



# “The Tale of Chunhyang” as Translated by Western Missionaries

Janet Yoon-sun LEE

## Abstract

*The story of a woman who pursues romance and marriage is popular source material in many cultures. “Chunhyang jeon” (The Tale of Chunhyang) is similar to “Cinderella,” in that each is a tale of a mistreated young woman who is presented with an opportunity to marry well and escape her situation. “The Tale of Chunhyang,” however, encompasses not only universal but also local themes. Chunhyang’s marriage above her social position suggests a serious challenge to Korea’s social stratification system, so knowledge of local practices is required to appreciate the rebellious message embedded in the text. This article investigates how the pendulum of interpretation has swung between the ubiquitous theme of love and the local message of political change through emancipation, by examining the earliest English translations of the story—“Chun Yang” (1889) by Horace Allen and “Choon Yang” (1917–1918) by James Gale. The translations do not simply restate the story but rather reinvent the hero and heroine to modulate Western readers’ engagement with Korean culture. This article explores how Western missionaries defined the literary meanings and values of “The Tale of Chunhyang” through translation practices, and how they reinvented Korean cultural identity in their representation of the tale in English.*

**Keywords:** Confucian patriarchy, evangelism, *The Tale of Chunhyang*, translation, Western missionaries

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## “The Tale of Chunhyang” as Translated by Western Missionaries

Without translation, the very concept of universality cannot cross the linguistic borders it claims, in principle, to be able to cross. Or we might put it another way: without translation, the only way the assertion of universality can cross a border is through a colonial and expansionist logic. (Butler 2000, 35)

“Chunhyang jeon” (The Tale of Chunhyang) is an important source in the Korean literary tradition, one that has transcended borders after being made available in many other languages. Its popularity in both domestic and overseas markets is evidenced by the considerable number of editions, foreign translations, and film versions that have been produced. The story has attracted diverse audiences, both past and present, in both East and West, due to its familiar theme of love subtly blended with humor and satire.

In the story, set in the 17th to 18th centuries, Chunhyang, the sixteen-year-old daughter of a *gisaeng* (female entertainer), attracts the attention of Yi Mong-ryong, the son of the new magistrate of Namwon County. The two fall in love at first sight and exchange promises of love and devotion. They are soon separated when Yi has to move to Seoul, accompanying his father, who has been transferred to a new position in the capital. After Yi's departure, Byeon Hak-do, who replaces Yi's father, is enthralled by Chunhyang's beauty and orders her to serve him. Chunhyang refuses Byeon's unlawful treatment, remaining faithful to Yi and, as a result, she is tortured and imprisoned. Meanwhile, Yi has successfully passed the civil service examination and is now a secret royal inspector. He returns to Namwon, traveling incognito. Dressed as a beggar, he attends Byeon's birthday celebration. After reciting a satirical poem on Byeon's despotism, Yi reveals his identity and rescues Chunhyang. Their reunion is the story's happy ending.

The theme of pursuing romantic love is common source material in many cultures. “The Tale of Chunhyang” depicts a mistreated young woman who happens upon an opportunity to escape her situation and marry well. Here, the magic of love is employed to simplify the relationship

between social standing and marriage. “The Tale of Chunhyang,” however, also contains a subversive message. Chunhyang’s marriage above her social position is seen as a heroic challenge to cultural norms; her rebellion symbolizes the popular desire to topple the prevailing social hierarchy of the Joseon dynasty (1392–1910). Chunhyang is depicted as a *yeollyo* (faithful woman) in conformation to the standards of the *yangban* elite and state ideology, and also to affirm that even the lower classes should adhere to the social and gender norms of Confucian culture. Simultaneously, Chunhyang’s marriage to Yi delivers an emancipatory message to lower-status groups, while her moral superiority over the new magistrate carries the covert message of scolding Joseon society’s ruling class (Jo 1974, 227–242).

