fate, usually one of bad fortune, and offer happy endings. This type includes tales about extending one's short lifespan through prayers to deities or by leaving home to overcome ordeals; about a protagonist born with the terrible fate to be eaten by a tiger, a protagonist who reverses his destiny through devoted prayer, overcoming ordeals, good deeds, marriage, or reading the scriptures; of a poor woodsman who ascends to the heavens to plead to the deity to let him borrow another person's fate and leads a happy life; and, of a poor man who, in order to save his fate, travels to the transcendental sphere, where he solves another man's problems and reverses his fate to lead a happy life.

Destiny tales include many supernatural narrative elements including prophecies, eccentric beings, Taoist hermits, shape-shifting and journeys to other worlds, thereby sharing similarities with prophecy tales, tales of eccentrics, or hermit tales, but while prophecy tales focus on whether the prophecies come true, destiny tales examine the human responses to the prophecies of destiny.

The significance of destiny tales also lies in the way they reflect the shifting views on human fate: Fatalist perspectives were basis of the first type of destiny tales, as elaborated above, while resistance to fate and pioneering of one's own destiny, are associated with the second type. Socio-culturally, destiny tales reveal the traditional Korean views on longevity, wealth, nobility, productivity and happiness.

Divination Tale

점복담

Jeombokdam, or divination tales, are stories that center on prophecies about the fate of a group or an individual, narrating the process of the realization of the prophecies and the consequences they bring.

Fortunetelling originated from the human desire to foresee the unknowable future, and boasts a long history, as seen in the many ancient divination tools uncovered by archaeological excavations. In Joseon, there was a government agency devoted to divination and astronomy, called Gwangsanggam (Office for the Observance of Natural Phenomena), staffed with public officials recruited through the *myeonggwa* section in the state examinations, specializing in fortunetelling. Divination tales, therefore, have been transmitted over a long period of time, with myriad different narratives recorded in books.

“Cheonnyangjeom (Divination Worth a Thousand Coins)” is a narrative that is transmitted across the country and also found around the world. A man travelled far from home to sell his goods, and as he headed back after making a good amount of money, he met a fortuneteller, who, in exchange for all of the man’s money, offers him a prophecy in the form of the three following sentences: “Do not take the shortcut (or the back alley) and stay on the main road,” “If it’s ugly, say it’s handsome,” “If someone is happy to see you, crawl (or, If you get upset, hold your anger).” The man did as the divination instructed, avoiding a bandit’s attack by keeping away from a mountain path, receiving a favor from an ugly monster that leaped out of the water, and tracking down and punishing a man who had an affair with his wife while he was away and was trying to kill the man upon his return. In this tale, the protagonist receives a divination that he cannot understand, but follows the instructions, which allows him to sustain his life.

Another example of a divination tale features a fortuneteller who told a man that he was destined

to die on a certain day at a certain hour. When that day arrived, the man, thinking he could avoid trouble if he did not leave the house, stayed home. Rain suddenly poured down with thunder and lightning, and after it passed, the man saw a flower under his fence which had snapped in the rain, and while the man tended to the flower, the fence collapsed, killing the man.

The prophecies in the divination tales involve dreams, selecting a date or site for an important occasion, illnesses, weather, career success, lifespan, rites of passage, and war, and are proven immediately or in a distant future.

Divination tales generally end with the protagonist’s wedding, appointment in public office, acquisition of wealth or good fortune, survival, escape from an oppressor or a tiger, but in some rare cases, the protagonist greets a tragic death or failure.

Divination tales are distinguished from prophecy tales, since the latter usually involve sages or eccentrics. In many divination tales, the fortuneteller delivers the divination through glyphomancy (*pajajeom*) or Chinese verse.

Some divination tales explain the origins of proverbs: “Above one who runs is one who flies” is said to have originated from a divination contest in which a renowned fortuneteller was unexpectedly defeated; and, “One can see others’ affairs but not one’s own” which came from a story about a renowned fortuneteller who could tell what would happen to others but not to himself.

In the oral tradition, famous divination-related historical figures are often featured in divination tales as renowned fortunetellers, including Jeong Ryeom (1506-1548), Yi Ji-ham (1517-1578), and Chinese figures including Guo Pu (276-324) and Li Chunfeng (602-670). Hong Gye-gwan, a renowned fortuneteller from early Joseon, is portrayed in folk narratives as being capable of knowing the number of fetuses inside the belly of a rat hidden inside a box.

Divination tales are in essence narratives

formed upon fatalistic views at a time before the advancement of scientific knowledge, serving to provide therapeutic consolation for human suffering.

Divine Serpent Scholar

구렁덩당신선비

The tale “Gureongdeongdeongsinseonbi” is a widespread folk narrative about a divine scholar who had the appearance of a serpent, and his separation and reunion with his wife.

A long time ago there lived an old man and his old wife, who became pregnant and gave birth to a serpent. The old wife took the serpent out to the backyard and kept it next to the chimney under a conical bamboo hat (*sakkat*). The couple had a rich neighbor with three daughters, who heard about the serpent and came to visit, and said it was disgusting. The third daughter, however, said that the old wife had given birth to “*gureongdeongdeongsinseonbi*,” a divine serpent scholar. When the serpent heard this, he asked his mother to propose marriage to the rich man’s daughters. His mother hesitated, but the serpent threatened that if she did not propose, he would get back insider her belly, holding fire in one hand and a sword in the other. So the mother proposed marriage to the rich neighbor’s daughters, to which the first two daughters declined, but the third daughter answered that she would do as her parents said, and the wedding was set. Following the ceremony, on their wedding night, the serpent asked his bride to prepare a jar of soy sauce (or oil), a jar of flour, and a jar of water. The serpent first entered the jar of soy sauce, then rolled his body inside the jar of flour, and after rinsing himself in the jar of water, he shed his snake skin and turned into a handsome scholar, his body beautiful and carrying the aura of a Taoist hermit. The two other sisters came and saw that their sister was living with a handsome and divine scholar, which made them

jealous. One day Sinseonbi (Divine Scholar) asked his bride to take good care of his skin and left for Seoul to take his state examination. But the bride’s sisters visited and while the bride was asleep, took out the skin and burned it in the brazier. Sinseonbi knew all the way from Seoul that his skin had been burned and he disappeared. When her husband did not return, the bride set out to find him. On the road, she met a crow, a wild boar, a woman doing laundry, and a farmer plowing the field, and learned the whereabouts of her husband in return for doing the work they demanded. Arriving at Sinseonbi’s home, the bride decided to spend the night under the wooden verandah of the house. That night, the moon shone bright, and Sinseonbi looked out at the moon from the attic, where he was reading, and sang about how much he missed his bride. The bride heard the song and answered him, and they were reunited, but Sinseonbi told her that he had a new wife now, and since a scholar could not live with two wives, he suggested a competition between the two wives, which would determine who was more competent at the given tasks, which included chopping wood, fetching water and pulling out the eyelash of a tiger. His first bride was capable of carrying out all the tasks, but his new bride was not, and Sinseonbi deserted his new bride and reunited with his first bride and lived happily.

The narrative comprises many fantasy-like elements that seem unrealistic and irrational, which can be understood when the serpent is viewed as a deity in a myth, in which case giving birth to a serpent signifies the enshrinement of the serpent god; the marriage between the serpent and the rich neighbor’s daughter the encounter between a deity and a priest; the burning of the skin a rejection of the serpent god; and the disappearance of Sinseonbi and his wife’s journey to find her husband can be interpreted as a linguistic rendering of the ritual *sinmajigut*, in which a disappeared god is welcomed back in enshrined. Based on this interpretation, the serpent’s threat to his mother can be read as the

threat to turn the earth into an infertile waste land if the serpent god is not worshipped, and the rich neighbor's consent to give away his daughter as an inevitable decision to secure the productivity of his land with the help of the serpent deity. And the serpent's metamorphosis into a divine scholar on his wedding night can be interpreted as the shift from animal god worship to the worship of personified gods following the introduction of agriculture.

At the same time, the tale offers an intriguing dramatization of a married couple love put to test and how they overcome and reunited, emphasizing the importance of a woman's endurance and wisdom in maintaining the family and sustaining the community.

Dog and Cat Fight Over Magic Marble

개와 고양이의 구슬 다툼

This tale narrates the origin of antagonism between dogs and cats, which is traced back to a fight that occurred in the course of repaying the favor of their master.

There lived a poor fisherman who was scraping by for a living. One day he went fishing but caught no fish, except for a large carp whose tears made the fisherman set it free. The following day the fisherman went out to the shore and saw a boy who offered him a bow. The boy said he was the carp that the fisherman set free the previous day, and the son of Yongwang (Dragon King). He thanked the fisherman and invited him to the Dragon Palace, where the fisherman was treated generously and was given a magic marble, which made him a rich man. An old woman from a neighboring village, upon hearing news of the fisherman's good fortune, stole the magic marble by switching it with a plain one, and the fisherman became poor again. The fisherman's dog and cat headed to the old woman's house to repay the fisherman for his care, and

retrieved the magic marble by threatening the rat that lived in the house. On their way back, the dog had to swim across the water, carrying the cat on its back, the cat carrying the marble in its mouth. The dog kept asking again and again if the marble was safe, and while the cat tried to answer, the marble fell in the water. The two animals began a brawl, and the dog headed home first, while the cat stayed behind catching fish and found the marble inside one of them. When the cat returned with the marble, the fisherman favored the cat while ignoring the dog, which turned their relationship for the worse.

The part about acquiring the magic marble overlaps with the tale of "receiving a gift of gratitude from a carp, the son of Yongwang," also known as the *bangideukbo* (free the carp and acquire the marble) narrative. There are variations of the tale that combine the narrative with the "Pheasant and Serpent" tale, in which a friend borrows the magic marble from the rich couple and does not return it. In these variations, the magic marble is sometimes replaced by a cintamani, magic flute, rectangular or triangular marble. The person who takes away the marble also varies, from women's ware vendor to friend.

While in the variations that combine the "free the carp and acquire the marble" narrative, human suffering is resolved by good deeds and animals returning the favor, those that combine the "Pheasant and Serpent" narrative highlight wisdom as the means of overcoming human fate, and the treasure is acquired by the bride's wisdom.

This narrative can be categorized as a "animal-returns-favor" tale and also as an animal origin tale.

Dog Defeats Tiger

호랑이 잡은 기름강아지

This tale narrates the story of a tiny dog that defeats a mighty tiger.

A hungry tiger came down to the village in search of food, and found a scrawny little dog. The tiger pounced to catch the dog but it slipped into a dog hole, coming out the other end and barking aloud, as if it were daring the tiger to catch it. The tiger, feeling provoked, attacked it, but the dog again came out the opposite end and barked again. After going about like this over and over again, the tiger thought of a trick and while pretending to dash to the other end, it stayed on this end, with its jaws open, so the dog ran straight into the tiger's mouth, but the dog kept going and going until it came out of the tiger's rear end, killing the tiger.

In a variation of this tale, the dog is rubbed with oil until it is slippery, and after it is left to be eaten by the tiger, the dog slips through inside the tiger's body and comes out the other end, to catch the tiger.

The dog in the tale is described as scrawny, a small and insignificant creature that in the end catches the huge and mighty tiger, the story signifying the triumph of the weak over the strong. The tale is a typical foolish-tiger-falling-for-his-own-trick narrative, offering the lesson that when the strong is too oppressive, it can be defeated by the weak.

Dog that Made Honey Dung

꿀 싸는 강아지

This narrative is a trick tale (*sagidam*) about selling a dog under the claim that it made honey dung.

A man in the country raised his dog on nothing but honey. When a friend visited from Seoul, he pressed the dog's belly to squeeze out honey as a dip for rice cakes, and they agreed that it really tasted like honey. When the friend asked him to sell him the dog, the man sold it for a large sum. The friend took the dog home and raised it on meat, and when the dog grew fat, his family gathered around with a plate of rice cake. They squeezed the dog's belly and

dipped their rice cake in what the dog had excreted, but it was too stinky for them to eat. The friend took the dog back to the man in the country, who refused to take the dog back, saying, "This dog should live in cool weather, but it was too hot in Seoul and now the dog's been ruined, so there's nothing I can do."

This tale is sometimes inserted as one of many anecdotes in a longer narrative of deception. There was a man who wanted to buy everything that was good. A villager sold him a dog claiming it made honey dung, but when the dog only made feces, the man tried to return the dog, and the villager took the dog back in return for a tree that he claimed bore fruits of rice cake, which was actually a tree with rice cakes slices tied with string. When the tree did not produce rice cake, the man again took the tree back. This time, the villager wrapped pig intestines around a woman's body and pretended to hit her, making her fall and bursting the pig intestines, which spewed blood. The villager then blew a horn, which brought the woman back to life. So the man who had come to return the tree took the horn. Back home, his wife ridiculed him, saying, "First you bring a feces-excreting dog, then a rice cake tree, and now a horn!" The man was infuriated by her words and struck her, which killed her, so he blew the horn. When the horn failed to bring her back to life, he went back again, realizing that he had once again been fooled. But this time the villager's wife said her husband was dead and pretended to hold a funeral, claiming that his body lay behind the folding screen. The man in the end was unable to ask for his money back and carried back his horn. His wife had died and his fortune was gone, but there was nothing he could do.

This narrative is not merely a trick tale but also a trickster tale, in that the trick is not played not just for gain but in a way that is culturally significant. A trickster is distinguished from swindlers in that they subvert the cultural hierarchy through his tricks. In this tale, the country man deceived a city man and acquires financial gain, which subverts the conventional cultural hierarchy of urban and rural

space. The narrative also serves as a morality tale when read as a confrontation between good and evil, or between clever and foolish.

Dongbangsak Who Lived to Be 3,000 Years Old

삼천갑자 동방삭

“Samcheongapja Dongbangsak” tells the tale of Dongbangsak (Dongfangshuo in Chinese), who lived to reach the unfathomably old age of “*samcheongapja*.”

Dongbangsak made a hole in another man’s rice paddy to supply water to his own. The owner of the paddy, a blind man, came to protest, and said that Dongbangsak was committing these bad deeds even though Dongbangsak had been born with a short lifespan. Dongbangsak asked how he could extend his life, and the blind man instructed him to treat Jeoseunchasa (Messenger of the Underworld) to food, money and shoes. The messenger, upon receiving great hospitality from Dongbangsak, changes his lifespan recorded on the underworld list from “thirty” to “three thousand” while the list supervisor was dozing. When he reached three thousand years of age, Dongbangsak became as smart as a ghost and would not be caught. The underworld messengers thought up a trick and washed charcoal at the river, saying they could make charcoal turn white, upon which Dongbangsak responded, “I’ve lived three thousand years but never heard of such a thing.” Through these words, the messengers were able to identify him and took him away.

Dongfangshuo is a legendary figure in Chinese history, but in Korea, he is known as “Samcheongapja Dongbangsak,” the man who lived longer than anyone in history. In Korean shamanism, Dongbangsak is recognized as the symbol of longevity, just as Seoksung (Shi Chong) is viewed as the symbol of wealth. “*Samcheongapja*” is generally

calculated as three thousand years, “*samcheon*” meaning three thousand and interpreting “*gapja*” as the first year in the sexagenary cycle, but there are various other interpretations, which add up to 180,500 or 14,000 years.

This tale reflects a fatalistic view of life that people’s lifespans are predestined, recorded in lists kept in the underworld, and that some are born with the fate to die young, while also expressing the anticipation of extending one’s given lifespan.

Dutiful Daughter-in-Law and Tiger

효부와 호랑이

This tale narrates the story of a tiger who offers a favor after being moved by the filial piety demonstrated by a dutiful daughter-in-law.

The portrayal of a tiger sacrificing himself for humans is found in the legend “Kimhyeongamho (Kim Hyeon Moved by Tiger),” from *Samgunngnyusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*), and can be traced back to the Three Kingdoms period.

A daughter-in-law of a poor family lived with a child and her father-in-law. One day the father-in-law attended a banquet in the neighboring village and when he did not return until late, the daughter-in-law set out to look for him. She found him in the mountain, drunk and stretched out, and a tiger sitting next to him. Startled, the daughter-in-law offered her child to the tiger and brought the father-in-law home. The tiger was moved by the daughter-in-law’s filial piety and brought the child back. This story reached the magistrate’s office, which awarded the daughter-in-law in recognition of her filial piety.

The tiger in the tale is an object of fear but also takes on the role of a mountain god (*sansin*) that practices benevolence by returning the child. The daughter-in-law rises above her deprived state through her filial piety, moving the tiger, both as a physical being and as a divine being, which in the end elevates



Buddhist painting of mountain god at Geumjeong Temple.
Joseon, Cultural Heritage Administration

her status within the family and wins her social recognition. This tale emphasizes the absoluteness of filial piety as a universal virtue that can move not only humans but even a beast like a tiger.

Dutiful Daughter-in-Law Offers Worm Soup

지렁이 삶아 봉양한 효자

This tale narrates the story of a daughter-in-law who, faced with poverty, serves her mother-in-law worm soup, which in the end helps the mother-in-law recover her vision.

Tales about filial piety and food have a long tradition in Korean folk literature. “Dongjasam (Little Boy Insam)” narrates the story of a couple who sacrifice their young boy to cure one of their

parents’ illness, to learn that the boy they sacrificed is *sansam* (wild ginseng). There is also the tale of a husband who hollers at his wife for serving his lunch late, only to find out that lunch was delayed because she was boiling a brood hen to help his parents restore stamina, and consequently he offers his wife deep bows on the banks of his rice paddy.

There lived a good daughter-in-law caring for her blind mother-in-law by herself while her husband was away to make money. The daughter-in-law wanted to serve her mother-in-law good food but could not afford it, and when she found worms by the brook, she washed them and cooked soup. The mother-in-law ate the soup heartily, and wanting to show her son how good his wife had been to her when he returned, she scooped up the meat and hid it under her mattress. Upon her son’s return, the mother showed him the meat and the son screamed, “Worm!” at which his mother opened her eyes. The daughter-in-law’s filial piety had restored the mother-in-law’s vision, for which the son offered deep bows to his wife.

This tale pushes the discussion of filial piety to the practical level of everyday meals. Worm soup is an extreme example of something that is too disgusting to eat, made palatable and beneficial when served up with love and dedication, a paradoxical expression of the meaning of nourishment and devotion.

The climax of the narrative is the miracle of the parent regaining her vision, a motif that is central to the Korean literary tradition.

Dutiful Son Acquires Stone Bell While Burying His Son

자식 묻다 돌종 얻은 효자

This tale narrates the story of a dutiful son who tries to bury his own son alive in an attempt to better serve his mother, but when he finds a stone bell in the burial site, decides to save his son, which in the end results

in a reward that allows him to better serve his mother.

The earliest record of this tale is “Sonsunmaea (Son Sun Buries His Child),” in *Samgungnyusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*) from late 13th century, and is also included in *Myeongsimbogam* (*Exemplar of Pure Mind*), from late Goryeo.

In Silla, there lived in the village of Moryang a man named Son Sun, who took care of his mother with the money that he and his wife made by providing labor for other families. However, Son and his wife had a young son who always took his grandmother’s food for himself. Son suggested to his wife that, since they could have another child but they could not get a new mother, they should bury their child to prevent his mother from starving. Son and his wife took their child to bury him alive but while he was digging, he uncovered a stone bell. His wife said that the bell was a sign of the child’s fortune and that they should take him back, and they brought also brought back the bell, which the hung in their yard, and the ringing of the bell reached all the way to the palace, where King Heungdeok heard the ringing and ordered his subjects to find out where it was coming from. Upon learning of Son’s story, the king presented the family with a house and fifty seok of rice each year to laud Son’s filial piety. Son made his old house into a temple and called it Honghyosa, Temple of Great Filial Piety.

This tale poses the question of what filial piety is and how it should be practiced. Some associate the narrative, featuring a mystical stone bell and the founding of a temple, with Buddhist miracle, but its significance lies in examining the Confucian virtue of filial piety within the realm of real life.

Dutiful Son Brings Back Heavenly Peach

천도복숭아 따온 효자

This tale narrates the story of a dutiful son who travels to another world, where he acquires

heavenly peaches that cure his mother’s blindness, and finds himself three wives.

There lived a poor farmhand who was devoted to his blind mother. When the king fell ill, huge rewards and a public post was offered to one who could acquire heavenly peaches (*cheondo*) to cure the king, and the son set out to find the peaches, despite his mother’s efforts to dissuade him. The son walked days on end and reached a magical and mysterious mountain at the edge of a remote land. While climbing the mountain, he encountered three maidens who offered him directions to the heavenly peaches. He picked one peach for the king, another for his mother, and one more for all the people of the land, and the peach tree immediately vanished. As he headed down the mountain, the three maidens asked that they go with him, and he brought them home and made them his wives. Upon returning, the son took one of the peaches to the king, which cured his illness, and offered one to his mother, who said, “Let me see that heavenly peach,” and opened her eyes. The son offered the third peach to be shared by all the people of the land, and became rich after receiving his reward. Then one day, the king, coveting the son’s beautiful wife, proposed a series of contests. The first was a match of the board game *baduk*, and the son, as instructed by his wife, put his stones where a bedbug sat, and won the match. The second was to make a trough out of steel big enough to feed tens of horses, and this also the son achieved overnight with the help of his wife. The third was to find talking water and a smiling flower and the following morning the wife handed the son a jade bottle filled with water that could speak and a flower wearing a bright smile. When the bottle was tilted to pour the water, the water said, “Stop, stop,” which the king found fascinating and went on and on pouring the water despite the water protesting, “Stop, stop,” and in the end the palace was flooded, turning into a pond, and the dutiful son, with the help of his wife, who turned out to be a heavenly fairy, ascended to the heavens.

This tale is similar to the story “Fortune Quest,” in its motif of a poor protagonist embarking on a journey to the otherworld to pursue a life of happiness and self-realization. The motif of the quest for a cure is similar to “Princess Bari” and the blind parent regaining vision is a motif featured in the tale of Sim Cheong. The narrative is structured into two parts, the latter sharing the foolish-husband-wise-wife motif and the state-stealing-wife motif with “Snail Bride”

This narrative brings together many major narrative elements in the Korean folk tradition, revealing the many layers and influences of oral literature while achieving a high level of literary quality as an individual narrative.

Dutiful Son Finds Ripe Persimmons in Summer

여름에 홍시 구한 효자

This tale of filial piety narrates the story of a devoted and dutiful son who succeeds in finding, for his mother, a fruit that is not in season.

A mother who had long been ill and bed-ridden craved for soft ripe persimmons, but it was summer and there was no way for her dutiful son to acquire it. On his way back from the marketplace late at night, the son encountered a tiger, which told him to get on its back and took him to a house, where an ancestral memorial service was being held. The offerings on the ritual table included ripe persimmons, which the son was able to acquire after the service was over. The son rode the tiger back home, and his mother was able to enjoy the sweet ripe persimmons.

Finding ripe persimmons in the summer or catching carp in the winter seem like miracles, but in folk narratives, the focus is on the lesson that devotion is what matters. In this narrative, while riding a tiger to find ripe persimmons from another

family’s memorial table is close to fantasy, the mother’s craving for soft persimmons is a realistic portrayal of an elderly person’s debilitating teeth and health.

Dutiful Son Who Healed His Mother

어머니 병 고친 효자

This tale narrates the story of a dutiful son who cures his mother’s illness, through devoted filial piety, which no renowned physiciſn could heal.

A long time ago there lived two brothers, the older of which was Bian Que, the most renowned physician of his time. But when their mother fell ill, not even this outstanding doctor could cure her. The younger brother, who was a devoted and dutiful son, travelled to distant lands to find a cure, carrying his mother on his back. One day while climbing a steep mountain, they came across a deep valley, where the son put down his mother to rest for a while. His mother said she was thirsty and asked for water, upon which the son searched for water deep in the mountain, and found an old skull filled with water, with two dead worms floating in it. He brought the water for his mother to drink, and they set out again. A while later, his mother said they should head back home, for she was now well. He carried his mother down the mountain, and she insisted she could walk herself, saying she could see their house right ahead. Upon their return home, the older brother heard what had happened and said that the water must be the “Two Dragon Water Inside Thousand-Year Skull,” believed to provide a miracle cure. The older brother had know about it, but was not devoted enough to go searching for it.

This narrative emphasizes the filial piety of ordinary people. It also reflects the hardships faced by the elderly in earlier times when medicine or medical care was not accessible to most people and all one could rely on in later years was the devoted

care of one's children. The water in the skull with the decaying worms signify the belief that medicine and poison are often one and the same.

Eight Brothers With Divine Powers

신통한 여덟 형제

This tale narrates the story of eight (or many) brothers who use their respective given powers, as reflected in their names, to resolve trouble.

There once lived eight brothers whose names were Mallibogicheollobogi (See Ten Thousand *Li*, See a Thousand *Li*), Jindungmandung (Carrying Weight As If Carrying Nothing at All), Jareundungmandung (As If Never Cut Off), Yeonittalgak (Opens With a Single Push), Jureottaneureotta (Contract and Expand), Gipeuniyateuni (Deep or Shallow), Deounichani (Hot or Cold), Ollatiginaeritigi (Roll Up Roll Down). Mallibogicheollobogi (See Ten Thousand *Li*, See a Thousand *Li*) was keeping vigil when he spotted a bride heading to her in-laws for her wedding, and took her to be his bride. His family was poor, so he decided to steal what he needed from a rich family (or the palace), sending Jindungmandung (Carrying Weight As If Carrying Nothing at All) to carry the treasures, but the magistrate's office arrested Jindungmandung, who faced a beheading, so Mallibogicheollobogi sent Yeonittalgak (Opens With a Single Push) to open the jail cell and Jareundungmandung (As If Never Cut Off) to replace Jindungmandung. The following day, the execution was held, but the head attached itself back on Jareundungmandung's neck. The authorities threatened to grind him in an ox millstone, and this time Jureottaneureotta (Contract and Expand) was sent to take his brother's place; and when they threatened to roll him down the cliff, Ollatiginaeritigi (Roll Up Roll Down) was sent in his place; and when they threatened to fry him in soy bean oil, Deounichani (Hot or Cold) was sent instead; and when they threatened to drown him in water, Gipeuniyateuni (Deep or Shallow) was

sent instead. The brothers were always able to save one another's life this way.

The brothers in this tale are introduced as fallen heroes, but as the narrative unfolds, they begin to display their powers. The narrative takes the form of a heroic epic, which originated from founding myths, and continues today in the many contemporary heroic tales.

Embittered Bride Turned Into Bones and Ashes

원통해서 사그라진 신부

This tale narrates the story of a bride who, upon being abandoned by her groom on the night of the wedding, spends a lifetime waiting for the groom to return and when he does turns into bones and ashes.

A man from the Kim family was about to marry a bride from the Yi family when he heard the story of an evil bride who kills her young groom on their wedding night. On his own wedding night, the groom from the Kim family entered the bridal chamber at his in-laws and was about to enjoy the table of food and drink that he had been served when he saw what he thought was a monk's head nodding, and ran back to his family. Later Kim married again and after dozens of years had passed, he found himself in the village where his former in-laws had lived and stopped by the house, which was in ruins and only a maid greeted him. The maid told him that everyone in the family was now dead, and the bride was the only one left, but no one had been able to open the bride's door in all these years. The maid then delivered the bride's message for the groom to "apologize with a hundred bows before opening the door." When Kim did as instructed and opened the door, he found the bride sitting there as she had on their wedding night but covered in dust. The bride said, "I was about to turn into a fox to eat you up, but if you resolve my grievance, I shall go away, leaving you alone." When Kim explained

why he had run away, the bride said what he had seen was a sunflower, showing him proof. The two shared the drinks on the table from their wedding night, which remained unchanged, and spend the night together as bride and groom. The bride said that in the morning, all that would remain of her would be bones, which she asked the groom to bury, wrapped in his vest. When morning arrived, Kim buried the bride's bones and left.

In some variations, the bride not only resolves her grievances but is worshipped as a village deity (*dangsin*), which is exemplified in the legend of Lady Hwang, transmitted in the Mt. Irwol area, in Yeongyang, North Gyeongsang Province, in two different narrative types. In the first type, the groom runs away due to a misunderstanding and remarries, but each time his wife had a child, the baby soon died, about which he consults a fortuneteller and learns that his first bride's haunted spirit was causing the deaths. So he builds a shrine to appease the spirit, which results in the dissolution of the bride's corpse. The second type is a narrative of the bride's ordeals as a daughter-in-law suffering from an abusive mother-in-law, and features real characters and places: "About a hundred and sixty years ago, during the reign of King Sunjo, there lived in the village of Dangni in Yeongyang, North Gyeongsang Province, a wife from the Pyeonghae Hwang clan, married to a man named Wu. They were happy in their marriage, but the wife had given birth to nine daughters and no son, which resulted in abusive behavior from her mother-in-law. When her ninth daughter was weaned from nursing, Lady Hwang, no longer able to bear her guilt, disappeared without a trace." The family was unable to find the missing wife until one day a wild *insam* digger encounters her in his hut, dressed for mourning. Her husband rushed to the hut as soon as he heard but when he held her hand, she dissolved into white bones and ashes. Her husband Wu held a funeral for her, lamenting her death, and the villagers, in order to resolve Lady



Lady Hwang Shrine.

Yeongyang-gun, Gyeongsanbuk-do, Academy of Korean Studies

Hwang's grievance, built a shrine and called it Hwangssibuindang (Lady Hwang Shrine).

Lady Hwang is worshipped today by the villagers as a guardian deity, a goddess that brings safety and prosperity to the village. Lady Hwang Shrine became a prayer venue for shamans, and the Lady Hwang is also worshipped as a goddess that brings sons, which reflects her grievance of dying for her inability to bear a son, transferred into the goddess' ability to solve other women's problems. The narrative serves as an example of a legend that has become a myth. As a haunted spirit narrative, this tale is also notable for delivering the voice of the public, that a grievance caused by a man can only be resolved by the man's apology.

Eop Enters a Home by Chance

우연히 들어온 엽

This tale narrates the story of a household that receives a chance visit by Eop (God of Property), believed to be embodied by serpents and other creatures and objects, bringing them wealth.

In a version of this narrative transmitted in Geoje, South Gyeongsang Province, a paper vendor carries home a bundle of paper one day, to find inside a serpent, which brings his family great

wealth. In another version, from Sokcho, Gangwon Province, a monk who was making rounds seeking donation received a sack of wheat and barley, which felt too heavy as he carried it and when he opened it, found a serpent inside. This serpent crawled under the wooden veranda of the house and whenever the monk sought donation, he received money and rice, which made him rich. A version from Yeongwol, Gangwon Province, tells the story of a woman who married into a poor family. Her well-off parents sent a slave to bring her rice cake, but when she opened the package, which seemed heavy, there was a serpent inside, and she treated the serpent with hospitality, which resulted in great wealth for her in-laws. Another variation from Geoje features a man who dreams of Eop leaving his house, dressed in a white overcoat, and arriving at his in-laws, which resulted in the in-laws becoming wealthy landlords. There is also a version from Seongju, North Gyeongsang Province, which features a porter who goes to the village guardian shrine (*seonangdang*) to die, but finds a child there and carries him home, but the child is not visible to the villagers. The child turned out to be Eop, who made the porter rich.

In Korean folk religion, Eop is a deity that oversees a family's material possessions, and each family take special care not to kill or harm it, since this will bring bad fortune to the home. When a house



Conical bundle of pine needles serving as sacred entity for Eop.
Ganghwa-gun, Incheon (1998, In Byeong-seon)

is scheduled to be demolished, it is believed that Eop knows of this beforehand and leaves before the demise. So if Eop appears before the family, it is considered a sign of the family's decline and a ritual is held, offering white porridge in the spot where Eop appeared, along with hand-rubbing prayers (*bison*). This tale serves as a reference that conveys the public notion of the deity Eop and how it was worshipped. The serpent as an embodiment of Eop signifies a worship not of the serpent itself but of a serpent's sacred traits.

Evil Older Brother, Good Younger Brother

악형선제

"Akhyeongseonje" narrates the story of the conflict between an evil older brother and a good younger brother.

Brotherly love has been one of the basic virtues in human society, along with loyalty between the king and his subjects, filial piety, fidelity between husband and wife, and friendship, and has thus served as an important motif in the oral narrative tradition.

There are two types of the evil older brother, good younger brother narratives:

The first is "Blind Younger Brother," in which the evil older brother assaults the younger brother, blinding him, and running away, but a mountain god (*sansin*) appears and instructs the younger brother to use a medicinal herb that will open his eyes. Following the mountain god's instructions, the younger brother heads to a rich family with a daughter dying from the venom of a centipede hiding under the roof ridge, which the younger brother finds and kills, curing the daughter. The rich father, pleased, makes the younger brother his son-in-law and also gives him part of his wealth. The mountain god again appears in his dream and instructs him to go to a village suffering from lack of water, and dig a spring after felling a hundred-year-old mulberry tree. The villagers repay him for bringing water to

them, which makes the younger brother even richer. He hosts a banquet for the blind and reunites with his older brother, arranging a marriage for him and sharing his wealth.

In the second type, summarized as “Younger Brother Heads Out in Search of Herb of Eternal Youth,” the brothers set out to Mt. Samsin to find the herb of eternal youth (*bullocho*) for their ailing mother, when a crane appears and guide them. When they arrive at sea, the older brother gives up and only the younger brother crosses the sea to acquire the herb. Upon the younger brother’s return, the older brother snatches the herb from him and pierces the younger brother’s eyes, blinding him. The older brother returns home alone and lies, as if he was the one who found the herb. The younger brother, after drifting on the sea, is washed up on shore and makes himself a bamboo flute (*tungso*), and news of the blind boy and his beautiful flute playing spreads across the country, reaching the princess, who invites him to the palace. His mother, in the meantime, having regained her health after eating the magic herb, ties a letter on the foot of a wild goose and prays that the letter reaches her younger son. Upon the arrival of the letter, the moment the younger brother opens it, vision returns to his eyes, and after marrying the princess, the younger brother invites his mother to live with them.

The evil older brother and good younger brother is a reflection of the dynamic between the stronger (older) and the weaker (younger), and thereby aimed at emphasizing brotherly love.

Eyes of Worm, Silky Skin of Crayfish

지렁이 눈과 가재의 띠

This tale explains why worms have no eyes and live in soil.

A long time ago, worm had eyes and crayfish had no eyes but skin smooth as silk ribbon. Crayfish

envied worm’s eyes and persuaded worm to trade its eyes with crayfish’s silky skin. Upon losing its eyes, worm immediately realized that they were necessary and demanded crayfish to trade back, but crayfish refused. Unable to bear the anger and shame, worm crawled into the earth and wept.

This simple tale is not transmitted widely, with few variations. A similar narrative is “Crayfish’s Whiskers, Larva’s Eyes,” in which the two creatures decide to trade, but after crayfish received larva’s eyes, it ran off, saying, “You think you deserve whiskers when you don’t even have eyes!”

This narrative is found across the world, one of the best known versions being “Nightingale and Lizard Without Feet,” in which nightingale borrows eyes from the footless lizard but does not return them, and lizard climbs the tree where nightingale has built a nest and takes revenge by making a hole in the nest. In Japan, “Worm and Snake Trade Eyes” is transmitted widely, with some versions that feature a frog or mole in the place of the snake.

This fictional tale offers an entertaining narrative to explain animal traits to the public.

Fairy and the Woodsman

선녀와 나무꾼

“Seonnyeowanamukkun” is the tale of a fairy that descended from the heavens who became the mate of a woodsman, but in the end parts with him forever.

A long, long time ago in a village lived a woodsman with his widowed mother. One day the woodsman was chopping wood in the forest when a deer, chased by a hunter, asked him for help. The woodsman hid the deer inside his pile of logs and saved it. The deer, as an expression of gratitude, told the woodsman about a pond on the other side of the mountain where heavenly fairies came to bathe, instructing him to hide one of the fairies’ winged robes while they were bathing. This would keep the

fairy from ascending to heaven and the woodsman should bring the fairy home and take care of her, which would make her his wife. The deer warned, however, that the woodsman should hide her winged robe from the fairy, never letting her see it until they had three children. The woodsman went to the pond and did as he had been told. While all the other fairies ascended after their bath, the youngest fairy, whose robe had been stolen, was weeping alone, unable to head back. The woodsman took her home and made her his wife. Two or three years passed and the woodsman and the fairy had two children between them. The fairy pleaded her husband to please let her see her winged robe now that they had two children, and the woodsman relented, upon which the fairy put the robe on and flew up to the heavens, holding the hands of her two children. The deer again appeared before the woodsman, left all alone. The deer told him that a bucket from heaven would come down to the pond, so the woodsman went to the pond, where he rode the bucket up to the heavens, where he was reunited with his wife and children. But the woodsman became concerned about his mother and decided to go back down to earth. His wife gave him a heavenly horse (*cheonma*) on which to ride down to earth, but told the woodsman that, even after he met his mother, he should never step down from the horse and on the ground. The woodsman rode on the heavenly horse and arrived



Sibiseonnyeotang Valley in Mt. Seorak.
Inje-gun, Gangwon-do, Cultural Heritage Administration

back on earth, where he met his mother. She cooked her son's favorite dish, red bean porridge (*patjuk*), but it was so hot that when some of the hot porridge fell on the horse's back as the woodsman ate, the porridge startled the horse, making it jump. This made the woodsman fall off the horse, and the horse flew back to the heavens. The woodsman, unable to return to the heavens ever again, turned into a rooster and each morning, crowed toward the sky.

This narrative is one of the most sad and beautiful among Korean folk tales, depicting the tragedy of a couple that come together despite their differences in status and background, but in the end part due to these differences.

Fake Geomancer Pulls It Off

가짜지관의 성공

This folk tale tells the story of a man who pretends to be a *jigwan*, an expert in traditional geomancy (*pungsujiri*), and succeeds by chance.

The older brother led an affluent life as a geomancer, while the younger brother was an idiot, living in poverty. One day, the younger brother's wife stole the older brother's compass and gave it to her husband, sending him away to try to find work as a geomancer. The younger brother came upon a rich family's funeral, where the head of the family took to him and asked him to locate an auspicious grave site. With the help of the family's errand boy, the younger brother was able to find a good site for them. In another instance, the younger brother located a corpse that had been buried in an unsuitable spot and had gone missing, which earned him a large amount of money, enabling him to live happily with his wife and the errand boy. Then the king passed away and the younger brother was called by the court for a consultation, upon which the errand boy blinded himself using a pair of chopsticks and left.

With its happy ending, this tale veers away from

a conventional geomancy tale (*pungsudam*). The narrative reflects the public's imaginative attempt at understanding the abstruse and abstract concepts of geomancy by simplifying them, which is a typical phenomenon in the oral tradition.

Unlike tales about renowned geomancers, this narrative focuses on the unexpected results of a fake geomancer's actions, its structure based on the folk tradition of starting from a state of deprivation and arriving at a state of resolution, characterized by elements of humor.

Family Flourishing, Family in Decline

잘되는 집안과 못되는 집안

This tale narrates the story of two families, one that flourished and one that was in decline, due to differences in family tradition.

A long time ago there lived two friends, one rich and one poor. The poor friend went to the rich friend and asked how he got so rich. The rich friend said he would show him. To his servant, the rich friend said, "Sweep the yard"; to his daughter-in-law, he said, "Bring the cauldron lid from the kitchen"; to his eldest son, he said, "Take the ox up to the roof"; to his wife, he said, "Get up to the roof and stand upside down." Without a word, his servant, daughter-in-law, eldest son and wife all did as they had been told. The poor friend came home and to his servant, he said, "Sweep the yard," and the servant said, "Why should I, when I already swept it in the morning and it's perfectly clean?"; to his daughter-in-law, he said, "Bring the cauldron from the kitchen," and she said, "Why should I take the cauldron to the gentlemen's quarters?"; to his son he said, "Bring the ox into the gentlemen's quarters," and the son said, "You're talking crazy." No one would do as he said. When he said to his wife, "Get up to the roof and stand upside down," the wife cursed at him, saying, "What bad manners, talking to me like that."

This tale reflects the Korean view that patriarchal authority determines a family's wealth or poverty. *Three Cardinal Guides and the Five Moral Imperatives* (*Samgangoryun*) according to Confucianism long served as the most basic codes of ethics in Korea—loyalty between the king and his subjects, filial piety, fidelity between husband and wife, hierarchy between the elders and the young, and trust between friends. This narrative emphasizes that observing these codes will bring peace and prosperity to the household.

Farmhand Reincarnated as Magistrate

원님으로 환생한 머슴

This tale narrates the story of a man of lowly social status reincarnated as the son of a nobleman and appointed to public office.

The story is recorded in the section titled "Daeseonghyoisebumo (Daeseong's Filial Piety for Two Generations of Parents)" of *Samgunnyusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*). Narratives about characters who overcome the limitations of their social status and achieve success were of great public interest in Joseon, which resulted in the tale's inclusion in various anthologies, including *Cheongguyadam* (*Tales from the Green Hills*) *Gimun-chonghwa* (*Assorted Collection of Tales Read and Heard*), and wide oral transmission.

Kim Sang-gu, who worked as a farmhand all his life donated all of his wages to a temple, where he offered devoted prayers asking that he be "reincarnated as a human" in his next life, then died in an empty room. As he entered the room, he had pleaded to the monks that "the door to the room should never be opened for twenty-two years, after which someone will come to open it." Twenty-two years later, the newly appointed magistrate came to the temple and opened the door to retrieve the remains and hold a funeral for Kim. The magistrate

was Kim's reincarnation, which the magistrate learned from a dream.

In many variations of this tale, the protagonist is either a farmhand, a farmer's son or a monk, wishing to be reincarnated as a governor or a magistrate. The protagonist learns of his previous life in a number of different ways: The parents receive a prophecy prior to conception about the son's fate, and the baby is born with a wooden badge in his hand, written with the name of his identity from his previous life; the protagonist, in his next life, has an annual dream about receiving great hospitality from an elderly couple, whom he meets after being appointed as magistrate and from them learns of his previous life; the protagonist reads in his dream a will placed next to the corpse of his previous self; or the will left behind in the previous life matches with the conception dream of the protagonist's dream in his next life.

This tale reflects the views of the Korean people on the human soul and reincarnation, on Buddhism, social success and anticipation and faith about achieving one's dreams in the next life.

Farmhand Who Married the Master's Daughter

주인집 딸에게 장가 간 머슴

This droll tale narrates the story of a farmhand who uses his wit to trick his master into letting him marry the master's daughter.

There lived a farmhand who longed to marry the master's daughter. One evening the master ordered the farmhand to thresh barley early the following morning. The farmhand went into the kitchen but there was no firewood, so he went to the shed, where he also found the daughter's underwear, left to be washed. At the rooster's first crow, the farmhand came out to the yard to thresh the barley, wearing the daughter's underwear. The master woke to the sound of his threshing, and upon seeing the farmhand, asked what it was that he was wearing.

The farmhand mumbled that he had put on the daughter's underwear without realizing it, and went in to change. The master, thinking that the farmhand had slept with his daughter, decided to marry them.

Variations of this tale feature different tricks played by the farmhand: The farmhand leaves feathers in the spot where the daughter urinating, which makes the daughter make strange sounds when she walks, and the farmhand fixes it; the farmhand uses sexual profanities to the daughter, who is in the outhouse, which makes the master think they have had sex; or the farmhand tricks the innocent daughter into having sex with him.

In the tale, the master does not want the farmhand as his son-in-law, but gives in reluctantly, thinking that they have already engaged in intimacy. In some versions, the master sends them away to avoid the neighbors' attention, which reflects the notions about marriage and social status in the traditional Korean society.

Fart Duel

방귀시합

This tall tale narrates the story of two men with powerful farts who hold a duel flinging a wooden pestle back and forth with their gas.

Fartman of Gyeongsang Province visited Farmman of Jeolla Province to compete him, but no one was home except for his son. When Gyeongsang Farmman asked where his father was, the son answered that he was out in the field. Disappointed that he missed his competitor, Gyeongsang Farmman went into the kitchen to fart before he headed back, which sent the son flying into the chimney. As the son tried to crawl out, the man farted again, which pushed the son in and out of the chimney before he finally escaped. Jeolla Farmman returned as Gyeongsang Farmman entered the mountain path that led back home, and hearing from his son why he was covered in soot, he

set out after Gyeongsang Fartman. When he found Gyeongsang Fartman in the mountain, he farted at him, which flung a wooden roller his way, and seeing the roller come flying, Gyeongsang Fartman farted back, flinging the roller back at Jeolla Fartman, who stood watching, thinking the roller would hit and kill his opponent, then farted back, sending the roller flying back. The roller kept flying back and forth, making the duel go on endlessly.

There are different variations of the tale featuring different character pairs, including a man from Seoul and a man from the country; a widow and a monk, the latter of which dies in the end, hit by the wooden pestle; a widower and a widow, who get married in the end; and a man and a woman, the latter of which triumphs. In some cases, the duel starts out in the form of offense-and-defense, then shifts to a contest of who can fling the pestle or roller further.

Flatulence, in the folk tradition, serves as a motif that incites laughter and is used in a wide range of droll tales. In this tale, it is applied in the form of a duel, functioning as more than a mere farcical device, and signifies the conflict between Jeolla and Gyeongsang provinces; between the capital and the country; between the north and the south; between man and woman. When the duel takes place between males, it goes on endlessly, while that between a male and a female ends in the female's victory, which seems to be a cultural reflection of a society moving from matriarchy to patriarchy, or the conflicts between women and men, who are trying to strip women of their newly earned rights.

Farting Daughter-in-Law

방귀쟁이 며느리

This tale narrates the story of a daughter-in-law who made a fart of enormous force in front of her parents-in-law.

A long time ago, there lived a daughter-in-law

whose face turned yellow and appeared sick. Worried, the rest of the family asked her what was the matter and she said it was because she had to hold in her gas. Her father-in-law told her it was okay and to go ahead, and the daughter-in-law urged, "Then I ask that dear father-in-law grab onto a column, dear mother-in-law the gate, dear husband the kitchen door, dear sister-in-law the cauldron." Then she released herself and the fart was so powerful that the house blew away, the father-in-law spinning, his hands still on the column, the mother-in-law flying this way and that as she held onto the gate, her husband rocking and rattling as he gripped onto the kitchen door, and her sister-in-law being swept in and out of the cauldron. Her parents decided that they should kick out a daughter-in-law with such an unacceptably powerful fart, and she set out to return to her family, and the father-in-law accompanied her. On their way, they met a brassware vendor and a silk vendor, who wanted to the pears on the tree to relieve their thirst, but the tree was too high so they were at a loss. The daughter-in-law told them she would be able to get the pears for them and proposed a wager, upon which the two vendors promised to give her brassware and silk if she succeeded. The daughter-in-law once again made a fart of enormous force, which made the pears fall, and in return received brassware and silk. Her father-in-law realized that his daughter-in-law's powerful fart had a use, and took her back to his family.

There are five different variations of this narrative: The daughter-in-law makes a fart of enormous force and the parents-in-law ask her if she feels better, or the daughter-in-law regains her beauty; her powerful fart blows away her parents-in-law, and sometimes the husband as well, leaving her a widow; the story ends with the daughter-in-law's expulsion; following her expulsion, she heads back home with her father-in-law and when he wants a pear in a tall tree, her fart makes the pears fall, and the father-in-law brings her back; and the fifth variation is the one summarized above, featuring the brassware and silk

vendors.

There are some interpretations that this tale of a woman with supernatural power is a variation of the giant goddess mythology. According to a more realistic interpretation, the daughter-in-law's flatulence signifies her capacity for labor and livelihood. It is also notable that she is able to return to her in-laws not due to a change in her behavior but a change in her in-laws' perceptions, the subversion of the conventional viewpoint that women need to be discrete and modest.

The narrative does contain mythological motifs, including flatulence, which can be interpreted as a farcical variation of the excretion motif, and the daughter-in-law's expulsion and return, similar in structure to that of an initiation ritual or rite of passage. Some variations of the narrative have plots that combine the story of "Fart Duel." The passing back and forth of the wooden pestle signifies the sexual union between man and woman, and the tale's ending, of the pestle flying all the way to Donghae (East Sea), where it turns into a stingray or yellowtail, signifying the fertility of a goddess.

Fool Tries to Sound Learned

바보의 문자 쓰기

This fool's tale narrates the story of a son-in-law who gets humiliated and ruins the reputation of his in-laws after trying to feign literacy.

In a traditional wedding ceremony, composing or reciting a poem in Chinese characters was often part of a groom's initiation rite imposed by the bride's family and friends (*dongsangnye*), which is the premise of this narrative. The story of a groom learning to sing is also included in the anthology *Seongsupaeseol* (*Tales to Keep Readers Awake*).

A fool was getting married, and his father, afraid he might get humiliated, taught him some sophisticated Chinese-character phrases in advance.

He instructed his son to say, "Baekgongcheonjang" when people made peeping holes in the mulberry paper door on his wedding night, which meant, "A hundred holes have created a window"; and when his mother-in-law served him a meal, to say, "Manbanjinsu," meaning, "The table is filled with rare delicacies." His son, however, got the order mixed up in his confusion and used the wrong phrase.

A variation of this narrative features the fool learning to read the phrase the spring greeting "*ipchundaegil*," and pointing to his mouth to remind him of the first letter "*ip*" a homonym of the word for mouth, which the fool misunderstands as nose, mispronouncing the first syllable as *ko*, meaning nose. There are other versions that also feature word play, including a poem that includes the word "*dugyeon*," meaning, "cuckoo," which the fool misunderstands as "*dudeok*," a prominent part of the female genitalia. In another version, the bride teaches her foolish husband to sing, but the groom keeps repeating not just the song but her instructions, "Repeat after me," which ends up in a humiliating situation for his parents-in-law.

This narrative is about the attempt to disguise a fool as a learned son-in-law, which fails in the end. If left alone, the son-in-law would simply have made a fool of himself, but when the family try to cover up his flaw, the humiliation falls on the entire family. Socially, this reflects the high expectations built up and the disappointment that result on the part of the bride's family, who, according to conventions, usually prefer "marrying up (*anghon*)."

Fool's Tale

우행담

Uhaengdam, or fool's tale, narrates the foolish acts of characters lacking in intelligence or silly acts by ordinary characters carried out under special circumstances. Fools are present in narrative

traditions around the world throughout history, and in Korea, these tales have been documented in many folk narrative anthologies including *Chondamhaei* (*Annotated Collection of Village Tales*).

Some of the most common types of fool's tales in the Korean folk tradition are foolish son-in-law, foolish daughter-in-law and foolish magistrate narratives, which focus on the fact that their lack of intelligence makes them incompetent in their given roles. Some fool's tales feature specific objects like mirrors or clocks, of which the foolish character is ignorant and which lead to trouble, or some feature fools that have no knowledge of sex, which are in effect obscene tales. There are others that portray protagonists in a positive light as people who are naïve about the ways of the world and too trusting of people.

Fool's tales and wisdom tales take up two opposite ends of the narrative spectrum, but some also view fool's tales that emphasize the innocence of fools as wisdom tales. In a similar vein, fool's tales that depict foolish acts that inadvertently result in good fortune overlap with fortune tales; those that try to teach a fool about sex overlap with carnal tales; those about inarticulate fools and the misunderstandings they create overlap with word play tales; and those about fools whose acts result in mechanical repetitions show traits of formula tales.

To conclude, fool's tales cover a wide range of narratives, including those that shed a positive light on the characteristics of fools, reflect sympathy, and/or sometimes even admiration for these characters.

Foolish Brother

바보 형제

"Babohyeongje" is the tale of a fool among two brothers, who kills his mother, caught in a snare, and engages in other foolish acts.

There lived two brothers and one was a fool.

When the fool released a beast caught in the brother's snare, the brother told him he should kill whatever got trapped in the snare, so when their mother got caught as she was leaving the outhouse, the fool killed her. To hold a funeral for her, the brother asked for some grains (or red beans) from a neighbor (or uncle) and made porridge, but the fool ruined the ritual by pouring the porridge over people's heads, and while burning the grave site before the burial, the fool burned up his mother's body as well.

Different versions include all or several of the incidents noted above, with some additional anecdotes, including stealing grains from a neighbor, or some of them obscene, for example, a scene in which the brother gets upset when his wife's private parts show through her clothes, and the fool says, "You're the only person in the world who gets upset at the sight of that thing."

According to some interpretations, the aggression and violence in the narrative reflect a society shifting from hunting to farming, as implied in the details regarding hunting in the beginning and the acquiring of grains in the latter half. The murder of the mother suggests that the old system was subverted by force, and that women were excluded and oppressed in the course of establishing a patriarchal society.

Foolish Daughter-in-Law

바보 며느리

"Babomyeoneuri" is a tale that pokes fun at a daughter-in-law inept at housekeeping and other responsibilities.

A daughter-in-law new to the family was not careful with her speech. Her father-in-law instructed her to address elders with honorifics, but one day when the dog barked and he ordered her to go see what happened, the daughter-in-law came back and reported, "Mister Ox performed the act of chewing up Mister Bean, which Mister

Dog witnessed and produced respectable barking sounds.” When during a meal, she saw grains of rice stuck on the father-in-law’s mouth, she said, “Mister Rice Grains are stuck on Respectable Father’s Mister Muzzle.” One day, when the father-in-law asked her to make a new *durumagi* (formal coat) to wear to an ancestral memorial rite, the daughter-in-law used grains of steamed rice to paste together the pieces of fabric instead of sewing them, and when the father-in-law got rained on as he returned from the memorial rite, the coat fell apart. But what the daughter-in-law had to say was, “What did you have to hurry back for? The coat wouldn’t have fallen apart if you had stayed the night and come back in nicer weather.”

Albeit the exaggeration, the tale is a depiction of the hardships of adapting to new surroundings. The first thing the daughter-in-law is required to do is to address her in-laws with honorifics, which she uses when addressing animals or even objects, which creates a comical situation while offering a critique of the inequalities experienced by the daughter-in-law. The various simple chores described in different versions of the tale, including sewing a ribbon or cooking porridge, emphasize the daughter-in-law’s ineptness. In recitation, the storyteller adopts a tone of ridicule, focusing less on the daughter-in-law’s adjustment and development into someone capable and reliable than on the fact that she is a fool who cannot be taught. Some versions also include an anecdote in which the daughter-in-law, upon hearing the adage that a daughter-in-law should “live as a mute for three years,” stops talking altogether and is praised, which reflects the social atmosphere in which unconditional obedience was the singular virtue for a daughter-in-law.

In traditional Korean societies, the practice of marrying down (*ganghon*) was preferred when choosing a daughter-in-law, which resulted in complaints and discontent for the family, which is reflected in this narrative.

Foolish Magistrate

바보 원님

“Babowonnim” is a tale that ridicules the foolish words and behavior of a naïve magistrate.

The new magistrate, dispatched to the country from Seoul, arrived at his post on the last day of the lunar month, when there was no moon. The magistrate addressed concern to the clerk that there was no moon, and the clerk answered that due to last year’s bad harvest, they villagers had to sell their moon to a neighboring village in exchange for grain. The magistrate gave the clerk one thousand coins to buy it back, saying that a village needs its moon. When the new moon appeared, he asked the clerk how come the moon was so small, and the clerk answered that the money he gave was not enough, so the magistrate gave him five thousands coins. Soon the full moon rose and the magistrate said, “Five thousand coins is too small a price to pay for a moon like that.”

There are many variations of this narrative, featuring varying foolish behavior by the magistrate, including not knowing when New Year bows (*sebae*) are offered; not knowing whether a deer lays eggs or gives birth to offspring; or makes a foolish judgment by listening to his wife, bringing damage to the villagers. The variations can be grouped into three types: of foolish acts resulting in humiliation from his clerk; of buying back the moon; and of court cases handled badly.

Hostility toward the magistrate is an attitude shared by the different variations, which is related to the central government system adopted in early Joseon, which resulted in conflicts between the central government-appointed magistrates ignorant of local affairs and the scholar gentry and local elites of respective regions.

Foolish Son-in-Law

바보 사위

“Babosawi (Foolish Son-in-Law)” is a tale depicting all sorts of foolish behavior by a groom or a son-in-law in the course of a wedding or in relation to his in-laws.

There was a husband who was a fool, incapable of managing even basic greetings. His father-in-law was scheduled to visit, so his wife taught him proper greetings, but he could not get them right. So his wife had to resort to tying a string to the husband's testicles; she designated a different greeting to each number of times she pulled at the string, which included, “How have you been, sir? Please come in,” “Dear, why don't you set the table for us,” “Please help yourself, sir,” “Oh no, are you leaving us so soon? I wish you a safe trip back.” When his father-in-law arrived, his wife pulled at the string from outside the room and the fool managed well as practiced. But his wife had to attend to something urgently, and left the string tied to a chicken bone (or a pollack), when a cat passing by jumped at the bone and kept pulling at it, making the fool repeat, over and over, “Ouch, oh no, are you leaving us so soon? I wish you a safe trip back,” “Ow, ouch, how have you been, sir? Please come in,” “Ow, ouch, dear, why don't you set the table for us,” “Ow, ouch, please help yourself, sir,” “Ouch, ow, oh no, are you leaving us so soon?” The father-in-law, feeling something was wrong, asked, “What is the matter? Are you mad?” and the son-in-law, angry with pain, said, “Mad? Well, it's not you whose balls are hurting, but mine are hurting, that is why.”

This tale reflects the psychological resistance of women, forced into marriage to young grooms as part of the practice of arranged marriages, with the establishment of a patriarchal order. It is also an indirect critique of damage from marriage arrangements that focus on reputation and decorum.

There are variations of this narrative that highlight a groom's mishaps in the course of his

wedding, which is closely related to the many wedding initiation rites including the groom's journey to attend the wedding (*chohaeng*), a teasing initiation rite imposed by the bride's family and friends (*dongsangnye*), the groom's first visit to his in-laws' after the wedding (*jaehaeng*), serving as important references about traditional wedding rituals.

Forgetful Old Man

건망증 심한 사람

This tale narrates the story of outrageous events that occur due to the severe forgetfulness of an old man and his search for his identity.

A forgetful old man was on the road when he sat down to relieve himself after hanging his *gat* (horsehair hat) where he would hit it when he stood back up and make it fall, so that he would not forget to take it. After he was done, he stood and the hat fell, upon which he said, “How lucky, I found this hat.” Then he turned around to see his steaming dung, and he said, “Someone just relieved himself right here!” He found a house to lodge for the night, where a monk was also staying. The old man asked the monk, “Which temple are you at?” and the monk told him which temple he belonged to. But the old man quickly forgot the answer and asked the same question all night long. The monk became so frustrated that when morning arrived, he cut off the old man's topknot and ran off. The old man awoke to find himself without a topknot, which led him to believe that he was a monk. He said to the man of the house, “I see that the monk is here, but where have I gone?” and the man of the house was dumbfounded. The old man, completely confused, asked a passer-by wearing a horsehair hat, “Are you me?” and the passer-by walked on by, swearing at the old man.

Forgetfulness is also a central motif in the tale of the poet Kim Baek-gok. Baek-gok's father had a dream in which he encountered a dragon about to

ascend to the heavens, and he meant to say, “Hey, it’s a dragon,” but instead said, “Are you a dragon?” The dragon protested that Baek-gok’s father had meant that it was not qualified to be a dragon, and following this dream, Baekgok was born. Due to his mistake of making an unpleasant remark to the dragon, he was given a son of insufficient intelligence, and Baek-gok was slow and distracted, which resulted in myriad anecdotes of his repeated readings of bills, of returning home as soon as he stepped out of the house for a outing, asking repeated questions to a monk, and others. The tale can be viewed as fatalistic, but at the same time, as a story of one man’s overcoming of one’s deficiencies.

This narrative is characterized by distinctive details and motifs including feces, a horsehair hat, repeated questions to a monk, and the cutting of the aristocratic topknot, the arc of the humorous story arriving at the philosophical question, “Who am I?” This theme is especially poignant, considering that the tale is set in a time when society placed more emphasis on the collective than the individual.

Formula Tale

형식담

Hyeongsikdam, or formula tale, is a story that relies on a specific narrative structure.

Formula tales boast a long history within the long oral tradition of the art storytelling. For example, the tale “Mole Wedding” dates back to the ancient Indian collection *Panchatantra* from the 3rd or 4th century and is also found in the 11th-century book *Sea of Stories* and in Korea, was documented between 17th and 18th centuries in *Sunoji (Fifteen-Day Record)* by Hong Man-jong.

Formula tales do not necessarily focus on form over plot and encompass a range of tales that follow a traditional form or structure, typically characterized by accumulation and repetition.

Formula tales can be categorized into narratives that are simply formulaic and those that focus on accumulation: The former generally includes word play, are linear and infinite in structure, and are often structured as questions and answers, questions that demand a selection and those that request an answer. The latter are often about fortune and misfortune, punishment or revenge, and also about fools, and have a recursive structure, often taking the form of questions and answers.

The general characteristics of a formula tale as storytelling can be summarized as follows:

First, in reciting a formula tale, the storyteller must adhere closely to the chosen form, especially in the case of those that focus on accumulative effect, since just one missing link can ruin the delivery; second, some formula tales are pure word play, without plot; third, formula tales are repetitive, as exemplified in “Story Without End,” comprising a repetition of the same words, phrases or action, some gradually building towards a climax; fourth, the narrative is based on a formulaic pattern forced on the storyteller despite his own disinterest or boredom; fifth is the personification of not only animals but objects; and sixth, the tales are often based on falsehood or exaggerations.

Some droll tales are categorized as formula tales due to their structure or form, based on meter, repetition, crescendo effect, or are very long or short in length, or are cyclical in structure. In other words, formula tales make up a distinctively lyrical and aethetical genre within the oral tradition.

Fortune Quest

구복여행

“Gubongnyeohaeng” is a tale that narrates the journey of a young man who sets out on a quest for a deity to overcome his poverty, during which he encounters many requests posed by people meets

and solves them by consulting a divine being, and in return, finds his own fortune as well.

The earliest form of a fortune quest is recorded as an anecdote in the Buddhist scripture from 3rd-century BCE India, *Jataka* (*Sutra of the Buddha's Reincarnated Manifestations*). Another version is included in the scripture *Xianyujing* (*Sutra on the Wise and Foolish*) a record in Chinese characters of sermons by monk Huijue from the ancient Chinese state of Wei delivered in the western lands. The sutra was also compiled as part of *Goryeodaejanggyeong* (*Goryeo Tripitaka*) from the Korean kingdom of Goryeo.

A long time ago there lived a young man whose bundle of lumber kept disappearing each time he finished chopping wood, which made it impossible for him to get out of poverty. Determined to seek his fortune, he set out for Seocheonseoyeokguk (Kingdom of Western Territories Under Western Heavens). He was lodging at the home of a beautiful widow, when upon hearing of his plans, the widow asked that he find a good husband for her. He said he would, and set out again. On the road he met three boy monks, who, upon hearing he was headed to the Kingdom of Western Territories, requested that he ask Buddha why they had been unable to make golden flowers blossom. Then he came upon a wide river where there was no bridge or boat, and the monster serpent *imugi* appeared, and upon hearing the young man's plans, asked that he find out why it could not turn into a dragon and ascend to the heavens. Finally the young man arrived in the Western Territories and said to Buddha that he had come to collect his fortune, and Buddha replied that the young man's birth hour carried no fortune and there was nothing Buddha could do. At a loss, the young man delivered the requests from those he met on the road and headed back with resolutions. To *imugi*, he delivered the answer that the weight of its two cintamanis was keeping it from ascending, and the serpent gave one of its marbles to the young man, then ascended to the heavens. To the three boy monks, the young man explained that golden blossoms required only

one gwan of gold but they were using three *gwan*, which was too much, and the boy monks gave the young man the gold that they did not need. And to the widow, the young man delivered the answer that the first man she met after being widowed was her match, which turned out to be the young man, and they married and lived happily.

The first question that the young man encounters on his journey is "What kind of a man should one marry?" which reflects the public's yearning to meet the right spouse and lead a happy life. The second one is about a flower that would not blossom or a tree that would not bear fruit, which is followed by the answer that gold and silver are precious but when they are buried under trees, they become not only useless but damaging to what one is trying to achieve. The last question is about the monster serpent *imugi* that is unable to ascend to the heavens, and Buddha's response explains that too much treasure is getting in the way of true progress and that one must abandon excessive greed.

This Korean version of the Buddhist tale specifies the goal of young man's quest as his "fortune" and the questions he is asked are about human greed, the ideal spouse, and how material possession should be viewed. The encounter with a divine being implies that the protagonist's problems have already been solved, and he is granted a happy life in return for solving the problems of others. In other words, this narrative is a dramatization of the public notion about fortune and fate, that if one lacks good fortune, it can be acquired by seeking it out.

Fortune Tale

행운담

Haengundam, or fortune tales, narrate stories of unfortunate characters who by chance acquire good fortune.

Fortune tales enjoy a long tradition in both oral

and written transmission, and some examples include, “Stone Stack, Rice Stack,” “Golden Ruler,” “Three Pieces of Straw Rope,” “Tiger Eyelash,” “Man Who Became a Kin of Bak Mun-su,” and “Royal Seal Returned.” The protagonists are men who are young, poor and/or disadvantaged, but do not possess the desire or plan to change their fortune, while surrounded by contrasting characters, including a rich friend, a teacher, nobleman or the folkloric character Bak Mun-su.

Fortune tales can be summarized as the narrative of an unfortunate protagonist one day visited by good fortune through an opportunity often provided by a bystander or a friend. For example, there was a student who always came to the village school on an empty stomach and a rich classmate hid his family possessions and helped his friend find them, to help the hungry student feed himself.

“Three Pieces of Straw Rope” is the story of a lazy son from a poor family, kicked out by his father for his laziness, and the mother, having nothing to give the son to take on the road, finds three pieces of rope in the yard and gives them to her son. As in this tale, fortune is always found outside of the boundaries of home, which makes journey an important motif in fortune tales. Encounters with new places and new people are what bring new opportunities in life.

In “Tiger Eyelash,” a man decides to take his own life in the face of grave hardships but his chosen method of suicide is to get himself eaten by a tiger, which can be interpreted as an attempt to find some sort of a solution or hope. The tiger, a divine animal, is impressed that this man has come to him of his own accord when other humans run away, and presents him with his magical eyelash.

In “Stone Stack, Rice Stack,” the poor son takes into account the rich neighbor’s greed and places silver spoons and gold nuggets atop his stack of stones. And when he visits the Great Kingdom, he makes plans with his friend back in Joseon to set fire on his house on a given date.

In other words, the first opportunity given the protagonist of a fortune tale is followed up and expanded, pushing the protagonists into better opportunities and bigger worlds, from village to magistrate’s office, from country to the city, from Joseon to the Great Kingdom. These opportunities present him with bigger obstacles as well, which the protagonist overcomes through luck and chance but also through the help of a supporter or the protagonist’s own wisdom, wit and effort, creating a narrative structure comprising a repeated chain of “deprivation-resolution of deprivation.

The resolutions are achieved through various motifs, including finding lost items, curing of illness, rise in status, acquisition of wealth and marriage, as observed in the poor protagonist’s acquisition of a rice stack; the lowly butcher who is acknowledged as the high official Bak Mun-su’s kin; the farmhand becoming the son-in-law to a king; and an ordinary man acquiring, through a tiger eyelash, the divine power of seeing people’s previous lives. Universal tales like “The Princess’s Gold,” found across the world, reflect the common belief that becoming rich is what all human want in their pursuit of happiness, and that fortune and happiness are given by chance.

Fortune tales are basically based on humor, related to character or problem-solving methods, more exaggerated and farcical compared to legends.

Fox Marble

여우구슬

“Yeouguseul” is the tale of a student who manages to steal the fox woman’s marble but because he looked down at the ground instead of looking up at the sky, his knowledge became constricted to the ways of the earth and not the heavens.

This oral narrative is transmitted in two different types:

The first type features a young student whose

health continued declining, and when his teacher asked what was the matter, he explained that when he was walking in the mountains, a woman appeared and kissed him, grabbing his ears, and ever since, he had felt ill. The teacher asked the boy if something entered his mouth when the woman kissed him, and told him that if the same thing happened again, he should bring the thing that entered his mouth to the teacher. But the student demanded that the teacher explain what that thing was, or he would not bring it to the teacher. The teacher explained that the woman was a white fox, and that if a person swallowed the marble inside of her mouth and looked up at the sky, the person would gain an understanding of the ways of the heavens, and if he looked down at the ground, the person would gain an understanding of the ways of the earth. The following day when the white fox kissed him, the student swallowed the marble that entered his mouth, but thinking that understanding the heavens was no use to him, he looked down at the ground, and the student gained a clear understanding of the earth and became a competent geomancer.

The second type combines the *gumiho* (nine-tailed fox) motif. A long time ago, in a rural village, there was a large village school attended by a hundred students who sometimes camped together in the large hall when their lessons ended late. One night, a fox transformed herself into a beautiful girl and visited the school to fulfill her mission to kiss one hundred students, which would send her to the heavens. She was able to kiss ninety-nine students, but one had realized what was going on and hid himself. The girl searched for the last student but gave up and left, and the student who had been hiding followed her and discovered the location of her lair. As he turned back to return to the village, the girl suddenly appeared and kissed his mouth, pushing in and pulling out the marble to suck up his energy, until the student's face turned pale. The student reminded himself of the common belief that if a person looked up at the sky before the marble melted, he would gain all the wisdom of the

heavens, and if he looked down at the ground, the person would gain all the wisdom of the earth, and swallowed the marble. But the girl, startled, pushed his jaws open to retrieve the marble, which pushed him to the ground and he fainted without a chance to look up at the sky. The following morning, the student woke and with help from the villagers, killed the fox, and the student acquired the wisdom of the earth, but not that of the heavens.

There are many variations of this tale, which feature a serpent in the place of the fox, or a physician in the place of the teacher that explains to him about the fox. In some versions, the teacher instructs the student to swallow the marble and visit his house to look at books, and the student reads only geography books, through which he gains an understanding of the earth. There are other versions in which the student falls to the ground while running back after swallowing the marble, which gives him knowledge about the earth, or the teacher follows his student, who has gained knowledge of the earth and swallows the fox marble found in the student's feces, which makes the teacher knowledgeable in the ways of the heavens. In one variation, the fox reappears and threatens that if the students does not give back the marble, he will die in three years, but the students refuses, and still lives a long life. In other versions, the fox demands that the student swallow the marble in return for knowledge of astronomy and geography; or the student, upon receiving the knowledge, is frightened, and screams, "*Aigume!*" and becomes a renowned singer; or the knowledge makes the student a renowned writer.

The fox in this narrative possesses both divine and devilish traits. On the surface, the fox appears to be an evil creature, but underneath the divine characteristics are also evident. In the Korean oral tradition, the fox is portrayed in a wide range of images, projecting both positive and negative concepts. In China and Japan, the fox is generally depicted as a woman of charm and wisdom, while in Korea the image is more negative.

Fox Sister

여우누이

The tale “Yeounui” narrates the story of a fox born into a family as the daughter, but who is killed in the end by her brother.

A long time ago, there lived a husband and wife with many sons but no daughter, which they desperately longed for, and after praying to the mountain god (*sansin*), finally gave birth to a girl. As the daughter grew up, their cattle began to die one by one. Thinking it strange, the parents asked the sons to find out what was going on. Late at night, the eldest son witnessed his sister rub oil on her hand and push it into the ox’s anus and pull out its liver to eat it, killing the ox. But the eldest son could not bring himself to report this to his father. The second son was sent out the following day, but he could not report what he saw, either, and the youngest son was sent out the following day, and he told his father what he saw his sister do. However, his father believed the youngest son was slandering his sister and expelled him, and the youngest son left home for a different village, where he got married and settled down. Many years later, the youngest son began to wonder how his family was doing and wanted to visit, but his wife tried to stop him, thinking it would be too dangerous. When he insisted, the wife relented, handing him a strong steed that could travel a thousand li (*cheollima*) and three bottles, instructing him to use the bottles in case of an emergency. The youngest son arrived at the family home to find the house in a devastated state, his sister alone after eating up all the cattle and family, greeting him and asking what he would like to eat. The youngest son, trying to buy time to escape, said he wanted chives pancake and sent her out to the field for chives. The sister tied up her brother before going out to the field, but he untied himself and ran away, leaving the rope tied to the gate. His sister came after him, shifting back and forth between fox and human, and scared that he

would be caught, the youngest son threw one of the bottles that his wife had given him, which was the blue one, which made a river appear, but the sister was able swim across it. He threw the next bottle and a thornbush appeared, piercing the fox, but it still did not kill the fox, and when he threw the last bottle, which was red, a fire exploded, burning the fox and finally killing it.

This narrative of brother-sister confrontation takes place between a fox that brings down the family and a son who tries to repel the fox. The son who tells the truth is abandoned by the parents, but in the outside world, he marries a woman with supernatural powers, who presents him with magical tools to defeat the sister when the son heads back home. The son receiving help from his wife signifies that his capacities were expanded through an alliance with a cultural group outside of his own, which enables him to become a cultural hero by defeating an evil force of nature and reestablishing a human-oriented cultural order.

Geomancy Tale

풍수담

Pungsudam, or geomancy tale, narrates the story of people related to the traditional belief of geomancy; of fortunes good or bad acquired through geomancy; or of the origins of geographical names.

In the Korean oral tradition, the narrative structure of geomancy tales comprise three levels: the first on geomantic belief; the second on geomancers; and the third on the general notions of geomancy. The narrative elements that make up geomancy tales are geomancy, user, and auspicious site, and the varying relations between these three elements determine the different narrative plots, which can be summarized as below:

1) A user secures an auspicious site and acquires fortune.

- 2) Someone becomes a renowned geomancer.
- 3) A renowned geomancer demonstrates his supernatural powers.
- 4) A renowned geomancer makes a mistake.
- 5) A fake geomancer manages to carry out his role and becomes rich.
- 6) Someone secures an auspicious site but is ruined by greed or breaking of taboo, or by damaging the site.
- 7) An auspicious site is created through geographical supplementation or by eliminating its geomantic flaw.

These narratives can be grouped into those about the user, about geomancy, and about auspicious sites, then categorized into motifs, as below:

1) Acquisition of auspicious site: This motif is central to all geomancy tales, and auspicious sites are acquired through various means including good deeds, in searching for a lost corpse, through someone's will, or sometimes by chance.

2) Stealing of auspicious site: This motif usually involves actual theft or taking someone's auspicious site without being noticed. In late Joseon, secret burials and illegal burials on other people's land were often reported, becoming the subject of oral narratives.

3) Auspicious site brings fortune: This motif focuses on how and what kind of fortunes unfold after acquiring an auspicious site, some immediate or some mystical, as in acquiring a son in a family at the risk of discontinuing its lineage.

4) Renowned geomancer: This motif can feature historical figures or nameless characters, who function as active agents of the narrative plot. The geomancer's actions focus on how he became a geomancer and how he practiced his craft, and sometimes on his despair.

5) Fake geomancer: This motif focuses on the unpredictable actions of a fake geomancer and their consequences, usually starting from a state of deprivation and returning to a state of deprivation.



A book of geomancy.

Joseon, National Folk Museum of Korea

6) Damaged auspicious site: This motif is brought about by excessive greed or broken taboos.

7) Creating an auspicious site: Central to this motif is the practice of geographical supplementation (*bibo*), carried out in relation to a wide range of activities and concepts, including environmental concerns, spatial arrangement, housing architecture, landscaping, village god worship and rituals, and folk games.

In Korea, geomancy takes up an important place in folk belief, and has immensely influenced the lives of ordinary people, believed to determine the rise and fall of states, and the fortunes of a family or individual, which also resulted in various social ills, becoming the target of criticism from late Joseon Neo-Confucian scholars with a practical bent, who at the same time emphasized that “becoming aware of and accepting the ways of nature is the best direction for humans to take.”

These discussions show that people's understanding of traditional geomancy varied greatly in depth and logic, which created varying degrees of value, making it all the more difficult for the lower class to grasp its consequences. This was why the common people attempted to convey the overall meaning and logic of geomancy in folk narratives, centering on cause and ideals.

Glutton and Envoy

떡보와 사신

This tale narrates the story of an illiterate glutton who defeats a scholar from China in a contest carried out in sign language.

The narrative, documented in the 17th-century collection *Eouyadam* (*Eou's Unofficial Histories*) and the 19th-century *Leonchongnim* (*Collection of Miscellaneous Secular Tales*), is an archetypal story spread across the world in various versions.

China sent an envoy to Joseon to examine the country's talent pool. The court carried out a nation-wide talent search for the occasion, but had a difficult time finding the right person. A glutton who loved rice cake (*tteok*) applied, thinking this would be a good opportunity to eat as much rice cake as he wanted. He was sent to Amnok (Yalu) River, disguised as a boatsman, to greet the envoy. Since they did not speak each other's language, they communicated in sign language. The envoy first made a circle with his fingers, meaning that the sky was round. The glutton thought he was asking if he had eaten a slice of round rice cake, and made a square with his fingers, meaning he had eaten a square-shaped rice cake. But the envoy understood this as meaning, "The earth is square." Next the envoy raised three fingers to ask, "Do you know the Three Cardinal Guides?" and the glutton, thinking that he was asking whether he had eaten three slices of cake, answered by raising five fingers, to mean that he had eaten five slices, but the envoy took this to mean that the glutton also knew Confucious' Five Moral Imperatives. Then the envoy patted his beard, to ask whether he knew the ancient emperor Yandi, and the glutton rubbed his belly, to mean that he had enjoyed the cake, but the envoy took this to mean that he also knew the ancient emperor Fuxi. Impressed, the envoy concluded, "In this kingdom, even the uneducated public boasts such deep knowledge, and I could not possibly compete with the others," and headed

back to China, and the court presented the glutton with a large reward.

Variations of this tale also start with China attempting to test the capacities of the people of Joseon, and as summarized above, the competition ends in misunderstanding.

The tale is a reflection of the public's sense of independence, and an expression of their spirit of resistance, and the tale ends with a triumph achieved by the ordinary people by overcoming the helplessness of the ruling class.

Glyphomancer Tale

파자점

"*Pajajeom*," literally meaning "divination by breaking letters," refers to the practice of glyphomancy, or telling fortunes by splitting or combining letters and their components. In a glyphomancer folk tale, the fortuneteller is able to judge human fate by interpreting the same Chinese character differently according to the individual who picks it.

In one version of the glyphomancer tale, King Sukjong of Joseon was surveying his kingdom in disguise when he came across a glyphomancer noted for his abilities. The king was asked to pick a character and he chose "問," which means "to ask." The fortuneteller offered a deep bow, saying that the man in front of him was the king, for the character shows a king (君) to the left and another to the right. To test the authenticity of the glyphomancer, Sukjong instructed a beggar to visit the glyphomancer and pick out the same character "問." When he did so, the fortuneteller said that the character, comprised of "門 (gate)" and "口 (mouth)," showed "a mouth outside the gate, which means you have to beg for food."

Glyphomancer tales feature historical figures like King Sukjong and the high official Bak Mun-su. Other variations also feature King Seonjo of

Joseon, Joseon's founding king Taejo, kings of Silla kingdom, and Chinese emperors, and sometimes the glyphomancy is performed not by a fortuneteller but by a blind man. In some versions, the glyphomancer foretells a different fortune to two people who both pick the character “初,” meaning “first”: to the first he predicts the birth of a daughter, while to the second he predicts the birth of a son. In another version, when the high official Bak Mun-su picks the character “卜,” meaning “fortune,” the glyphomancer adds a stroke to the character to form “上 (high),” and states that Bak is a royal emissary; then when Baks sends his servant to pick out the same character, the fortuneteller adds a stroke to form the character “下 (low),” and states that he is a servant.

These tales were developed from human curiosity about the future and the belief that profound meanings lay in letters. The tales are also believed to have originated from the game of *paja*, a form of word puzzle that involves the splitting or combining the components of Chinese characters, and requires a highly educated individual to grasp. The tales have been preserved in myriad different variations. In another version of the Bak Mun-su tale elaborated above, a royal emissary picks the character “卜” and the fortuneteller says that it shows a man wearing on his belt a horse badge (*mapae*), the identity tag of a secret royal inspector; then a beggar, also in disguise, picks the character “卜” and the fortuneteller says that it shows a man carrying an empty gourd on his waist to beg for food. The aforementioned tale of King Sukjong choosing the character “問” is also told in versions with Joseon's founder Yi Seong-gye in the main role. Another variation of the tale has Crown Prince Suyang of Joseon choosing the character “田,” meaning “field,” to which the fortuneteller responds that he sees the character “王 (king)” left and right and front and back, and that he will be the king; when the mighty Second State Councillor Kim Jong-seo picks the same character,

the fortuneteller said that this character “lacks the leg (亠) from the character 甲 (top position; king); is missing the light of day (日) from the word 用兵 (soliders); shows the character 十 (ten/myriad; four directions) blocked all around; and the character 口 (mouth) in tenfold (十), which means conflicting opinions are scattering in a dizzy whirl.”

The significance of the glyphomancer's tale lies in refusing to blindly worship the marvels of divination by focusing on the wise art of deftly adapting to shifting circumstances as they come.

Goblin Fire

도깨비 불

This tale narrates accounts of encountering *dokkaebibul*, or goblin fire, the phenomenon of glimmering light or tall blue flames, which can cause fainting.

One evening, it was raining in the cemetery when a voice called a person's name and when that person turned around, he saw a tall blue flame, which split into ten vertical flames, flashing up and down in a single column like lightning. Then the flames leaped out of the column one by one, six in all, which merged into one again. In another version, there was a man who was carrying meat when flames grabbed him and a goblin challenged him to wrestle. If the goblin won, it would leave him alone, and if the man lost, he would lose his meat to the goblin.

These tales are distinguished from other folk narratives in that they were transmitted by witnesses who had directly encountered the phenomena. Goblin fires herald the appearance of *dokkaebi*, and its dance of flames enlarging and splitting stimulated the curiosity and imaginations in agricultural communities. The phenomena is interpreted as visual images born out of the communities' fears and the will to overcome them, bringing them pain but eventually happiness.

Goblin's Hat

도깨비 감투

This tale narrates the story about *dokkaebigamtu*, or goblin's hat, a magical device that made one's body invisible when worn.

There was a man who by chance acquired a hat with magical powers. Upon learning that wearing the hat made him invisible, the man went around the village stealing other people's possessions. One day, a passer-by's pipe left a burn in the hat and the man's wife sewed a piece of red fabric to fill the hole, and the man resumed his stealing. Villagers began to notice that their possessions disappeared whenever a piece of red fabric breezed past, and one day they all waited for the red fabric to appear and leaped on it. The man's hat was pulled off and he received a beating.

The desire for metamorphosis and invisibility can be seen as part of every man's dream to overcome one's physical limitations. In this tale, the desire is fulfilled, but when the desire is combined with immoral acts, it brings on strict punishment. On the other hand, the protagonist's theft, which usually involves food and other humble necessities, reflects the poor commoner's desire for material compensation.

Goblin's Magic Club

도깨비 방망이

This tale narrates the story of a good-hearted woodsman who acquires a magical club that brings him riches, and a bad woodsman who is punished.

The North Korean publication *Joseonjeonsa* (*A Comprehensive History of Korea*) defines this narrative as a folk tale from Silla, which was introduced to Tang China in the 9th century, and the scholar Lee Byong-gi wrote in his book *Gungmunhakjeonsa* (*A Comprehensive History*

of Korean Literature, 1957)" that the tale was an influence for the classical novel *Heungbujeon* (*Tale of Heungbu*).