The powerful theme of “The Tale of Chunhyang” attracted the attention of Anglo-American missionaries arriving in Korea in the late 19th century and transformed them into pioneering scholars and writers of Korean literature.<sup>1</sup> In particular, Horace Allen (1858–1932) and James Gale (1863–1937), taking a critical view of other missionaries’ puritanical strictness and narrow-mindedness, explored Korea’s geography, ethnography, and religion to better understand the Korean people. Allen’s and Gale’s achievements contributed to the development of Korean language and cultural studies in the West (Finch 2012, 61).

Allen and Gale hoped to connect readers to Korean literature and increase cultural intimacy. Their translation projects were aimed to educate ill-informed or completely ignorant Westerners about Korea. To connect the local culture to the center of the Western world, the translators endeavored to represent Korea in a less esoteric and cryptic form and adopted

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1. “The Tale of Chunhyang” is available in several English translations. Allen’s and Gale’s earliest translations were followed by Edward J. Urquhart’s “The Fragrance of Spring” (1929), Chai Hong Sim’s “Fragrance of Spring” (1950), Ha Tae-hung’s “Spring Fragrance” in *Folk Tales of Old Korea* (1958), Chin In-sook’s *A Classical Novel Chun-hyang* (1970), Richard Rutt’s “The Song of a Faithful Wife: Ch’un-hyang” in *Virtuous Women: Three Masterpieces of Traditional Korean Fiction* (1974), and Samuel Kimm’s *The Pure Hearted Lady, Ch’un-Hyang Story* (1998) (O 2007, 402–406). Recent versions include Peter H. Lee’s “A Road to Chunhyang” in *Azalea* (2010) and Brother Anthony of Taizé’s “Fragrant Springtime” (2016), a translation of *Printemps Parfumé* (1892), a French version.

*domestication* as one of their translating strategies, which advocates a transparent, fluent style and minimizes the strangeness of the foreign text to conform to the target reader's standards (Venuti 2010). The translations also reveal their vacillation between hope and despair as religious missionaries. They were torn between their primary mission to modernize Korea through the gospel and the anxiety of preserving Korean tradition in opposition to the imperialist powers.

Earlier studies examined different versions of English translations of "The Tale of Chunhyang," focusing on identifying the source text of Allen's translations (Gu 1963; O 2007; Jeon 2014; Jeon 2016) or attempting a lexicon comparison between the source text and the translated text in Gale's works (S. Yi 2010; Yi and Yi 2015b). These studies, however, failed to demonstrate an understanding of the Western missionaries' complicated position as translators. This article instead examines how each translator, situated in an analogous but dissimilar context, reinterpreted cultural elements in the story and transferred them into modern-day English. The translated texts reveal how the translators reinvented a hero and a heroine to familiarize Western readers with Korean culture and also attempted to transform the story to empower Korea. Specifically, this study analyzes the literary aspects of the English translations through close examination of Horace Allen's "Chun Yang" (1889) and James Gale's "Choon Yang" (1917-1918).

### **The Source Materials for the English Translations of "The Tale of Chunhyang"**

"The Tale of Chunhyang," emerging from the oral tradition, has developed into a narrative incorporating diverse voices of different classes, genders, and backgrounds. As an anonymous story, its origin is obscure, but since the emergence of popular readers, the story has appeared in numerous versions of handwritten, woodblock, and print editions, beginning in the late 19th century and flourishing in the early 20th century.

The oldest version of the tale is found in Yu Jinhan's collected writings, "Manhwajip" (1754), which contains a long love poem in literary Chinese

that is considered to be a prototype of "The Tale of Chunhyang" (T. Yi 2003, 193–208). With the rise of the market for literary productions in the 19th century, "The Tale of Chunhyang" was engendered as a *panggakbon* (privately published edition), which were particularly prevalent in the Seoul and Jeonju regions. These two varieties, however, display noticeable regional differences. Specifically, *gyeongpan* (the Seoul edition), involves fewer improvisations, is less affected by musical elements and maintains a consistent plot and characters. This version centers on the male protagonist to target male elites as its main consumer base (Hunggyu Kim 2003, 294), while Chunhyang is deprived of her noble origin and instead presented as a *gisaeng* of obscure background (Ho 2016, 8–42). Contrary to the Seoul edition, *wanpan* (the Jeonju edition) emphasize Chunhyang's upper-class origins by suggesting her father was a former magistrate. This version often incorporates such lyrical elements as folk, shaman, and popular songs. In the late 19th century, the Seoul edition became the most popular source text for the translation of "The Tale of Chunhyang," generating Japanese, English, French, Russian, and Chinese versions (Jeon 2016, 152).

As for the source text of Allen's "Chun Yang" (1889), Gu Jagyun claimed that Allen's text deals with elements found only in the Seoul edition. For example, Allen's version indicates Yi Mong-ryong's father's name; Chunhyang is presented as a *gisaeng*; Hyangdan does not appear as Chunhyang's female servant; Yi Mongnyong and Chunhyang exchange written pledges and gifts before saying farewell (Gu 1963, 231–232). As a result of this research, "Gyeongpan 30 jangbon" (the 30-sheet Seoul edition), the most extended version of the Seoul edition, was considered the source material of Allen's work (Sa and Jeon 2004, 186), until a recent study claimed that "Gyeongpan 23 jangbon" (the 23-sheet Seoul woodblock edition) was Allen's source text (Jeon 2014, 128, 135–139).<sup>2</sup> My own cross-check of the Seoul woodblock editions supports this latter claim.<sup>3</sup>

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2. It should be noted that, at this time, the Seoul woodblock edition is available in five versions composed of 16, 7, 23, 30, and 35 sheets.

3. This study refers to "Gyeongpan 23 jangbon Chunhyang jeon" ("The Tale of Chunhyang" in the 23-sheet Seoul woodblock edition), in J. Kim et al 1997a.

On the other hand, it is evident that Gale adopted Yi Haejo's (1869–1927) rendition of the tale, *Okjunghwa* (Flower in Prison), for his translation (Rutt 1974, 238). *Flower in Prison*, serialized in the *Daehan maeil sinbo* from January to July 1912, was the most popular edition of “The Tale of Chunhyang” in the early 20th century (T. Yi 2003, 197). In Yi Haejo's remake, class stratification is undermined by the placement of Chunhyang in the *yangban* class (Gwon 1990, 234). Further, Yi Mong-ryong's parents are described as being supportive of their son's secret marriage and sympathetic toward Chunhyang's abandonment in Namwon. The depiction of the new magistrate is also different, as he is portrayed as a virile old man rather than a brutal, corrupt governor (Gwon 1990, 231–259). These changes were also adopted in Gale's translation, “Choon Yang,” which he published in *The Korea Magazine*, a monthly chronicle for Western settlers in Korea, from December 1917 to July 1918 (Rutt 1972, 56).<sup>4</sup>

The analysis of Allen's and Gale's translated texts in the following section shows that translation is not merely the process of rendering a given text into another language, but is a cultural artifact deeply associated with historical reality. Based on this notion, this article poses the question of how the translator's position, particularly in the age of colonialism, influenced the practice of translation and illuminates the ambivalent position of the translators, who not only domesticated “The Tale of Chunhyang” to the norms of the target Western readers but also reconstructed the characters to represent the social status system and gender norms of Korean traditional society.