While chopping wood in the forest, a kind-hearted woodsman picked ginkgo nuts that had fallen to the ground. The first nut would be for his grandfather and grandmother, the second for his parents, the third for his wife, the fourth for his children, and the last for himself. Suddenly it started to rain and he sought shelter inside a cabin, where he fell asleep. He awoke to loud noises, to find a group of *dokkaebi* having a party. Each time one of the goblins pounded a club, there appeared piles of food and drinks. As he watched this, the woodsman grew so hungry he took out one of the ginkgo nuts and bit into it, making a cracking sound so big it startled the goblins and made them run away. The good woodsman brought home one of the magic clubs and became rich. Upon hearing news of this, an evil-hearted neighbor, who was also a woodsman, came asking about how he got so rich, and the good woodsman told him what had happened. The bad woodsman, greedy to become just as rich, headed for the spot that the good woodsman had directed him. There were again ginkgo nuts fallen on the ground and the bad woodsman picked them up, all for himself. Then he entered the cabin right away and fell asleep. At night, the goblins assembled and began their party, with food and drinks. The bad woodsman bit into the nut, and upon hearing the cracking sound, the goblins leaped on him, saying that the man who had deceived them was back. The bad woodsman was badly beaten, nearly to death.

Different variations of this tale feature a range of punishments, some that simply end with beatings and some that end in death. Other forms of punishment include extending a part of the body—arms, legs or the male sex organ—resulting in a permanent disability. Versions that feature punishments of stretching the penis by ten *bal* are closer to carnal tales, which focus on humor rather than moral lessons.

It is also interesting to note that this narrative emphasizes filial piety more than other virtues. The goodness of the protagonist is stated in the beginning of the tale, but the two scenes of picking ginkgo nuts highlight a vivid comparison of the two woodsmen as sons. In the various different recordings of orally transmitted versions, the storytellers also focus on filial piety. Another point of note is that while most other folk narratives about *dokkaebi* feature them in individual encounters with a human, this tale shows them in a group, and their supernatural powers demonstrated by the magic club.

This narrative is one of the oldest among *dokkaebi* narratives, and the most faithful to folk tale conventions, with the exception of the emphasis on filial piety, an element that is likely to have been added in Joseon, which was dominated by the Confucian values of loyalty and filial piety.

Gold Ax, Silver Ax

금도끼 은도끼

The tale “Geumdokkieundokki (*Gold Ax, Silver Ax*)” delivers the lesson that those who are honest and do not covet what belongs to others are rewarded in the end.

The narrative originated from ancient Greece and was spread as part of Aesop’s fables. It was first introduced to Korea when it was included in the Korean language primer *Sinjeongsimsangsohak* in 1896. A Korean adaptation of the tale was included in school textbooks in Korea’s early modern times and has since spread as a traditional folk tale.

A woodsman drop his ax in the pond while chopping wood in the mountain. He was weeping by the pond when a mountain god (*sansin*) appeared and asked why he crying. The mountain god, after listening to what had happened, brought a gold ax and a silver ax and asked which one was his. The woodsman gave the honest answer that none was

his, that his ax was made of steel. The mountain god, impressed by the woodsman’s honesty, gave him both axes. A greedy man who heard this story went to the pond and threw his ax in the water, only to experience trouble.

The fable, about the honest man who is rewarded and the greedy one who is punished is a cautionary tale against human greed, which has no bounds.

Golden Ruler

금척

The tale of *geumcheok* narrates the story of a man who acquires a golden ruler, which helps him save a man’s life, leading him to success in the world.

The golden ruler narrative was first transmitted as the origin tale of Geumcheok Tombs in Gyeongju, North Gyeongsang Province, believed to be from Silla. Following the founding of Joseon, the golden ruler was presented as a token of legitimacy for Yi Seong-gye’s enthronement, and the *geumcheok* narrative began to receive new light. *Taejogangheonsillok (Annals of King Taejo’s Reign)* includes an account of Yi Seong-gye receiving the golden ruler from a divine being, which alerted him of his heavenly duty to take the throne. In late Joseon, the golden ruler emerged as a divine symbol that reaffirmed national pride and the sanctity of the Yi dynasty in times of national crisis, featured in the epic poem “Mongsugeumcheoksongbyeongseo (Dream of Acquiring Golden Ruler),” written following the Japanese and Chinese invasions in 16th and 17th centuries and “Haedongjukji (Bamboo Stalks East of the Sea)” from the Japanese colonial times.

The tale about the origin of Geumcheok Tombs and the surrounding grounds, as recorded in *Donggyeongjapgi (Miscellaneous Records from the Eastern Capital)*, goes as follows:

The king of Silla acquired a golden ruler, which became a national treasure for its ability to cure the

ill and bring the dead back to life. An envoy was sent from China to investigate the matter, but the Silla king, not wanting to show the ruler to the envoy, buried the ruler on these grounds, where he created over 30 hills and mounds, and built a shrine. Another version features the founding king of Silla in his days as an ordinary man, when in a dream a divine being descended from the sky and gave him the golden ruler, saying, "As you are a sacred man, talented in letters and the arms, the likes of which the people have not seen for a long time, take this golden ruler and set straight the golden bowl." When he awoke from his dream, he was holding the golden ruler in his hand.

Oral versions of the tale of the golden ruler can be summarized as follows:

A long time ago, there lived a child who had been orphaned at a young age and made a living as an errand boy. One day he had an auspicious dream, which made him smile in his sleep, and the man sleeping next to him asked him what he was smiling about but when the boy did not answer, the man reported it to the magistrate, requesting punishment. When the child went on smiling without answering, the magistrate became furious as well and locked him up in jail. Then one day a huge weasel crawled into the jail cell with its offspring and the boy threw a rock at them, which killed one of the baby weasels. But soon the mother weasel carried in a glittering ruler in its mouth and measured the width and length of the dead weasel's body, which made the weasel spring back to life. After witnessing this, the boy slapped the floor, which startled the mother weasel and it ran off with the babies, leaving the ruler behind, which the boy picked up and tied to his shirt ribbon. Just then the magistrate's only daughter fell critically ill and the boy used the ruler to bring her back to life, and the magistrate made him his son-in-law. When the kingdom's princess died, the court called the magistrate's son-in-law to revive her, and when she came back to life, the king made him his son-in-law. The orphan now lived in a palatial house

with two wives, who were washing each of his feet, with a golden basin to his right and a silver basin to his left, and he finally told them the auspicious dream he had, which had turned out to be true.

In the tale's oral version, the boy's dream serves as the engine that drives the story. After striving to observe the superstition about dreams, risking his life to make the dream come true, the happy ending that the protagonist arrives at is an affluent life, which every ordinary man dreams of. The method with which he achieves that dream turns out to be "bringing back life," using the golden ruler, which also reflects the values of those who listen to and transmit the tale. The plot twist, of an orphaned errand boy, the lowliest among Joseon's social classes, entering the kingdom's most powerful class of his own means and acquiring both wealth and glory, is a rare imaginative leap even in the genre of folk narrative, reflecting the worldview of the grassroots, subverting the conventional hierarchy of class and power.

Good Son Who Slapped His Parents

부모 때리는 효자

This tale narrates the story of a son who corrects his habit of slapping his parents, which started as childhood play, and becomes a good son.

A couple living in a remote mountainous region had a son late in life. They adored the boy so much that they found even his habit of slapping his parents as cute and playful. They encouraged him, the father suggesting he slap his mother, and the mother suggesting he slap his father. The son, thinking slapping his parents pleased them, continued to do so into adulthood. Then one day he had the chance to observe the behavior of a good son who took good care of his parents, serving them fine food and tending to them at bedtime, which made the son repent his acts and became a good son to his parents.

There are many variations of this tale, in one

of which the son realizes he has been bad only after he is married and has a son of his own. In some versions, the son is a woodsman who sells lumber at the market, where he encounters the good son who makes him recognize his wrongdoing and imitate what the other son is doing. There are also others in which the son is taken away by a hunter or vendor or fortuneteller, who makes him repent. In one version, when the repentant son rushes home, his parents, afraid that the son will start slapping them again, hide inside the kitchen hearth, and the son starts a fire in the hearth to warm the room for his parents, killing them both.

Tales about ill treatment of parents are often extremely violent, with depictions of desertion, assault on aged parents, even trafficking of parents' bodies. These depictions carry mythological implications of rituals to revive deities that have become decrepit, a state that in the latter half of the narrative is reversed and given new meaning.

This tale also mixes the mythological motif of violent assault with children's playful misbehavior to render a narrative about filial piety, emphasized through the dramatic contrast between the good son and the unknowing bad son.

Grasshopper, Water Bird and Ant

메뚜기와 물새와 개미

This tale explains how the grasshopper ended up with a smooth and slick forehead, how the water bird's beaks got to be so long and sharp, and how the ant's waist got so small.

A long time ago grasshopper, water bird and ant were hungry and decided that ant would prepare rice and grasshopper and water bird the other dishes to accompany the rice. Ant was able to acquire rice by biting the leg of a woman carrying rice in a basket, and water bird caught fish. They were waiting for grasshopper when they heard a cry for



Water bird, lark and ant.

Early 20th century, National Folk Museum of Korea

help from inside the fish. They cut open the fish and grasshopper emerged, wiping the sweat off his forehead, which made him bald, leaving his forehead smooth and slick. Grasshopper offered water bird and ant to help themselves to the fish, saying it was he who had caught it. This made water bird frown and pout, turning his bill long and pointy. Ant laughed so hard as he watched this that his waist became tiny.

In some variations, ant bites the genitalia of the woman carrying rice of a fish sauce vendor to make them spill their wares. In another variation, grasshopper offers to hunt food since he is always treated to food by ant and water bird, but gets eaten by a carp and calls for help, and water bird goes looking for him.

This narrative is a dramatization of specific features of animals.

Groom Dressed in Bird Feathers

새털 옷 신랑

This narrative tells the story of a protagonist who uses a magical costume made of bird feathers to take over the riches or the status of a wealthy or powerful man.

The oldest remaining version of this narrative is a 1930s recording of the shamanic song “Irwolnoripunyeom (Song of Sun and Moon)” from

Ganggye, North Pyeongan Province. The song tells the myth of Scholar Gungsan, who in an attempt to keep his beautiful bride Maiden Myeongwol contests against the Scholar Bae in flying up to the sky wearing a beaded robe. Gungsan successfully carries out the mission, and after a happy life with Myeongwol, the couple becomes the sun and moon gods, Bae, not knowing how to take off the robe, is unable to descend from the sky and is turned into a black kite.

A young man married a beautiful maiden. He carried a portrait of his bride to the woods with him when he went to chop lumber, but a gust of wind swept away the portrait. Someone picked up the portrait and took it to the king, who ordered his subjects to find this beautiful woman. The bride was taken to the king, but she never smiled. In the meantime, her husband practiced his archery skills and became an outstanding archer. The beautiful woman asked the king to host a banquet for beggars, which her husband attended, performing a dance dressed in a costume made of bird feathers, which finally made the beautiful woman smile. Seeing this, the king exchanged clothes with the husband, upon which the husband took over the throne and became king.

This tale of a man dressed in bird feathers take over the status of a powerful man depicts an act that would be considered treason in a society where the king held absolute power in the form of a fantasy that reflects the public's desire for social mobility.

Groom's Chaperone Suffers Humiliation

상객의 망신

This tale narrates the story of a man who accompanied a groom as chaperone to his wedding, suffering humiliation for his drunken mishaps.

A long time ago there lived two brothers, the older of which drank too much. One day their cousin was scheduled to be married and the older brother was asked to serve as the groom's chaperone and

accompany him to the wedding ceremony, held at the bride's home. The older brother had promised not to drink, but when the in-laws kept offering him drinks, in the end he got drunk and relieved himself in his pants, staining them with his feces. So the servants pull his pants off and threw them out in the yard, where the dog tore them up. The chaperone, who had fallen asleep naked, woke up in the middle of the night to urinate, and this time fell asleep in a room where women were sleeping. When the women noticed him and screamed, he ran into the room where he had been sleeping, where he found a child asleep and took the child's pants and put them on himself. When morning arrived, the chaperone got ready to leave as fast as possible, his donkey tied right outside the room, but the child woke up and began crying about his missing pants. The chaperone tried to jump on his donkey, but the tight pants made him fall, which the child saw and yelled that the man was wearing his pants, the chaperone running off by foot.

Variations of this tale feature the groom's uncle accompanying the groom on his first visit to the in-laws' after the wedding (*huhaeng*). In some versions, the chaperone takes off his pants voluntarily because it is too hot in the room, and he wakes up in the middle of the night because of thirst. In some cases, the chaperone puts on a pair of women's bloomers (*gojaengi*), which produces the comic effect of revealing his penis.

This tale is a departure from the foolish groom narrative, featuring the chaperone as the protagonist and set against the custom of the groom's visit to his in-laws.

Halfie

반쪽이

"Banjjogi" is a tale about a baby born with only half a body, who defeats a tiger and a greedy man by using his power and wit, and in the end lives a

wealthy and happy life.

There lived a man who offered devoted prayers as he awaited a baby. One winter day, a Buddhist monk visited his home to request a donation and the man's wife offered rice. The monk gave her three cucumbers, saying that if she ate all three of them, she would have three sons. The wife had finished two of the cucumbers when her husband returned, and they shared the last cucumber. The wife went on to give birth to three sons, the youngest of which had only half a body and was called Banjjogi (Halfie). Then one day the husband, who was a hunter, was killed by a tiger, and when the brothers set out to seek revenge, their mother at first tried to dissuade them, but after testing their hunting skills and seeing that they were as gifted as their father, she allowed them to leave. Banjjogi also followed them, but the two brothers tied him to a huge tree in the village center, upon which Banjjogi pulled out the tree and brought it home, telling his mother that his brothers had sent a tree to provide shade. Next, the two brothers tied Banjjogi to a huge, wide rock, upon which Banjjogi lifted up the rock and brought it home, telling his mother that his brothers had sent a rock for the family to sit on. In the end the three brothers set out together and while on the road, they lodged at the home of a red bean porridge (*patjuk*) vendor located at the mouth of the valley where the tiger lived. The porridge vendor, an old woman, told the brothers that the tiger ate up hunters after turning into a woman and instructed them how to capture it. By following the instructions, the brothers succeeded in killing the tiger and retrieving their father's remains and heirloom. Then the porridge vendor alerted them that their mother was in danger of getting eaten by a tiger, upon which Banjjogi left for home, travelling a distance that would take three months and ten days in one night, and captured the tiger, rescuing his mother.

The tiger skin was hung out to dry on their roof and fence, which made their rich neighbor envious. He made a proposal to Banjjogi, that if he could steal

the rich neighbor's daughter, he would be made his son-in-law, and if he failed, he would have to hand over the tiger skin to the neighbor. Then the neighbor assembled all the villagers to guard his house. Banjjogi delayed his visit to the neighbor's house for three days in a row, spending his time collecting lice, fleas and bedbugs in three bamboo tubes. On the fourth day, Banjjogi headed to the neighbor's house, to find everyone fast asleep. He tied up the hair of those keeping vigil to the fence or gate, or put jars over their heads, while he put matches in the hands of the woman of the house, and rubbed sulfur on the rich neighbor's beard. Then Banjjogi released the insects that he had collected, which made the daughter step out into the garden. As he carried the daughter away, Banjjogi hollered to wake everyone up, which stirred up a ruckus, with the neighbor's beard catching fire and everyone running about. Banjjogi brought the daughter home and married her, and the two brothers returned home after travelling for three months and ten days.

In some variations, Banjjogi captures the tiger through a wager with the tiger, while in some others, Banjjogi becomes a hero by rescuing his brothers, not by capturing the tiger, and is depicted as a glutton who eats up a meal for one hundred people. Some versions include only the first half of the narrative, concluding with Banjjogi's return after catching the tiger, which makes him rich. In this version, Banjjogi is confronted by Onjjoki, who has a full body, or Banjjogi catches the tiger not with his strength but with his wit. There are also versions that include only the latter half of the story about Banjjogi's marriage, in which the protagonist is portrayed as a supernatural being who can create what he needs with his own hands.

This tale, featuring protagonist's very distinctive physical characteristic, is not wide spread and only twelve versions have been collected from around the country. Its narrative drive comes from the hero's overcoming of his disability through supernatural strength and extraordinary wit to become whole.

His traits as a transcendental ruler are reflected in his defeat of the tiger and the rich man, the most powerful being in the natural world and the human world, respectively.

Hare's Judgment

토끼의 재판

This tale narrates the story of hare who outsmarts and punishes the ungrateful tiger by tricking tiger with a clever strategy.

The character of the wise and witty hare is similar to that of the monkey in "Tale of the Dragon King and the Monkey" from the Indian scripture *Jataka* (*Sutra of the Buddha's Reincarnated Manifestations*), and other hares in "Gwitojiseol (Tale of Turtle and Hare)" from the the section on Kim Yusin in *Samguksagi* (*History of the Three Kingdoms*), the pansori "Sugungga (Song of the Water Palace)" and the classical novel *Tokkijeon* (*Tale of a Hare*).

A long time ago a man encountered tiger caught inside a trap. Tiger pleaded that if the man would save him, he would return the favor. The man released tiger from the trap, but tiger threatened to eat him up. Feeling betrayed, the man proposed that they take their case to trial. Tiger accepted but searched for someone who would be favorable to him. First he sought out rock, who harbored ill feelings toward humans and thereby made a judgment favorable to tiger. Next they sought the judgment of hare, who suggested that they visit the trap again. At the trap, hare asked tiger to show him how he had fallen into the trap, and tiger went back inside the trap to show hare, and hare made the man close up the trap, and left.

There are few variations of this tale, with the man's character sometimes switching to a hunter or a monk, or the rock replaced by tree or crayfish.

By depicting the tragic ending of the egocentric tiger and the decentered actions of hare, the tale offers

a literary tool for stimulating decentering in children. There are also interpretations that view the tiger as the oppressor, and the weak but wise hare as the people, the plot ending in the triumph of the people.

Hare's Liver

토끼의 간

This animal tale narrates the story of a hare who thinks up a trick to overcome a deadly crisis.

The character of the wise and witty hare is similar to that of the monkey in "Tale of the Dragon King and the Monkey" from the Indian scripture *Jataka* (*Sutra of the Buddha's Reincarnated Manifestations*), and other hares in "Gwitojiseol (Tale of Turtle and Hare)" from the the section on Kim Yusin in *Samguksagi* (*History of the Three Kingdoms*), the pansori "Sugungga (Song of the Water Palace)" and the classical novel *Tokkijeon* (*Tale of a Hare*).

Yongwang (Dragon King) fell ill and the only thing that would cure him was hare's liver, so turtle, one of Dragon King's subjects, was sent to land to bring hare. Turtle went to the mountain, where he met hare and tricked hare into going with him to Sugung (Water Palace), promising hare a high post in the court. Upon their arrival at the palace, Dragon King's subjects pushed hare down and tried to take his liver. Hare said he left his liver on land, that he would have brought it if turtle had told him that his liver would be needed. When Dragon King refused to believe him, hare showed the king his bottom and said, "One hole is for peeing, one hole is for pooing, and one is for taking the liver in and out." Dragon King saw three holes and was persuaded, sending hare and turtle back to land. Hare, upon returning on turtle's back, railed at turtle for deceiving him and ran away to the mountain, teasing, "Whoever heard of taking the liver in and out of your body?"

In the tale, hare is weak but smart, outwitting



The front cover *Hare's Liver*.
Ji Song-uk, 1913, National Library of Korea

powerful and threatening humans or tigers. The characters represent roles within a feudal society: Dragon King as ruler, turtle as subject and hare as common people. This perspective results in the interpretation that the narrative is a portrayal of an adverse society where the ruler views the people as objects of exploitation, for his own glory. This tale, in other words, reflects the subversive perception that the feudal system resulted in a dysfunctional society and thereby must be eliminated. It can also be read as a social critique, centering on the struggle of an individual—in this case hare, who ultimately acts for himself—against a repressive social system.

How to Eradicate Goblins

도깨비 물리치는 법

This narrative, which can be categorized as a tale of otherworldly beings (*imuldang*), tells the story of a heroine who becomes rich with the help of *dokkaebi*, after which she grows tired of the goblins and chases them away.

A woman was visited by *dokkaebi*, and they lived together in her house. The goblin brought her treasures, which she used to purchase land and she soon became rich. Now that she was wealthy, she grew tired of the goblin and wanted to kick him out. She asked the goblin what it was scared of, while offering a lie that she was most scared of money. The goblin answered that what it feared most was the blood of a white horse. The following day, the woman splattered white horse blood all around the house, and the goblin ran away in fear. Angry at the woman, the goblin sought revenge by throwing a pile of money into the woman's house, which made the woman even richer.

The protagonist of this narrative is usually a woman, with some variations where the heroine grows pale and emaciated after befriending the goblin, which becomes the reason for chasing the goblin away. The goblin's object of fear is in most cases horse blood, with variations that range from white horse blood, white horse hide and horse head, to a white puppy and white rooster. The goblin's method of revenge varies from bringing money and treasures to hammering stakes into the four corners of the woman's land, or piling her fields with gravel or porcelain shards. Details surrounding the endings vary as well, but most end in the goblin's failure in seeking revenge.

According to *Yongjaechonghwa* (*Assorted Writings of Yongje*), ghosts are depicted as black due to their long sojourn underground, and goblins as creatures that appear in the late hours in dark and damp places, which show that *dokkaebi* are otherworldly beings that carry a strong *yin*, or female, energy. This means that objects of a strong *yang*, or male, energy are

their biggest weaknesses, which in the narrative is visualized as the red blood of a white horse.

Husband and Wife Fight Over Rice Cake

부부의 떡 다툼

This tale narrates the story of a husband and wife who, after fighting over a plate of *tteok* (steamed rice cake), decide to hold a silence wager to determine who will get to eat the cake, continuing the competition even as they suffer severe damage.

A long time ago there lived an elderly couple. One day their neighbor brought over food to share from their table of offerings prepared for an ancestral memorial rite (*jesa*). The husband and wife together enjoyed the food, except for the rice cake, which neither wanted to share. After fighting over the cake, they decided to see who could last longer without speaking to determine who would get to eat it. While they competed, a thief entered their house and stole their possessions, but the couple stayed quiet, their eyes on the cake. In the end, the wife screamed and chased away the thief, and protested to her husband, who was only pleased that the cake would be his to eat.

In a version of this narrative included in the Buddhist scripture, *Satāvadhāna-sūtra* (*Sutra of One Hundred Parables*), the wife speaks when she faces of danger of being assaulted by the thief, but in this Korean variation, she speaks when the husband's testicles are about to be hurt during the thief's break-in.

The tale ridicules human greed, risking the loss of something important for a small and trivial gain.

Husband Turns Wife Into Dutiful Daughter-in-Law

불효부를 효부로 만든 남편

This narrative tells the story of a husband who uses

his wit to transform his wife who is disrespectful to his parents into a dutiful daughter-in-law.

This narrative can be categorized into two types:

The first type can be summed up as "Fattening Up the Father-in-Law to Be Sold." There was a husband and wife who lived with the husband's widowed father. The husband noticed his wife treating his father badly, and his father would complain to him, the relationship worsening day by day and the household also falling into decline. One day, the husband said to his wife, "There was a man at the market today who sold his father, fattened up nice and plump, at such a good price," adding, "Let's fatten up Father and sell him." His wife, tempted at the idea, agreed and began pampering her father-in-law. She served him chestnuts, sweet potatoes, meat and bean porridge at every meal and kept his clothes clean and crisp. As his daughter-in-law began to treat him differently, the father-in-law's mood changed as well, and he would offer to sweep the yard, take care of his grandson while his son and daughter-in-law were working in the field, wake up before everyone else and clean out the kitchen hearth. A year passed and on the scheduled date, the eve of Lunar New Year, the husband brought up selling his father to his wife. But his wife protested that life was much easier with him around and it would be hard to manage without her father-in-law.

The second type features a daughter-in-law who resents her mother-in-law and treats her badly. Her husband, noticing this, lies to her that elderly people die within a month if they are fed sweet chestnuts, bean porridge and rice wine everyday. Tempted by her husband's suggestion, the wife treats her mother-in-law to fine food everyday, which makes the mother-in-law healthy and content. She praises her daughter-in-law to everyone in the village, establishing her reputation as a kind and dutiful daughter-in-law, which brings about change within the daughter-in-law.

This narrative offers a fully fleshed dramatization of family dynamics centering on the care of elderly

parents, from the point-of-view of everyone involved. From ancient times, the most burdensome role for a daughter-in-law was supporting a widowed father-in-law, which is reflected in the idiomatic expressions, “Would you rather support a widowed father-in-law or crawl on the wall?” “Would you rather support a widowed father-in-law or bead three *mal* of marbles?” The circumstances depicted in the tale show that while filial piety is the duty of the son in relation to his father, the person responsible for practicing the virtue is the daughter-in-law, emphasizing the importance of establishing the appropriate roles among family members.

Husband Who Turned Into a Tiger

호랑이로 변한 남편

This tale narrates the story of a man who transformed himself into a tiger in an attempt to practice filial piety.

A long time ago there lived a dutiful son who, upon his mother's illness, offered devoted prayers day and night. One day he heard that dog's liver would cure his mother, and acquired a book that contained a spell to turn himself into a tiger. Each day, he recited the spell to turn himself into a tiger and caught a dog to offer the liver to his mother. When his wife witnessed her husband turn into a tiger, however, she disliked the idea and threw the book in the kitchen hearth and burned it, but without the book, the husband was unable to change back. He went around the village and the mountains and fields as a tiger, and each time someone recognized him and offered the greeting, “Hwang, where are you headed?” he would simply nod and gaze before heading back up the mountain, and as years passed he no longer came down to the village and was assumed dead.

This narrative is known by the title “Hwang Pal-do the Tiger” and is transmitted around the country but originated from Chungcheong provinces. The

many variations of the tale have different endings, the most common of which is the tiger dying from a hunter's gunshot.

In the Chinese narrative “Legend of Li Zheng,” the protagonist Li Zheng turns into a tiger and eats people, then one day disappears. While the Korean tale emphasizes filial piety, the Chinese narrative is unrelated to the theme, which highlights the importance of the Confucian virtue for Koreans.

This tale is one of the few examples of a dutiful son meeting a tragic end, which perhaps reflects the moral perception that violent and unethical means that transcend human boundaries, adopted for even the most noble cause, are unacceptable by society.

In-Laws Switch Cows

소바꿔 탄 사돈

This tale narrates the story of two in-laws who get drunk and ride each other's cows, which takes them to each other's homes.

A man took his cow to the market to buy an ox and his in-law took his ox to the market to buy a cow. Encountering each other at the market, they were delighted that they could simply trade their animals, and went to get a drink together. They both ended up extremely drunk and rode their traded cows back home. However, the two cows instinctively headed back to their respective homes, taking the two men to their in-laws'. The following morning, the daughter-in-law brought breakfast to her father-in-law's room, where she found her father lying there in his underwear. She woke him up and asked what had happened, and her father explained, adding, “But I wonder what happened to your mother.”

The Korean idiom “because of an appeal from Pocheon,” used to avoid a difficult or uncomfortable question, originated from frequent appeals to the government made by the official Choe Ik-hyeon, who was posted in Pocheon during the reign of King

Gojong of Joseon, which resulted in frequent changes in government policies. Over the years, this idiom was combined with the above tale due to the identical sound shared by words for “appeal” and “cow,” both “*so*” in Korean, and now the idiom means “because they switched cows at the Pocheon market.”

Interpreting the Catfish's Dream

메기 꿈의 해몽

This tale narrates the origin of the appearance of catfish and halibut, a result of the fight between the two fish about the catfish's dream.

A ninety-nine-year-old catfish had a strange dream one day of him “being lifted up to the heavens, as if he had silver and gold in his mouth, as if riding on gold rope, then he fell underground, where he wandered this way and that, lost, as if he were wearing the king's hat, as if he had been hit by lightning sword, as if he had stepped onto the king's throne and entered Namdaemun Gate, as if he had slipped out through coffin's gate.” The catfish, unable to tell what the dream meant, went to see halibut, who told catfish that the dream meant catfish would ascend to heaven as a dragon, which made catfish so happy he held a feast, inviting all the fish. Shrimp, one of the guests at the feast, said that the dream meant catfish would get himself stuck on a fishing hook and be eaten by humans. This made catfish furious, and he struck halibut, which pushed his eyes and mouth to one side of his face. Halibut struck back, crushing catfish's mouth with his body, which formed the features on catfish's face today. Shrimp watched all this, taking a step back, and laughed so hard his back broke.

In some variations of the tale, the fish that has the dream is a three-thousand-year-old anchovy, who takes out his anger on the other guests as well, one of them being flounder, who was struck, his eyes pushed to the right, and another being butterfly,

whose mouth became short and blunt. Squid, who had been watching this, hid his eye between his tentacles in fear, which shaped the way squids look today. Goby was so shocked by what he saw that a goby's heart still beats fast today. Cutlassfish, who liked to meddle in others' business, arrived at the scene late, and after getting pushed and shoved by the other fish, had his body turned flat and long.

A catfish or anchovy dreaming of ascending to the heavens as a dragon is perhaps an impossible dream, an excess, and it can result in great unhappiness if one does not realize it as a impossible or excessive.

This tale warns that those who nurture dreams that are out of their range should be warned, and that they should not be condoned or encouraged. The halibut's ugly transformation is a form of punishment, and the other guests going through similar transformation signify that they are being held responsible for condoning the halibut's flattery toward the catfish.

Jang Gil-son the Giant

거인 장길손

This tale narrates the story of Jang Gil-son, a widely recognized male giant character in the Korean oral tradition.

While the number of oral recordings of Jang Gil-son narratives are few the tales are observed around the country.

There are two different types of narratives about Jang:

The first type is about Jang creating geographical features with his own excrement. Jang Gil-son was so huge that there were no clothes that fit him, which the king deemed pitiful and so had an outfit tailored for him, with fabric that had been sent up from the three southern provinces. Jang was so happy he danced and pranced, his movements so large they blocked the sun and ruined the harvest.

The angry farmers chased Jang away all the way to Manchuria, where Jang dug up the earth to eat, and with his excrement, created mountains and rivers. In the second type, the people of the three southern provinces collected hemp cloth to make clothes for Jang, but Jang's shadow ruined the harvest. The government sentenced Jang to the punishment of flogging, but his body was so huge the officers were unable to locate his bottom and in the end failed to give him a flogging.

Jang Gil-son is a male giant and geographical creator, comparable to female giants in Korean mythology like Magohalmi (Grandmother Mago) and Seolmundaehalmang (Grandmother Seolmundae), but the tales offer a caricature of a weakened creator, emphasizing his giant physique and his excrement.

Jaringobi

자린고비

This tale narrates the story of the eponymous protagonist, a miser who practices extreme frugality.

"Jaringobi" narratives are transmitted in the form of tales about miserly characters who are extremely frugal even with small and insignificant things like fish, soy sauce, or fans.

An example features a woman who goes to the market to buy fish and after sifting through the merchandise with her hands returns home without buying anything and cooks soup with the water she rinsed her hands in. Then her husband (or a villager) laments that if she had washed her hands in the well, they would have enough soup for the entire village (or to last a long time).

In another example, there lived a miser who allowed only a small bowl of soy sauce on the table and one day his new daughter-in-law served a large bowl of soy sauce. The miser admonished her for being wasteful, but the daughter-in-law responded that with a big bowl of soy sauce, you could taste the

saltiness of the sauce just by looking, which saved the family not only the sauce but also spoons. Similar situations, in which the daughter-in-law serves pickles or fish in large portions, are depicted in different versions, which end with the miser admitting that the daughter-in-law's method is more frugal.

Other Jaringobi tales depict frugal ways of fanning (by using only a small section of the fan, or by shaking one's head instead of flapping the fan); borrowing from a neighbor items that one already has, including straw sandals, hammers, tobacco, *baduk* game boards and stones; or chasing a fly that sat on the sauce inside the jar and licking the sauce off the fly's legs.

Some variations focus on ways to become rich or on the good deeds performed by misers after becoming rich. "Tale of Gobi" narrates the story of a rich man named Gobi, who was visited by a man asking him to share his secret of acquiring wealth. Gobi took the man to the forest and told him to climb a pine tree and hang his body from a branch while holding on with just one hand. When the man found this difficult to do, Gobi told him that to be rich, he had to hold on to his possessions the way he was holding on to the tree branch. Some Jaringobi tales end with the protagonist sharing his wealth with others when he learns that his good fortune has run out.

There are various theories about the etymology of the name Jaringobi. One of them connects it to a miser who was so stingy that he reused the prayer paper for his parents' memorial rite each year by preserving the paper in oil. "Gobi" is a word that refers to one's deceased parents, while "*jarin*" came from the word "*jeorida*," meaning "*preserve*." Another theory links the name to a frugal old man who was also giving, and his tombstone read, "Jaingobi," meaning "tombstone for an old man who practiced generosity with his material possessions." There are also other theories that say Gobi was the name of a real-life character, or that "*gobi*" means "old tombstone."

This narrative, while reflecting the Korean people's views on acquiring wealth and the responsi-

bilities of the rich, also stresses the importance of frugality and good deeds.

Keep Chicken No Longer Than Three Years, Keep Dogs No Longer Than Ten Years

계불삼년 구불십년

The tale “Gyebulsamnyeon, Gubulsimnyeon” is a narrative associated with the proverb of the same title.

A chicken being raised by a man disappeared one day. The man went after it, and found it turning into a snake, shedding its feathers. The lesson is that if people keep chickens too long, they turn into wily creatures, so three years should be the limit. The same applies to dogs, who after living with humans too long will start reading people’s thoughts and run away or attack when they are about to be butchered, bringing damage instead of returning the favor of being provided with food and shelter.

The proverb, “*Gyebulsamnyeon, gyeonbulonyeon*,” meaning “Keep chicken no longer than three years, keep dogs no longer than five years,” is a variation of the folk tale, reflecting the common belief that after three years of domestication the chicken will turn into a serpent and the dog after five years will harm its owner. Another variation is “*Gyeonbulonyeon, gwonbulsimnyeon*,” meaning “Keep dogs no longer than five years, keep power no longer than ten years,” emphasizing that political power rarely lasts.

Generally dogs have long been viewed as friends in Korean culture, but this narrative offers a warning that domesticated animals can always reveal their wild, untamed side.

Kongjwi and Patjwi

콩쥐 팥쥐

This tale narrates the story of Kongjwi (Bean Girl)

who dies after suffering from mistreatment by her stepmother and her stepsister Patjwi (Red Bean Girl), but with the help of supernatural beings, overcomes her ordeals and is returned to life.

Kongjwi’s mother passed away and a stepmother moved in, bringing with her a daughter named Patjwi. The stepmother treated Kongjwi abusively and made her carry out difficult chores. One day, the stepmother gave Kongjwi a wooden hoe and Patjwi a metal hoe and ordered them to weed the field. Patjwi was done early and returned home, but Kongjwi broke her hoe and broke into tears. At that moment, a black ox descended from the sky, bringing Kongjwi a metal hoe and weeding the field for her. On another day, as the stepmother left with Patjwi for a banquet at her parents’ home, she told Kongjwi that she could come as well, but only after completing a series of chores: filling the water jar that had a crack; pounding rice; and, spinning and weaving hemp. Kongjwi sat weeping when a toad appeared and filled the hole in the jar, birds flew in to pound the rice, the black ox spun the hemp, and a fairy descended to weave the hemp, bringing Kongjwi a dress and shoes to wear to the banquet. But on the way to the banquet, Kongjwi lost one of her shoes, which the magistrate found and returned to Kongjwi, in the course of which the two married. Patjwi became jealous and lured Kongjwi to the pond, pushing Kongjwi in the water and killing her, after which she posed as Kongjwi. Kongjwi was reincarnated as a flower, and disturbed by the flower, Patjwi threw the flower into the kitchen hearth and burned it. An old woman from the neighborhood came to borrow fire from the hearth, where she found a marble and took it home. The marble transformed into Kongjwi and alerted the magistrate of Patjwi’s identity. The magistrate dug up Kongjwi’s body to revive her and executed Patjwi, sending the corpse to her mother, who died from shock upon seeing her dead daughter.

The many variations of this tale can be categorized into three types. The first type is similar to the classical novel *Kongjwipatjwijeon* (*Tale of*

Kongjwi and Patjwi); the second features additional motifs of the ox that swallows the hemp to spin it from its anus, of cooking rice in a cauldron with a crack, and Patjwi luring Kongjwi with red bean porridge; the third type leaves out the motif of the lost shoe, possibly omitted in the course of transmission. In these versions, the main characters' names also vary widely, from Kongjoji Patjoji, Kongjosi and Patjosi, to Kongrye and Patrye. In some cases, the two characters' names are reversed.

The version summarized above focuses on the events following Kongjwi's marriage, which is interpreted by some as a narrative of a woman building her own world through rites of passage. The motifs of death, recarnation and shapeshifting are related to agrarian mythology, elements that, according to some analysis, are predominant in East Asian narratives, which demonstrate strong demands on the heroines to prove their femininity.

"Kongjwi and Patjwi" belongs to the "Cinderella" narrative tradition, combining the marriage tale with the stepmother tale. The latter half of the narrative, of Kongjwi's death, transformation and reincarnation, is typical of East Asian variations of the Cinderella story. The Korean version was greatly influenced, in the course of the transmission, by the classical novel version of the tale, and also the Western "Cinderella" narrative.

Lady Dohwa and Bachelor Bihyeong

도화녀 비형랑

This tale narrates the story of a king's ghost that visited his unrequited love Dohwanyeo, which results in the birth of Bihyeongnang.

The narrative takes place during the reign of Silla's 25th king Jinjiwang, and is documented in *Samgungyusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*). The section on "Gyeongju District" of *Donggukyeo-jiseungnam* (*Augmented Survey of the Geography*

of the Eastern Kingdom) includes a record that "In Silla, after the appearance of Bihyeong, the worship of Duduri spread widely among the people of Gyeongju," Bihyeong here referring to *dokkaebi*, or goblin. Still observed in today's Gyeongju is the custom of chasing away ghosts by pasting a message that reads, "House of Bihyeongnang, the son of the divine emperor." The tale of Lady Dohwa and Bachelor Bihyeong is considered the first documented shamanic myth that narrates the origin of *dokkaebi*.

In his life time, King Jinji was taken by the beauty of Lady Dohwa of the district of Saryang and asked her to be with him, but she declined, for she was a married woman. After the death of King Jinji, who had stepped down from the throne, and the death of Lady Dohwa's husband, the late king's spirit came to Lady Dohwa and stayed with her for seven days before leaving again. Lady Dohwa then became pregnant and at the end of her term, gave birth to Bihyeong. King Jinpyeong realized that Bihyeong was extraordinary, and raised him in the palace, appointing him to serve as his assistant in the position of *jipsa*. Bihyeong began spending his nights on the hills by Hwangcheon River west of the city, in the company of a group of ghosts, and the king ordered Bihyeong to build a bridge, which Bihyeong and the group of ghosts completed the bridge overnight, naming it Gwigyo, or Ghost Bridge. Among Bihyeong's group of ghosts was one named Gildal, whom Bihyeong recommended to the royal court, and the king made one of his subjects who did not have a son take Bihyeong in as adopted son. Gildal constructed a city gate south of Heungryeun Temple and slept on top of the gate, hence it came to be called Gildalmun. One day Gildal turned into a fox and ran away, and Bihyeong sent ghosts after him, ordering them to kill him. This was when people made the song about Bihyeong and pasted the lyrics to the door to chase away ghosts.

This narrative comprises two separate plot-lines,

one about Bihyeongnag's origins and the other about how his divine powers were displayed. The union between the spirit of a deceased king and a living mother implies the union between the underworld and the world of the living, and Bihyeong, born between them, is a border and the medium between the two worlds. The mission given Bihyeong in the world of the living is to keep ghosts under control, especially to supervise goblins to build bridges and fortress gates, displaying the functions of a building god. This tale is generally read as a shamanic myth that narrates the origin of *dokkaebi*, providing evidence for the existence of goblins.

Lazybones Who Turned into an Ox

소가 된 게으름뱅이

This tale narrates the story of a lazy man who was forced to work in the field wearing an ox mask, then turned back into a human by eating a turnip, and then became a diligent man.

A lazy man set out to buy an ox, with two rolls of silk and five coins, which he received from his wife. What he actually had in mind was to spend them on having fun. On the road, he met an old man, who made him put on an ox mask, but when he tried to take it off, the mask would not come off and only cow mooing came out of his mouth. The old man made the lazybones who had turned into an ox work his field, then sold it, instructing to the buyer that the ox should never be fed turnips. The ox worked hard all summer, and when autumn arrived, he came across turnips in the field, which he ate and was transformed back into a man. The man returned home and led a diligent life.

In a variation of this narrative, the lazy man returns to the old man, and after turning the old man and his wife into cows, takes their treasures and becomes rich.

In Korean culture, cows have always been very

close to humans as diligent helpers in domestic life and it is likely that this tale reflects the wish to transform lazy, purposeless people into those with an ox's diligent and exemplary characteristics.

Leg Shaking Drives Away Good Fortune

다리 떨면 복 떨어진다의 유래

This narrative, categorized as a tale of fate (*unmyeongdam*), explains the origin of the superstition that the habit of leg shaking drives away one's good fortune.

A long time ago there lived a physiognomist known for his outstanding face-reading abilities. One day he sought lodging in the home of a poor man, whose face, as the physiognomist read it, was that of a wealthy man, unlike his current state. The physiognomist found this to be most unusual, and in the middle of the night, noticed that the poor man was tapping his feet in his sleep. The physiognomist finally realized the cause of the man's poverty, and that night took a steel hammer and smashed the man's leg before running off. Following this incident, the poor man's fortune was reversed; with everything going smoothly he acquired great wealth. Several years later the physiognomist again asked for lodging at the man's home. When the physiognomist asked how things had been since he lost his leg, the man responded that since he was now rich, he could manage without a leg. When the physiognomist told the man that he was the one who had damaged his leg, the man offered him great hospitality.

This tale, based on a superstition about losing one's fortune, emphasizes that such superstition should be observed, and is quoted to warn against the habit of leg shaking or to highlight the inevitability of fate. Poverty caused by leg shaking, despite the man's auspicious physiognomy, implies that bad habits such as leg shaking can have impact greater than the fate that one is born with.