### **The Male-Centered Narrative in Horace Allen's Translation**

Horace Allen (1858–1932), the first American Presbyterian missionary in Korea, arrived at the turn of the 20th century. A medical missionary

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4. *The Korea Magazine* was a monthly chronicle designed by a group of missionaries, including Willard Gliden Cram, James Gale, and William Arthur Noble, whose aim was to provide practical information to the community of Western missionaries in Korea.

who aimed to bring modern medical education to Korea, Allen is often referred to as a diplomat due to his close association with King Gojong (r. 1863–1907).<sup>5</sup> In 1889, the king asked Allen to help the Korean members of a delegation in the United States. During his mission in Washington, D.C., Allen published a literary collection entitled *Korean Tales*, with the intent of introducing the popular stories and folktales of Joseon Korea to an English-speaking audience. In the book's preface, Allen states:

My objective in writing this book was to correct the erroneous impressions I have found somewhat prevalent—that the Koreans were a semi-savage people.... I also wished to have some means of answering the constant inquiries from all parts of the country concerning Korean life and characteristics. People in Washington have asked me if Korea was an island in the Mediterranean; others have asked if Korea could be reached by rail from Europe; others have supposed that Korea was somewhere in the South Seas, with a climate that enabled the natives to dispense with clothing. (Allen 1889, 3–4)

This project was born out of his personal interest in Korea, but his motivation increased during his trip to the American capital, where he was often asked about Korea. In an attempt to address Westerners' lack of knowledge on Korea, he translated several pieces, including "The Rabbit and Other Legends," "The Enchanted Wine Jug," "Ching Yuh and Kyain Oo" ("The Weaver Girl and the Cowherd"), "Hyung Bo and Nahl Bo" ('Hungbo and Nolbo'), "Sim Chung" ("The Tale of Sim Cheong"), and "Hong Kil Tong" ("The Tale of Hong Gil-dong"). *Korean Tales* also contains a translation of "The Tale of Chunhyang" known as "Chun Yang: The Faithful Dancing-Girl Wife."

Allen's translation centers on Ye Toh Ryung (hereafter Yi Mong-ryong), whose origin, heritage, and social status are emphasized from the beginning using ordinary words. Instead of comparing Yi's talents with those of Du

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5. Allen was also appointed as a court physician after helping Prince Min recover his health. With Allen's connection to the royal family, he influenced not only Western missionary works but also US commercial investment in Korea (Henry Kim 2013, 1–21).

Mu (803–852) and Li Bo (701–762)<sup>6</sup> as in the original text, Yi is described as an impeccable young man in appearance and morals: “[H]e was not an ordinary young man, however, for in addition to a handsome, manly face and stalwart figure, he possessed a bright, quick mind, and was naturally clever. A more dutiful son could not be found” (Allen 1889, 116).<sup>7</sup>

In the following scene, Yi visits Kang Hal Loo (Gwanghan Pavilion) where he encounters the heroine, Chun Yang (hereafter Chunhyang). The translation illustrates the moment Yi is fascinated by Chunhyang in an exaggerated tone: “He could just get a consumed picture of an angelic face, surrounded by hair like the black thunder-cloud, a neck of ravishing beauty, and a dazzle of bright silks—when the whole had vanished” (Allen 1889, 118).<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, in the source text, Chunhyang is swinging outdoors, attending the *Dano* seasonal festival, but in the translation, her presence at home invokes a voyeuristic viewpoint augmented by the limited visibility of the female figure, and Yi’s elevated position in the pavilion enables him to look down to glimpse a woman on a swing inside a house.

“She is Uhl Mah’s daughter, a *gee sang* (public dancing girl) of this city; her name is Chun Yang Ye [Chunhyang]—fragrant spring.”

“I yah, superb; I can see her then, and have her sing and dance for me,” exclaimed Toh Ryung [Mong-ryong]. (Allen 1889, 119)

[SOURCE TEXT]

방자 그제야 엿자오대 다른거시 아니오라 본음 기생 월매 딸 춘향이로쇼이  
다 도령 말이 얼사 조흔시고 제 분이 창녀면 한번 구경 못할쇼냐 방자야 네  
가 불너오라. (J. Kim et al 1997a, 85)

6. Li Bo, or Li Bai 李白 (702–762), and Du Mu 杜牧 (803–852) were prominent poets and writers of the late Tang dynasty. They do not appear in Allen’s translation.