Lie After Lie

새빨간 거짓말

The tale “Saebbalgangeojjimal (Lie After Lie)” reveals the falsity of the lies depicted in the narrative by listing implausible events and non-existent objects or creatures.

This story tells of Mt. Taishan, on which stands a pear tree without roots, on which hangs a great number of pears without stalks. A headless monk comes and picks all the stalkless pears, collecting them in a skirt without a waistband, and when he lays out the pears on a wooden floor without a log frame, the straw mat floats away on the water, and when he turns over the mat, it is full of lies.

This narrative lists oxymorons like a rootless tree, stalkless fruit, headless monk, making fire with an icicle and selling one wares at an empty market, in the end defining what a lie is. Some variations feature a personified story as the protagonist, some feature different details, as in a watermelon rolling down Mt. Baekdu, and some variations are sung as folk songs (*taryeong*).

Little Boy Insam

동자삼

“Dongjasam” is a tale of filial piety that narrates the story of a couple who sacrifice their young boy to cure one of their parents’ illness, to learn that the boy they sacrificed is *sansam* (wild ginseng).

There was a husband and wife taking care of aging parents. The mother (or father) became ill with a disease that no medicine could cure. One day a monk passing through town told them that boiling their son and feeding the broth to the ailing mother would cure the illness. The husband and wife concluded that they could have more children but their parents could not be replaced, and decided to do as the monk had suggested. When their son returned

from school, they told him he was getting a bath and put him in a cauldron of boiling water. They offered the broth to the mother, which cured her illness completely. The following morning, however, their son returned home, saying he had stayed the night at school to study. The father opened the cauldron to find *dongjasam*, or little boy insam, the roots of centuries-old wild ginseng that resembles a boy, which is believed to wander amongst humans as a playful demonic goblin.

The parent’s illness is usually leprosy, which could have come from the popular belief that a child’s liver is effective for treating leprosy. In other variations, the child is boiled, then made into wine, or the parent is served the meat of liver of the child.

The narrative is a typical filial piety tale based on the tradition of human sacrifice, incorporating the motif of infanticide and the concept that the child’s regeneration leads to the recovery of the elderly parents’ ailing body. The emphasis on filial piety is intensified through the difficult dilemma of choosing between the death of the parent or the death of the child.

The demonic goblin *dongjasam* is portrayed here as a child and centuries-old wild ginseng, which reflects the common belief that the goblin wanders through villages during the day, searching for an extraordinary human, and at night resumes its identity as a plant, an idea formed by the shape of wild ginseng. Overlapped with the child’s image, the *dongjasam* motif adds to the drama of the narrative.

Locating an Auspicious Site by Chance

우연히 잡은 명당

This tale narrates the story of a man who, while pretending to be a geomancer, randomly chooses a site in order to escape a crisis, but the site turns out auspicious.

The Korean oral tradition boasts a wealth of geomancy tales, based on the long enduring belief

that the location of one's ancestral tombs have great affect on the family's fortunes. In addition to tales about renowned geomancers like Doseon and Nam Sa-go, there are a significant number of tales about characters posing as geomancers, which date back to late Joseon.

There lived a scholar who was scraping by making a living, and his wife got him a magnetic needle, suggesting that he try to make money by posing as a geomancer. The man had no choice but to set out with the magnetic needle on his jacket, and he came across a rich family holding a funeral for their father, and looking for an auspicious burial site for him. There were many geomancers staying in the house, but when the man presented himself as a renowned geomancer, the family's chief mourner sent away all the other geomancers and asked the man to locate a good site for them. The man received generous hospitality for several days and after promising the family an auspicious burial site, he tried to run off, but tripped and fell. The family came after him, and the man, feeling cornered, pointed at the spot where he had fallen as an auspicious site, and it actually turned out to be one.

This tale focuses less on the concept of geomantically auspicious sites and more on the protagonist's struggle to overcome poverty, which is viewed in a positive light and in the end is rewarded. This reflects

the public's desire to escape their hard-scrabble lives through storytelling, while highlighting the optimism of the people, as shown in the triumph of a passive and incompetent character.

Magistrate Catches Murderer

간부 잡은 원님

This tale narrates the story of a wise magistrate who uses his wits to solve a murder case.

Three scholars were travelling to Seoul to take their state examinations and arrived at an inn to lodge for the night. While the owners of the inn had gone to the market, their beautiful daughter served them dinner. The scholars decided that the first among them to strike a conversation with her would pay for all the expenses for the entire trip. When Choe, one of the scholars, went to the maiden's room later that night, he found her dead, stabbed by a dagger. Remaining calm, Choe pulled out the dagger and rinsed it, before wrapping it up in a handkerchief. When the inn owners returned and found their daughter dead, Choe told them that he killed her and turned himself in, ending up in jail. The magistrate sent a clerk to Choe in jail to investigate the details of the case. Choe handed over the dagger to the clerk, and the magistrate made an announcement for a call for the best knife in the county, which would be rewarded with the prize of an ox. When owners of the best knives gathered, the magistrate inquired about the owner of the dagger that Choe provided, and was able to track down the murderer in Busan, where he was hiding at his maternal grandparents' home.

A variation of the tale features a wise fifteen-year-old magistrate who catches a murderous concubine, who killed the child of the legitimate wife, by assembling all the county residents and keeping them standing until sunset. When the exhausted villagers are finally released, the magistrate calls out, "You child murderer, stop where you are," and the



Magnetic needle (compass).
Joseon, National Folk Museum of Korea

concubine collapses in her place.

The narrative structure starts with a difficult criminal or court case, with tension intensifying as the story moves forward, and ending with a reversal or a resolution, brought about by the magistrate's wisdom, an approach that is less logical than psychological, emphasizing that to resolve conflicts of interest, insight into the people's hearts are more important than rational persuasion.

Magistrate Makes Wise Ruling

원님의 명판결

This tale narrates the story of a wise magistrate who solves the grievances of the people through his court rulings.

The earliest example of the motif of the wise official's clearheaded ruling in the Korean narrative tradition is the story of Talhae, who buries a whetstone and a piece of charcoal by the house that belonged to the high minister Hogong (Gourd Duke), and seeks a trial to take over the house for his own. Some of these narratives are included in folk tale anthologies compiled in Joseon, but most have been orally transmitted.

In an example of this narrative, a mute worked as a farmhand for a rich family for three years but the family refused to pay his wages, so he submitted a blank appeal to the magistrate's office, and the magistrate was able to understand the appeal and made the family pay. In other words, the wise magistrate was able to read the mind of a mute and resolved his grievance.

In some tales, it is not the magistrate but a child or a woman who solves the case, an example of which features a boy who arrives in Seoul to take his state examination and goes to see a renowned fortuneteller named Hong Gye-gwan. Hong paints a bamboo with brown ink on white paper and hands it to the boy, saying the painting will one day save the boy when his life is in danger. The boy goes on

the pass the state exam and becomes the son-in-law of a state councillor, but when his bride is killed on their wedding night, he is accused of murder and faces execution. He presents the painting he received from Hong and the magistrate's daughter discovers from the painting that the murderer is a man named Hwang Baekjuk, the letters meaning "brown," "white" and "bamboo." A similar example is the tale "Mourning Robe That Has Not Heard Keening," about a magistrate's successful attempt at tracking down a criminal who, disguised as the husband in mourning, bedded and impregnated the wife.

There are also tales of the magistrate tracking down lost items like money pouches or rice cakes. In one example, a poor vendor loses his money pouch after leaving it hanging on a village guardian post (*jangseung*), and the magistrate summons all villagers, in front of whom he flogs the guardian post. When the villagers ridicule the magistrate's foolish behavior, the magistrate charged them a fine for contempt and recompensates the vendor. Another version is about offering resolution for a conflict between two people fighting over a prized possession like silk or sable. The magistrate orders that the silk be cut in half to be shared, which brightens one person and saddens the other, and the magistrate rules that the saddened person is the real owner. In another example, when a whirlwind knocks down an earthenware vendor's wares, the magistrate takes into account the vendor's desperate circumstances and orders the boatmen who prayed for wind to compensate for the destroyed wares, or when a hunter loses his hawk while hunting and brings the case to court, the magistrate rules that the hunter should go and ask the mountain.

This narrative reflects the qualities of the ideal government official or the ideal relationship between the people and the government, as seen from the perspective of the people. These tales, based on the Confucian principle of serving the public with love, depict realistic events and serve as social critiques, unlike most other folk narratives.

Magpie's Trial

까치의 재판

This tale narrates the origin of the sparrow's bouncy walk.

Categorized under the universal narrative type known as "Council of Birds," similar tales are spread around country and the world.

Following the fall harvest, people prepared a large amount of rice cake as offerings for a ritual for the celestial god. But a fly had gotten to the offerings first, and people reported this to the celestial god, who summoned the fly to punish him. But the fly insisted that there was someone else who got to the rice cakes even before he had, which was the sparrow, who ate grains before they were ripe for harvest. Upon hearing this, the celestial god summoned the sparrow and sentences a punishment of 18,987 strikes for the crime of eating the grains before they were ripe. The painful injury from the flogging resulted in the bouncy walk of the sparrow.

In a variation of the narrative, the fly accuses the sparrow of the crime of eating all the innocent worms and insects, and the sparrow protests that the fly leaves its dung everywhere and sits in dirty places, leaving dirt everywhere, which gives him no choice but to eat up the flies. The magpie, after listening to them both, declares that both had done wrong, but the sparrow's crime was graver, sentencing the



Sparrow and fly.

Early 20th century, National Folk Museum of Korea

sparrow with one hundred strikes on the legs, which resulted in the sparrow's bouncy walk, and the fly's constant rubbing of its feet, which is an expression of gratitude to the magpie for pardoning his crime.

The tale offers a humorous take on the castigation received for touching the sacred offerings for the gods.

Maiden Seol

설씨녀

"Seolssinyeo" is the tale of Maiden Seol, who lived during the reign of Silla's King Jinpyeong, a woman of chastity and exemplary behavior who maintained faithful to her fiancé Gasil.

Maiden Seol was from a humble family but her beauty and exemplary behavior gave her an air of impressive dignity. When her aging father was drafted, she lamented that she could not serve in the military in his place. A man named Gasil, who was in love with Maiden Seol, offered to serve in her father's place, and her father promised to make him his son-in-law. Maiden Seol, however, refused to wed right away, saying her heart was already his and that it would not be too late if they wed upon his return. She broke a mirror in half and they each kept a piece as a token of their promise. Gasil was to serve three years in the military, but did not return after six years passed. Maiden Seol's father, worried that his daughter was getting too old, tried to marry her off to someone else, but Maiden Seol refused, saying it would not be right to betray Gasil's trust when he was enduring his time in the military for her sake. When her father tried to arrange a marriage in secret, she attempted to run away but failed, and was weeping in the stable where Gasil had left behind his horse, when Gasil, unrecognizably ragged and emaciated, returned as showed her his half of the mirror. Maideon Seol and Gasil wed and lived happily into old age.

This narrative is documented in the "Yeoljeon

(Biographies)” section of *Samguksagi* (*History of the Three Kingdoms*), and the version is viewed as reflective of editor Kim Bu-sik’s Confucian perspectives. Maiden Seol’s character, however, is not merely one of the chaste women who remained faithful to her fiancé, but one of the independent women who thinks for herself, standing up against the father’s decision. Unlike similar tales recorded in Joseon, which emphasize chastity, this narrative emphasizes the universal virtue of trust and loyalty.

Man and Woman With Oversized Genitals

성기 큰 남녀

This tale narrates the story of a man and a woman, who both had oversized sex organs, and the events that their union unfolded.

A long time ago, there lived a woman with genitalia that was long and huge. One day she went on the road, carrying her genitalia all rolled up inside a basket on her head. She came to a pavilion by a spring and decided to take a rest. A man with huge genitalia, which he carried rolled up in a wooden carrier on his back, also happened to be passing by and decided to stop for a rest. The woman asked the man what he was carrying in his wooden carrier and the man replied, “Well, my thing is a too long, that’s what.” The two realized they were made for each other and decided then and there to get married, setting out on the road together. They arrived at a marketplace, where, upon seeing the man’s unrolled genitals, all the vendors ran off, screaming, “Goodness, what a frightening serpent.” After getting their wares, the man and the woman set out again and arrived at a wide river. The woman unrolled her genitals to form a long bridge, the man walked on it to cross the river, during which he shook his pipe and hot ashes fell on the bridge, which made the woman’s genitals roll up again, and the man fell into the river. The woman rolled up her genitals and

took the wares that the man bought at the market and she lived happily.

A variation of this narrative is documented in the section “Gii (Records of Marvels)” in *Samgungnyusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*). Silla’s 22nd monarch King Jicheollo had a penis that measured one *ja* and five *chi*, which made it difficult to find himself a queen. His subjects went all around the country searching for a queen, and one day came across two dogs fighting and growling over a piece of feces as big as a drum. They asked around about the feces and learned that it belonged to a woman from a neighboring village, who was a giant, her height reaching seven *ja* and five *chi*, and she was made the queen of Silla.

This narrative was transmitted among adults since ancient times as a light obscene joke, added with humor and exaggeration.

Man Brings Treasure from Dragon Palace

용궁에서 보물 얻어온 사람

This tale narrates the events that unfold when a man by chance visits Yonggung (Dragon Palace) and returns with a rare treasure.

This narrative is believed to date back to ancient times, with some versions that associate Haein (Seal of the Sea), one of the acquired treasures, with the founding of Haein Temple in the 3rd year of King Aejang’s reign in Silla. In the book *Gyeokanyurok* (*Divinations by the Late Gyeokam*), believed to be authored by the prophet Namsago from the era of King Myeongjong’s reign in Joseon, Haein is described as “an object that saves a good man and kills a bad man.”

A scholar looked after a helpless dog, and it turned out that the dog was the son of Yongwang (Dragon King). In return for taking care of the prince, the man was invited to visit Yonggung, where he was given the Seal of the Sea, and became rich. One day a monk came and asked him to lend him the seal so

that he could build Haein Temple. The scholar let the monk borrow the seal, but the monk did not return it, hiding it in the temple's woodblock printing of *Palmandaejangyeong* (Collection of Eighty-Thousand Buddhist Scriptures). In the meantime, the king, who had no son to inherit the throne, called the renowned fortuneteller Jeong Man-in for a physiognomy reading. Jeong said that it would be difficult for the king to have a son, and offered to find a child befitting the position of the crown prince, asking in return for the permission to rebuild Haein Temple. Just then, an envoy arrived from China and delivered the message warning that the kingdom would lose its great treasure unless ten thousand men were killed, and so ten thousand subjects were sacrificed by the state. However, what the envoy had meant was to kill Jeong Man-in, but the court had mistaken the name as the phrase "manin," which means "ten thousand men." Following this incident, Jeong Man-in took possession of the treasure and became king. Now the treasure was back at Yonggung, but the person who takes it will be granted great power, receiving tributes from seven states.

Variations of this tale feature different treasures, from a red marble or metal to white bottle. In some versions, Haein is capable of reviving a dying person. The animal that the scholar takes care of is sometimes a terrapin, and the scholar is in some cases replaced by the progenitor of the Gyeongju Choe clan; a poor man; or an elderly state councillor. Jeong Man-in's character is sometimes named Jeong Man-yeong, Jeong Man-yong or referred to as senior monk Jeong. A variation features a man who falls into a pond and arrives at Yonggung, where he meets an old woman or Yongwang and receives white rice cake and a puppy, or a tiny puppy and a rock, before returning to land. But as soon as he leaves the water, the puppy and the rice cake turned hard, so the man stored them as treasures, but they are stolen by his son-in-law, servant, or married daughter.

In this tale, Haein is capable of carrying out a wide range of functions, including constructing a

temple, ensuring health and longevity, or serving as a shamanic tool that revives the dead. Haein, like the One Ring in north European mythology, is also viewed as a treasure that brings absolute power.

Man Who Became a Kin of Bak Mun-su

박문수 친척된 사람

This tale narrates the story of a butcher who posed as a kin of Bak Mun-su and was treated as a nobleman.

In a village there lived a butcher who had acquired great wealth but continued to experience humiliation or had his money taken from him due to his lowly social class. One day the village's local clerk faced grave charges for embezzling government money, and the butcher offered to pay back the money on his behalf. In return, the clerk presented the butcher with a letter appointing him as overseer, but protests from the local aristocracy kept him from accepting the post. So the butcher took his possessions and moved to a faraway village, where he posed as a kin of the famous secret inspector Bak Mun-su. Upon hearing rumors, Bak paid a visit to the butcher's home, where the butcher quickly realized it was Bak and treated him with hospitality, to seek Bak's help. Later when Bak revealed his identity at the local magistrate's office and visited the butcher again, the butcher greeted Bak without fear or reserve, which earned him status as a nobleman. Bak Mun-su's younger brother, however, would not accept this and came after the butcher, threatening to kill him, but the butcher succeeded in locking him up as a mental patient and upon the younger brother's surrender, was able to enjoy his new status.

Variations of this tale feature a butcher paired with a poor nobleman, or a servant paired with his former master. In some versions, the clerk's letter of appointment is replaced with a fake family tree, or the story opens with the butcher pasting on his gate a message that reads, "Bak Mun-su should stop by this

house.” The butcher usually claims that he is Bak’s uncle or second uncle, or in some versions, poses as Bak’s cousin or brother.

This narrative reflects the changes in the notion of social class in late Joseon, through a protagonist who responds actively to the changing times. The butcher is a typical “vulgar rich man” character of late Joseon, capable of pioneering new life using his practical insight and abilities. His posing as a nobleman is not mere elevation of status but a means of human liberation and self-fulfillment. Bak Mun-su, in this tale, is a man who accept the changing times, while his brother is punished for refusing to accepting the change. The tale gained much popularity as a highly literary narrative about social change, with vivid, recognizable characters.

Man Who Borrowed Treasures From the Underworld Shed

저승 창고에서 재물 빌려온 사람

This tale narrates the story of a man who died before his time and was sent back from the underworld, with orders to offer more tributes in his lifetime.

A long time ago there lived in a village a poor man named Kim and a rich man named Bak. Bak was extremely stingy and people referred to him as a thief, for when people pleaded for help, all Bak would spare was a bundle of straw. Bak fell ill and died, and when he arrived in the underworld, Yeomnadaewang (Great King Yeomna) said it was not his time yet but gave Bak a tour of the underworld. During the tour, Bak was shown that inside his shed in the underworld was but a single bundle of straw, but poor man Kim’s shed was filled with all kinds of treasures, which made Bak realize that he had not lived his life properly. Upon returning to the world of the living, Bak led a life of good deeds and was no longer called a thief.

This tale was originally transmitted as the story

of a man who was sent back from the underworld after borrowing treasures from another man’s shed of alms, but in the version, Great King Yeomna forces Bak to pay more tributes, showing him his underworld shed to make him realize his mistakes. Good deeds, according to the people who transmitted this tale, are acts of consideration for others, which bring rewards in the afterlife. A miser, upon learning this, leads a life of giving and of giving up one’s own interests, highlighting that good deeds not only secure one’s rewards in the afterlife but provide motivation for practicing neighborly love.

Match Made in Previous Life

전생 인연으로 부부된 사람

This reincarnation tale explains the origins of the belief that the union between a husband and a wife is predetermined by ties formed in previous life.

A rich man (or state councillor) and his wife lived in a good life in prosperity, when one day the wife suddenly disappeared. The husband wandered across the land in search of his wife and one day in a deep valley found his wife living with a young wood charcoal maker, and it puzzled him that his wife left their happy life together and was living a life of hardship. On his way back home, the husband stopped by a temple where he met an ascetic at a temple (or became enlightened through meditation) and learned the story of their previous lives. In an earlier life, the husband had been a salt vendor (or monk), his wife a lice, and the charcoal maker a wild boar. One day the salt vendor caught the lice, but he could not kill something that had been living on his body and just shook it off, and the lice landed on the wild boar, living on its body until its death. This tie that had been formed in their previous life had resulted in their identities in this life as a man and a woman from affluent families, joined in marriage for a while, but the wife destined to live with the

charcoal maker, just as the lice has spent the rest of its life on the wild boar's body.

In this narrative, events unfold in counter-chronological order, but, in some variations, the narrative opens in the previous life and moves toward the present life. Some versions have extended conclusions, showing the husband, who had been a monk in his previous life, find himself a new wife and living happily. Some versions combine plots with the tale, "Daughter Who Built Her Own Destiny." In some variations, the husband, while lodging at a stranger's home on the road, witnesses his wife's affair with the son of the family and deserts her, and many years later, after attaining enlightenment through meditation, he learns that in previous life, the son and his wife had been a couple as deer.

This tale of reincarnation, from animal to human, emphasizes the absoluteness of the union between husband and wife. While in many reincarnation tales, it is for revenge or grievance that one is reborn, in this narrative, it is to repay a favor, portraying matrimonial ties in a positive light. The Buddhist concept of *samsara*, the eternal cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, forms the basis of the story's depiction of matrimonial ties as deeply binding yet limited, that marriages are not only consummated but also broken according to predestined ties, not by individual mistakes or wrongdoing.

This tale is a rare, imaginative example in the Korean folk tradition of a narrative that explores how matrimonial ties are formed or severed.

Meeting One's Spouse in the Underworld

저승에서 만난 배필

This tale narrates the story of a boy who dies but in the underworld receives an extension on his life.

A boy died and upon arriving in the underworld, inquired with the judge of the underworld why was it that all the men in his family died young. The judge

checked his papers and admitting the mistake, told the boy to return to the world of the living, where he should stay until the age of seventy or eighty. The boy saw a girl his age arrive in the underworld and made a request to bring her back as well. His request was granted and the boy returned with the girl to the world of the living. The girl told him where she lived and the boy found her and married her, and lived a long life.

This narrative is transmitted in two different variations: one in which the protagonist extends his life and meets a spouse, and the other in which he only extends his life. The former is again transmitted in various different versions, in which the boy asks for an extension on the girl's life in exchange for his early death, or he asks to give a part of his extended life to the girl, and the judge extends both their lives, either because he is persuaded by the boy or is moved by the boy's consideration and kindness. In the latter type, the protagonist extends his life by doing work in the underworld, or is given an extension, along with a mission to educate the people. And while the protagonists is in most cases a boy or a man, in some versions, it is a mother.

The protagonist of this tale demonstrates a strong will to pioneer his own destiny, reflecting a positive and optimistic worldview that human fate can be altered by trying. And unlike most other underworld narratives, the story does not simply involve a visit to the underworld or a mistake on the part of the underworld messenger but emphasizes the role of the protagonist in the underworld.

This narrative of changing one's destiny demonstrates a audacious outlook on life, not often observed in Korean destiny tales.

Mole Wedding

두더지의 혼사

This tale narrates the story of a mole searching for the world's best groom for its daughter, who in the

end gets a mole as its son-in-law.

The narrative is documented in *Sunoji (Fifteen-Day Record)* by Hong Man-jong. In the oral tradition, the tale has been transmitted since ancient times across Asia, with various versions that feature other animals like rats, and the mountains as the higher being.

A long time ago there lived a mole who had a beautiful daughter. He wanted the best groom in the world for his daughter, and proposed marriage to the sun, which answered that although he might illuminate all of universe's creations, the cloud was capable of blocking his light, so the cloud was a higher being. So the mole proposed to the cloud, and the cloud said the wind was capable of scattering him with a single blow, so the wind was a higher being. So the mole propose to the wind, and the wind said he was incapable of knocking down the stone Buddha standing in the middle of the field, so the stone Buddha was a higher being. When the mole proposed to the stone Buddha, the stone Buddha said that he had no choice but to fall when the mole dug under him, so the mole was a higher being. The mole finally realize that he was the highest being of them all and found a mole for his daughter to wed.

This tale explains the origin of the expression, *dudeojihonin*, or "mole wedding," an analogy for vain and groundless hope. The story emphasizes the relativity of one's abilities and conditions through the cycle of vain pursuit for something better.

Monks Boast About Their Temples

중들의 절 자랑

This tale narrates the story of three monks, from Buseok Temple, Haein Temple, and Tongdo Temple, respectively, boasting about the immense size of their temples.

Monks were traditional revered by the public, but after Joseon adopted Confucianism as the national policy, Buddhism faced oppression and

monks began to be portrayed as caricatures, secular characters possessing human flaws.

Three monks from three renowned temples—Buseok Temple in Yeongju, North Gyeongsang Province; Haein Temple in Hapcheon, South Gyeongsang Province, and Tongdo Temple in Yangsan, South Gyeongsang Province—got in a quarrel over which temple was the biggest. The monk from Tongdosa said to the monk from Haeinsa, "Our temple is so large, the village is crowded with monks, whose blinking produces a sound as loud as the wind from Donghae (East Sea)." The monk from Haeinsa said to the monk from Tongdosa, "At our temple, we get three *mal* of stone powder each morning." At this, the monk from Buseoksa said, "When we cook red bean porridge on Dongji (Winter Solstice) at our temple, we cannot finish seasoning it even if we get in a boat and row for three months and ten days."

This tale offers a caricature of monks boasting about the size of their temples, depicting them as vain humans rather than priests of high virtue and character.

Monster with Long Tail and Long Beak

꼬리 닷발 주둥이 닷발 괴물

The tale narrates the story of a son who seeks revenge on the monster with a long tail and beak that killed his parents.

A son returned home to find his parents dead. His neighbor told him that a monster, with a tail that was five *bal* long and beaks also five *bal* long killed them with its beak. The son set out after the monster. When he asked about the monster's whereabouts in a village, the villagers demanded fifty *jim* of wood in return. When he asked again in the next village, the villagers demanded that he plow twenty *majigi* of rice fields in return. In the next village, the villagers demanded that he provide one week's work as farmhand. When the son had completed all the work

that was demanded of him, the villagers instructed him to pull the tallest sorghum straw in the field, which will lead to a cave. He entered the cave and arrived at the monster's lair, where he hid in waiting, then when the monster returned, he stole from the monster's meals to feed himself. The monster, trying to catch the thief that stole his food, steps inside his cauldron, and the son placed a large rock on the cauldron and lit the stove, killing the monster.

Variations of this narrative feature an anecdote of the son and the bird-like monster engaged in a conversation, or different methods of killing the monster, including pounding it with a pestle after luring it using fleas, mosquitoes, or bedbugs. The protagonist is sometimes a son, or a brother and sister, and sometimes it is the widowed mother who is killed by the monster.

This tale can be interpreted as a narrative of the empowered man dominating over forces of nature by using his wits to overcome clear differences in physical power and by using fire, the root element that brought about the human civilization. The protagonist's journey in search of the monster follows a quest similar to those in "Divine Serpent Scholar (Gureongdeongdeongsinseonbi)" and "Abandoned Princess Bari (Barigongju)," which is also partially adapted in the tale "Fox Sister (Yeounui)," which features the monster, "a fox with a tail five *bal* long and mouth five *bal* long."

Morality Tale

윤리담

Yullidam, or morality tale, refers to a wide range of narratives about ethics, values and regulations that human actions should adhere to, and includes filial piety tales, chastity tales and tales of brotherly love.

In the Korean folk tradition, morality tales emphasize the Five Moral Imperatives (Oryun) according to Confucianism—loyalty between the king

and his subjects, filial piety, fidelity between husband and wife, hierarchy between the elders and the young, and trust between friends. Storytellers reveal the lesson of these tales by emphasizing the consequences of human action through characters who are honest and just. Morality tales generally focus on the responsibilities between family and friends, rather than within the context of state social affairs.

Filial piety tales narrate devoted acts of dutiful sons and daughters towards their parents, including offering one's own body part as a cure for the parents' illness; acquiring foods that are not in season, including carp, strawberries, persimmons and pomegranate; receiving help by impressing a tiger, deity or other non-human beings; and sacrificing oneself or one's child for the parents. Most of these tales conclude that filial piety is always rewarded.

Chastity tales reveal Korean society responding to the spread of the Three Cardinal Guides according to the Cheng Zhu school of Confucianism, and most narrate normative tales about women preserving their chastity or fidelity, as imposed by Joseon's Confucian society.

Tales of brotherly love focus on motifs of cooperation or conflict between brothers and also the motif of the foolish brother, to highlight the ideal sibling relationship.

Morality tales, while emphasizing society's ethical codes and promising their rewards, also portray the many different values and modes of action, and the emotions evoked by the tensions between and morality and reality.

Mother Reincarnated as a Dog

개로 환생한 어머니

This tale narrates the story of a mother who dies after living a hard-working life, never taking the time to see the world, and as a punishment, is reborn as a dog. When her son learns of this, he carries the

dog on his back all around the country to show her what she has missed.

A woman who did nothing but housework all her life, never taking time off to see the world, died and arrived at the underworld, where she was admonished for doing nothing but work and sent back to the world of the living as a dog, obliged to guard her son's house as punishment. One day, the mother, now a watchdog in her son's home, was caught stealing food prepared as offering for the ancestral memorial service and was severely beaten up. The mother appeared in her son's (or the daughter's) dream and explained what had happened, and the son sold his farmland and with that money, travelled the country to show his mother the sights, carrying the dog on his back. When they were nearing the end of their journey, the dog died on the road. The son buried the dog in that spot, which turned out to be an auspicious site, which made the son a rich man.

This narrative is transmitted by those who appreciate and preach the importance of "seeing the world" in life. Recited mostly by women, many recordings of this tale refers to a temple or Buddha, which shows its association to Buddhist folk tales.

Mountain Swallows Mortar, River Produces Two Marbles

산함일구 강토이주

"Sanhamilgu Gangtoiju" is a tale about two brothers in dispute over their inheritance, who learn the meaning of the eponymous phrase and reconcile.

Two brothers, in dispute over who will inherit a larger portion of the estate, sought the advice of the magistrate, who wrote on a sheet of paper the phrase "山舍一白江吐二珠 (mountain swallows mortar; river produces two marbles)," ordering the brothers to find out what it meant. The brothers sought out a learned man, who told them the following story:

There lived two brothers who promised they

would divide into half whatever they inherited from their parents, but they inherited a stone mortar, which could not be split into half. After fighting over the mortar, they decided to roll it down a mountain and see in whose direction it headed to determine who would keep it. So they took the mortar up the mountain and after designating their spots, rolled it downhill, but the mortar disappeared along the way, nowhere to be found. The phrase "mountain swallows mortar" summarized this tale. Then there were another pair of brothers who lost their parents at a young age and lived poorly as beggars, but with strong brotherly love. One day the brothers found a marble on the road, and while pushing the marble in each other's direction, urging that the other should have it, they dropped the marble in a brook. They worked together searching the brook for the marble and found two marbles. This tale is summarized in the phrase "river produces two marbles."

In a variation of this tale, the older of the two brothers is invited to a banquet hosted by a friend, who urged the brother to help himself, promising that he would pack some food to bring to his father, but the friend became drunk and forgot to pack the food. As the brother headed back, he felt bad that he did not have food for his father and vomited up the food he ate, upon which a stone mortar rolled down the mountain towards him. He put a jujube into the mortar and it filled up with jujube, which he took to his father. He then put rice and money into the mortar and became rich. The younger brother, jealous, took the mortar up the mountain and rolled it down in the direction of his house, but the mortar disappeared along the way.

Another variation features two loving brothers, the younger of which was crossing the river one day and a carp jumped out of the water. He cut up the fish's belly to share it with his brother, and found a marble inside. The brothers argued that the other person should have the marble and in the end, threw it into the river. A few days later the younger brother was crossing a bridge when again a carp jumped out

of the water, and this time there were two marbles inside the belly, and both brothers became rich.

The narrative, which is also transmitted as two separate tales, reflects the notion that one must be learned in letters to educate oneself about morals.

Mourner Sings, Monk Dances, Old Man Laments

상가승무노인탄

“Sanggaseungmunointan” tells the tale of a young couple who were poor but dutiful to their parents, then rewarded by the king after he heard their story.

A long time ago, the king (or King Sukjong) was travelling incognito to observe the country. One evening as he passed through a village, he encountered a chief mourner who was singing, a female monk dancing, and an old man seated, sighing in lament. When the king asked what was going on, the old man answered that it was the anniversary of his wife’s death, but they were too poor and his daughter-in-law had sold her hair to prepare offerings for the memorial rite. His son, the rite’s chief mourner was singing and his daughter-in-law, with her head shaved like a monk, was dancing, to make him feel better. The king, moved at the son and his wife’s devotion to the father, alerted the son of an upcoming special state examination. The son attended the exam, where the contestants were required to write about a passage that read, “*sangga seungmu nointan* (mourner sings, monk dances, old man laments),” which no one else understood but the son. The son referred to his own experience to write an essay that landed him a government post and he went on to achieve great success in public office.

Filial piety is one of the most important virtues for Koreans, one that has kept Korean society going throughout history. Love and respect for one’s parents is also part of the universal notion of gratitude toward the roots of human life (*bobonuisik*), which speaks for the longevity of filial piety narratives.

Mourning Robe That Has Not Heard Keening

곡성 안 들은 상복

This tale narrates the story of a magistrate’s successful attempt at tracking down a criminal who, disguised as the husband in mourning, bedded and impregnated the wife.

A pious son went to live in a hut by his father’s grave to serve his three-year mourning ritual (*simyosari*), leaving behind his young wife. One night, the husband visited wearing his mourning robe and bedded the wife, which the wife complied with, although it was dark and she could not see him clearly. Soon the wife became pregnant, and when the husband returned after finishing his mourning and found her expecting, he was puzzled, saying he had never visited. The wife was overcome with guilt and shame, and killed herself. The husband and the wife’s family took the case to the authorities, requesting that they investigate what had happened, the magistrate struggled to come up with a solution. The magistrate’s wife suggested that a public notice be sent out that the magistrate’s wife was critically ill, promising a huge reward to the person who brought in a mourning robe that had not yet heard keening, which would cure her. The perpetrator, greedy for the reward, brought in the mourning robe he used as disguise, which resulted in his arrest and punishment.

The tale focuses on the injustice experienced by the victim to deliver the message of punitive justice and “punishing evil and rewarding virtue (*gwonseonjingak*).” It also reflects the public’s hopes for a state official who makes an effort to solve the problems with care and wisdom. The narrative offers a glimpse into the social ideology and contradictions of the times.

Old Man With a Lump on His Neck

흑부리 영감

“Hokburiyeonggam” is the tale of an old man who,

with the help of goblins, loses the big lump on his neck, and another old man who, instead of losing his deformity, was given another lump by the goblins.

An old man who had a lump on his neck went to the mountain to gather wood. He worked until after dark and on his way down, found an empty house where he decided to lodge for the night. Feeling alone and bored, he began singing a song, which attracted goblins (*dokkaebi*), who were moved by his singing. “Old man, where does that beautiful singing come from?” asked the goblin leader, and the old man answered, “It comes from this lump on my neck.” The goblin asked the old man to sell him the lump in return for treasure, which the old man accepted, and the old man lost his lump and became rich as well. A neighbor of his, who also had a lump of his neck, heard the story and headed out to the empty house in the mountain and waited for nightfall. Night arrived and he began to sing, which again attracted the goblins. The goblin leader again asked where the singing came from and the old man answered that it came from his lump. Upon hearing this, the goblin said, “The other old man was a liar and you’re one, too,” and added a lump on the other side of the old man’s neck. This gave birth to the expression, “Went to lose the lump but returned with another,”

This tale belongs to the type of imitation tale spread around the world, but lacks in characterization. Many folk tales emphasize the theme of “punishing evil and rewarding virtue (*gwonseonjingak*),” and many Korean tales highlight filial piety, but those themes are ignored in this narrative and the only clear plot is the old man overcoming crisis with a lie, for which he acquires wealth, which makes it difficult to position the tale within the Korean oral tradition. It is also notable that the structure of repetition is unrelated to the character’s virtue or vice and that reward and punishment is determined only by the order of who came first. The tale is included in the primary school textbook *Chōsenko dokuhon*, published in



Old Man Who Lost His Lump in *Chōsenko dokuhon* (vol. 4).
Japanese Government-General, 1933, National Library of Korea

1923, under Japanese colonial rule, and the inclusion of a story in which the protagonist is rewarded for lying seems to pose moral issues. The story’s plot is revised in the 1933 edition of the book, but the fact that it took ten years to change this reflects the Japanese colonial government’s attempt to distort the characteristics of the Korean people.

The tale was first documented in 1915 in the textbook *Chōsenko dokuhon* under the title “Old Man With a Lump” and has since been recognized as one of the most widely known Korean folk tales. In Japan, the story was published as part of the 1st-grade textbook *Jinjō shōgaku dokuhon*, which was copied onto the Korean textbook, including the illustrations, which depicted *dokkaebi* as the Japanese goblin *oni*, resulting in the similarity between the public image of *dokkaebi* and *oni*.

Old Sir Carefree

무수옹

The tale “Musuong” narrates the story of an old man of good fortune and no worries.

A long time ago there lived an old man who had three married sons, all of them dutiful and devoted to their father, their spouses as well. The son he lived with provided a bowl of steamed rice for every meal and the two other sons prepared the rest of the dishes, and the old man lived comfortably, without care or worry. The family hung a signboard on the gate that read “無愁翁 (Musuong, meaning Old Sir Carefree),” and the old man’s reputation became known to the king, who wondered how could it be that an ordinary subject could be without worry when even he, the king, was so full or worries about his subjects. So the king summoned the old man, who actually looked content and healthy, both in appearance and spirit. As a test, the king bestowed a marble to the old man, ordering him to keep it safely at home until he summons him again. During the old man’s journey back home, however, the boatsman snatched the marble from him and threw it into the sea, which had been arranged by the king. Back home, the old man stopped taking food and drink as he wallowed in misery. His daughters-in-law wondered if the old man disliked the food he was being served, and went searching for fine ingredients, returning with a fresh carp. When they cut through the carp’s belly to prepare it for cooking, they found a marble inside, which was the one that the old man had lost. When the king summoned him again, the old man took the marble and told the king what had happened. The king responded that the old man was blessed by the heavens and bestowed upon him the pen name Musuong.

This narrative serves to offer hope to the elderly and emphasize the importance of filial piety to the younger generation. It also reflects the Buddhist concept of nonpossession, of finding happiness

not in secular values life wealth and glory but in a humble yet peaceful life shared with a caring family. True happiness, the tale says, lies in throwing out one’s possession, thereby freeing oneself from its bounds.

Origin of Cold

감기의 유래

This tale narrates the origin of the common cold (*gamgi*, or *gobbul*), which is believed to be caused by the ghost of a man with two genitals, who died after a futile search for a wife and fulfilled his lust in death by releasing himself in people’s nostrils.

There lived a prince with two genitals, and when it came time for him to marry the king ordered his subjects to find a maiden with two genitals. But they were not able to find such a maiden, and in the end the prince died. When he turned into a ghost, he sought relief for his unfulfilled desires by releasing himself in people’s nostrils, which in people manifests as symptoms of sinus congestion in the early stages of a cold and progresses into a runny nose.

A variation of this tale features a maiden with two genitals, whose father posts an advertisement in search of a bachelor with two genitals. A young man who happened across a penis floating down the stream picked it up to compare it with his own, but it stuck to his body, inadvertently leaving him with two genitals. Thus the young man and the maiden wed, and gathered much wealth. In other variations, the heroine is a widow and not a maiden, or another young man tries to get himself another penis and become rich like the other bachelor, but ends up with a penis stuck to his nose.

This tale shares its roots with earlier mythology, which feature oversized genitalia as symbols of fecundity and wealth, and serves as an important

reference in understanding the archetypal symbols in the tradition of genital mythology. This narrative can also be read in relation to the popular belief that the size of one's nose is in proportion to that of one's genitalia; the folk custom of chasing away colds by calling out, "*Gaejotbbul*"; and also to the etymology of "*gobbul*," the indigenous Korean word for the common cold.

Origin of the Custom of Guarding the Bridal Chamber

신방 지키는 유래

This tale narrates the origin of the traditional custom of peeping inside the bridal chamber (*sinbangjikigi*) on wedding night.

Scholar Yi Deok-mu, of 18th-century Joseon, wrote of the custom in "Sasojeol (Etiquette for Scholars and Youth)," included in *Cheongjangwanjeonseo* (*Complete Writings of Cheongjangwan*), "Over the three days that the groom spent at his in-laws' following the wedding, the women of the house made sure to eavesdrop on the goings-on between the newlyweds, and one can not help but wonder, what



Sharing bed on the bridal night.
National Folk Museum of Korea



Peeping inside the bridal chamber.
National Folk Museum of Korea

vulgar custom!"

A groom was about to be wed and his mother instructed that what he should do "on the first night was to strip the bride." The son misunderstood and used a knife to strip the bride's skin, instead of her clothes. The bride had been told by her mother that she should endure pain on her first night, so she persevered and did not resist. The following morning, the bride was found skinned and dead. Since this incident, people made sure to peep inside the bridal chamber to guard against unfortunate incidents.

This tale reflects a spirit of resistance against the violence of patriarchy, imposing the women to kill their sense of self in marriage, as symbolized by the death of the bride.

Origin of the Expression "Carry a Straw Basket"

오쟁이 지다는 말의 유래

This tale, which mixes sexual and humor motifs, explains the origin of the expression "*ojaengijida*," or "carry a straw basket," which means to engage in

an adulterous relationship.

A man was walking down the road, carrying a straw basket (*ojaengi*) on his back, when he saw a husband and wife working in the field (or having a meal) and was overcome with an impulse to engage in intimacy with the wife. He thought up a scheme and said aloud, "What a sight. Making love in the middle of a working day!" The husband came after him and demanded, "What did you just say?" And the man, said, unfazed, "From where I stand, carrying this basket, that's what it looks like." The husband fell for this and the man made the husband stand where he had stood, carrying his basket, and went over to the wife and engaged in intimacy as the husband watched.

A variation of this tale features an adulterous couple. One day the man suggests to his lover, "What we have is great but, wouldn't it be even more enjoyable if we did it in front of your husband?" A few days later the man was walking past his lover's house, carrying a straw basket on his back, when he found the husband at home and went inside, saying, innocently, "What is this, making love in broad daylight!" The husband, puzzled, asked what he was talking about, and the man replied that that was what it looked like from where he stood, carrying a basket on his back. The husband took the basket from the man, trying to see if this was true, and the man walked over and made love to the wife, and the husband admitted that that was what it looked like from where he stood, carrying a basket on his back.