7. “년광이 십육의 관옥의 괴상과 두목지 풍채와 니백의 문장을 겸하어스니 칭찬 아니 리 업더라” [Yi was now sixteen years old. He had a jasper-like face. His fine presence was likened to Du Mu’s, and his literary talent was that of Li Bo. He attracted affection and admiration from people.] (J. Kim et al 1997a, 83).

8. “문득 녹음간 엿던 일미인이 휴천하난양 보고 심신이 황홀하여 급히 방자불너 못는 말이 저 건너 저거시 무어신고” [In the forest’s green shades, Yi discovered a fair maiden on a swing. Feeling exalted, he asked his valet, “Who is that woman?”] (J. Kim et al 1997a, 84).

In the above scene, Chunhyang, introduced to Yi Mong-ryong and readers by Yi's valet, Bangja, is identified as a *gisaeng* (female entertainer), which is interpreted as a "public dancing girl" by the translator. The exchange subtly exposes the hierarchical relationship between Yi and Chunhyang. Yi's response, "have her sing and dance for me," corresponds with Chunhyang's role as a public dancer, a lower-class social entertainer, in this translation.

The male-centric composition of the translation is partly due to the Seoul woodblock edition source text. In the capital, it was common for candidates who passed the civil service examination (*gwageo*) to request famous *pansori* singers to perform for them to celebrate their achievement. The rise of urban male *yangban* as connoisseurs and consumers inspired the story to emphasize male success both as suitors (love) and officers (career) (Hunggyu Kim 2003, 294). Nonetheless, Allen's version imposes more masculine and heroic qualities on the male protagonist. It reflects Allen's observation of Korean tradition as a patriarchal and male-centered system. In *Things Korean*, for example, Allen recounts that Korean women were secluded from the outer world and exposes his sympathy for the women kept busy doing laundry during the day and straightening clothes at night (Allen 1908, 96–98).<sup>9</sup>

In the translation, while Yi is characterized by youthful attributes such as confidence and restlessness, Chunhyang is a charming but prudent woman, wary of her vulnerable status as a singing girl.

"Certainly," he [Yi] answered, "we cannot celebrate the six customs ceremony [parental arrangement, exchange of letters, contracts, exchange of presents, preliminary visits, ceremony proper], but we can be privately married just the same."

"No, it cannot be. Your father would not consent, and should we be privately married, and your father be ordered to duty at some other place, you would not dare take me with you. Then you would marry the daughter of some nobleman, and I would be forgotten." (Allen 1889, 123)

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9. This attitude parallels another anecdote in *Things Korean*, in which Allen laments the fact that he could not see a female Korean patient due to the Korean gender norm that forbids Korean women to engage with other men in a public place (Allen 1908, 206).

## [SOURCE TEXT]

도령 왈 늑네난 비록 갖초지 못하나 혼인은 착실헌 혼인이 될 거시니 잡말  
말고 허락하여라 춘향이 첫자오대 만일 허락한 후 사또게옵서 필경 갈니시  
면 도련님은 올라가 고관대가의 성취하여 금슬지낙으로 세월을 보낼 적의  
날갯흔 천첩이야 생각할가 속전업슨 이내 일신 개밥의 도토리되리니 아모  
리 하와도 이 말삼 시행치 못할소이다. (J. Kim et al 1997a, 87)

Here the narrator discloses Chunhyang's concerns regarding her social background, but the translator adds a new element to the scene. Chunhyang aspires to portray herself as an elegant woman but is mortified by her profession as a singing girl. Yi Mong-ryong comes up with a simple solution. He first writes out a pledge to be a faithful husband. Then, he enters his father's office and secretly removes Chunhyang's name from the list of *gisaeng*. By describing how Yi frees her from her status as a dancing girl, the translation discourages any further scrutiny about social stratification, instead highlighting the male character's role and capability as a savior who wields the necessary power to rescue Chunhyang.