This carnal tale about adultery is structured as a narrative of trickery, which adds tension and playfulness.

Origin of the Expression "One Night Together Can Build a Fortress"

'하루 밤을 자도 만리성을 쌓는다'의 유래

This tale delivers the lesson that even a one night

affair can be an event as major as building a fortress ten thousand li long, and so one must take caution.

The renowned scholar Jeong Yak-yong wrote in 1820 in *Idamsokchan* (*Additions to an Earful of Conversation*) that the expression means that "one must be cautious of and prepared for even seemingly ephemeral moments." In *Songnamjapji* (*Songnam's Encyclopedia*), written by Jo Jae-sam in 1855, the author explains that the expression "originated from the fact that when Japanese invaded Korea, they always built fortress even if they stayed only for a night, and came to be used in reference to sexual relationships." According to the folk tale, the expression originated from the story of a man forced into the labor of building a fortress by a woman with whom he engaged in a one night affair.

After her husband was taken away to build the Ten-Thousand-Li Fortress (or the Great Wall), the wife had been alone. A travelling salt vendor came by and the wife suggested that they live together. The salt vendor accepted, and the wife promised that if the salt vendor deliver to her husband the last garment that she made for him, they could be together. The salt vendor spent that night with the wife and headed to the fortress construction site to deliver the wife's letter and garment. The husband read the letter, which told him return home after getting the salt vendor to build the fortress on his behalf. The husband asked the salt vendor to work on the construction while the husband changed his clothes, and headed back home, where he lived happily with his wife.

The characters in this tale appear carefree to the concept of chastity, and the wife uses sex as a means of fraud, which poses ethical issues. The storytellers do not portray the wife's trick as a an act of loyalty to her husband, and instead focus on the salt vendor forced into labor for the couple, which indicates that unlike the meaning of the proverb, the narrative functions as a cautionary tale for men against the sexual advances of a stranger.

Origin of the Ghost of Spirits

술 귀신의 유래

This tale narrates the origin of *sulgwisin*, or the ghost of spirits, which came from the spirits of men who had to be sacrificed to cure a father's illness.

There lived a dutiful son caring for his ill father, and he wandered the country in search of a cure for his father's illness. When he heard from a renowned doctor that the livers of a scholar, a clown, and a mad man would cure his father, the son did as he was instructed, killing the three men for their livers, which actually brought his father back to health. The son buried the three men in a single grave and on the grave mound began to grow wheat. Liquor was made by brewing the wheat from this grave, thereby it contained the three men's spirits, which meant one cup of alcohol made the drinker a gentleman; two cups made him dance and sing in good spirits; and three cups made him show his madness.

This tale depicts a conflict between ethics on human life and filial piety, from which the latter prevails. The wheat and the liquor discovered by the son while caring for his father's tomb gives voice to the innocent lives sacrificed through the body of the drinker, warning those witnessing the scene not to repeat the same mistake. The narrative also reflects the view that human characteristics live on even in death, and the ending also addresses the danger of excessive drinking.

Oseong's Pranks

오성의 장난

This tale narrates a series of pranks by Oseongbuwongun (Lord of Oseong) Yi Hang-bok (1556-1618), a renowned high official from mid-Joseon referred to as Oseong, and his friends.

Oseong and Haneum were best friends who went around playing naughty pranks. Once they

were assigned to clean up the corpses left behind by a plague and Haneum arrived first, to lie among the dead bodies to startle Oseong but when Haneum leaped up, Oseong was not a bit surprised and instead treated Haneum as if he were a corpse. Another anecdote features Oseong telling Haneum that there was a goblin (*dokkaebi*) that lived in the outhouse, who pulled at your testicles and delivered prophecies. When Haneum was squatting in the outhouse, Oseong pulled at Haneum's testicles with a string, which Haneum took as the doing of a goblin. Oseong was also close to Haneum's wife, and one day Oseong went around saying he and Haneum's wife had a special relationship, citing evidence. Haneum's wife, upon hearing this, invited Oseong over and served him rice cake steamed with feces inside, saying that a lying mouth should be stuffed with feces. Oseong was just as naughty towards his own wife. When arrangements were being made for their wedding, Oseong, pretending to being chased, crawled under his bride's skirt, and the bride complained that the groom was examining not just the bride's appearances but her intimate parts well. One day Oseong noticed that his father-in-law was concerned about his lack of facial hair, and told him that chewing on donkey shoes would help, tricking his father-in-law. Oseong's wife, on her part, took revenge by telling her father-in-law, who had a small nose, to stick his nose out in the winter cold. There is another anecdote about Oseong's prank of chilling his bottom on a cold rock before stepping inside the house, then pressing his bottom on his wife's belly. One day his wife heated up the rock until it was sizzling, and Oseong burned his bottom.

There are myriad other narratives about Oseong's pranks, one of which is about stealing a blacksmith's nails, which were red-hot and caused a burn on Oseong's bottom. One is about Oseong's riddle contest against a goblin, which he won by asking, "Guess if I am going to stand up or sit down." When a neighbor climbed Oseong's fence and picked persimmons on his tree, he went over to push his fist

into the neighbor's door and asking to whom this hand belonged. There is also a string of stories about Oseong's student days at the village school, one of which narrates a prank played on a teacher who hid his honey from the students, and while he was out, Oseong ate the honey with his classmates, then pretended to be poisoned.

The tales of Oseong and Haneum are fictional narratives focused on humor. While it is true that Oseong and Haneum were close acquaintances, their ages were significantly apart, and they did not spend their childhood together. Nevertheless, their story took on a life of its own and has been widely transmitted and despite his reputation as a prankster, Oseong went on to become an important public official.

In the narratives, Oseong and Haneum are portrayed as characters that follow their desires rather than ethical norms, and focus on action rather than ideas, and their actions, based on basic human impulses, subvert authority and convention, which possess great appeal to the public. Stories of Oseong's pranks on his or Haneum's wife ends with the woman taking revenge through a bigger prank, which can also be read as a dramatization of the tale's theme of subverting the existing social order and authority.

Oseong and Haneum are two of the most entertaining characters in the Korean oral tradition, their free-spirited and playful pranks offering fun and release. The pair is also the most recognizable examples of male friendship in folk narratives, and their tales are still enjoyed by contemporary readers through children's stories and comic books.

Otherworld Tale

이계담

Igyedam, or otherworld tales, are narratives that take place across different spheres and worlds, including

the heavens, the underworld, Yonggung (Dragon Palace), and other supernatural or imagined places.

Otherworld tales, formed upon people's sense of space, take place in places other than the experienced world, in virtual spaces or those constructed by symbolic imagination. In folk tales, space can be divided into celestial and terrestrial spheres and the underworld.

Narratives that involve the celestial world include founding myths that feature progenitors that have descended from the heavens. In the Dangun myth, Hwanin, the ruler of the celestial world sends down Hwanung to rule the human world; in the myth of Haemosu, a fairy from the celestial world descends on the pond on Mt. Geumgang to bathe and meets the woodsman, but in the end returns to the heavens. There are also those that feature Taoist hermits (*sinseon*) with supernatural powers, narrating human encounters with a hermit or a hermit's training to acquire his powers.

Underworld tales narrate a human's journey to, and sometimes back from, the underworld, or about previous life and life in the human world. Included in this genre are ghost tales, which involved haunted spirits (*wongwi*), reflecting the traditional Korean views on life, death and destiny.

Yonggung tales feature characters related to the Dragon Palace, including Yongwang (Dragon King), Yongja (Dragon Prince) and Yongnyeo (Dragon Princess). The earliest narrative record of Yonggung is "Lady Suro" from *Samgungnyusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*), in which the palace is depicted as an extravagant otherworld filled with treasure. "Tale of Geotaji" in *Samgungnyusa* and "Tale of Jakjegeon" in *Goryeosa* (*History of Goryeo*) epic stories of heroes who are invited to the Dragon Palace to fulfill the Dragon King's request. Narratives about dragons returning favors given them, including the legend of Bangi and the tale of Haein (Seal of the Sea), feature treasures from the Dragon Palace, a water dropper, or seal.

The human world, as depicted in otherworld

tales, are places of exile from the celestial or underwater worlds or the underworld. All the different realms exist on the same sphere, which is especially evident in shamanic tales: Transcendental worlds, like Seoecheonguk (Heavenly Kingdom of the West), Geungnak (Pure Land) or the underworld are all depicted as horizontal extensions of the human world, reachable on foot. A clear example is the tale “Gubongnyeohaeng (Fortune Quest),” in which the protagonist sets out on foot to meet the celestial deity.

Owner of My Own Fortune

내 복에 산다

This tale narrates the story of a daughter who is expelled by her father when she tells him that she is the creator of her own fortune, and meets a poor man but acquires wealth with her ability to find gold, and later reunites with her father and is accepted. Its plot structure is similar to those of the legend of Princess Pyeonggang, documented in the chapter “Ondal” of *Samguksagi* (*Record of the Three Kingdoms*), the legend of Princess Seonhwa in the section “Muwang” in *Samgungyusa* (*Memorabilia of Three Kingdoms*), and the sha-manic myth “Samgongbonpuri.”

A long time ago, a rich man and his wife had three daughters. One day the father called his three daughters and asked to whom they owed their good fortune. The two older sister answered that they owed their fortune to their father, but the third daughter said, “I am the owner of my own fortune,” which earned his father’s resentment and led to her expulsion from the family home. The third daughter met and married a poor charcoal maker, when she found a gold mine at a wood charcoal kiln where he worked, for she possessed the ability to seek out gold nuggets. She instructed her husband how to sell the gold, which he followed and they became very rich. The third daughter had a vision that her father lost

his wealth after expelling her, and made preparations to meet the family. Her two older sisters had satisfied their father with their answers, but after the father’s fall, they had turned away from their parents’ call for help. The third daughter finally encountered her parents when they came to her door to beg, and the father admitted that she became rich because she was the owner of her own fortune. The third daughter invited them to live with her, offering support and filial piety.

The focus of this narrative is on materials related to gold and metals, including a gold mine, bracelet, and gold piled like mud. In early medieval times, gold was used in weaponry and later came to take on value as currency. The narrative is a mythological account of daughter from a family (community) that dealt with metal weaponry, who after competing with her father for power leaves home, meets a man from a group culturally inferior to her own, develops her talent and abilities, then uses her power to subjugate her father’s group. The charcoal maker, as the mate of the shaman who brings in material wealth, is the one who can control fire, and is seen as a blacksmith.

This tale has been interpreted as a narrative formed by the need to seek compensation for women in the patriarchal society of medieval Korea. Through the confrontation and resolution of conflict between the heroine and her antagonist, the tale weaves a story of a woman with outstanding talent and will, building a life of her own making. The theme also suggests a fatalistic view on human destiny.

Pack of Rats Cross the River

쥐떼도강

“Jwittedogang” is a tale about a pack of rats crossing the river by each grabbing another’s tail, in succession.

It is a typical formula tale, found across the world and transmitted since ancient times. The

oldest documented version of a Korean formula tale is “Jangdamchwicheo (*Long Tale of Acquiring Wife*)” in *Myeongyeopjhae (Calender Collection of Humor)*, written by Hong Man-jong (1643-1725). This tale is distinctive in its subject of rats, which provide the basic unit for the counting that makes up the narrative.

A man who loved to listen to stories wanted a neverending story and sought out a storyteller, promising his daughter (or a large sum of money) as reward. “On a year of a very bad harvest, there was nothing to eat and a pack of rats crossed the river in search of food, by grabbing another’s tail, one after another,” the storyteller began, and continued, “and another jumped in the river, grabbing another’s tail, or simply, “squeak, squeak, squeak,” and went on like this, repeating himself, over and over. In the end, the man who hired the storyteller gave up and asked him to stop, but had to keep his promise to reward him.

This type of formula tale is begun by the storyteller when he has run out of stories to tell, or to avoid his audience’s further requests, but eventually the audience gives up listening, so in effect, the tale stops short of a neverending story. In other words, this tale was devised for storytellers without much talent for creating plot.

Pot of Inexhaustible Supply

화수분

“Hwasubun” is a fortune tale that narrates the story of a man of good deeds who acquires a magic pot that provides an inexhaustible supply of money, rice or whatever is put inside.

There lived a poor married couple. The husband was a scholar who did nothing but read books and even as the harvest holiday Chuseok approached, there was nothing to eat in the house. Out of desperation, the wife urged the husband to try

stealing, so the husband went out to someone else’s paddy to steal rice but could not bring himself to take the rice. At that moment, the thunder roared, startling the husband, and as he tried to run, he tripped on an earthenware pot. He picked up the pot and put a fistful of rice inside, then the pot filled up with rice. In the husband’s dream that night, an old man appeared and told him that he alone should use the pot and should not speak about it to his wife. The husband hid the pot in the closet and used it in secret, but one day the wife found it and learned the secret. Their married daughter, who happened to be visiting, borrowed the pot, but its magic power was lost.

A variation of this tale features a man who goes to the market to buy rice and instead buys a frog, feeling sorry for the creature, and releases it in a puddle, after which the frog brings the man the magic pot. Some variations combine the two different versions. The frog is sometimes replaced by a tadpole, toad or fish, and the magical instrument is sometimes a bowl or a bat. In the case of the versions with a carp or other fish, sometimes the protagonist is invited to Yonggung (Dragon Palace), where he acquires the magic pot.

In the narrative, when the magic pot is used to acquire more than one needs, or when the pot falls into the wrong hands, it loses its magical power, which serves as a cautionary tale against excessive greed or undeserved gain.

Pottery Vendor Lost in Daydream

독장수 구구

The droll tale “Dokjangsugugu” narrates the story of a pottery vendor who, while seeking shelter from the rain, gets lost in his daydream and destroys his wares.

The pottery vendor was on the road, carrying his wares on his back, when he encountered a rain shower and without anywhere to seek shelter, he put



Pottery vendor (postcard).
1920s, National Folk Museum of Korea

one of his large earthenware jars over his body and sat inside it. Inside the dark jar, the pottery vendor started daydreaming: “If I sell this jar, I’ll make this much profit, and with that money, I’ll buy another ware, and sell that and make this much profit, and with that money, I’ll buy another, then sell, then buy, then sell, then buy...” His imagination led him to believe he would make thousands of coins in profit, and with that money he would be able to build a house, get married, buy rice fields, hire farmhands, and get himself a concubine. He started to imagine his wife and his concubine arguing, and himself trying to intervene, in the course of which he would get so angry he might release a punch, and when his thoughts reached this far he swung his fist without realizing it, which hit the jar that was covering him, breaking it and getting him soaking wet.

The narrative offers the lesson that empty fantasies can make one lose what is already one’s own.

Pranks on the Teacher

훈장 골탕 먹인 제자

This droll tale narrates a series of student pranks played on the teacher at a traditional village school.

The first tale is about a student who proposed to his teacher that he would make the teacher rich, then spread rumors that the teacher was a renowned fortuneteller. At the time in the Great Kingdom, the royal seal was stolen, and the state dispatched the teacher to the Great Kingdom to help retrieve the seal. The student instructed the teacher that when he got to the Great Kingdom, he should start wailing toward Joseon on a certain date and time, saying that his house is on fire. The student set the teacher’s house on fire at the designated time, and the court of the Great Kingdom was greatly impressed by the teacher’s abilities. In the mean while, the thief who stole the royal seal became afraid of the teacher’s divinations and turned himself in, and the teacher returned to Joseon after being rewarded with a large amount of money. The teacher became greedy for more and asked the student how he could go on doing this. The student took the teacher up to a mountain and hung him on a pine tree by the nose, then he told the teacher to tell people that he had lost his divine powers after tearing his nose, advising him to lead an ordinary life.

In the second tale, the teacher one day asked each of his students a question. First, he asked a high-achieving student what he wanted to do in the future, and the student answered that he would like to teach students. Satisfied with the answer, the teacher asked a student from a rich family the same question, and the students answered that he hoped to make more money and helped those in need. Again satisfied with the answer, the teacher asked he same question to a poor student who did not excel academically and the student answered, “My wish is to have three large donkey cocks.” The teacher was angered by the unexpected answer, but suppressed himself and asked what they were for. Then the student answered



"Teacher and His Pupils" from a collection of genre paintings by Gisa (reproduction). National Folk Museum of Korea

that one of the cocks would be used to stick into the mouth of the smart student who lied that he wanted to teach students when he refused to offer help with a single letter; and that the second donkey cock would be used to stick into the mouth of the rich student who lied that he wanted to help the needy when he refused to offer a single spoon of rice to his hungry classmates. When the teacher asked about the third cock, the students hesitated before saying, "I think I should stick a donkey cock in your mouth as well, for sighing with admiration at these other pricks."

There is a variation in which the teacher tries a prank on a student getting married but is tricked instead by the bride: The teacher offers the student soup made with uncooked beans, which gives the students diarrhea on his wedding night, but the unfazed bride offers her husband's feces, and makes a dog carry away the teacher's earthenware jar enshrining the family ancestral god (*sinjutdanji*).

These tales focus on the talent and intelligence of the students, offering humor and satire that comes from the subversive destruction of conventional hierarchy.

Pregnant Rat and Clairvoyant Fortuneteller

새끼 뱀 쥐와 옹한 점쟁이

This tale narrates the story of a fortuneteller who foresaw his own fate and tried to avoid death, but failed.

Fortuneteller Hong Gye-gwan was renowned for his ability to foresee the future, and one day his divination revealed the date and hour of his own death, which would be avoidable only if he were able get under the king's throne. Just then the king, after hearing of Hong's reputation, summoned him to the palace and made him crouch under his throne. At that moment, a rat happened to pass by and the king asked Hong how many rats had crawled by, to which Hong replied, "Three rats." The king, disappointed, ordered Hong's execution, saying that his inaccurate divinations would delude the world and deceive the people. The king, however, began to have doubts and ordered the rat's belly to be cut open, inside which they found two baby rats. Only then did the king realize that Hong was indeed clairvoyant, and ordered that his execution be stopped. In the meantime, Hong had asked his executioner to delay the execution by one hour, to which the executioner had agreed, since it would be his last wish. Just then the king's messenger was approaching and when he waved to the executioner to signal that the execution was canceled, the executioner mistook this as a sign to hurry, and killed Hong. The mountain pass where the execution took place came to be called Acha—meaning "oh, no"—Pass.

In a variation of this tale, the king hides the rat inside a bowl and asks Hong how many rats are in the bowl. In some versions, Hong is not summoned by the king but crawls under the throne on his own to save his life.

In the book *Ojuyeonmunjangjeonsango* (*A Collection of Writings on Various Topics by Oju*), Hong Gye-gwan is introduced as an outstanding fortuneteller who was blind, during the reign of Joseon's King Sejo, and this tale offers a realistic

portrayal of the social status of a fortuneteller in Joseon.

Proxy Groom

대신 든 장가

This narrative is a fortune tale (*haengundam*) that tells the story of a son who acts as a proxy groom to pay off his father's debt, and is accepted as the son-in-law of a state minister.

A son set out to find a way to pay back a government loan on behalf of his father, a state official. A rich family offered to pay back the loan if the son would take the place of their leper son as a groom. After the wedding, when the son refused to bed the bride, the bride, feeling rejected, attempted to kill herself, and the son was forced to confess the truth. The bride's family were relieved to learn that their daughter had not married a leper, and accepted the proxy groom to be their son-in-law, offering to pay off his father's loan. The son's sister, saying that their father's loan was taken care of thanks to the rich family's proposal, decided to marry their leper son. She prepared arsenic to kill herself on her wedding night, but the leper groom ate it by mistake, which cured his leprosy and the couple lived happily.

The circumstances depicted in the story—the father in debt, acting as a proxy groom in return for money, the bride's family offering monetary compensation to avoid a leper son-in-law—reflect the late Joseon society in which economic logic was emerging as an important part of public discourse, as the Confucian disciplines of loyalty, filial piety and fidelity (*chung, hyo, yeol*) made way for the capitalist principles of a monetary economy.

In terms of structure, the narrative, as a fortune tale about an unfortunate protagonist, a tale of filial piety, and a good wife tale about curing the leper groom, is a hybrid of three different types of folk tales, reflecting the changes taking place in the genre at the time.

Quail's Tail

메추라기의 꼬지

This tale explains how the quail's tail got so short.

Quail was about to be eaten by fox when he promised that if he were allowed to live, he would always keep fox full and content. To prove this, quail made a woman drop her basket of food and come chasing after him, during which fox ate up the food in the basket. Then quail offered to make fox laugh and sat on a piece of earthenware that two brothers were selling, which made the younger brother chase after him and crack the pottery. Then quail offered to show fox real pain and misery, telling fox to dig a hole and sit inside with only his nose sticking out. Quail sat on fox's nose and a woodsman struck with a stick. Fox felt so painful and angry he caught quail with his mouth, threatening to kill him. Quail begged for the fox to call his mother for one last time before he died, and fox opened his mouth to call out



Fox and quail.

Early 20th century, National Folk Museum of Korea

“Mother,” releasing quail. As quail flew away, fox grabbed his tail and the quail lost his tail feathers.

In a variation of this narrative, the fox is replaced by a rabbit or a tiger. Another variation features a pheasant and a quail left without food in the middle of winter, asking a rat for food. The pheasant acquired food from the rat by being polite, but the quail makes the rat angry and loses his tail feathers.

The tale can be read as a narrative about the weak defeating the strong by using his wits.

Rabbit Throws Baby in Cauldron Before Running Away

아이를 솥에 넣고 도망친 토끼

This tale narrates the story of a cruel rabbit that throws the baby of its captor into a cauldron before running away.

Nokducheomji (Old Man Mung Bean) was determined to catch the rabbit that had been eating his mung beans and lay in his mung bean patch, waiting for the rabbit. A herd of rabbits soon arrived, and while they were engaged in a game of pretend funeral for the man, he grabbed the biggest rabbit among them. Nokducheomji handed the rabbit to his wife and began chopping wood, and his wife put the rabbit, still alive, inside a cauldron. While the wife went to next door to borrow fire, the rabbit crawled out and put the couple's baby into the cauldron and lay down in the room as if it were the baby. As the old man and his wife ate the meat from the cauldron, they said that the rabbit looked like their baby. When they finished eating, the rabbit jumped out from the room, shouting that the couple had eaten up their baby and now they were trying to eat this rabbit. As it ran away, the rabbit said that setting fire to the clothesrack would kill it, and when the couple set the clothesrack on fire, this time the rabbit said setting fire to the roof would kill it, and when the couple set the roof on fire, the rabbit ran away to the mountain, shouting that the couple had eaten up their

baby and now they were trying to eat this rabbit.

The rabbit as trickster and the rabbit as cruel killer offers contrasting psychosocial aspects: While the former represents the desire to intervene in the social order through heroic acts, the latter reflects the instincts repressed deep in the human unconscious.

Rat Transformed Into a Man

쥐의 둔갑

This shapeshifting tale narrates the story of a rat who transformed itself into the master of the house but is eradicated in the end.

This narrative usually starts with the rat's transformation, achieved by eating a broken tip of the master's fingernail or toenail. Everyone in the family thinks the rat is the master, and the magistrate rules that the real master is fake, expelling him from the house. The master drifts here and there, then receives advice and returns home with a cat, which kills the fake master, transformed back into a rat, and the real master resumes his position. His children chide and ridicule their mother, saying, “Can't you tell between Father's prick and a rat's prick!”

In some variations of this tale, the rat takes the master's position while the real master is away. There are versions where the person offering advice to the master is a woman, or the master thinks up the idea of taking a cat without someone advising him. In some versions, the rat turns into a young groom or son, or the rat is able to transform into a human by using clothes that are strewn about the house, or by someone else's mistake, like a daughter-in-law feeding food to the rat. The classical novel *Onggojiseon* (*Tale of Ongjojip*) combines the narrative of this tale with story of a miser who mistreats a monk seeking donation, to make up a cautionary tale against ingratitude toward one's parents and against the anti-Buddhist social atmosphere.

Of special note is the version of this tale that

features a daughter-in-law feeding food to the rat. She feeds the first spoon from the day's first pot of steamed rice, which is reserved for the eldest member of the family, and she continues to do this for a year out of pity for the starved rat. After consuming the food reserved for the master of the house, the old rat wants to become the master and in the end he does. The daughter-in-law practiced a good deed on the rat without any intent of doing wrong, but in the end the act made her an undutiful daughter-in-law.

In the shamanic myth "Changsega (Song of the Creation of the Universe)," the rat is a divine creature that explains to Mireuk (Maitreya) the origin of water and fire during the creation of the universe; in "Origin of Twelve Animal Signs," the rat is the most intelligent animal after humans. Under the Confucian monarchy of Joseon, however, the rat is degraded to a negative creature. Scholars like Jeong Yak-yong used the rat as an analogy for corrupted provincial officials pillaging or wasting grain that should go to the people.

This tale is also related to the folk belief of grain worship and the Confucian idea of viewing one's body as an inheritance from one's parents that should consequently be handled with the utmost care.

Red Bean Porridge Granny and Tiger

팔죽할멈과 호랑이

This tale narrates the story of an elderly woman who escapes a tiger's threats with the help of various animals and tools like a wooden backpack carrier.

A granny living alone in the remote mountainous was planting red beans in her field when a huge tiger appeared and tried to eat her up. Granny pleaded that the tiger wait until she harvested her red beans so that she could make red bean porridge on Dongji (Winter Solstice). As summer and fall passed and Dongji arrived, granny wept as she cooked red bean porridge. That was when one



Old woman and tiger.

Early 20th century, National Folk Museum of Korea

by one, chestnut, awl, dog dung, millstone, turtle, straw mat and wooden carrier appeared and asked granny for some red bean porridge. After finishing a bowl of porridge each, they all offered to help granny fight the tiger. At night when the tiger came down the mountain and asked granny for red bean porridge, she told him to go inside the kitchen to eat. In the kitchen, the tiger was hit in the eye by chestnut, and unable to open his eyes, was bitten on the nose by turtle, slipped on dog dung, pierced by awl, struck by millstone, and died. Wooden carrier took tiger, wrapped inside the straw mat, and threw the tiger into the deep river.

In the many variations of this tale, the tiger threatens to eat up granny under different circumstances: because she loses a red bean hulling contest; after she harvests her beans and cooks porridge for the tiger; or because she loses to the tiger in a weeding contest. Her helpers' identities, method of assistance and order of appearance also vary: fly turns out the lamp in granny's room; chestnut (or egg, bullet) attacks tiger's eyes from the kitchen hearth; crab (or turtle) bites the tiger's paws when he tries to rinse his eyes with water; awl picks at the tiger's back or bottoms; dog dung (or cow dung) makes tiger fall; millstone (or mortar) strikes at tiger's head and kills him; while straw mat and wooden carrier always take care of the last stage of the revenge.

A branch of this narrative originated from Asia

and spread to Russia, Germany, Italy, and Spain, and to China, Korea and Japan in the east, while another branch spread through Mongolia and to Canada and the Northern American west coast, and a third branch to Sumatra and Java.

In the tale, tiger, who tries to take away the red beans, the fruit of the granny's intense labor, and also her life, symbolizes the greedy ruler in power, while the animals and objects that come to the granny's rescue stand for the weak and the ordinary people. The lesson offered is that by bringing together their wisdom and power, even the weakest and most insignificant beings can overcome any hardship.

Reformed Daughter-in-Law

며느리 개심시킨 시부모

This narrative is a realistic tale of an undutiful daughter-in-law reformed by the compliments of her parents-in-law.

A long time ago there lived an undutiful daughter-in-law who mistreated her father-in-law. One day, the father-in-law was invited to a *hwangap* (sixtieth birthday) banquet, but he had no proper attire, so he wore his son's clothes and set out for the banquet. The daughter-in-law was washing laundry by the brook when she saw her father-in-law in her husband's clothes and she ran after him furious, swinging her laundry bat. A friend of the father-in-law asked why his daughter-in-law was following him, and the father-in-law answered that she was escorting him to the banquet to make sure he arrived safely. The banquet's host, impressed by her filial piety, treated the daughter-in-law with generous hospitality, which reformed the daughter-in-law and she was from then on dutiful and respectful to her father-in-law.

In some variations, the father-in-law responds that the daughter-in-law is following him to carry the

father-in-law on her back because of his ill health or bad leg. There are also versions in which the parents-in-law are not fed properly by the daughter-in-law but she is reformed when the parents praise her filial piety to others.

This narrative emphasized that filial piety is not a virtue that can be forced, and that the relationship between parents and their offspring is one that requires mutual effort, not one-sided obedience.

Reincarnation Tale

환생담

Hwansaengdam, or reincarnation tales, depict characters who die and are reborn as another human or animal, plant or mineral.

The section "Daeseonghyoisebumo (Daeseong's Filial Piety for Two Generations of Parents)" of *Samgunghnyusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*) includes the story of Kim Dae-seong, the son of a poor woman in the village of Moryang, who dies and is reborn as State Coincilor Kim Mun-ryang's son. Dae-seong supports his parents from his current and previous lives with equal devotion, building Bulguk Temple in honor of his parents in his current life and Seokguram Grotto for his parents from his previous life.

"Councillor Hwang Hui's Parents from His Previous Life" tells the story of a commoner's son who aspired to be appointed the governor of Pyeongyang but died upon realizing the limitations of his status, but is reborn into an aristocratic family and achieves his dream.

In "Ox That Became the Councillor's Son-in-Law," a man gets a concubine to conceive a son, but his wife gives birth to a son and the jealous concubine feeds the baby to the cow. The cow gives birth to a calf and the calf keeps going in the house and nursing on the wife's breasts. Realizing that the baby has reincarnated as the calf, the concubine feigns illness and insists that the only cure is the

liver of a calf. The butcher hired to retrieve the liver releases the calf and offers another animal's liver. The calf heads to Seoul, where he makes the bell ring and becomes the councillor's son-in-law, upon which he takes a bath in a pond and transforms into a handsome man. After being appointed to high office, he returns to his home town and reveals what had happened, ordering a punishment for the concubine and a reward for the butcher.

In "Someone Known from Birth," the dead man's spirit repeatedly travels to and from the underworld, reincarnated as a human, a serpent, a puppy and a human, and again.

There are also many tales in which humans are reborn as plants, including flowers, trees, pine tree, bamboo, wisteria, quince tree, oak, and wheat. In "Two Friends That Turned Into Crepe Myrtles," two girls fall off a cliff while walking in the snow and die, and flowers bloom as roots grow on their bodies. In "Origin of Liquor," a dutiful son hears that his father's illness will be cured with human liver, and kills a scholar, monk and a mad man to take their liver, and buries them in a single spot. The following year, a strange-looking plant grows on the spot and the son takes the seeds and plants them in his field, which turn out to be wheat, which was brewed into liquor. Drinking liquor makes the three dead men's spirit appear, and at first the drinker acts like a scholar, then like a monk, and finally, like a mad man. In "Plum Blossom and Warbler," a bachelor who had lost his fiancée finds plum blossoms blooming on her grave, which he transplants to a pot at home and takes devoted care. After he dies, he turns into a warbler and visits the plum tree.

In "Sister Sun and Brother Moon," siblings ascend to the sky and turn into the sun and the moon, while in other tales, humans die and turn into marbles, rocks, Buddha, or Bukduchilseong (Seven-Star Dipper of the North, or Ursa Major). In "Lord Chilseong and Lady Ongnyeo," Lord Chilseong's seven sons turn into stars as well. In the shamanic song "Underworld Messenger Gangnim" from Jeju Island, the three sons

of King Beomu turn into three flowers, then again into three marbles, which is eaten by Gwayangsaeng's wife, who gives birth to three sons.

In Korean folk religion, nature, including geographical features, animals, and plants is often worshipped as a deity. While in our modern world, a phenomenon is viewed as fixed and unchangeable, in folklore, situations and phenomena were believed to be in constant shift and circulation, just as seasonal change and other natural phenomena, which gave birth to the concept of reincarnation and related folk narratives.

Return from Inside the Tiger's Belly

호랑이 뱃속 구경

This humor tale narrates the story of a man who was swallowed by a tiger but escaped, killing the tiger in the end.

A long time ago there was a huge tiger that attacked people and caused much damage. The state offered the reward of a government post for capturing the huge tiger. A man of small build headed to the mountain to try and catch the tiger. Upon encountering the tiger, he teased the beast to make it swallow him. Inside the tiger, the small man used his knife to eat bits of the tiger's liver, which made the tiger jump in pain and attack all the other tigers around. Then the small man slashed the tiger's belly and stepped out. The small man was appointed to public office and the ambush of tigers that threatened the village was eradicated.

The tale's many variations feature a wide array of different protagonists, including straw sandal vendor, hunter, and old man. In some versions, a large cast of characters—hunter, salt vendor, rice vendor, dog vendor, gambler, gas vendor, general goods vendor, eight percussionist brothers—take turns entering the tiger's body and escape together.

The weapon used also varies, from flail and pestle to gun. The escape from the tiger's body is made through not only the belly but the anus, or by pulling the tiger's tail from the inside and turning the tiger inside out. In some versions, the tiger, after swallowing the protagonist, is swallowed by a whale.

Inside the tiger's belly is an unknown place, stimulating the curiosity and imagination of the audience. Exploring unknown worlds is a rite of passage for all youth, a festivity and a party. This tale narrates an adventure to an unknown world and is popular among children for its fun and entertaining portrayal of the process of overcoming ordeals and hardships.

Riddle Contest Against Goblin

도깨비와 수수께끼 시험

This tale narrates the story of a protagonist who wins a riddle contest against *dokkaebi* (goblin) and takes over the goblin's land, or receives a favor from the goblin.

A man encountered a goblin, who challenged him to a riddle contest, and the man accepted the goblin's condition that the loser would have to grant the winner's wish. The goblin gave the first riddle: "How much water does Duman (Tumen) River contain? (Or, how many gourd dippers of water does the pond contain?)" The man answered, "One gourd dipper, if there is a dipper big enough to contain Duman River." It was now the man's turn and he asked, while sitting (or lying down), whether he was about to stand or he would stay seated. The goblin was unable to answer and granted the man's wish.

This narrative uses the device of *umunhyeondap*, meaning "a nonsensical question given a wise answer," to demonstrate the protagonist's wit and wisdom in responding to the goblin's riddles, which also applies to the tales of Soldier Son, who fights over his seat with a goblin, and of Lord Oseong's

riddle contest against a goblin. In other words, the goblin plays the role of an extraordinary being capable of recognizing an outstanding individual's abilities before anyone else.

Royal Seal Returned

다시 찾은 옥새

This droll tale narrates the story of a protagonist who by chance finds someone else's missing belonging or makes an unexpected discovery.

A similar narrative is recorded in the 19th-century anthology *Dongyahnwiji* (*Collection of Tales from the Eastern Plains*) under the title "Jidongjangeunsugigye (Wise Child's Wondrous Trick of Hiding Silver Vessel)." Oral variations have been observed across Mongolia, China and Japan, with over 100 versions found in Korea alone.

A poor man (named Gaeguri, meaning frog) and rich man were friends and the rich man played a trick on the poor man, hiding one of his valuable belongings and helping the poor man find it. As a result, the poor man is rewarded and rumors spread of his extraordinary ability. The Emperor of China happened to lose the royal seal and after searching for a man of insight, tracked down the poor man, commanding him to find the seal. The poor man spent the time he was given in seclusion and on the last day he let out an exclamation, which by coincidence was the name of the thief, who had been peeping in to keep an eye on the poor man. The thief confessed his crime and the location of where the seal was hidden, in return for his life. The poor man retrieved the seal from the pond where it had been hidden, before the deadline. The emperor, however, presented another test to the poor man, placing a frog inside his palms (or under a rock) and asking him to answer what was in there. The poor man, in despair, uttered an exclamation, which happened to be the answer, and the poor man was able to return

home with a huge reward. When people came to him asking for prophecy, the poor man told them that he had lost his ability due to a serious illness.

This narrative highlights chance and coincidence experienced in our daily lives. It also reflects the pride of Korean people through the motif of the heavenly ruler (*tianzi*) of a great kingdom finding the seal with the help of an expert from a small kingdom.

Runny Nose, Crusty Eyes, Scratchy Boils

코흘리개 눈곱쟁이 부스럼쟁이

This fool's tale narrates the story of three men, suffering respectively from runny nose, crusty eyes, and scratchy boils, who, upon being challenged to suppress their habits, use tricks to relieve their discomfort.

There lived in a village a man whose nose was always runny; a man whose eyes were always sticky with mucus; and a man whose head was always covered in boils. All day long they repeated the habits formed by their ailments, nose-wiping, chasing flies that attack the sticky eyes, and scratching the boils on the head. One day they were given a plate of rice cake and after fighting over the food, they decided that the person who could endure the longest without wiping his nose, chasing flies or scratching his boils would eat the cake. After a while, the boil-head could no longer bear it and started a story, thinking of a trick. He said he had seen a deer in the mountain with horns all over his head, here and there, and scratched his head. Then the runny nose said if he had a gun he would have shot the deer, bang, as he wiped his nose. Then the crusty eyes said he should not do that, waving his hands to chase away the flies.

This tale creates humor and sympathy from common symptoms with a positive attitude toward basic human instincts while at the same time reflecting the perception that human traits that disturb communal life should be corrected.

Sack of Stories

이야기 주머니

"Iyagijumeoni" is a tale about a man who kept stories inside a sack without retelling them, and is attacked by the stories, which have turned into evil ghosts, but he is saved by his servant.

There was a student in a village school who, each time he heard an old story, wrote them down and kept them stored in a sack, so that he would not forget them. He did not tell these stories, however, and soon the sack became filled with stories. The stories felt stifled inside the crowded sack and turned into evil ghosts, scheming to kill the person who had locked them up inside the sack. They made a plan to kill the student on the day of his wedding, by turning into a pear or spring that would poison him on his way to the bride's home for the wedding, or to turning into a pillow of needles or rice cake soup that would kill him at the ceremony. However, the student's servant overheard the evil ghosts' discussion and pleaded that he be allowed to join the groom's procession as horseman. Each time the groom felt thirsty and asked to stop to pick a pear or drink from a spring, the servant did not let the horse stop and kept going. At the ceremony, the servant rescued the groom from the needle pillow and kept him from eating rice cake soup. The groom was at first frustrated by the servant, but upon learning everything, he was moved by the servant's loyalty and offered a generous reward.

This narrative takes issue with the fact that the student, situated within the village school, an institution where written language is produced and consumed, chooses to only listen to stories and not tell them. Stories are transmitted through storytelling, and the documentation of stories using written language is an assault on oral literature, threatening an end to the tradition. In order to protect themselves against destruction, the stories come up with a scheme to kill the student, but he is ignorant of this scheme and it is his servant who

overhears the conversation among the stories and rescues the student. The tale offers a critique of a society in which oral culture is ruled by the culture of written words, or in other words, a society in which spoken language and written language are at odds and in contradiction, which should be overcome by the development of a more lively oral culture. The servant, as a marginal character, represents the status of storytelling in the new society, and the tale proposes that just as the servant can find a way to coexist in harmony with his new master, the oral tradition should find a way to reestablish itself to coexist with the written tradition. In other words, this narrative is a significant and profound statement on the cultural legacy of folk literature and the challenges it faces within a new culture.

Salt Vendor Who Caught a Fox

여우 잡은 소금장수

This tale tells the story of a salt vendor who uses a stick to kill a fox that turned into a human, a stick which he tricks a man into buying for a steep sum.

A salt vendor witnessed a fox put a human skull on its head to transform into an old woman and followed it to a banquet where the old woman received generous hospitality. The salt vendor, after watching the old woman, killed her with a stick, upon which she turned back into a fox and everyone was awed by the salt vendor's ability to see through the old woman. The salt vendor told people that he owed his ability to the magic stick, and sold the stick for a steep price. The man who bought the stick, wanting to catch a fox and make money like the salt vendor, killed an innocent old woman and got himself in trouble.

A salt vendor travels and gains rich experience, which makes him an interesting character in folk narratives, taking on special roles. In this tale, he is depicted as an ordinary human who is greedy for material wealth and prone to lying, and the fact that

this ordinary salt vendor can defeat a shapeshifting fox signifies that humans are emerging as the dominant force against the supernatural world.

Through the salt vendor character, this narrative accepts the universal desires of humans, while the ending warns against vain greed but with a comic touch.

Scholar Passes State Examination With Provincial Dialect

시골말로 급제한 선비

This tale narrates the story of a scholar who, after repeatedly failing in the state examination, finally passes with the help of a fellow applicant.

A learned scholar who, despite his education, failed repeatedly in entering public office through the state examination, decided to give up his life and climbed Mt. Namsan. Just then on Mt. Namsan, the king was carrying out an undercover inspection in disguise, and spotted the scholar. When the king asked him why he was climbing the mountain on his own, the scholar explained, and the king urged him to take the exam one more time the following day, and that all he would take for him to pass this time would be to give the meaning and sound of a single Chinese character, 鸞. The following day the scholar took the exam, but he could only remember the pronunciation of the letter, "yeon," and not its meaning, which was the bird "black kite." In the end, he offered that the character was "yeon," meaning, "round-and-round," and again failed the exam. It was only on his way out that he remembered that the letter meant "kite," which he relayed on to the applicant after him, explaining that he had answered "round-and-round" and failed. The next applicant, upon being presented with the letter, asked the exam proctor, "Should I answer in provincial dialect or Seoul dialect?" to which the proctor responded by asking how they were different. And the applicant answered, "In provincial dialect, this Chinese character 'yeon'

means ‘round-and-round,’ and in Seoul dialect, it means ‘kite.’” Upon hearing this, the proctor called back the failed scholar to reverse the verdict, and the scholar was finally able to enter public office.

The many variations of this narrative feature a wide range of different test modes and problems, including hiding the test item and asking the applicant to guess, or placing the sheet of paper with the Chinese character inside a straw nest atop a tall stake. The applicant who helps the protagonist offers slightly different answers, referring to the protagonist’s erroneous answer as a dialect of Chungcheong or Gyeongsang provinces.

This tale emphasizes the importance of the solidarity among those from similar social status and situation, and the importance of seeking communication between the capital and the provinces amidst a political atmosphere that centered on the capital and its culture, including language.

Seeing Oneself in the Mirror for First Time

거울 처음 본 사람

This tale depicts the foolish behavior of country folks encountering the mirror for the first time. The narrative is based on Buddhist scripture, and there are various different oral and written versions, the latter documented in Hong Man-jong’s (1643-1725) *Myeongyeongjihye* (*Calendar Collection of Humor*) as well as other books.

A wife asks her husband to get her a comb as he sets out to Seoul on business. There was a half-moon in the sky, and the wife pointed to the moon to explain what a comb looks like. By the time the husband headed back, however, there was a full moon in the sky, and he brought back a mirror, round like the full moon. Upon seeing the reflection of herself in the mirror, the wife expressed anger that the husband had brought home a young concubine. The mother-in-law stepped out, startled at what she

heard, but when she looked into the mirror, she saw an old woman, and she admonished her son that if he was going to bring home a concubine, he should have gotten someone young.

This narrative is widely spread across East Asia, including China and Japan. Philosophical questions like the absurd confusion between what is true and false and how to overcome human absurdities are addressed through such farce.

Serpent Repays Favor

구렁이의 보은

“Gureongiuboeun” is the tale about a serpent raised on food from a boy and how the serpent repaid the boy by eradicating his bride’s lover who tried to kill the groom on his wedding night, thereby saving the groom’s life.

There was a boy who met a serpent on his way to the village school. The boy began sharing his food with the serpent everyday, and the serpent grew huge. The boy also grew into a young man and on the evening before his wedding, the young man told the serpent as he gave it food, that he could not come on his wedding day, and that the serpent should not come out. On the day of the wedding, the serpent followed the young man to the bride’s home, but was not visible to other people’s eyes. The serpent followed the young man to the newly-weds’ bedroom on their first night, where the groom heard a strange noise and found the serpent inside the closet (or chest) attacking the bride’s lover, who had been hiding with his sword aimed at the groom. The serpent killed the man and the groom was able to find himself a good wife and live happily.

The narrative highlights the serpent’s supernatural characteristics, including human emotions, visionary insight and immense physical power, to deliver a cautionary tale that warns against moral deviation like adultery and murder.



Seven-Star Dipper of the North depicted in
Sun, Moon and Stars painting.
Late 19th century, National Folk Museum of Korea

In Korean folk religion, the serpent is worshipped as Eop, the god of property. The boy's sharing of his food with the serpent, instead of killing or avoiding it, is in vein with the folk ritual *eopmaji* (welcome ceremony for Eop), in which a bowl of white porridge is offered, then is later consumed by the ritual officiant. In other words, the relationship of mutual trust and dependence between human and serpent, as portrayed in the tale, reflects the religious rituals of offering food and hospitality to Eop in exchange for the protection of the family.

Seven-Star Dipper of the North and a Boy Destined to Die Young

북두칠성과 단명소년

This tale narrates the story of a boy who was destined to die young but overcame his fate by offering devotion to the deity Bukdutchilseong (Seven-Star Dipper of the North; Ursa Major).

There lived a man raising an only son. One day a divine monk who happened to be passing by read the boy's face and said that he was destined to die at the age of nineteen. When the father begged for some way to save his son's life, the monk suggested that he climb the summit of Mt. Namsan in the middle of the night and inquire with the old men playing the board game *baduk*. The following night, the boy climbed Mt. Namsan and pleaded with the two old men, offering them food and drinks. One of the two men, who had an ugly face, pretended not to hear the boy's pleas, but the other man, with a handsome face, said he would save the boy, taking out his list and changing the boy's age to ninety-nine. Thereafter, the boy went on to live until the age of ninety-nine. The ugly old man was Bukdutchilseong, who oversees death, and the handsome old man Namdutchilseong (Seven-Star Dipper of the South; Sagittarius), who oversees life.

Narratives about extending one's lifespan also include stories of offering food, straw sandals, or coins

to Jeoseungchasa (Messenger of the Underworld) or offering devoted prayers to Yeomnadaewang (Great King Yeomna) of the underworld.

The worship of Bukdutchilseong and Namdutchilseong reflects astrolatry, the belief in the sun and the moon and the stars as overseers of human destiny. In Korean folk religion, Chilseong (Seven Stars) was worshipped as a deity that oversees human life and death. In this tale, the boy climbing the mountain in the night and offering food and drink is an act of Chilseong worship, and reflects the belief that human life can be extended with the intervention of a transcendental being.

Shape-Shifting Skull

머리에 쓰면 둔갑하는 해골

This tale narrates the story about a skull that, when worn on the head, turns the person into a beautiful woman.

A man witnessed a fox transform into a beautiful woman by putting on a skull over its head, and stole the skull from the fox. When he tried using it, the skull indeed turned any creature into a beautiful woman. So he turned a dog into a beautiful woman and was walking home with her, when his wife saw them together and thinking the woman was a concubine, she fell ill with anger, but the husband was able to make her understand by explaining what had happened.

In different versions of this tale, the man's action varies after stealing the skull from the fox. In one, the man sells the dog wearing the skull to a tavern, and in another, the wife boasts about the skull to her family, who advise her to get rid of it, advice which she follows.

The depiction of the skull as a precious possession that can turn anything into a beauty, is a reflection of the human instinct to pursue beauty, while selling the dog, which has been transformed

into a beauty, captures the social reality in which beauty brings monetary gain. Abandoning the skull with supernatural powers signifies the effort of the human consciousness to distinguish between the human world and the supernatural world.

Shapeshifting Tale

변신담

Byeonsindam, or shapeshifting tales, feature as agents of the events that unfold in the narrative humans or other creatures or objects that transform into different creatures or objects, of or against one's will.

A majority of Korean shapeshifting tales are about non-human creatures or objects that transform into humans. Most common are snakes, toads, centipedes, and foxes and tigers are also frequently featured. The shamanic myth "Sasinchilseongbonpuri (Origin of Snake God Seven Stars)" of Jeju Island tells the story of a human transforming into a snake, then enshrined as a deity. A daughter born as a result of her parents' conception prayer (*gijachiseong*) is lured by a monk who impregnates her, and after giving birth to seven snakes, she herself also turns into a snake and is enshrined as a snake god upon her arrival on Jeju Island. The tale "Myeoneuribappulkkot (Daughter-in-Law's-Grain-of-Rice Flower)" is a story about a daughter-in-law who dies tragically as a result of the ordeals of marriage and turns into a flower. The legend of Jangjamot (Rich Man Pond) tells the story of a man who breaks a taboo and turns into a menhir (*seondol*). In "Haewadaridoenonui (Brother Sun and Sister Moon)," humans turn into natural objects in the celestial world.

Shapeshifting tales can be divided into narratives in which the transformation takes place as a means and those in which the transformation is a goal. The former includes "Sogadoengeureumbaengi (Lazybones Who Turned into an Ox)" and the night

visitor (*yaraeja*) tales. The latter is exemplified by the tale "Ukmyeonbiyeombulseoseung (Slave Ukmyeon Enters Nirvana Through Devoted Prayers)" in *Samgungnyusa (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms)*. The heroine Ukmyeon's transformation into a living Buddha through devotion and prayer after enduring persecution from her master and the ordeals of lowly life, is in itself the ultimate goal of her religious faith, embodying the crystallization of the Buddhist discipline.

Metamorphosis is a motif frequently used not only in the oral tradition but a wide range of lyrical and narrative literary genres. The myriad transformations that take place in folk narratives are closely associated with the specific experiences of the collective life of the group, reflecting the wish become someone or something else in pursuit of human desire in the face of a difficult reality.

Sincerity and Heaven's Way

지성이감천이

"Jiseongi Gamcheoni" is a tale of two disabled characters who overcome their disabilities through good deeds and find happiness.

There once lived two men, a blind man Gamcheoni (Heaven's Way) and Jiseongi (Sincerity) who could not walk. They had both lost their parents at a young age and had to beg for food. They decided to help each other out and they went around begging together, Gamcheoni carrying Jiseongi on his back. One day, they were drinking water from a spring when they found a large gold nugget, but they could not decide who should have it and being unable to break it into half, in the end left the gold where they found it. They told a passer-by about the gold, but in his eyes, what he saw was a huge serpent, and he cut up the serpent in half in frustration. Jiseongi and Gamcheoni decided to each take a piece of the gold, but thinking they might be killed by bandits, donated

the gold to a temple. The monks at the temple offered devoted prayers for the two men, and Jiseongi was able to walk and Gamcheoni regained his vision.

In some variations, the two protagonists are brothers (or bloodbrothers) or neighbors. There are also versions that do not portray the two characters as disabled, in which the evil man makes the good man blind and steals his possessions, ending in the punishment of the evil one, or in both men finding happiness. In one variation, the blind one regains his vision by following the instructions of a goblin (or passer-by or tiger) to wash his eyes with water.

The tale reflects the public belief that hardships can be overcome by working together, and that good deeds will lead to good fortune.

Sister Sun and Brother Moon

해와 달이 된 오누이

This tale narrates the origin of the sun and the moon.

A tiger ate up an old mother returning home after providing labor at a rich household, and after disguising himself with the mother's clothes and headwrap, went to the home where the mother's son and daughter were waiting and asked them to open the door. The brother and sister peeked out and realizing that it was a tiger, they ran out through the back door and climbed up a tree. The tiger climbed the tree after them and the brother and sister prayed to the heavens, upon which a metal chain was sent down for them and they climbed up to become the sun and the moon. The tiger tried to come after them on a crumbling straw rope, which broke and the tiger fell on a sorghum field and died. The heavens first assigned the brother as the sun and the sister as the moon, but the sister was afraid of the dark and their roles were switched. The sister, shy of all the people looking up during the day, illuminates with intense light.

This tale has evolved into many variations in the

course of transmission. One version takes the form of an imitation tale, in which the tiger tries to copy the siblings' prayer, saying, "Please send down a thick rope to save me, or send down a crumbling rope to kill me"; another version turns into an origin tale, in which the tiger's fall turns the sorghum stalks red, with some variations that leave out the part about the sun and the moon and only include the origin of the sorghum color. There are also variations that feature a dog or wolf in the tiger's place.

The switching of the siblings' roles emerged as a controversial issue in transmission, giving way to many variations. While in the creation mythology about the sun and the moon, the brother turns into the moon since he always trails the sister. In the folk tale versions, however, the sister becomes the sun because she is afraid of the dark; or in the course of a quarrel the brother pokes the sister's eye, which makes her the sun; or the sister pleads that darkness scares her but the brother insists that the assigned roles cannot be changed. The variations seem to have been based on the instinct to adhere to the convention association of the male with the *yang* energy and the sun.

The chase motif provides the narrative drive in this tale, and the chaser is not always an animal but also humans, often family members in conflict. And as in the myth of the great flood, this tale is also related to the incest taboo motif, which underlines the tale's connection to creation myths. An Inuit mythology tells the story of an unidentified man who visits a woman every night, and to track him down, the woman mixes soot with oil and rubs it on her nipples. The following morning she sees that her brother's lips are black with soot, which shames the sister and makes her leave the village, but the brother chases after her and in the course of their long chase, the sister turns into the sun and the brother turns into the moon. The solar eclipse occurs when the brother is finally able to catch up with the sister. Another example of the incest motif in the creation of the sun and the moon can be found in a Manchurian mythology, in which the mirror that belongs to

the brother who is chasing the sister turns into the moon and the lamp that belongs to the sister who is running away turns into the sun. On the other hand, the motif of the mother being eaten by the tiger is a distinctively Korean one.

In other words, this narrative is based on the creation myth of the sun and the moon, in which the chase between brother and sister is central to the plot, on top of which the motif of the mother-eating tiger has been added, with the tiger as a stand-in for the brother. This narrative is found in many cultures across the world and serves as an important reference for studying the shift from mythology to folk tale.

Site of Descendent-of-the-Dead

사자생손지

“Sajasaengsonjiji” is a tale about a dead son who produces a son through a living woman to keep the family going.

In 17th-century Korea, patriarchal lineage was increasingly emphasized. The purpose of marriage lay in producing a son to continue the family, and the eldest son’s status as the heir to the family estate and ancestral rituals became official. This narrative needs to be understood within this social context.

When a father loses his only son, he keeps the body at home, and a divine monk or a geomancer finds the father a site that will produce a descendent of the dead (*sajasaengson*). Such sites are usually located by a thoroughfare, in the middle of the street, next to a tavern, under the village plaza tree (*jeongjanamu*), or other spots where there is much traffic and people stop by for rest. After the father buries his son at the recommended site, the newly appointed magistrate and his party happens to take a break there on his way to take up the post. The magistrate’s daughter, while watching the moon at night or urinating, encounters a young man and the two engage in intimacy in an otherworldly manner,

and she is given a knife or other token. The daughter is impregnated by the incident, which infuriates the magistrate, who tries to kill her for dishonoring the family, but after hearing the details of the event from the daughter, decides to find the owner of the knife. In the meantime, the daughter gives birth and the magistrate hosts a banquet to find the knife’s owner, who turns out to be the father who buried the dead son, who is the child’s grandfather, and the grandfather is united with the son of his dead son.

The crisis in the narrative’s plot is the severing of family lineage brought about by the death of an only son, made more urgent by the fact that many generations of this family had seen only sons. To resolve this crisis, the geomantic solution of a site that will produce a dead son’s child is suggested, which is an expression of the desire to transcend the limitations of reality through supernatural means, a desire founded on the determination to continue the family in the patriarchal social order.

Snail Bride

우렁 각시

The tale “Ureonggaksi” narrates the story of a man who marries a maiden who came from a snail shell, but who loses her after breaking a taboo.

Narratives about auspicious snails have been documented in China since ancient times, included in *Jiyiji* (*Collection of Strange Stories*) under the title “Snail Bride” and in excerpted from *Shoushenhouji* (*Addition to Records of the Strange*), compiled by Deng Yanzuo sometime between 365 BCE and 474 CE.

A long time ago there lived an old bachelor who supported his aging mother on his own but was too poor to find himself a wife. One day he was working in the rice paddy when he said to himself, “Who will I share all this rice with?” and he heard a voice reply, “With me, of course.” Mystified, he repeated his question and the voice again answered, “With me, of

course.” He looked around but saw nothing, except for a snail shell by the paddy, and he brought it home and kept it deep inside the wardrobe. From that day on, when the son and his mother returned from from working in the field, there was dinner waiting for them, a warm and delicious meal of stir-fried pheasant meat and fresh steamed rice. The bachelor, baffled, one day peeked inside after pretending to leave for work, and saw a maiden, beautiful as a fairy, emerge from the shell inside the wardrobe and prepare the food. The bachelor could not suppress his excitement and jumped in, taking the maiden in his arms and asking her to be his wife. The maiden said it was not time yet and asked him to wait three days (or three months, or three years). The bachelor was too impatient, however, and persuaded her to marry her that day. Afraid of losing her to someone else, he kept a close guard on her, prohibiting her from leaving the house. One day, the bride prepared lunch for her husband, who was working in the field, and her mother-in-law, who wanted to stay and have the crispy rice scrapings from the pot, sent her daughter-in-law to the field with the lunch. On her way to her husband, the bride encountered the magistrate’s procession and hid in the woods, but the magistrate noticed a bright light coming from the woods, and ordered a servant to go and check, telling him to pick it if it was a flower, fetch it if it was water, and bring her if it was a person. When the servant found her, the bride was trembling, with the lunch basket by her feet, and the servant pulled her by the hand, but she begged to let her go, handing the servant her silver ring, but in the end the magistrate carried her away in a palanquin. The groom went to the magistrate’s office to find her but failed and died from his grievance, turning into a bluebird. His bride refused to serve the magistrate and died after rejecting food, turning into a fine-toothed comb.

There are some variations of this tale that conclude with a happy ending. When the bride refuses to smile while in captivity, the magistrate accepts her request to hold a banquet, and when her

groom attends in a bird feather costume and dances, the bride finally smiles. The magistrate asks the groom to exchange wardrobes, and when the groom puts on the magistrate’s dragon-embroidered royal robe (*gollyongpo*), the bride tells him to step onto the office halls, which results in the expulsion of the magistrate and groom’s appointment in public office, and they lived together happily.

The tale borrows the structure of initiation rites and female ordeal narratives, with the difference in social status serving as the obstacle, the snail bride depicted as a heavenly fairy (*seonnyeo*) sent down to the human world as a punishment. This union between unequals, achieved by the breaking of taboo, ends with tragic consequences, brought about by the ruling power. The woman, in this narrative, is portrayed as an object of important value in men’s lives, an object of extortion or loss.

Son Reborn as Golden Calf

금송아지로 태어난 아들

This tale narrates the story of a baby that was fed to a cow and reborn as a golden calf, then turned back into a human after making sounds from a drum woven of straw to become the son-in-law of a nobleman.

This oral narrative is also documented under the title “Geumdoktaeja (Golden Calf Son)” in the collection of Buddhist tales *Seokgayeoraesip-jisuhaenggi* (*Chronicle of Buddha’s Ten Stages of Discipline*), first published in Goryeo in the 5th year of King Chung Suk’s reign (1329), and republished as a woodblock edition in Joseon in the 30th year of King Sejong’s reign (1448).

There was a man who took a concubine with hopes for a son. While he was away, the concubine gave birth to a son as promised. This made the man’s wife jealous and she secretly fed the baby to a cow. After the man returned home, the cow

gave birth to a golden calf and the man adored it. Noticing her husband's affection, the wife thought of a scheme and feigned illness, insisting that her only cure was to eat the liver of the golden calf. The husband ordered a butcher to take out the golden calf's liver, but the butcher released the calf and brought back a dog's liver instead. The golden calf headed to Seoul, where he read a bulletin put out by a nobleman in search of "one who can make sounds from a drum woven of straw," promising to make him the nobleman's son-in-law. The calf succeeded in making sounds with the straw drum and was made the nobleman's son-in-law, upon which it transformed into a handsome man. He returned with his bride to his father to explain what had happened, and after saving his birth mother's life, lived happily.

A variation of this tale features a baby that is dropped into a pond and changes into a frog, which is killed and buried and turned into blood, which is then mixed into fodder and fed to a cow. There are other variations, in which the baby is killed with a needle pierced into his forehead then thrown into a brook, where the baby turns into a frog and is eaten by a cow; the baby is thrown into the sea but is protected by a phoenix, then is given to a pig, then is mixed into boiling pot of fodder, which is fed to a cow; of the cow giving birth to a golden calf that has retained its human appearance and is born with a cow skin over its body; or the butcher releasing the calf after seeing it weep, or after hearing it plead for help. The metamorphosis of the golden calf into a human is achieved by skin-shedding; skinning its hide with a knife; bathing in the pond; bathing in water mixed with bean paste; or attaching a flower to its forehead. In some versions, the protagonist does not seek punishment of the stepmother and offers forgiveness.

The protagonist of this narrative goes through a cycle of shape-shifting, from human to calf to human, formed by the Korean belief in the cycle of life and spirit, of perceiving all life as sacred,

animals, plants, humans alike. The metamorphosis from human to calf signifies a rite of passage that everyone has to go through on the path of denouncing one's unhappiness and constructing happiness.

Son-in-Law Uses Tricks to Become Governor

피로 평양감사 지낸 사위

This tale narrates the story of a son-in-law who uses trick after trick to serve as the governor of Pyeongyang.

A long time ago there was a man who married into the family of a state councillor. He hoped his father-in-law would get him appointed as a magistrate, but this did not happen, so the son-in-law used his wits and by presenting his father-in-law with a black steed, which was really his horse painted with ink, was appointed as the governor of Pyeongyang. But when a heavy rain fell and the ink washed away, the father-in-law realized he was deceived and sent his eldest son to Pyeongyang to cancel his son-in-law's appointment as governor. The state councillor's daughter, upon learning of her older brother's departure, immediately alerted her husband in Pyeongyang, who wrote a fake obituary for his father-in-law and showed it to his brother-in-law as soon as he arrived, which made him head back immediately. Next the second son was sent to Pyeongyang, and on the way he stopped at a tavern, where a courtesan lured him into bed, but the courtesan's husband suddenly appeared and the second son hid inside a chest. The courtesan and her husband began to argue over who would keep the chest, and the Pyeongyang governor had to intervene, ordering them to cut the chest in half, upon which the second son jumped out of the chest, naked, and begged the governor for his life and rushed back home. Next the third son was sent to Pyeongyang, and on the way as he stopped at a

tavern, across from him he saw two men, dressed in the attire of Taoist hermits (*sinseon*) engaged in a game of *baduk* on a flat rock. He asked the tavern owner who the two men were and she said that rock was called Sinseonbawi (Hermit Rock) and that she did not see any men. The third son approached the rock and the hermits offered him strong liquor, which made him lose consciousness, and the hermits changed him into ragged clothes and covered him with withered pine branches. When the third son came back to and found himself in rags under old pine branches, he thought decades had passed, and asked an old woman at the pub where the tavern owner had gone. The old woman said the woman he was asking about was her great-great-great-grandmother, wondering how he knew her, which made the third son believe centuries had passed. When he arrived back home, there was a man who closely resembled his father, and he said to him, "You would not know who I am, but you are my descendent, although I am not sure how many generations apart," and his father shouted, "Where have you been wandering around and gone all mad, uttering such nonsense!" At this, the third son finally came to his senses.

The moral of this tale is about using one's wit to achieve one's goals and to overcome crisis, however difficult or unexpected it may be.

Spilled Water

엎질러진 물

This tale narrates the story of a wife who leaves her husband for being too studious, then returns when the husband achieves success, but she is rejected.

There lived a studious husband who did nothing but read books while his wife took care of their livelihood. One day as the wife headed out to gather barnyard millet from the paddy, she asked the husband to keep an eye on the grains laid out in

the yard to dry. While she was out, a heavy shower came, but the husband did not notice, his attention focused on his reading. The wife became very angry and left him. The husband went on to pass the state examination, and they ran into each other by chance. The wife was still struggling, surviving on barnyard millet, and when she saw that her husband was doing well, she pleaded that she wanted to get back together. At this, the husband asked the wife to fetch some water, then spilled it on the ground, and told her to put the water back in its container. And he refused to take her back, saying that just as spilled water could not be put back in its container, it was impossible for a husband and wife to reunite after separating.

This tale addresses the responsibilities that should be upheld, not only in a marriage but in all human relationships, delivering the lesson by punishing the wife who left the marriage for her own self-interest.

Spirit Mouse

혼쥐

"Honjwi" is a tale that narrates the story of spirit mouse, which crawls out of the human body at night, its nighttime experiences delivered to the person in the form of a dream.

A wife sat awake at night working on her sewing, when she saw a mouse crawl out of her husband's nostril. She followed the mouse, helping it crawl over the threshold and cross over a puddle by making a bridge with a ruler. After digging in the plain, the mouse returned home and crawled into the husband's nostril, awaking the husband. The husband told his wife about his dream, in which he travelled a rough path with the help of a fairy and found a jar of gold but returned because he was out of energy. The husband and wife found the jar of gold in the plain and lived happily in wealth. It is believed that while people sleep, the human spirit transforms into a mouse and

roams about, the experience of which forms dreams.

A variation of this tale features two or three mice crawling out of the husband, the last of which the wife kills, and the husband, who is an audacious thief, turns into a coward and quits stealing.

Mice, as nocturnal creatures that compete with humans for grains, are viewed in a negative light, but as prolific creatures that travel both on and under the ground, are also seen as spiritual animals that carry nature's secrets. These dual aspects are captured in the tale, in which the mouse brings riches that lie underground and also roams about at night pillaging. In the tale, the sleeping husband symbolizes the human unconscious and a natural state closely connected with wildlife, while the wife, as the maker of garments and a user of the ruler, symbolizes a cultural being who trains and disciplines humans.

This tale reflects the view that human body and soul can be separated, and the Koreans' ambivalence toward mice. It is a rare example of the spirit of the living portrayed in Korean folk literature.

Stepmother Tale

계모담

Gyemodam, or stepmother tales, depict the conflict between the stepmother and her stepchildren.

Stepmother tales are found across many different genres in Korean oral and written literature, comprising many different narrative structures, one of the most widely known being the "Kongjwi and Patjwi" tale. The narrative generally starts with the arrival of a stepmother following the death of the children's mother, which sparks a conflict among the family members, usually between the stepmother and the children. The stepmother tries repeatedly to isolate her stepchildren from the rest of the family, which results in the death or the expulsion of the children. The children then encounter patrons or spouses who help them overcome their trials and

return home, upon which the stepmother's evil deeds are revealed and punished, resolving the conflict. Based on this common structure, each tale takes on unique characteristics, according to the different motifs taken on in relation to the conflict portrayed. Stepmother tales make up a distinctive epic tradition in Korea, with a diverse range of interconnected works across many different genres, from folk tales and shamanic myths to the "classical novels (*gososeol*)" of pre-modern times and the "new novels (*sinsoseol*)" of the early modern era.

Stepmother Who Pulled Out Stepson's Eyes

전설 자식 눈 뺀 계모

This tale narrates the story of a stepson who is tricked by his stepmother to pull out his own eyes for his father, then is reunited with his father and recovers his vision.

While her husband was away in China, a stepmother thought of a scheme to get rid of her stepson and fabricated a letter saying that the father had lost his vision in China and that he needed a pair of eyes donated by a living person. The son pulled out his own eyes for his father, and the stepmother put the eyes away in a box after wrapping them in silk, and pushed the blind stepson into the river. The stepson, washed up in a bamboo grove, survived and after carving himself a bamboo flute (*tungso*), he went around playing the flute to beg for food, during which he encountered his father returning from China and told him what had happened. The father retrieved his son's eyes from the stepmother and the village's women, upon hearing this sad story, cried a bucket of tears, inside which the son's eyes were soaked and the son recovered his vision. The father punished the stepmother by burning her and her children.

A distinctive detail in this narrative is the stepmother's wrapping of the stepson's eyes in silk and placing them inside a box, which is associated

with the passage “寓目囊箱” in *Qianziwen* (*Thousand Character Classic*), the primer for learning Chinese characters, meaning, “eyes placed in silk and box.” Another notable detail is the tears of the village women, which helps the son regain his vision.

There are a number of mythological elements underlying the narrative, including the conflict between culture and wilderness, signified by the stepmother’s letter and the stepson’s flute playing, while the reunion between father and son is a variation of the mytheme from shamanic myths and founding myths, of the confirmation of blood ties through tokens. The women’s tears signify recovery and productivity, associated with the role of the Earth Mother.

Stepson More Devoted Than Daughters

친딸보다 나은 양아들

This tale narrates the story of a stepson who invites his stepfather to live with him when the stepfather’s daughters mistreat him after inheriting his wealth, and in the end is rewarded for his filial piety.

A long time ago there lived a rich man who had three daughters and one day decided to adopt a son. When the three daughters pledged that they would take good care of him, the rich man gave them everything he had and took turns visiting each one’s home. But he was mistreated by his three daughters and discouraged, he headed up a mountain to hang himself. There, the rich man’s stepson, who made a living as a peddler, found the man and brought him home. The stepson and his wife looked after the rich man with devotion. One day as the man was hoeing to help out around the household, he found a jar of gold in the ground, which he gave to the stepson and his wife.

In a variation of this tale, the man retrieves his wealth from his daughters by reporting them to the authorities or by taking the land deed from one of the daughters, saying he would exchange it for another

daughter’s more valuable property, and hands over the deed to the stepson. In some versions, the rich man leaves home to die or lives as a beggar before meeting the stepson and his wife. There are quite a number of variations in which the rich man kills the stepson’s child by mistake, either by stepping on the sleeping child or crushing him in a drunken state, or boils the child, thinking he is a chicken. When the stepson and his wife find their child dead, they try to bury the child without letting the rich man know, and as they are digging, they find gold and the child is revived.

Many storytellers include in their recitation of the tale the phrase, “One stepson is better than ten daughters,” reflecting a strong male chauvinist view, that the daughter becomes an outsider (*oein*) after marriage while the son remains an insider (*naein*) to the family. On the other hand, some also interpret the tale as a feminist tale, in that the agents of a family’s breakup or persistence lies on the decisions of the daughters or the stepdaughter-in-law rather than on patriarchal authority.

Stork Judges Singing

황새의 노래 재판

This fable narrates the story of a bird that cannot sing but wins a singing contest by bribing the judge.

A long time ago in a village lived ibis, after which cuckoo and nightingale moved in and the three birds became neighbors. Cuckoo and warbler, jealous of ibis’ good house and land, which he secured as an early settler, suggested to ibis that they ask stork to judge their singing and only the best singer would be allowed to remain in the village. Ibis was worried because he could not sing, and his grandson caught a frog and offered it to stork, making an appeal about ibis’s grievance. On the day of the judging, the three birds went to stork, who gave low scores to the singing of cuckoo and warbler, but when ibis uttered a single note, stork praised the dignified tone and

allowed him to go on living in the village.

Variations of the tale feature a different set of characters. The ibis is sometimes replaced with the crow, crane or stork. The role of the judge is sometimes given to the owl, eagle, or crane. Despite the different animals featured, the plot of the narrative does not change.

Another variation type takes the form of a frame narrative, featuring a capable scholar who has failed to enter public office and delivers this tale to King Sukjong or the overseer of the state examination to make his appeal. This structure helps highlight the theme of the allegory.

Animal fables deliver morals and lessons through personified animal characters, and this tale offers a satire on the prevalent corruption in the judicial system.

Student Finds Wife for Teacher

훈장 장가보낸 학동

This tale narrates the story of a student who uses his wit to arrange a marriage between his teacher and a widow.

A student asked his teacher at the village school who lived alone if he liked a widow in the village. When the teacher said he did, the student visited the widow for three evenings and asked where his teacher was. When he visited for the fourth time, the widow got angry and while they were quarreling, the teacher sneaked into the widow's room. The student insisted that he had to check if his teacher was here, and the two walked into the room to find the teacher inside. The widow asked the student not to mention this and made him rice cake, which the student sent around the entire village, saying it was a gift to celebrate his teacher's wedding. With the rumor spread across the village, the widow had no choice but to marry the teacher.

In some variations, a son helps his father get

married; or a farmhand helps a bachelor get married; or the master's son helps a farmhand get married. Many different tricks are introduced in the various versions, including locking up the widow and the teacher in a room; exaggerating the size of the teacher's genitals to provoke the widow; and various other ways to create misunderstanding.

The narrative takes the structure of a trickster tale, with added interest due to its clear departure from social norms. In other words, the relationship between the teacher and the student is reversed, and the teacher marrying a widow is also unconventional. The events created by the student, who is the youngest and the least educated among the characters, underline the theme of liberation from the world of ideas and the restoration of humanity.

Tail Chase Tale

꼬리따기

"Kkorittagi" is a type of formula tale (*hyeong-sikdam*) in which a phrase or motif from the preceding paragraph or section of the narrative is repeated over and over in the following sections.

"Jibanmunan (Regards from Home)," an example of a tail chase tale, goes as follows:

A young man pursuing his studies in Seoul servant was visited by a servant sent from his home in the country. The young man asked the servant, "So have things been well back home?" and the servant replied, "Yes, quite, except that your beloved dog has died." "How did this happen?" "One of the horses died and the dog ate its rotting flesh." "How did the horse die?" "The house was on fire and the horse got too exhausted from fetching water." "What, the house was on fire?" "Yes, the candle by Master's coffin fell and..." "What did you just say? Father's coffin? What happened to Father?" "Well, he was heartbroken and bedridden after Madame tripped on her way to the temple on Buddha's birthday and

fell off cliff and passed away... but other than that things have been well.”

The servant begins and ends his account of the family regards with the statement that “things are well,” which functions as the servant’s device for helping ease his young master’s mind, and also the storyteller’s device to incite laughter from the audience. In contrast to the usual plot structure of folk narratives, which progresses from cause to effect, this tale moves from effect to cause. The “tail-chase” structure that connects the individual incidents also escalate the audience’s interest in the story. Most tail chase tales have adopted elements of word play, which is also evident in the dialogue structure of the narrative.

Tale of Eccentrics

기인담

Giindam, or tales of eccentrics, depict characters that demonstrate traits and actions that are different from ordinary people.

Tales of eccentrics can be categorized into those that explain the origin of the eccentrics, and those that depict their deeds.

The eccentrics’ origins are usually explained through their appearance. Han Myeong-hoe was born only seven months into the pregnancy, his body not yet fully formed, and when his family did not want to raise him, an old maidservant wrapped him with quilted clothing for protection. The baby began to grow after a few days and there were black warts on his belly and back, in the pattern of constellations (*Gimunchonghwa*, *Assorted Collection of Tales Read and Heard*). Eo Jung-ik was a state official during the reign of King Taejo of Goryeo, who was born with unusual body hair and scales under his arms. His surname was Ji, but Taejo bestowed the surname Eo, meaning “fish” (*Gyeseoyadam*, *Tales from Gyeseo*). Yi Tak was born with the appearance of a dragon. He

was left covered with a blanket and soon he turned into a child (*Gimunchonghwa*).

Tales that narrate the deeds of eccentrics mostly focus on those who did not enter public service, and were thus unbound by the secular social order. Sin Man was capable of knowing a person’s fate after seeing his face or hearing his voice just once. Sin found academic pursuit ridiculous, but he was friends with the Confucian scholar Song Si-yeol, and one day he asked Song to give him lessons. After several days of discussions on the Confucian discipline with Song, Sin laid back, stretching his legs with a yawn, and jeered that Confucianism is like a dog’s bony legs (*Maeonghallok*, *Maeong’s Tales for Idle Times*). Geomancer Yi Ji-ham visited scholar Yi I one day, wearing a ceramic conical hat (*sakkat*) and a long straw rope tied around his waist. When Yi I asked about his attire, Yi Ji-ham answered that he became epileptic after sleeping next to a chilly wall in a drafty room, and no medicine would cure him, so he meditated in a temple in the mountains in this attire, which cured him of the illness (*Dongpaenaksong*, *Tales of the Eastern Kingdom for Repeated Recitation*).

These tales offer the listeners and readers an escape from their lives, constrained by social norms. The fact that these tales were transmitted mostly in written form implies that the narratives served as a means to relieve the repressions of the educated class, who were strictly bound by the Confucian social order.

Tale of Otherworldly Beings

이물담

Imuldham, or tales of otherworldly beings, are narratives that feature non-human beings that enter the human world and engage in friendly or antagonistic relations with humans, after which they confirm their identities by returning to their world or being expelled by humans.

Tales of otherworldly beings depict the relationship between humans and non-human beings through a wide range of perspectives from various non-human characters.

One of the most distinctive non-human beings in Korean folk tales are *dokkaebi*, or goblins, which first appear in documentation in *Samgunnyusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*) in the tale “Lady Dohwa and Bachelor Bihyeong.” Various anecdotes about goblins are recorded in the many folk tale anthologies from Joseon, including *Yongjaechonghwa* (*Assorted Writings of Yongje*) and *Eouyadam* (*Eou’s Unofficial Histories*). Among them, “Benefits of Befriending Dokkaebi” is a tale about a man who becomes rich by using a goblin’s powers as a material deity, its appetite, capricious temperment and foolishness, then expels the goblin through deception. The tale reflects the notion that acquiring wealth through human relationship with the goblin is a reward for a good deed, and that human wisdom and good deeds are the driving force behind the advancement of human civilization.

Ghosts are also often featured in tales of otherworldly beings, dating back to earlier times, before the establishment of ancient states. “Lady Dohwa and Bachelor Bihyeong,” from the Three Kingdoms period, tells the story of Bihyeongnang, born between King Saryun’s ghost and his unrequited love Dohwanyeo, who becomes the ruler of ghosts. With the development of death-related rituals in the lives of Koreans, many ghost tales were transmitted about ancestral memorial rites (*jesa*) and burial rituals, and as Confucian ethics gained increasing influence, ghost tales also became more diverse.

Ghosts exist on the borders between life and death, and haunted spirit (*wonhon*) tales are about beings that are biologically dead but must resolve their grievance before they can leave for the underworld. Haunted spirit tales are grouped into four types: The resolution-through-assistance type usually features ghosts of violated women, as in the legend of Arang; in the pursuit-of-desire type, a man

who has died from unrequited love turns into a snake and goes after his loved one, as in “Lovesick Snake”; in enshrinement-type tales, when a haunted spirit threatens a community, villagers decide to enshrine the spirit as a village guardian deity (*dangsin*), as in the myth of Samcheok Sea God Shrine.

Tales about spirits that travel to the human world on the day of their ancestral memorial rites reflect the Confucian belief that spirits can traverse the human world and the underworld for a given period but eventually scatter.

Reincarnation tales features characters with great grievances, whose wishes are granted by being reborn in the next life with a noble status, or to take revenge.

Tales of otherworldly beings also include monster narratives, an example of which is “Defeating the Enemy in the Underworld,” and narratives about objects that turn into otherworldly beings, including “Coin That Turned Into an Evil Ghost” and “Sack of Stories.”

These are time-honored stories from ancient narratives origins, reflecting the changes in folk tradition over history, while demonstrating the mythological perspectives, world views and values of the Korean people through human encounters with otherworldly beings that leads them to confront human identity.

Talented Bloodbrothers

제주 많은 의형제

This tale narrates the story of two men of special talent who became bloodbrothers and worked together to accomplish a challenging mission by using their abilities.

Two men possessing special talent met and after deciding to become bloodbrothers, set out to see the world. On their first night on the road, they encountered hostile men who challenged them to

a series of contests, with their lives at stake. The first contest was to cut straw; the second was to catch a serpent (or tiger) in the mountains, which the bloodbrothers accomplished, and then made a sack with the animal skin; and the third was building a dam. While the bloodbrothers built their dam near the stream bed and their enemies near the headwaters, the enemies lost the contest, upon which they destroyed their dam and released a great flow of water, but the bloodbrothers were able to catch the water with the sack they made during the second contest. For their last contest, the two teams competed in making straw stacks, the enemies throwing the straw they cut in the first contest to the bloodbrothers, who caught them to build the stacks. The enemies lost this final contest, upon which they set fire to the stacks, and the bloodbrothers put out the fire, either with the water in the sack or by urinating. Then the two men snorted air out of their noses, freezing the water with their enemies locked inside and killing them.

There are many variations of this narrative, featuring a different set of protagonists with varying abilities and given different challenges according to their talent. The characters and their talents include a strongman who wears shoes of stone or steel; a man with a snort powerful enough to knock down a tree and lift it back up; one who can create a river by urinating, or who is able to drink an immense amount of water; one who carries a ship and an ox on his shoulders; one who can make rain and snow; one who walks with one foot because he is too fast on both feet; and one who can hear all the sounds in the world by pressing his ear to a rock.

This tale, as in “Defeating the Enemy in the Underworld,” takes on the narrative structure of a heroic epic, in which the protagonist accomplishes his given mission, defeats hostile enemies, and achieves marriage. The protagonist receives the help of a supporter possessing divine powers, who

confronts and eliminates the enemy, which reflects the public’s desire to completely eradicate injustice and evil, signified by the hostile enemies. It is notable that the protagonists are nameless, identified only by their individual abilities. The narrative also serves as a reference connecting the various heroic epics in the Korean folk tradition, from ancient founding myths to the contemporary superhero tales.

Talking Terrapin

말하는 남생이

This tale narrates the story of a good son who acquires wealth with the help of a talking terrapin.

A long time ago there lived a poor mother and son. As the holidays approached, the son went to the



The Talking Terrapin in *Chōsengo dokuhon* (vol. 3).
Japanese Government-General, 1923, National Library of Korea

mountain to get wood, and as he was muttering to himself about his worries about preparing holiday food he heard a voice repeating his words like a parrot. He searched after the voice and under a rock, found a terrapin repeating his words. He took the terrapin home and travelled to Seoul, where he put on a show demonstrating the terrapin's talking skills. He eventually sold the terrapin for a large sum, which gave him a better life.

There are many variations of this tale, titled, "Kind-Hearted Terrapin," "Terrapin," "The Good Son and Terrapin," among others, the last of which is the most rich in detail, with an elaborate story.

Tall Tale

과장담

Gwajangdam, or tall tales, are farcical narratives that apply unrealistic exaggerations to emphasize humor.

Tall tales in the Korean oral tradition depict events that unfold due to the protagonists' exaggerated abilities, or from exaggerated competition between rivals.

An example is the story of a lazybones who even found breathing too much of a bother. One day his family had to go away for a banquet hosted by a relative, and they left slices of rice cakes hanging near his mouth for him to eat, but he was too lazy to eat them and died. Another is of an absent-minded man who was running while carrying a child on his back, but got the child's neck caught on a tree branch and the child's head fell off. The man realized only much later and wondered, "Was this child always headless?" The tales are often structured as a series of anecdotes, ending with a punchline that incites laughter.

Among the many tall tales that feature the miser Jaringobi is one about the conversation between Jaringobi and his sons about how to be frugal with a fan. When Jaringobi asks his sons about how long one can make a fan last, one replied a year or two,

but the eldest son said that he could make a fan last twenty years by flapping his head instead of the fan. The same anecdote is featured in a tale of two misers. Jaringobi's stingy acts include demanding the return of the glue used on an envelope and admonishing his daughter-in-law wastefulness when she cooks soup with water she rinsed her hands in after handling fish. The exaggerated extent of his stinginess provides the narrative with dramatic tension and effect.

"Monks from Haeinsa and Seogwangsa Boast About Their Temples" is a tall tale about the rivalry between two monks boasting about the cauldron at Haein Temple, so big that a senior monk who got inside it on a boat to stir the red bean porridge still had not returned a year later, and about the outhouse pit at Seogwang Temple so deep that the feces that the monk made before he left still had not hit the bottom. A cauldron bigger than the East Sea or an outhouse pit deeper than the sky are details that provide humor, based on a distinct sense of imagination.

There is also a separate branch of tall tales that can be categorized as obscene tales (*eumdam*), featuring genitals of exaggerated size or men with exaggerated sexual powers, including the story of King Jicheollo, who could not marry because of his immense penis, or that about a shrimp sauce vendor who sought shelter from the rain inside a vagina, where he accidentally spilled his sauce, which was why women's genitals still carry the smell.

Thousand-Coin Salvation

돈 천냥의 구원

This tale narrates the story of a son who gives all the money he has to save another person's life, and is repayed with an auspicious site for his father's grave, which brings him great fortune.

A nobleman living in unbearable poverty sent his son to a serf that he had freed, who was leading

a good life in the country, to ask for some money. The serf gave the son a thousand (or three thousand) coins, but on his way back home, the son encountered a man in despair, about to throw himself into the river. After listening to the man's dire circumstances, the son handed him all the money. Upon his return, his father praised the son, saying that he was proud of what he had done. Many years later, the father passed away and when the son was looking for a good burial site, a monk pointed at a large tile-roofed house and said he should demolish the house and dig a grave here. At a loss, the son knocked on the house, to learn that it belonged to the man he had saved with the thousand coins. The man said that he had built the house in order to repay the favor, so the son buried his father on the site, and the two families lived together in wealth.

A point of note is that in the story, the son never reveals his name or hometown after giving everything he had to save a dying man. Such an act of giving, which does not ask for anything in return, is similar to an act of a god, which reveals the public mindset that humans who perform god-like acts should be compensated with a great fortune.

Three Lies

거짓말 세 마디

This tale narrates the story of an official who wanted and found a son-in-law who was a competent liar.

There once was an official with a daughter who was turning into an old maid. The official sought a competent liar for his son-in-law and posted a bulletin that he would accept as his son-in-law a bachelor who could tell three lies in a row. Many men came to see the official, but none qualified, for the official would accept only two lies but after that, whatever the person said, the official declared was the truth.

This was when a confident young man came

forward and said he had three lies to offer. The first lie was about the statue of the standing Maitreya in Eunjin. A jujube tree grew very tall, taller than the standing Maitreya, and when fall arrived, the tree bore abundant fruits, but the tree was so tall no one could reach the fruits, so the villagers poked a long stick into the statue's nose, which made the Maitreya sneeze and made all the jujubes fall. The second lie was about how to overcome the summer heat. The bachelor said in his village, people stored the cold winter wind in pouches, opening them in the summer to keep cool. The official accepted both lies, and the bachelor pulled out a sheet of paper from inside his sleeve and said it was a loan statement of a huge sum of money that the official had borrowed from his father. Caught between the choice of accepting the bachelor as his son-in-law and of handing over the large sum of money, the official in the end accepted the lie and made him his son-in-law.

There are three different variations of the bachelor's third lie:

One is about how to eat pork everyday. You buy a pig and raise it inside a rectangular tin box, which of course should have several holes. And when the pig grows big enough for its flesh to stick out of the holes, cut off these parts everyday to have with your meals. The second is about how to catch pheasants. Paste mud to the bottom of an ox, seed the mud with beans, which pheasants like to eat, then tie a hammer to the ox's tail. Take the ox into the mountains and tie it to a tree, then a pheasant will come by and peck at the beans on the ox's bottom. Tickled by the pecking, the ox will swat at the pheasant with its tail, and the pheasant will be killed by the hammer on the tail. The third variation is about a unique farming method, an innovation to do away with the hassle of planting, cutting and gleaning. First, sow rice seeds, then cover the seeds with a dense net, tied to stakes on four corners of the field. When the rice plant grows through the net and the grains are ready to be harvested, pull up the four corners of the net, which will glean the grain.

To win in a contest against someone making judgments between true and false, one must push the issue into an antinomic dilemma, which is what the third lie in this tale achieves. Through these lies, the tale is making a statement that the fictional elements of a folk narrative should be understood not simply as a depiction of something that does not exist in reality, but as the creation of diverse stories about life on the borders between truth and falsehood.

Three Pieces of Straw Rope

새끼서발

This tale narrates the story of a man who was considered a lazybones but uses his wit and intelligence to achieve great success.

A long time ago, there lived a mother and her lazy son, and the mother kicked him out, giving him nothing but three pieces of straw rope. On the road, the son met an earthenware vendor who needed rope and exchanged his rope for an earthenware water jar. Then he met a maiden who broke her water jar and exchanged his jar with one *mal* of rice. In a home where he lodged, a rat ate up the son's rice and he took the rat. Then at another house, a cat ate his rat, and the son was given the cat. At another house, a horse stepped on his cat, killing it, and the son was given the horse. Then he met a man burying a maiden's corpse and he exchanged his horse for the corpse. Then he encountered another beautiful maiden who pushed the corpse, making it fall, and the son accused the beautiful maiden of killing the dead maiden, and acquired the beautiful maiden. The son continued his journey with the maiden, when he met a rich man, who, wanting the beautiful maiden for himself, proposed a riddle wager. The lazy son asked the rich man, "What is the thing that came out of three pieces of straw rope that turned into a water jar that turned into rice that turned into a rat that turned into a cat that turned into a horse that turned

into a dead maiden that turned into a living maiden?" The rich man was unable to answer, and handed over his wealth to the son, who returned home with the maiden.

The first half of the tale "Carrying a Chest" is identical to that of "Three Pieces of Straw Rope," but in the second half, the fool, who is the protagonist, while carrying the maiden on his back inside a chest, puts down the chest by the road to relieve himself. Just then the king (or the magistrate) happens to pass by and takes the maiden out of the chest, leaving instead dregs of bean curd. The fool, unaware of this, arrives home and asks his mother to prepare a banquet to celebrate. But when they open the chest to find it filled with nothing but bean curd dregs, the fool says, "When did I say there was a maiden in here? All I said was let's get some soy sauce and spoons and eat bean curd dregs."

"Three Pieces of Straw Rope" tells the story of the weak defeating the strong with a witty strategy, and achieving success in life, the lazy son's triumph over the greedy rich man offering a satisfying ending for the audience.

Tiger and Dried Persimmon

호랑이와 곶감

This animal tale narrates the story of a foolish tiger that believes that a dried persimmon is a fearful creature and runs away.

This narrative has a long tradition and is transmitted across the country. It has been included in school textbooks since the Japanese colonial period and was adapted as a children's tale in the 1920s. A similar narrative can be found in the ancient Indian collection *Panchatantra* from the 4th century.

One night a tiger came down to the village and was hiding in a barn when it heard the mother comforting a crying child. She tried to stop the crying by saying, "A tiger's coming, you must

stop crying,” but the child kept on crying, and the tiger thought the child must be quite courageous, unafraid of tigers. The mother then mentioned dried persimmons and the child immediately stopped crying. The tiger thought this persimmon must be a creature more fearful than himself. At that moment, a thief who had come to steal the cow leaped on the tiger, thinking it was a cow. The tiger, on his part, thought this creature on his back must be the fearful persimmon and ran with all his might. The thief, realizing that he was riding a tiger, held on with all his might, scared that he would be eaten up if he fell. When morning came, the thief jumped off the tiger and ran to hide behind an old tree, and the tiger ran off as well, sighing with relief. But when the tiger encountered a bear (or hare), the bear said the persimmon was probably only a human and proposed that they go catch him. But when the bear attacked the thief, he pulled at the bear’s testicles, killing it, and the tiger ran away again.

This tale is transmitted in three different types: The first ends with the tiger running away after hearing about the persimmon; the second ends with the tiger running away with the thief on its back; and the third ending with the tiger running away again after trying to catch the thief. In some versions, the tiger falls for the thief’s trick and is killed. And in some versions, the tiger comes after the thief alone, without the bear or the hare.

This tale offers a humorous take on the dynamics between the strong and the weak, the former being defeated due to foolishness and the latter triumphing through wit.

Tiger Brother

호랑이 형님

This tale narrates the story of a tiger brother who shows great dedication to his human brother and parents.

Tigers have a special place in the Korean folk tradition, the earliest depiction of the relationship between tigers and humans going back to the Dangun myth of Gojoseon, and this tale also dates back to ancient times.

A woodsman, despaired by his poverty, decided to be eaten up by a tiger and headed into the mountain, where he encountered a tiger. Struck with fear, the woodsman wanted to save his life and said, “Big Brother! Mother told me that I had an older brother who died and turned into a tiger, and I can tell that it is you!” And the man went on to invite the tiger to go and see their mother right away. The tiger fell for the woodsman’s lie but said, “I would like to see Mother right away, but I do not have the heart to show her my tiger face.” Following this encounter, the tiger often brought pigs to the woodsman’s house, which made the family rich, and the tiger also brought the woodsman a bride. A few years later, the woodsman’s mother passed away and the tiger stopped coming with pigs, which made the woodsman curious, so he went to the tiger’s cave and found inside a group of tiger cubs with white hemp ribbons on their tails. When the woodsman asked the cubs what the ribbon was for, they answered, “Our grandmother is a human and she passed away, after which our father refused food and drink and he passed away soon after, so we are wearing mourning ribbons on our tails.” The woodsman, moved by the tiger’s filial piety, made a grave for the tiger next to his mother’s.

In some variations of this tale, the tiger asks a boy for some of his rice cake but the boy hands the tiger a pebble instead, and the tiger is fooled into thinking that the boy is capable of eating pebbles, which amazes the tiger and it decides to address the boy as big brother.

This tale underlines the virtue of filial piety by showing that even a beast can be devoted to its parents, while offering humor through the contrast between the foolish tiger and a human outwitting the dangerous beast to overcome a crisis.

Tiger Eyelash

호랑이 눈썹

This tale narrates the story of a man who, through the acquisition of a tiger eyelash that shows people's previous lives, acquires good fortune.

A long time ago there lived a man who encountered one bad fortune after another after his marriage and was miserable. The man went into the mountain, thinking that he would rather be eaten by a tiger than keep living like this. When he met the tiger, however, the tiger plucked out one of its eyelashes and handing it to the man, explained that with the lash, he would be able to see people's previous lives. Indeed when the man placed the lash on his eye, he saw many people as animals. As for his own family, he had previously been a human, but his wife had been a hen, which was why things were not working out. Another couple happened to visit his home and the man could see, with the tiger lash, that the husband had been a rooster in his previous life and the wife a human. Things were not good for this couple, either, so they all had a discussion and decided to switch partners, which brought them all good fortune and wealth.

In some variations, the tiger hands the man a pair of glasses. The characters' identities in previous life also vary: In some versions the wife was a human and the husband an animal; the chicken is sometimes replaced by dog, pig, racoon, or cow. The tiger eyelash is a detail that also appears in the tale "Gureongdeongdeongsinseonbi (Divine Serpent Scholar)" as part of the contest between the old wife and the new wife.

This tale emphasizes the notion that individuals are all different inside, based on the concept of previous lives and reincarnation. Placing the tiger eyelash on one's eye's signifies seeing the essence in people, taking on the perspective of the tiger. And the notion that good marriages are achievable through the union of kindred souls is highlighted through the "swapping" motif. It is notable that this

tale reflects traditional views on karma, while the suggested resolution of swapping partners is quite unconventional.

Tiger Gets Its Tail Cut Off

꼬리 잘린 호랑이

This tale narrates the story of a foolish tiger that was tricked by a rabbit to dip its tail inside a stream in frozen cold of winter and got its tail cut off.

A tiger was wandering the woods in the middle of winter hunting for a rabbit. When it finally comes across a rabbit, the rabbit makes a tempting proposal that it would bring as many crayfish as it would take to fill the tiger's stomach. The tiger headed to the stream with the rabbit and dipped its tail in the stream as instructed. While the rabbit pretended to steer crayfish in the tiger's direction, the tiger sat in anticipation of a huge meal. When morning came and villagers began to appear, the tiger bolted up to run away, without realizing that its tail was frozen stiff inside the icy stream, and the frozen tail fell off.

A variation of this tale features the tiger being tricked by the rabbit to swallow a stone that is burning hot, while in another, the rabbit tricks the tiger to sit in the woods and wait to be fed birds, which leads the tiger to get burned.



Tiger and rabbit.

Early 20th century, National Folk Museum of Korea

The rabbit in this narrative is viewed as a trickster and the tiger as a gullible character, while some interpretations view the tiger as the trickster. There are also interpretations that view the tiger as the ruler and the rabbit the ruled, or the grassroots, and the rabbit's triumph as the victory of the people against the unjust ruling class.

Tiger Helps Son Mourn for His Father's Death

시묘살이 도와준 호랑이

This tale narrates the story of a tiger that helps a dutiful son serve his three-year mourning ritual for his father, then is rescued by the son when faced with life-threatening crisis.

A man of the Choe family went to live in a hut by his father's grave to serve his three-year mourning ritual (*simyosari*), during which a tiger guarded him and kept him safe. One day Choe heard that a tiger had been captured in the village of Waangsangol and when he went to check, it was the same tiger that had guarded him. He pleaded that he was willing to pay any amount to set the tiger free again, but the villagers were too afraid to open the cage. In the end Choe went inside the cage himself to release the tiger and send it back to the mountain. He could not afford to pay right away, but promised to come



A tiger's grave next to the tomb of Jeompiljae.
Ulju-gun, Ulsan (2012, Bae Do-sik)

up with the money, and when the magistrate heard about what had happened, he paid the sum on Choe's behalf and erected a stele honoring the dutiful son.

In Korea's oral tradition, tigers are viewed as both good and evil. Compared to mythology and legends, folk tales portray tigers in a more negative light, but in moral tales, they are often featured as helpers of loyal subjects, dutiful sons, faithful wives and just men, offering grace and generosity.

Tiger Leads Man to Auspicious Site

호랑이가 잡아 준 명당

This tale narrates the story of a man who rescues a tiger from danger and as a reward receives an auspicious site.

A courageous man encountered a tiger in the mountain. The tiger appeared unusual, and upon a closer look, the man could see that the tiger was crying. The man wondered if the tiger was about to eat him up, but the tiger shook its head and opened its mouth, inside which the man saw a hairpin caught in its throat, and he pulled it out for the tiger. The tiger gestured for the man to ride on its back and carried him to an auspicious site, pointing with its paw where the body should be buried. The man used the site for his ancestral tombs and his family enjoyed good fortune and wealth for generations.

The earliest documented version of this narrative, which incorporates the favor-returning motif into a geomancy tale, is the tale of Yu Hyo-geum from early Goryeo. Hyo-geum, the son of Yu Cha-dal, went on an outing to Mt. Guwol, where he encountered a tiger crying painful tears and pulled out the silver hairpin from its throat. That night, the tiger appeared in Hyo-geum's dream and saying that it was really a mountain god (*sansin*), promised as a reward high government posts for generations of Hyo-geum's descendants. Hyo-geum would go on to serve as vice minister (*jwayun*). This tale, recorded in *Sinjeungdonggukyeojiseungham*

(*Augmented Survey of the Geography of the Eastern Kingdom, Revised and Expanded Edition*), provides details of the public appointments of Hyo-geum's fifth-generation descendent Yu Gong-gwon and others in between, highlighting the divine powers of the tiger. Oral variations of this narrative are assumed to have originated from this version.

Sinjeungdonggukyeojiseungnam cites the backdrop of this narrative as the village of Husan-ni in Jecheon, North Chungcheong Province, but the Munhwa Yu clan is actually based in the nearby village of Hwangseong-ni. The hairpin, believed to be the one taken from the tiger's throat, is still in possession of a family in the village of Sagong-ni.

Tiger Offers Ride for Dutiful Son

효자 태워 나른 호랑이

This tale narrates the story of a tiger who, upon being moved by a dutiful son's filial piety, offers him favors.

A long time ago in a village lived a dutiful son who was so poor he could not afford food for his mother, and he had to ask for food from the family he worked for as a farmhand, and ride on the back of a tiger to serve the food to his mother. There was another dutiful son who had to travel far to get medicine for his ailing father and a tiger appeared and let him ride on its back. Another dutiful son was accompanied by a tiger when he went to live in a hut by his father's grave to serve his three-year mourning ritual (*simyosari*). Yet another dutiful son found strawberries (or paper plant shoots, bamboo shoots, carp, ripe persimmons, or lichen) in the winter for his mother, and when she died, a tiger kept his side during the three-year mourning and also found him a bride.

The reason a tiger offers the dutiful son these favors is owed to the son's devoted filial piety. This tale is transmitted only in the oral tradition. The only reason that a tiger, which is a feared beast,

helps humans is because it is moved by filial piety, indicating that at the time, filial piety was perceived as the highest virtue.

Tiger Returns Favor

호랑이의 보은

This animal tale narrates the story of a tiger that seeks help from a human and receives it, upon which the tiger returns the favor.

A man went into the mountain to gather firewood and encountered a tiger blocking the path, its jaws open wide. The man was unafraid, however, and offered to pull out the object caught inside the tiger's throat and the tiger accepted his help, nodding. The man pulled out a hairpin from the tiger's throat and the tiger, albeit a wild beast that ate humans, acknowledged his gratitude and wept. The man was a poor old bachelor who lived in the mountains with his widowed mother, and one night, he heard a thumping sound and saw in his yard a huge stack of firewood left by the tiger, after which he never had to chop wood again. Then one day he again heard a thumping sound and saw that the tiger had carried a beautiful maiden. She was the daughter of a state minister and she had fainted while being carried by the tiger, and even after she came to, could not find her way back from the mountain. She accepted that there must be a reason for this predicament and married the bachelor. Thanks to the tiger's help, the two lived in contentment, supporting the mother and raising a son. One day the tiger came and announced that its death was nearing and that it would launch an attack on the village and told the man to capture him. Soon the village was caught in fear as the tiger attacked, and the authorities offered a reward of money and public post for capturing the tiger. The man headed into the village and shot the tiger, receiving his rewards, which made him a rich man.

Tales of animals returning a favor received from

humans sometimes include prophecies of the animal's request for help. The method of returning the favor varies, from saving the man's life or helping him achieve success, to bringing him money or treasure, or indirectly guiding him to a place treasure is buried, or finding him an auspicious burial site.

The tiger is a feared beast, an object of awe and wonder, worshipped as a mountain god (*sansin*). Tigers have been a major presence in Korean folk literature since the Three Kingdoms period, taking on a more varied and distinctive characteristic through history, both the negative and positive, associated with national sentiments. In tales of animals returning favors, tigers are depicted as spiritual creatures that intervene in human affairs, sometimes portrayed as a dignified deity that carries out the moral function of punishing evil and rewarding virtue (*gwonseonjingak*). In this tale, however, the tiger is depicted as a neutral supporter that receives and provides rescue and help.

Tiger Runs Away at the Sight of a Female Genitalia

여자 음부 보고 도망간 호랑이

This tale narrates the story of a tiger so foolish it mistook a woman's vagina for a monster and ran away.

On a spring day, three daughters-in-law went to the mountain to pick herbs and encountered a tiger that attacked them. The youngest daughter-in-law, who did not yet have children, volunteered to sacrifice herself and sent the two others down the mountain. The youngest daughter-in-law decided she might make it easier for the tiger to eat her and undressed, but she became too scared to offer herself to the tiger and could only manage to walk backwards, with her rear toward the tiger. As the tiger watched her approach, its eyes landed on her rear, which frightened him. While all other creatures

had mouths that stretched sideways, this creature had a mouth that opened vertically, covered in black hair and dripping with blood. The tiger, scared that it would be killed by this creature, tried to crawl backwards but fell off the cliff and died.

This tale aims at highlighting the foolishness of the tiger, and is paired with a similar narrative that features the male genitalia.

Tiger That Helped the Widowed Daughter-in-Law

개가지지 않은 며느리 도운 호랑이

This tale narrates the story of a widowed daughter-in-law who did not remarry despite the urging of her parents and cared for her father-in-law, and a tiger who helped her, moved by her dedication.

A long time ago there lived a daughter-in-law who was widowed at a young age. Her parents insisted that she remarry, but she did not comply, and instead devoted herself to the care of her widowed and ill father-in-law. Her parents, tired of waiting for their daughter, one day sent her news that her mother had passed away. The daughter-in-law prepared porridge for her father-in-law and headed to her parents' home, where she learned that she had been set up as part of her parents' plans for her



Stele honoring the virtuous widow of Eonyang.
Ulju-gun, Gyeongsangnam-do (2012, Bae Do-sik)



Grave for the tiger that helped the virtuous widow.
Ulju-gun, Gyeongsangnam-do (2012, Bae Do-sik)

remarriage. The daughter-in-law headed home that night, upset, and the journey across mountains and rivers was difficult in the dark. That was when a tiger suddenly appeared and carried her on its back, transporting her back to her in-laws'. Upon returning, the daughter-in-law further devoted herself to caring for her father-in-law, and one day in her dream, she learned that the tiger had fallen into a trap and was dying. The daughter-in-law found the tiger and rescued it.

The narrative is a morality tale that emphasizes the lesson of filial piety.

Tree Bachelor and the Great Flood

목도령과 대홍수

This tale narrates the story of Mokdoryeong (Tree Bachelor), born between a fairy from the heavens and a tree, who becomes the progenitor of the human race.

A long time ago, a fairy descended from the heavens and after experiencing a communion with the spirit of a tree (or a tree god) she gave birth to a son, whom she named Mokdoryeong (Tree Bachelor). The fairy returned to the heavens and soon after a heavy rain fell, flooding the entire universe. The father tree drifted on the water, carrying Mokdoryeong on its

trunk. When they encountered a swarm of ants and mosquitos, swept up in the water, the boy rescued them. A while later, they encountered a boy calling out for help, and Mokdoryeong wanted to save him, which the tree opposed, but Mokdoryeong felt very bad for him and rescued him. Soon the tree arrived at the summit of a tall mountain, where an old woman lived with her foster daughter (or maidservant). Both Mokdoryeong and the rescued boy wanted to marry the girl. In an attempt to marry the girl, the rescued boy slandered Mokdoryeong, who was presented with the test of sorting out grains from a field of sand, and he was able to pass it with the help of the ants that he had rescued from the flood. Next the old woman challenged Mokdoryeong to find her daughter in a room full of women, and this time the mosquitos appeared and guided Mokdoryeong to the daughter. Mokdoryeong was allowed to marry the daughter and the boy married one of the other women. This great flood resulted in the extinction of mankind, the two couples became the progenitors of the new human race.

What is notable about this narrative is the new progenitor Mokdoryeong's character and his divine lineage as the son of a heavenly being and a tree, a trait shared by other mythological progenitors like Dangun and Jumong. After Mokdoryeong's birth, his fairy mother abandons him to return to the heavenly world, and when the flood begins, Mokdoryeong is raised by his father, which indicates that the new progenitor is one who pursues his earthly roots rather than his celestial foundations. Mokdoryeong's character is revealed through his relationship with the boy, who is his rival. While the boy stands for secular values and evil instincts, Mokdoryeong stands for the values of nature and goodness. Especially demonstrative of his character as a progenitor of mankind is the way he solves his given task and defeats his rival by empathizing and communicating with the creatures that he rescued. It should also be noted that not only Mokdoryeong but the rescued boy who schemes against his rescuer becomes the progenitor for the new mankind. The

human race that emerged after the Great Flood, in other words, are descendents of not only the good Mokdoryeong but also of the evil boy, who serve as the origins of good and evil, the two primal characteristics of man.

In most Korean mythology, progenitor characters are born from the union of sky father and earth mother (*cheonbujimo*), but Mokdoryeong comes from an earth father and sky mother. Despite this difference, the rest of Mokdoryeong's narrative follows the structural motifs of progenitor and founding myths, from unusual birth and divine parents to journey, finding a spouse, and receiving help from animals.

Trick Tale

사기담

Sagidam, or trick tale, is a category of narratives about the protagonist's use of tricks to deceive people and pursue his interest.

As in other cultures, Korean trick tales have a long history. The earliest in record would be "Tale of Seoktalhae's Trick" in *Samgungnyusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*) from the 13th century. With his eyes on the house that belonged to the high minister Hogong (Gourd Duke), Seoktalhae buried a whetstone and a piece of charcoal by the house, and claimed to the authorities that his family of blacksmiths had lived in the house for many generations, asking them to dig up the land for evidence. Seoktalhae was thus able to take over the house.

These tales comprise a wide range of tricks, from simple ones like the servant taking his master's food by lying that it has been contaminated, to more elaborate ones like Kim Seon-dal's scheme of passing out money to people and retrieved it the following day to trick a rich man into purchase from him the right to sell the water from the Daedong River.

A successful trick usually meets the following conditions: First, the trickster must be able to read people's minds, especially their weaknesses, for not everyone is gullible; second, the trickster must have the verbal skills to persuade his target to accept terms that are actually disadvantageous to them. Kim Seon-dal's success owed to his detailed planning, but his trick was made believable by his persuasive words; third, spontaneous improvisation is also important, because even the most carefully planned scheme will accompany unexpected situations, which require quick thinking to turn things around to his benefit; fourth, anonymity is required, for successful tricksters can quickly acquire notoriety, which is why they often play out their schemes where they are outsiders, or target outsiders as in the case of Kim Seon-dal, who tricks a traveler from Seoul or China.

Since tricks and schemes are social taboos, trick tales reflect the moral lesson of "punishing evil and rewarding virtue (*gwonseonjingak*).” Narratives of successful tricks, however, usually depict schemes that target immoral characters who bring harm, like corrupt officials or villains, or the narratives emphasize the wisdom and extraordinary ability of the protagonist.

True Friend

진정한 친구

This morality tale delivers the lesson that a true friend is one who offers help in a time of crisis.

A father, upon observing that his son used money to make friends, decided to test whether his son had any true friends. The father instructed his son to borrow a corpse or buy a dead pig and carry it inside a sack, asking friends for help. The son went around friends telling them he had killed a man, asking him for help burying the corpse, but none stepped forward. When his father went over to a friend and said the same thing, however, the friend immediately

invited him in to discuss what should be done, and after digging up his backyard to bury the corpse, told the father to put his mind to rest. The father was thus able to demonstrate to his son what a true friend is.

In some variations, the father gets a corpse himself and pretends that he killed a man, or kills a pig and puts it in a sack, telling his son that it's a corpse. There are also versions in which the father's friend finds a dead pig in the sack and hosts a banquet for the whole village.

This tale can be categorized as a "teaching the son narrative (*hunjaseol*)," emphasizing the moral that true friends who offers help in times of crisis cannot be bought.

Tying a Rattle Around the Cat's Neck

고양이 목에 방울 달기

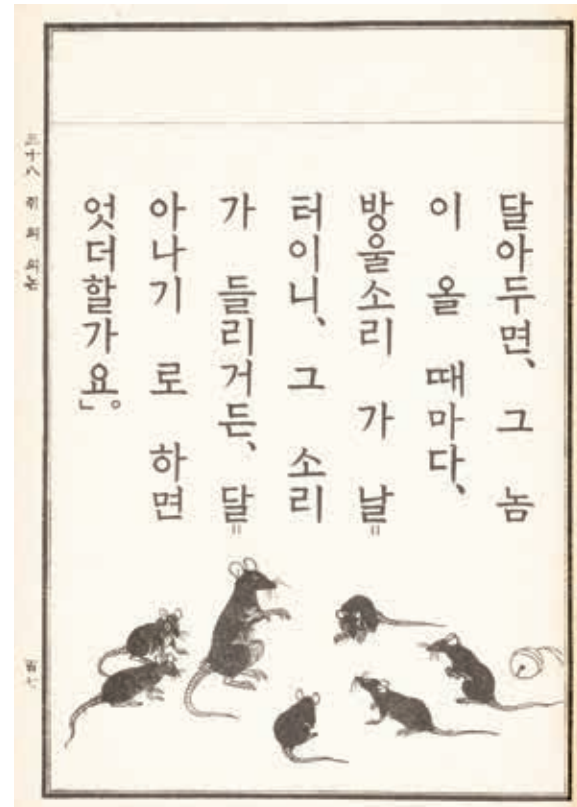
This tale narrates the story of how a group of rats assembled to decide who amongst them would tie a rattle around the cat's neck to protect themselves against the cat's attack, but in the end no one would take on the task. The story, identical to one of Aesop's fables, is included in the book *Sunoji* (*Fifteen-Day Record*, 1697), under the title "Myohyanghyeollyeong (Tying a Rattle Around the Cat's Neck)."

The version in *Sunoji* goes as follows:

A group of rats gathered to discuss if there would be some wonderful way to prevent the damage they suffer from the cat. One rat said, "There's a simple way. If there is a rattle tied to the cat's neck, we will always know when it's coming, won't we?" And all the other rats agreed in unison, "That is a very good idea." But then an old rat asked, "I agree it is a good idea, but will we be able to tie the rattle around the cat's neck?"

The tale is the origin of the proverb, "tying a rattle around the cat's neck," a warning against plans that are difficult to carry out. The old rat's resonant last words imply a firm lesson that even the best

ideas are nothing but empty words if they cannot be put into practice.



The Rats' Discussion in *Chosengo dokuhon* (vol.2).
Japanese Government-General, 1937, National Library of Korea

Village Guardian Posts Put on Trial

장승재판

This tale narrates the story of a wise magistrate who put the village's guardian posts (*jangseung*) on trial to catch a thief.

The earliest record of this story appears in *Hyobinjapgi* (*Miscellaneous Writings on Exemplary Matters*) from mid-Joseon. The narrative seems to have been influenced by the Chinese tale "Stone Stele Punished for Crime," from the book *Baogongqian* (*Bizarre Case Records of Lord Bao*), introduced to Joseon by Ming Chinese troops dispatched as

reinforcements during the Japanese invasions in the late 16th century. In versions of the tale from late Joseon, recorded in *Maeonghallok* (*Maeong's Records of Idleness*) and *Gimunchonghwa* (*Assorted Collection of Tales Read and Heard*), the magistrate is renowned official Jeong Hyo-seong, and in later versions, the protagonist is referred to as the “head official of the village.”

A paper (or silk) vendor loses his goods and goes to the magistrate's office requesting that the authorities find them for him. The magistrate went out to survey the site where the vendor lost his goods and found a village guardian post (or in some versions a stone Buddha) standing there, glaring with wide, impertinent eyes. The magistrate ordered his men to arrest the guardian post and keep a close vigil through the night. But the magistrate found none of the officers guarding the post and fined them for disobedience, to be paid in paper. The magistrate

examined the paper that the officers submitted and found among them the vendor's stolen papers, which he tracked down and caught the robber.

An orally transmitted version of this narrative is almost identical to this variation documented in *Cheongguyadam* (*Tales from the Green Hills*), with only slight changes in the stolen items or the punished statue.

Earlier in the oral tradition, folk narratives that featured village guardian posts highlighted the divine powers of the posts, but in this tale, the guardian post makes up only a small detail in a narrative that emphasizes the wisdom of the public official and the rationality of the court proceedings.

By highlighting the problem-solving skills of the magistrate, who upholds the Confucian ideology of the state, the tale aims at demonstrating the stability of the social order.



Village guardian posts.
Gangneung-si, Gangwon-do, 1972, National Folk Museum of Korea

Virtuous Widow Who Remarried and Raised Posthumous Child

개가해서 유복자 키운 열녀

This tale narrates the story of a widow who remarried while pregnant with a child by her deceased husband, and sent the grown son back to his paternal grandparents.

A third-generation widow in the So family was abducted in the middle of the night by a prospective husband, a customary remarriage procedure in the old days, called *bossam*. The widow was pregnant with a child by her deceased husband, but realizing that she would not be able to escape the remarriage arrangements, resists her new husband until her child is born, enduring the wait by scorching her private parts. She went on to give birth to more sons by her new husband, but when the child of the deceased first father, now grown, passed his state examinations to enter public office, she revealed that he was the son of her deceased first husband and left with the

son for her former in-laws. When they arrived there, she sent in the son of her deceased husband, then taking one step inside the gate of her former in-laws, she killed herself with a dagger.

The issue central to the narrative conflict is lineage, carrying on the aristocratic family. The Korean medieval virtue of loyalty (*yeol*, 烈) was fundamentally about upholding the status and honor of the noble literati family, and as shown in this tale, raising a semi-orphaned child who would carry on the family name was a far more active and essential act of loyalty for a widow than her chastity.

Visit to Underworld Turns Man Into Physician

지하국 다녀와 명의 된 사람

This tale narrates the story of a man who is trained as a physician in the underworld but in the end becomes blind.

A falcon hunter while out hunting entered a cave, which led him to the underworld. People there did not notice him and when he stood next to someone, that person fell mysteriously ill. For fun, the falcon hunter followed around a beautiful maiden from a rich family, but was tricked by a fortuneteller and got locked up inside a bottle. A group of children accidentally broke the bottle and he was freed, upon which he encountered an old man who was able to see him. The old man taught him medicine, after which the hunter returned home and made a living as a physician. His reputation as a man of medicine reached the king and he was summoned to the court to cure the king's mother, who had turned into a yellow serpent. Trying the delay the crisis, the hunter prayed for ninety-nine days for a chance to meet his teacher. Ninety-nine days later, his teacher appeared and prescribed the king's mother to eat ninety-nine dog penises, and advised the hunter to stop posing as a physician if he wanted to live a long life, at the

same time handing the hunter a potion. The hunter cured the king's mother with the prescription, for which he was rewarded, and took the potion from the old man, which made him appear blind, and he was able to live in comfort with the reward money.

In the first half of this story, the falcon hunter becomes a transcendental being in the underworld simply for being a human, but upon getting stuck inside the fortuneteller's bottle, he realizes that a life was limited unless one made an effort, and so he receives training in medicine. The second half of the tale features the king's mother, who after being widowed at a young age, falls in love with a eunuch and turns into a serpent, and the falcon hunter's life is threatened upon facing the challenge of curing her. The king's mother and the renowned physician both face a crisis because of their status, which until then has served as a privilege. The falcon hunter is able to overcome his crisis and in the end becomes blind, which turns out to be the happiest time in his life, the best status he can have.

In this tale, the underworld is a space that exists below the human world, from where the human world is the celestial world, an interesting twist to the dynamics between human reality and otherworlds.

Weeping of a Lice

이의 울음

This tale narrates the story of a man who hears a weeping from somewhere and upon examination, find a lice on his body, weeping.

A man heard the sound of grief-stricken weeping and looked around but saw nothing. He listened more closely and learned that the weeping was coming from inside his shirt. He took off his shirt and looked closely, and found a lice weeping, caught in a strand of thread.

There are many variations of this tale that features a different set of phenomena and causes:

The man feels his beard getting wet or hears shouts or screaming, associated with a lice swinging inside his beard, a lice and bedbug wrestling, or a lice holding a funeral for a fellow lice.

Another narrative that highlights small, insignificant creatures takes place against the backdrop of the holidays when clothes are laundered in preparation for the festivities, and a lice laments, “The mother-in-law is in charge, so there’s no way we’ll survive this,” or “The daughter-in-law is in charge, so we might just survive this time.” The tale emphasizes the different attitudes toward housework between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, but also takes into consideration the existence of insignificant pests amidst human lives.

Why Sea Water Tastes Salty

바닷물이 짠 이유

This tale narrates the story of a magic millstone that produced salt but could not be stopped, from turning the sea water salty.

There lived two brothers, an older one rich and a younger poor. The younger one went to see his older brother to ask for food, and the mean old brother sent him on an errand to the *dokkaebi* (goblin) lair with an aim to kill him. But the younger brother, with help from an old man, acquired a magic millstone from the goblins and lived happily. When the older brother heard about the millstone from the younger brother, he borrowed it from him but when he could not stop the millstone, the younger brother came to his rescue and the millstone was returned to the younger brother. Then salt vendors who heard about the magic millstone came to the younger brother to buy it at a high price. They took the millstone on their ship and it began producing salt, but the vendors did not know how to stop it and they drowned in the sea, with the millstone, which is why sea water, to this day, remains salty.

Variations of this tale feature, in the place of the millstone, a net, or a vessel or chest that brings the dead back to life (*hwaringi*, or *hwaringwe*), and in some versions, the treasure acquired in return for a good deed is stolen from the good man. There is also a variation in which the older brother borrows the magic millstone to make it produce money, but when he cannot make it stop, dies, buried under the money.

The reason the older brother or the salt vendors are unable to control the millstone is because their use of the millstone is based on greed, which, in the story, is viewed differently from the younger brother’s desire to escape his state of deprivation. The narrative, in other words, can be read as a cautionary tale against excessive greed.

Why Tree Frogs Croak

청개구리가 우는 이유

This tale explains why tree frogs croak in the rain.

The tale, transmitted throughout East Asia, is documented in many Chinese anthologies including *Xubowozhi* (*Continued Treatise on Curiosities*) from Tang dynasty; *Youyangzazuxuji* (*Continued Collection of Miscellaneous Morsels from Youyang*) also from Tang; and *Taipingguangji* (*Extensive Record of the Taiping Era*) from Song China. Chinese versions of the tale feature an undutiful son, while the Japanese versions feature birds like pigeons and owls and narrate the origins of the sounds they make.

There lived a defiant tree frog who always did the opposite of what his mother had instructed. When his mother lay dying from an illness, she asked her son to bury her by the river, recalling that he always defied her. The tree frog, however, regretted that he had never done as his mother instructed and decided that he would follow her instructions for once. So he buried his mother by the river and whenever it rained, he croaked with



Why the Tree Frog Croaks.

Early 20th century, National Folk Museum of Korea

sadness, worried that his mother's grave would be washed away in the rain.

A variation of this narrative is the tale about Yi Gwal, the martial official from mid-Joseon who staged a rebellion. Just like the tree frog, Yi Gwal always did the opposite of what his father instructed. As he approached his death in old age, his father instructed Yi Gwal to bury him right side up, thinking that his son would contradict his instructions. Yi's father was half-dragon, half-man, and when buried upside down, he would turn into a full dragon and ascend to the heavens. Yi Gwal, however, regretting that he had never followed his father's instructions, obeyed this time and buried him straight up. His father, therefore, was unable to turn into a dragon, and Yi Gwal's rebellion ended in failure.

From this tale came the idiomatic expression "like a tree frog (*cheonggaeguri gatda*)," an analogy referring to disobedient children.

Widow and the Farmhand

과부와 머슴

This tale narrates the story of a poor old bachelor who feigns innocence to trick a rich widow into marrying him.

There lived a farmhand past a marriageable age but

too poor to afford a wife. One day he visited a widow in the village and while smoking a pipe, asked her if he could put his fingertip on hers. The widow permitted him, and he touched her finger and left after giving her one hundred coins. On his next visit, he asked if he could touch her ear. The widow permitted him, and again he touched her ear and left after giving her one hundred coins. On his next visit, he asked if he could place his navel on hers. The widow permitted him and took off her skirt, and as he placed his navel on hers, he succeeded in having intercourse with her, which led to their marriage, which was a long and happy one.

Variations of this narrative feature a farmhand who feigns sexual ignorance and asks the widow to explain to him about marriage and sex, which leads to their union; who sneaks into the widow's house and tricks her into believing that they had intercourse to make her marry him; or one who lets the widow see him masturbate every night, which earns the widow's sympathy and leads to their union.

The plot can be summarized as the union between an old bachelor lacking the resources for marriage and a widow who is financially capable but unable to remarry because it is socially unacceptable, which leads to the gratification of both of their deprivations. On the surface, it appears as if the union is the farmhand's gain, but both the servant and the widow emerge triumphant.

Widow Undresses Lascivious Schoolmaster

음탕한 선생 발가벗긴 과부

This tale narrates the story of a widow who uses her wit to bring to shame a lascivious schoolmaster.

The schoolmaster kept pressuring one of his students, a widow's son, telling him, "Tell your mother I'd like to see her this evening," and finally the child refused to go to school. His mother thought of a scheme and invited the schoolmaster one evening. The schoolmaster undressed and lay in her room when a neighbor, an old widow, came over.

The mother made the schoolmaster hide inside a large jar, and the old widow tapped her pipe on the jar, letting the ashes fall inside. When the old widow left, the schoolmaster crawled out of the jar, but they again heard someone coming and the widow told the schoolmaster to go out to the yard, where he hid under the pile of manure, still naked. In the morning, workers arrived and poked at the frozen pile of manure with a pitchfork, which made the schoolmaster leap up and run away, but he slipped on the ice and fell. He stayed down, pretending to be dead, when a patrolman came by and saying that a dead man's testicles made good medicine, tried to cut them off. The schoolmaster jumped up and ran away, and never again tried to make advances on the widow.

In some variations, the lascivious male character is a monk, or a monk who serves as a schoolmaster. The versions with the monk are most widely spread, offering satire on the secular attitudes of Buddhist priests.

The tale portrays the widow, who is socially vulnerable, as the one who exposes and reforms the lecherous acts of a schoolmaster or monk, deemed as possessing character, knowledge and authority.

Wife of Wit and Intelligence

가지 있는 부인

This tale narrates the story of a local clerk's wife, whose beauty captivated the magistrate and when he proposed a riddle contest with aims to steal her away from her husband, the wife uses her wit to triumph over the magistrate.

A new magistrate arrived to serve his post and learned of the beauty of the local clerk's wife. Wanting the wife for himself, the magistrate proposed a contest to the clerk. He said he would wager a large amount of money and ordered that the clerk wager his wife, which the clerk had no choice but to accept. Seeing that the her husband seemed

worried, the clerk's wife asked what had happened and after hearing about the contest, told her husband not to worry. She went to the magistrate and said that she would compete in the contest on behalf of her husband, and the magistrate presented her with a riddle. He asked how far the sun travels in a day and the clerk's wife answered that it travelled only fifty *li* a day, and when the magistrate asked to explain, she said, "When I set out in the morning after I rise and comb my hair, that is when the sun rises in the east, and when I arrive at my parents' home, fifty *li* away, that is when the sun sets," defeating the magistrate. It was now the wife's turn to give him a riddle and she asked, as she stood, "Which door do you think I am going to walk out? This one or that?" The magistrate was unable to answer, and gave the clerk's wife the money that he had waged.

There are many variations of this narrative, including some that feature the king or a rich judge in the place of the magistrate, and some that feature a teacher at the village school with his eyes on the wife of a student. The riddles also vary. In one version, the magistrate asks, "How many trees are there in the pine grove?" and the clerk's wife answers, using wordplay, "The grove is dense (*bbaekbbbaek*) and well-grown (*chilchil*), which means there would be two hundred trees, since hundred and hundred (*baekbaek*) makes two hundred, plus forty-nine, since seven and seven (*chilchil*) makes forty-nine, so there would be two hundred and forty-nine trees in all." Another version has the magistrate asking the number of birds on a pear tree, to which the clerk's wife replies, "The weight of the pears on the pear tree add up to five *seom* and five *mal*, which means the birds weigh five *seom* and five *mal*." In another, the king asks "What is the weight of my head?" and the clerk's wife answers, "Seven *geun* and half," and when asked to explain, she says she will be able to prove it by beheading him to weigh the head, and the contest ends in the king's defeat. A more explicit variation has the king asking the weight of his penis, and the clerk's wife answers that it looks about the

size of the ox's genitals, which she weighed the previous day and was two *nyang* and half, winning the contest.

In the riddle contest, the magistrate takes the most powerful position of asking the questions, some of which are beyond anyone's knowledge and therefore impossible to prove. The question about the weight of his head emphasizes that the rationality of males and aims at demonstrating his superiority in the contest of wits. The question about the weight of his penis aims at insulting, silencing or threatening the opposite, and the weaker, gender, in order to win. The clerk's wife, however, outwits the magistrate by presenting him with equally difficult questions. Her wit and intelligence gratifies the audience by attacking male chauvinism, and also makes them think about the moral issues involved in the magistrate's desires and hypocrisy.

This narrative is a critique of male domination, using power and letters/knowledge to steal another person's wife. It is also a satire on the government's oppressive rule, as represented by the magistrate, which in the story is ridiculed and defeated by a woman's wit and wisdom. The tale reflects the social atmosphere of the times, in which women were treated by men as possessions, and at the same time, a changing mood that offered criticism from women on outdated conventions of a male-dominated social order.

Wife With Small Appetite

밥 안 먹는 마누라

This tale narrates the story of a wife who ate all she wanted despite her husband's disapproval.

A long time ago, there was a husband whose wife always ate heartily. He disapproved of her appetite and one day tried to test exactly how much she could eat. He told his wife to bring the field

a meal for ten workers, then said that the workers were not coming, upon which the wife ate up all the food by herself and returned home. The husband followed her home, to find her frying beans to eat. He panicked that his life would be ruined with a wife who ate so much, and beat her to death. He remarried a woman with a tiny mouth, but for some reason the rice in the shed ran out quicker than before. Finding this strange, the husband peeked inside the shed, to find his wife with the tiny mouth making rice balls and eating them through her head, its lid lifted open.

The wife who ate too much and the husband who wanted a wife with a small appetite and expelled her, reflect a society in which the value of women was measured through the perspective of men, and wifely virtues were imposed on women. In the tale, the wife is portrayed not as an equal member of the family, but a labor provider. The wife's excessive sexual demands are depicted as her excessive appetite, and the second wife's consumption of food through her head implies sexual desire that has been perverted.

The tale offers a rare portrayal of women that defy the conventional expectations and the male-oriented social order.

Wild Insam and Isimi

산삼과 이시미

This tale narrates the story of a woodsman who discovers wild insam, finds himself in a predicament when his neighbor betrays him, and is rescued by a monster serpent.

A long time ago, a woodsman went to the mountain in the cold of winter to chop wood and at the bottom of a cliff found a big batch of *dongsam*, or little boy *insam*, the roots of centuries-old wild ginseng that resemble a boy. He was unable to climb down the steep cliff and returned home, where he told a neighbor, who agreed to help him.

The woodsman tied a basket to a rope, which his neighbor held at one end and lowered the woodsman sitting inside the basket. When the woodsman sent up all the roots in the basket, the neighbor ran away, abandoning him at the bottom of the cliff. At that moment, a monster serpent appeared, carrying the woodsman on its back to rescue him, and biting the neighbor and killing him.

Some variations of this tale state that precious wild ginseng is visible only in the eyes of kind-hearted people of exemplary behavior. Monster serpents in the Korean oral tradition, called *imugi*, *isimi* or *ggangcheori*, are snakes that have failed to become dragons and ascend to heaven, and often portrayed as violent creatures that bring harm, but they also bring great compensation to those who help their ascension. In this tale, the monster serpent appears and rescues the woodsman for no apparent reason, which could simply be evidence of the woodsman's goodness. In a variation of the tale, the woodsman acquires a cintamani from a woman and gives it to the serpent to help its ascension, which implies that the relationship between the serpent and the woodsman was reciprocal.

Wisdom Tale

지혜담

Jihyedam, or wisdom tales, are stories in which the motif of using one's wisdom to solve a problem makes up the narrative backbone.

In wisdom tales, the protagonists exhibit their wisdom through various methods: Some use schemes that involve tricks and disguises to solve a problem; unconventional thinking or reversal of convention also lead to solutions, delivered by imagination and articulation, often by child protagonists; logical proof is presented in wisdom tales that center on court cases, accompanied by testimony and scientific investigation, as

exemplified in "Son Judges Father," in which the son sides with his stepfather in a conflict between a biological father and stepfather, and in the magistrate's judgment in "A Son Fathered at Seventy Is Still a Son"; wit is also an important means of demonstrating the protagonist's wisdom, requiring spontaneity in speech and action, as shown in "Child Saves Bak Mun-su's Life" and "Man Cleared of Murder Charge"; insight is another frequently demonstrated means, as shown in "Daughter Defends Father's Mistake."

The problems that the protagonists face in wisdom tales range from individual to communal, some related to state affairs, and the problem solvers are often children or women. Children as problem solvers demonstrate their wisdom through insight and imaginative and unconventional thinking, rather than through experience or understanding. The distinctive tradition of wise women tales can be traced back to the tale of Queen U and her attempt to gain political stance against her husband King Sansang; "Wife of Domi," about a woman using her wits to escape the king's harassment; and Queen Seondeok's demonstration of her three abilities to prove herself as a ruler. The problems that women solve are usually related to family, which reflects the Confucian view of women and the social reality that women's capacities were focused on family and its livelihood. Wisdom tales that feature men, on the other hand, generally encourage filial piety or depict wise judgments on social problems made by judicial authorities, the former exemplified in "Husband Turns Wife Into Dutiful Daughter-in-Law."

Wisdom tales offer ways to overcome real-life problems of the people through wisdom, the power dynamics of real life transferred into a hierarchy based on wisdom. The narrative structure of the socially disadvantaged overcoming crisis reflects the public notion of wisdom and also a critical view on prejudice and discrimination against the weak, offering a possibility of creative and progressive change.

The narrative devices, thematic significance and worldviews employed in wisdom tales contributed to the establishment and development of populist literature and arts in late Joseon, including the solo narrative song genre *pansori* and folk theater *minsokgeuk*.

Wise Child Judge

꼬마 명재판관

This tale narrates the story of a wise child who presides over a case and resolves it with a sensible judgment.

A couple decided to go work at the home of a landlord as a farmhand and a maid, to save up for ten years and get a home of their own. Their master became worried that paying their wages for ten years would deplete his wealth. On the ninth year of their employment, the master came up with a scheme and after sending away the farmhand on an errand, married the farmhand's wife in order to steal their wages. The farmhand's wife, now the lady of the house, took the farmhand's seal and stamped it in the master's books, stating that the master had already paid all their wages for the nine years. The farmhand came back to find out he could not receive any of his wages and went mad, circling the courthouse while calling, "My money, my money." The judge wanted to help but could not come up with a solution, when his twelve-year-old son offered to solve the case. The judge's son made a clerk hide inside a chest and told both the master and the farmhand that the wife was inside the chest. First the master was ordered to carry the chest, and as he carried out the order, the master whispered that she should watch what she said or they could both die. Next it was the farmhand's turn and he poured out words of reproach to his wife for stamping his seal without his approval. The clerk, after listening to both of them from inside the chest, served as a

witness on the case, and the child judge forfeited all of the master's wealth and handed it over to the farmhand.

This tale reflects the social atmosphere of 19th century Joseon when local government positions were sold and bought with bribes, resulting in a reputation of greed and corruption for those in public office. This negative view has been dramatized in this tale through the character of a wise child judge. The solution of the case by a child who is wiser than the adults reflect a serious criticism on the status quo, making this narrative a poignant satire of a society where fair judgments are rare and the line between good and evil has been blurred.

Wise Child Magistrate

어린 원님의 지혜

This tale narrates the story of a child magistrate who, upon facing disdain from his clerks, brings them to their knees with his wisdom.

In Deoksan, South Chungcheong Province, a thirteen-year-old took office as magistrate, and the clerks, attempting to give the child official a hard time, suggested that he survey the embankment in Hapdeok, which stretched over ten *li* long. The magistrate rode in a four-men palanquin, while the clerks followed on their feet, and the magistrate did not grow tired even when the clerks asked to turn back, saying the views were lovely. In the end, the exhausted clerks begged for forgiveness. Then one day when the child magistrate was on his way to meet the governor of Gongju, he encountered a man in the village of Daeheung, who pleaded for help, saying his ox had been stolen. The magistrate stopped by to see the magistrate of Daeheung, who offered breakfast. The child magistrate refused to touch any of the meat dishes, saying he did not eat horse meat. The magistrate of Daeheung insisted that it was beef and not horse meat, offering to show the child

magistrate a butchered ox's head, skin and hooves, which the child magistrate showed the man who had lost his ox, and the man said the remains indeed belonged to his ox, weeping with his arms around the ox head. The child magistrate asked the Daeheung magistrate to lend him one hundred coins, a request the magistrate could not refuse due to the stolen ox, and the child magistrate handed over the money to the owner of the stolen ox. The child magistrate had known that all the meat served on the magistrate's table came from butchers, and that the man who had stolen the ox would have sold it to the butcher to discard the evidence.

The tale offers a vivid portrayal of the irony of a child, as the weaker being, triumphing over the stronger and older by using his wisdom.

Wise Child Tale

아지담

Ajidam, or wise child tales, feature children who are wiser than adults, or narrate the story of a child using his wisdom to solve a problem.

In a wise child tale, the concept of wisdom also includes his wit and resource, but not his capacity for swindling. The wise child can be defined to possess the following characteristics: innocence, vulnerability, eccentricity, covertness, future-mindedness and idealism.

While some wise child tales simply demonstrate the child's outstanding intelligence, a large number of them narrate the story of the child using his wisdom to solve a problem, which can involve the state, family, or an individual. State-level problems are usually posed by China or Japan, and cannot be solved even by the king and his subjects, including renowned wise men like Bak Mun-su. Family problems are often brought about by incompetent or immoral fathers and solved by the child. The wise child also intervenes in conflicts between

individuals, in the process revealing the ignorance or contradictions of the grown-ups, which incites satirical humor.

Wish of Three Women

세 여인의 소원

This carnal tale tells the story of three women revealing their sexual desires through words and action, a narrative formed as an act of resistance against the Neo-Confucian doctrines of late Joseon.

To a household of three women—mother-in-law, daughter-in-law, and daughter—a salt vendor came visiting one day. The day was getting dark, and the salt vendor asked if he could spend the night, but the three women refused. The salt vendor pleaded again, saying a tiny corner would do, and the three women reluctantly let him stay. That night, the salt vendor tapped the feet of the daughter-in-law, engaging in intercourse. Then the mother-in-law, pretending to be talking in her sleep, said "Come over to my side, zzz," to seduce the salt vendor and they engaged in intercourse as well. The daughter, who saw everything, seduced him by saying, "But mine's all new." In the end, the salt vendor had intercourse with all three women and left the following morning.

The carnal tale (*yukdam*) is a genre that shows significant growth under oppressive social circumstances, when rationality loses force in the world, and writing is carried out with raw emotion.

Woman Acquires Fortune After Nursing the Secret Inspector

암행어사 젖 먹이고 발복한 여인

This tale narrates the story of a young woman who nursed a famished and frail secret inspector and

became rich.

Some fifteen women from the village went up the mountain behind the village to gather mountain herbs. On the mountain, there was a scholar lying as stiff as if he were dead, and upon a closer look, they could tell that he had collapsed from hunger. One of the women, who was younger than others, worked up the courage to nurse the scholar. The other women tried to stop her, but the younger woman let the scholar suckle on one of her breasts, then the other, and took him home to offer him food. Another of the other women, upon returning to the village, told the young woman's husband everything that had happened, which made the husband very angry. He beat up the scholar, who showed his horse badge (*mapae*), revealing his identity as a secret royal inspector. The husband sought forgiveness for his assault, after which the inspector left. Later the magistrate's office summoned the woman and the husband, who, upon arrival at the office, were greeted by the secret inspector. They were presented with expansive farmland and a pond as well, which enabled the couple to live an affluent life.

The young wife in the tale, like other heroine of fortune-making narratives, acquires wealth through extraordinary qualities and acts. She saves a stranger's life by acting on her belief in the importance of human life rather than other people's views or social

ethics, which poses the fundamental question of what is essential and important. Her action is depicted not as immoral and unchaste behavior but that of goodness and goodwill, and is rewarded in the end with good fortune, which reflects the public's notion of goodness and the importance of human life.

Woman Destined to Mother a State Minister

정승을 낳을 여자

This tale narrates the story of a bride whose strange actions lead to desertion by her husband or difficulties with her in-laws, but in the end gives birth to a son who grows up to become a distinguished figure.

There lived a poor family and the parents, who in preparation for their daughter's wedding, sent out the daughter to the brook to wash the laundry. At the brook, the daughter encountered a monk who advised her that it would be better for her to marry three years later and the daughter thought about ways to be inhospitable to the groom on their first night. On their wedding night, the bride kept puffing on a pipe, her appearance a mess, which made the groom run away. In the morning, the bride reported to her parents that the husband was gone when she awoke, and spent three years as if nothing has happened. Three years later, she went with her father to her in-laws and after explaining why she had acted strangely on the wedding night, reunited with her groom. They soon had a son and he grew up to be appointed the governor of Pyeongyang.

There are many variations of the bride's actions on wedding night, including her arriving late after an outing; pretending to be mute; or marrying an old beggar from her dream because this will give her a state councillor son. In one of the versions, the bride gives birth to three sons but loses them to a ghost after refusing to worship at the in-law's shrine, after which she gives birth to a son who grows up distinguished, a plot that is almost identical to the tale



Horse badges.
Joseon, National Museum of Korea

of Soldier Son's mother.

This tale features a heroine who is far from the generally anticipated model of the obedient and discreet bride or daughter-in-law, who goes on to give birth to a distinguished son, and reconciles with her family and her husband, bringing fortune to the family. The heroine's bizarre and unpleasant qualities are in the end portrayed as audacity, which reflects a criticism of the conventional and oppressive standards imposed on wives and daughters-in-law within the patriarchal order, and that a woman of relentless drive, unafraid of stepping outside the social norm, can produce major talent.

Woman of Infidelity, Woman of Fidelity

열불열녀

"Yeolbulyeollyeo" is the tale of a woman who marries her husband's murderer but in the end takes revenge on him.

A bachelor wanted his friend's beautiful wife for himself and while chopping wood together in the woods, attacked his friend with a scythe, which killed the friend, blood bubbling from his neck. The man returned and approached the wife, eventually marrying her and raising a child together. One day it was raining, and upon seeing raindrops bubble as they fell from the eaves, the man let out a laugh. When the wife asked what he was laughing about, the man told her about killing her husband and his memory of blood bubbling from the first husband's neck. After hearing this, the wife killed the man.

In different variations of the tale, the wife, after learning of the murder, simply parts with her second husband, never to see him again; or she kills their child and takes her own life as well; or she kills her second husband and their child kills the wife to take revenge for his father's death.

As the title suggests, the concept of infidelity and fidelity take on a complicated meaning in the

many variations of the narrative. In most cases, the woman does not seem determined to stay faithful to her husband, who fails to return, nor does she seem aware that her remarriage is an act of infidelity. So when she kills herself after finding out what has happened, it is less an act of atonement for her infidelity than that of guilt and shock at the absurdity of life. The same goes for versions in which the wife kills her child and herself. In all versions, the woman's response appears to be associated less with the concept of fidelity than with human agony and a sense of righteousness in punishing the murderer.

From a social perspective, the tale offers a critique of the ethical code of fidelity, imposed by the ruling class, which for a widowed commoner can pose threats to one's livelihood. The tale also portrays the heroine, who remarries for love, not as an ideological character upholding fidelity but as a character based on emotion and desire.

The climactic scene, of the second husband confessing his crime as he watches the raindrops bubble as they fall from the eaves, vividly captures the happy family life that the couple made for each other. Some versions depict the wife cleaning the husband's ear as rain falls outside, or pulling laundry with a club as her son plays, which are descriptions rarely found in conventional chastity tales (*yeolhaengdam*), and serve to emphasize the drama of the reversal that follows. This tale is recognized for its universal literary depth, as evident in the vivid depiction of a woman's tragic life as a portrayal of human life as a conflict between one's secular and practical desires and one's social and ethical responsibilities.

Word Play Tale

어희담

Eohuidam, or word play tales, are narratives that incite fun and laughter less through the story itself

and more through devices like teasing or contests using language.

In the Korean oral tradition, word play tales can be traced back to Goryeo, when, according to ancient records, witticisms (*jaedam*) were staged as a form of performing arts and entertainment. The Goryeo court ritual *narye*, for chasing away evil spirits, was comprised of stage performances that focused on bodily movements, including acrobatics, grouped as *gyusikjihui* (formal entertainment) and those that focused on jokes and storytelling, called *sohakjihui* (humor entertainment). The latter was performed by clowns and acrobats, many of whom had experience in shamanic rituals. These jokes and witticisms were eventually incorporated into the dialogues in folk narratives, which came to form the genre of word play tales. In written literature, word play tales originated from *sihwa*, a genre from Goryeo of commentary on poets and poetry, and also humor tale collections from the 15th century. Word play tales gained popularity in late 15th century within the open cultural atmosphere of the time, which emphasized realism, humor and camaraderie in the writing community.

Word play tales are structured as contest narratives, and the contests can be divided into two types, those of spoken words and those of written words:

Spoken word contests take on dramatic effect by featuring contestants that reverse the audience's expectations. An example is the tale "Child Who Talked Back," in which a nobleman, all dressed up, walks past a millet field when he sees a boy about five years old, squatting with his pants down, and asks, "Where do you think you are?" and the boy replies, "Millet field, can't you tell?" Repetition is another important device, used to add dramatic effect in the tale "Long, Long Time Ago," which features repeated phrases and beats. Puns are also often used in spoken word contest narratives, which result in misunderstandings and ambiguities, creating comic effect.

Written word contest narratives often take the form of the couplet contest, borrowed from the tradition of the couplet contest in Chinese literature. An example is the tale "Nothing That Cannot Be Turned Into a Couplet," in which Chinese names and historical references are used to make up a string of couplets, arranged to make two different interpretations possible. The couplets for instance, can be interpreted as "Insangyeo and Samaangyeo share the same name Sangyeo but their last names are not Sangyeo," or "Insangyeo and Samaangyeo share the same name but have different surnames," and "Wimugi and Jangsonmugi means you and I are both Mugi" or "Wimugi and Jangsonmugi means neither you or I have anything to be hesitant about."

Another form of the written word contest narrative brings together puns, especially Korean vocabulary that have the same sounds as words in Chinese characters, to create poems. An example is the tale "Groom's Chaperone Is a Talented Writer," in which Kim Sakkat attends a wedding as the chaperone of a groom of inferior intelligence and recites a poem, claiming it was written by the groom, which, when understood as a Chinese character poem, sounds lyrical and philosophical, but when understood as a poem made up of Korean words, sounds crass and comical.

There is also the glyptomancy (*paja*) tale, referring to splitting or combining Chinese characters and their components. An example is the tale "Paja," which features a scholar by the surname of Kim and another by the surname of Yu. Kim lived in the west village and Yu lived in the east village, and Yu would tease, "The west (西) village is evil (惡), and a mouth (口) to the west means to sneer (哂)," the only basis of the statement being the various associated letters and their components, put together in different arrangements.

The many different ways that a Chinese character text can be read serve as the structure of word play tales as well. In the tale "Naebulwang (來不往)," a group of scholars exchanged notes to organize an

outing and a response arrived, reading, “來不往 來不往,” which they could not quite decipher, but since the message contained the character “不,” meaning “not” twice, they assumed it meant the sender could not make it, but the sender rushed over, and explained that the message had meant, “I would go even if asked not to come, so why would I not go when I am asked to come?”

Word play tales make up a subgenre of witticisms or droll tales, and can be characterized as humorous, short and structured around a single motif, mainly in dialogue form, and focus on their impact as entertainment rather than morals.

Wrestle with a Goblin

도깨비 씨름

“Dokkaebissireum” is a tale that narrates a man’s encounter with a goblin (*dokkaebi*) that turns into a wrestling match, and is observed across the country.

A man was walking on a mountain pass, returning home from the market after a drink at the tavern, when a goblin appeared and challenged him to a wrestling match. The match went on all night and only at daybreak the man was able to defeat the goblin and head home after tying it to a tree with his belt. When he returned the following morning, the spot was scattered with broomsticks and flails.

In most *dokkaebi* narratives, goblins are tied to a tree after their defeat, following which they turn into broomsticks or flails. Sometimes they are also depicted as one-legged creatures, which is the only reason a human is able to defeat them. This is also reflected in the Chinese-character transliteration of *dokkaebi*, which is 獨脚鬼, meaning one-legged ghost.

Wrestling was one of the most popular folk games in Joseon, which implies that these goblins possess a distinctively Korean identity. The narrative also reflects through the goblins, the human desire to display their power and capacities.

Yeoni and Willow Bachelor

연이와 버들도령

This stepmother tale narrates the story of a daughter who is sent out by her stepmother to pick herbs in the middle of winter but overcomes this ordeal with help from a bachelor possessing supernatural powers.

Yeoni is sent out by her stepmother to find mountain herbs in the coldest month of winter, and after wandering in the mountains, comes across a mysterious cave overflowing with lush trees and plants. There she meets Beodeuldoryeong (Willow Bachelor) who finds the herbs for her, who instructs her to recite the following spell to open the cave on her subsequent visits: “Bachelor Kim from Kimhae, Bachelor Nam from Namhae, open the gates.” And he also tells her about different types of reincarnation flowers (*hwansaengkkot*): *sumsarikkot*, which return breath to the dead; *bbyeosarikkot*, which brings bones back to life; and *salsarikkot*, which grows back flesh. The stepmother becomes suspicious and follows Yeoni to the cave, where the stepmother kills the bachelor, but Yeoni brings him back to life with a reincarnation flower and they wed.

Variations of this tale feature different types of mountain herbs, including *chamnamul* (barren-ground willow), *gosari* (bracken) and lettuce, and the spells also vary according to region. In some versions, the stepmother is helped by a white dog, her dead mother, or a bird in finding the cave, and the reincarnation flower sometimes appears in the form of a medicine bottle. There is also a version in which the stepdaughter and the bachelor become brother and sister and ascend to the heavens.

The tale’s heroine continues to overcome any ordeal, however difficult, which some interpret as a reflection of the persistent strength of Korean women. The heroine’s overcoming of obstacles as she suffers the stepmother’s abuse and encounters the bachelor is viewed as the process of a woman’s incomplete sense of self growing into a singular mature character.

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Annotated Collection of Village Tales

촌담해이 Chondamhaei

Chondamhaei is a collection of droll tales compiled by Gang Hui-maeng (1424-1483) in early Joseon.

A full edition of this book does not currently remain and the exact number of tales contained in the book is unknown. Gang's introduction mentions eight narratives, about the deception of the peony; the foolish servant's trick; the mad servant playing matchmaker; mole's wedding; the young monk who stole a persimmon; the cunning hare's judgment; of Hongseon who had blind faith in the heavenly hat; and of Hyeneung who was infatuated with Yeonhwa. Among them, four stories are held in collection at the Korea University Library under the titles "Modantaljae (Peony Steals Wealth)" "Chinohoeckcheop (Mad Servant Acquires Wife)" "Cheongbudokkwa (Poisonous Fruit in the Basket)" "Gyegyeongjuji (Hanging of Chief Monk)." Another edition of *Chondamhaei*, comprising ten tales, is included in *Gogeumsochong* (*Assorted Collection of Ancient Humor*), and it is viewed that the six narratives, other than the four aforementioned, are later additions. Among the ten, four are carnal tales or trick tales, with organized narrative structure and significant in length. Each are accompanied by a commentary at the end, reflecting the editor's opinions and appreciations about the tale.

Assorted Collection of Ancient Humor

고금소총 Gogeumsochong

Gogeumsochong is a collection of droll tales, comprising eleven different humor anthologies compiled from early to late Joseon.

A mimeograph edition of the collection's first volume was published anonymously in 1959, which was preceded by *Joseongogeumsochong*



Collection of Ancient Humor.
Kyujanggak, Seoul National University

(*Assorted Collection of Ancient Humor from Joseon*) in 1947, the first edition of which included *Eosurok* (*Records to Chase Away Languor*); the second edition including *Chondamhaei* (*Annotated Collection of Village Tales*); and the third *Eomyeonsun* (*Shield Against Languor*). In 1970, a total of three hundred and seventy-nine droll tales were collected under the title *Gogeumsochong*, which included the both the Chinese-character texts and the Hangeul translations, and in 2008, the entire original collection from Joseon was published in five volumes. The full collection comprises a total of eight hundred and twenty-two tales in eleven anthologies: one hundred and forty-six tales in *Taepyeonghanhwagolgyejeon* (*Collection of Humorous Tales of Leisure*); eighty-two tales in *Eomyeonsun*; thirty-two in the sequel *Sokeomyeonsun*; ten in *Chondamhaei*; seventy-nine in *Myeongyeopjhae* (*Calendar Collection of Humor*); sixty-three *Pasurok* (*Records to Break Languor*); one hundred and twenty-nine in *Eosusinhwa* (*New Tales to Chase Away Languor*); forty-nine in *Jindamnok* (*Record of Miscellaneous Tales*); eighty in *Seongsupaeseol* (*Miscellaneous Tales to Chase Away Languor*); sixty-six in *Gimun* (*Strange Tales*); and eighty-six in *Gyosujapsa* (*Collection of Tales to Chase Away Languor*).

Assorted Writings of Yongjae

용재총화 Yongjaechonghwa

Yongjaechonghwa is a collection of miscellaneous writings by Seong Hyeon (1439-1504), pen name Yongjae, from early Joseon.

The book was first published in the 20th year of King Jungjong's reign (1525) and currently held in collection at the Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies are a three-volume three-chapter manuscript edition and a lithograph edition; a five-volume five-chapter woodblock edition housed at the Yonsei University Library; and an incomplete edition at the Korea University Library.

The book is a comprehensive record from Goryeo through King Seongjong's reign in Joseon, of writers, calligraphers, painters and musicians; of capitals, war, ceramics, epitaphs, and typeface; of the administrative system in early Joseon including state examinations, Seongjeongwon (Royal Secretariat), Yejo (Ministry of Rites), Jiphyeonjeon (Hall of Worthies); of court events like the Cheoyong dance, fireworks, or ghost-repelling ritual; and of wedding rituals, initiation rites, seasonal customs, birth rituals and Buddhist rituals. The book contains a large number of anecdotes about distinctive characters, both literati and commoners. There are many writings on poetry as well, including brief critical commentaries on past Korean poetry, and also on

specific individual passages. There are also personal family anecdotes, along with proverbs and ancient sayings, legends and biographies. Natural phenomena are also observed, including metamorphosis, tidal flow, pheasant meat, similar objects, the color of red bean blossoms, frogs croaking, the color of the tail of a stork. This vast book serves as an important reference for studying the society, folklore and literature of Joseon.

Collection of Humorous Tales of Leisure

태평한화글계전 Taepyeonghanhwagolgyejeon

Taepyeonghanhwagolgyejeon is a collection of droll tales written in Chinese characters, compiled by Seo Geo-jeong during the reign of King Seongjong in Joseon.

Written in the 8th year of Seongjong's rule and published in the 13th year, the collection was a four-volume set, according to Gang Hui-maeng's introduction, but a full edition does not remain today. Currently there are five different editions remaining, all incomplete: a woodblock edition housed at Korea University's Mansong Collection; a mimeograph copy of an edition owned by Bang Song-hyeon; a printed copy included in the edition of *Gogeuksuchong* (*Assorted Collection of Ancient Humor*) published by the Folklore Reference Publication Society; a manuscript edition housed in the Imanishi Collection at Tenri University in Japan; and a manuscript edition in a private collection owned by Jeong Byeong-uk. Seo stated that his aim in putting this collection together was "to record the jokes that I exchanged with friends in order to forget about the worries of the world," which underlines that the tales were transmitted among intellectuals of the time. The collection is the vastest remaining anthology of folk tales, a singular feat in the history of Korean literature that influenced many others that followed.



Assorted Writings of Yongjae.

Seong Hyeon, 20th century, Kyujanggak, Seoul National University

Collection of Tales from the Eastern Plains

동야휘집 Dongyahwijip

Dongyahwijip is a collection of tales put together by Yi Won-myeong (1807-1887) of late Joseon.

Different editions of the book are currently held in collection at various institutions around the country: four different editions at Seoul National University; two at Yonsei University; one at Sungkyunkwan University; one at Sookmyung Women's University; and two at the National Library of Korea. There is also a copy of the book's eight-chapter eight-volume edition at the Osaka Municipal Library in Japan. One of the eight-chapter eight-volume editions is a mimeograph of two volumes of the original held in the Jang Ji-yeong Collection, printed in 1958 by the Korean Literature Society of Kyungpook National University's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; and another one was printed by the National Library of Korea.

Dongyahwijip is a comprehensive collection of a wide range of tales from the past and present, their selection based on the tastes and world view of the book's editor, who also provided extensive revisions and polishing on many of the tales. In some versions, individual stories were grouped under single titles. The Confucian literati mindset was a major influence, resulting in the modification of some situations in the tales from a conservative perspective and a writing style that is formal and literary. Based on Yi's extensive reading, the book included works not only from story collections from Joseon but from China as well, most notably 18 stories from *Xie duo*, an anthology of the loosely structured narrative genre *biji xiaoshuo*, or brush note novellas. Other references include *Eouyadam* (*Tales by Eou*); *Gimunchonghwa* (*Assorted Collection of Tales Read and Heard*); *Gyeseoyadam* (*Tales by Gyeseo*); and *Cheonggyuyadam* (*Tales from the Green Hills*).

The collection follows a unique structure comprising 13 sections, which are again divided into over 80 categories. Each tale is given a title of

seven or eight Chinese characters. It is also notable that some of the stories conclude with a short commentary.



Collection of Tales from the Eastern Plains.

Yi Won-myeong, 19th century, Kyujanggak, Seoul National University

Collection of Tales from the Great Eastern Kingdom

대동야승 Daedongyaseung

Daedongyaseung is a collection of folk narratives and miscellaneous tales from Joseon, compiled into seventy-two chapters in seventy-two volumes.

The collection's exact publication date is unknown, and is speculated to have taken place between the last years of King Sukjong's rule to the reign of King Yeongjo or King Jeongjo. The only remaining copy is the manuscript edition currently in collection at the Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies. The collection is a compilation of fifty-nine different titles on a wide range of records, from modified historical accounts to miscellaneous anecdotes from local or literati communities, some embellished with fictional elements. The narrative structure also varies, from *yasa* (unofficial history) and *ilhwa* (anecdote) to *sihwa* (poetic tale), *sohwa* (droll tale), *mallok* (informal record) and *supil* (essay). Some of the titles include *Pirwonjapgi* (*Miscellaneous Writings*) by Seo Geo-jeong (1420-1489) and *Yongcheondamjeokgi* (*Tales Recorded by*



Collection of Tales from the Great Eastern Kingdom.
17th century, Kyujanggak, Seoul National University

Yongcheon) by Kim An-ro (1481-1537) from early Joseon, published between late 15th and early 16th centuries, and *Gimyorokboyu* (*Additional Records on the Purge of the Year of Gimyo*) by An Ro and *Ilsagimun* (*History Hidden and Heard*) by unknown author, from between late 16th and early 17th centuries. Collections from mid-Joseon record the social, economic and political turbulence of the time. Records about the purges of literati factions and major crimes serve as important historical references, along with those on the Japanese invasion of 1592 and the Manchu invasion of 1636.

Eou's Unofficial Histories

어우야담 Eouyadam

Eouyadam is a collection of folk narratives compiled by Yu Mong-in (1559-1623), pen name Eou, in mid-Joseon.

There are over thirty different editions of the book, showing how widely it was read. When Yu Mong-in's descendant Yu Geum was working on the compilation of the author's poetry collection *Eoujip* in 1832, he also had plans to anthologize posthumous manuscripts of folk narrative not included in

Eouyadam, but was unable to see it through. In 1964, another descendant, Yu Je-han compiled the different editions of the book into five volumes under the title *Manjongjaebon*. The first volume, on "Human Morality," comprises stories about filial piety and chastity, loyalty, virtue, seclusion, marriage, wives and concubines, weather, friendship, slavery, entertainers and courtesans; the second, on "Religion," has stories about Taoism, Buddhist priesthood, Western religion, shamanism, dreams, spirits, ghosts, taboos, traditional geomancy and lifespan; the third, on "Arts and Sciences," includes stories on literature and arts, music, etiquette, knowledge, archery, calligraphy and painting, medicine, martial arts, divination, and board games; the fourth, on "Society," compiles stories on state examinations, wealth, pursuit of public office, perseverance, factional disputes, discreet acts of kindness, deception, antiquity, courage, provincial public post, eloquence, public conduct, arrogance, greed, disaster, hardship, theft and humor; the fifth, on "All Creations," has stories about heaven and earth, flora, mankind, fauna, fish and shellfish, and antiques.

The collection includes a significant number of tales of high literary quality and well-developed narrative structure, as well as various records on



Eou's Unofficial Histories.
Yu Mong-in, late 17th century,
Kyujanggak, Seoul National University

people and events and history, and verse and ghost stories. The tales provide a vivid glimpse of life in Seoul before and after the Japanese invasion of 1592. Manuscript editions of the collection are housed at the Yeungnam University Library, the National Library of Korea, and the Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies.

History of the Three Kingdoms

삼국사기 Samguksagi

Samguksagi is a book on the history of the Three Kingdoms—Goguryeo, Baekje and Silla—compiled by Kim Bu-sik and others around 1145 by the royal command of King Injong of Goryeo.

Structured in annalistic form, the book comprises twenty-eight volumes of “Bongi (Records)” —ten on Goguryeo, six on Baekje and twelve on Silla and Unified Silla; nine volumes of “Ji (Treatises)” ; three volumes of “Pyo (Chronological Tables)” ; and ten volumes of “Yeoljeon (Biographies).” *Samguksagi* does not simply comprise historical records, and cites from folk narratives when relevant to the event being described. Folk narratives play a significant

role in the biographical narratives in “Yeoljeon,” ten volumes of which make up an important literary legacy. Three of the ten volumes are dedicated to Kim Yu-sin and the seven remaining ones narrate biographies of sixty-eight figures. The biographical format was borrowed from the Chinese history book *Shiji (Records of the Grand Historian)* by Sima Qian, to offer a vivid and dynamic portrayal of the makers of history. Elements of folk narratives include Kim Yu-sin’s encounter with an elderly man while praying in Jungak cave, who trains him in supernatural methods, and Ondal’s biography, which mirrors motifs from the folk tale version. It is also notable that figures of lowly status were also included if their deeds deserved credit, including Maiden Seol and Wife of Domi; and traitors were also introduced to admonish their crimes, including Changjori, Gungye and Gyeon Hwon.

Samguksagi serves both as an official historical record and literary reference of great importance, a model publication providing a consistent and well-organized account based on Confucian values and historical perspectives, written in a highly polished style.



History of the Three Kingdoms.
Kim Bu-sik, 1932, National Library of Korea



Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms

삼국유사 Samgungnyusa

Samgungnyusa is a history book written by Bogak-guksa (All-Enlightened National Preceptor) Iryeon (1206-1289) in Goryeo, recording the history, culture, religion and folklore of ancient kingdoms from Gojoseon to Unified Silla.

The publication comprises nine chapters in five volumes: “Wangnyeok (Chronology of Monarchs)” records the kings of the Three Kingdoms and the related events; “Giyi (Records of Marvels)” records the founding of the kingdoms that came before Silla and Silla’s history in the first half, and in the second half the political events from the reign of King Munmu to Late Baekje; “Heungbeop (Raising of the Dharma)” accounts the introduction of Buddhism to Silla and its acceptance and transmission; “Tapsang (Stupas and Images)” narrates the history surrounding the stupas, temples and sarira, the symbols of Buddhism; “Uihae (Exegetes)” discusses the lives of eminent monks of Silla; “Sinju (Supernatural Spells)” depicts the miracles of Esoteric Buddhism; “Gamtong (Bodhisattvas’ Responses to Sentient Beings)” narrates the divine spiritual experiences related to Buddhism; “Pieun

(Hermits’ Lives)” depicts the lives of monks who have left the secular world for seclusion; and “Hyoseon (Filial Piety)” discusses Buddhist good deeds, centering on filial piety.

This book’s structure, arranged by topic, is a departure from the chronological narrative of history books, which allowed for the inclusion of a wide variety of folk narratives. As seen in the term “yusa,” meaning “overlooked events,” the book does not emphasize legitimacy or authenticity, citing many mythological accounts of wondrous events. At the same time, the book offers wide-ranging bibliographical citations, underlining the accountability of its contents. The book’s biggest significance lies in its importance as a literary text that offers a vivid portrayal of human lives, traversing history and literature, transcendence and everyday life, truth and fiction.

Shield Against Languor

어면순 Eomyeonsun

Eomyeonsun is a collection of droll tales compiled by Song Se-rim (1479-1519) in early Joseon.



Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms.
Iryeon, 1512, Kyujanggak, Seoul National University

Song Se-rim was a young man of exceptional intelligence who passed the state examinations for civil service at the age of twenty-three, but illness sent him to retire from public office and compile *Eomyeonsun*. The book was first published as a wooden type edition by Song's younger brother Song Se-hyeong, but this edition does not remain today. The two-volume book comprises eighty-two tales, with an introduction by Jeong Sa-ryong. About half of the compiled narratives are carnal tales, which made later generations of Joseon literati label the book as a scandalous endeavor that should be burned, and the book was not widely distributed. In contrast to Seo Geo-jeong's authorial intent in *Taepyeonghanhwagolgejeon* (*Collection of Humorous Tales of Leisure*), to depict a harmonious world, Song attempted to show a chaotic world full of frustration and grievance through the humorous narratives in his book. The two collections serve as important references in understanding the two different traditions of droll tales in early Joseon.

Tales from Gyeseo

계서야담 Gyeseoyadam

Gyeseoyadam is a book of folk tales collected by an unknown editor.

The collected tales are largely from *Gimunchonghwa* (*Assorted Collection of Tales Read and Heard*), with parts excerpted from *Gyeseojamnok* (*Collection of Miscellany by Gyeseo*), edited by Yi Hui-yeong, pen name Gyeseo, in 1828. The exact date of the publication of *Gyeseoyadam* is unknown, but is assumed to have succeeded *Gimunchonghwa*, compiled between 1833 and 1869. The earliest edition of the book that remains today is the one in the collections of Tenri University in Japan, comprising four volumes and four chapters. The edition includes a total of three hundred and thirteen tales, seventy-one tales in the first volume; twenty-seven in the second

volume; forty-five in the third; and one hundred-seventy in the fourth volume. An anecdote about Hong Sun-eon is the only tale in the collection that is a complete new addition. It is also of note that the collection excludes tales from *Gimunchonghwa* that were anthologized in *Eouyadam* (*Eou's Unofficial Histories*).

Considered one of the three major collections of folk narratives from Joseon alongside *Cheongguyadam* (*Tales from the Green Hills*) and *Dongyahwijip* (*Tales from the Eastern Plains*), *Gyeseoyadam* serves as an interesting reference for understanding how folk literature was read and enjoyed at the time.



Tales from Gyeseo.

Yi Hui-jun, 19th century, Kyujanggak, Seoul National University

Tales from the Green Hills

청구야담 Cheongguyadam

Cheongguyadam is a collection of folk narratives compiled by an unknown editor in late Joseon around mid-19th century.

Along with *Gyeseoyadam* (*Tales from Gyeseo*) and *Dongyahwijip* (*Tales from the Eastern Plains*), *Cheongguyadam* is considered one of the three major collections of folk narratives from Joseon, and the one among them that retains the tales in their most original form. There are many editions of the book, among which the ten-volume ten-chapter edition currently housed at the University of California-Berkeley being the oldest remaining one.



Tales from the Green Hills.

19th century, Kyujanggak, Seoul National University

Held in collection at the Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies are two Hangeul editions comprising nineteen chapters in nineteen volumes, which shows that the book was read in the royal courts as well. It is believed that the most comprehensive edition contained around 290 tales, many excerpted from other folk tale anthologies including *Haksanhaneon* (*Idle Writings by Haksan*), *Gyeseojamnok* (*Collection of Miscellany by Gyeseo*) and *Hujae-jeonseo* (*Complete Works of Hujae*). At the same time, the versions in *Cheongguyadam* attempt a different approach, focusing on the events being depicted, ignoring elements that support their verity, including the informants, and omitting commentaries that offer objectivity. The collection, in other words, marks a turning point in the transmission of folk narratives, from an approach emphasizing reality to one that focuses on entertaining the readers.

household of high official Hong Bong-han. The earliest remaining edition is held in collection at Yonsei University, which contains seventy-eight tales, but book's introduction, by Hong Rak-su, notes that the book compiles "over one hundred tales in oral transmission collected while taking a break from writing." The collection includes a wide range of tales, from tales of ghosts and Taoist hermits and romance stories, to tales of class conflict, war, state affairs, and good deeds, most notable being a significant number of tales of contemporary events. The chapters are not titled. *Dongpaenaksong* greatly influenced *Gyeseojamnok* (*Collection of Miscellany by Gyeseo*), which played a crucial role in the transmission of folk narratives.

Tales of the Eastern Kingdom for Repeated Recitation

동패낙송 Dongpaenaksong

Dongpaenaksong is a collection of folk tales compiled by No Myeong-heum (1713-1775) in late Joseon.

The book was put together by No between 1774 ad 1775, when he served as a tutor in the

OPEDIA

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