In this version, the translator takes the liberty of concentrating on Yi Mong-ryong's character development and reshaping the story into a *bildungsroman*, the genre that focuses on a character's journey from youth to psychological or emotional maturity through trials such as leaving home, undergoing various conflicts, and finally finding the best place to use his or her talents. As an example, when Yi bids farewell to Chunhyang and leaves for the capital, the source text is more attentive to Chunhyang's unarticulated feelings of disappointment, anger, and fear of abandonment, but the translation keenly articulates Yi's moans and determination:

“If you go to Seoul, you must not trifle, but take your books, study hard, and enter the examinations, then, perhaps, you may obtain rank and come to me. I will stand with my hand shading my eyes, ever watching for your return.” Promising to cherish her speech, with her image in his breast, they made their final adieu and tore apart. The long journey seemed like a funeral to the lover. Everywhere her image rose before him. He could not think of nothing else; but by the time he arrived at the capital he had made up his mind as to his future course, and from that day his parents

wondered at his stern, determined manner. He shut himself up in his room with his books. (Allen 1889, 132)

[SOURCE TEXT]

춘향이 옛자오대 떠나난 회포난 축냥 업거니와 부대 학업이는 힘써 입신양명하여 부모게 영화되고 내도 슈이 차즈시요 머리후애 손 언고 기다리리이다 도령이 답왈 그런 말이야 엇지 성언하리 부대 신을 직히여 나 오기를 고대하라 하고 마지 못하여 말기 올라 서울을 향할 새 도라보고 도라보니 한 산 넘어 오리되고 한 물 건너 십니 되매 춘향의 형용이 묘연한지라 춘향이 눈물을 씻고 북돋을 바라보니 임의 머러난지라 할일업서 집의 도라와 의복 단단 전폐하고 북병상창 구지 닳고 무정세월을 시름 속의 보내더라. (Jinyeong Kim et al 1997a, 94–95)

The separation from Chunhyang produces discomfort, but Yi’s journey provides a new quest for the meaning of life and also gives the author a vehicle to facilitate Yi’s transition from carefree boy to mature man. Yi prepares for and passes the civil service examination and is immediately appointed as an *ussa* (*eosa* 御史; a secret royal inspector), a high-ranking officer with the power to dismiss local officials in the king’s name. On Yi’s mission to Namwon, an old man expresses skepticism about the ruling class, telling Yi about a new magistrate’s misbehavior and maltreatment of his subjects and the commoners’ dread of the exploiter.<sup>10</sup> However, Allen’s translation focuses on Yi, describing him as one who pays attention to the people’s sufferings and understands their anger: “Yi Mong-ryong [Ye Toh Ryung] was stung by these unjust remarks filled with the deepest anxiety for his wife, and the bitterest resentment toward the brute of an official. [...] He

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10. “월님이 음탕하여 춘향이 슈청 아니든다 하오 엄형하여 옥귀신을 맨드되 구관의 아들인지 난경의 아들인지 그런 계집을 바려두고 찻들 아니하니 그런 쥐아들 괴아들놈 또 어디 잇스리요 하거날 어사 이 말 드른 후의 춘향 생각이 더욱 간절하여 일각이 여삼츄라 밧비 오슈를 지나 남원성중의 드러나 슈근슈근 숙덕숙덕 엄문할 제” [“The lustful magistrate, annoyed and angered as Chunhyang refused to be his mistress, ordered soldiers to take her to prison. The boy who abandoned Chunhyang is said to be the son of the former magistrate, but he must be a bastard, as he leaves the girl behind and never comes back.” Upon hearing this, Yi Mong-ryong could not cloak his affection for Chunhyang any longer. He decided to leave for Namweon to investigate the case and go around town asking people.] (J. Kim et al 1997a, 105).

walked away meditating. He had placed himself down on the people's level, and began to fall with them" (Allen 1889, 144). The text draws attention to Yi, who remained calm and mature even when the old man mentioned the hypocrisy of the noble class, saying, "[A]ge alone is respected (as opposed to rank) in the country," and referring to Yi as "the brute beast who married and deserted her [Chunhyang]" (Allen 1889, 144).<sup>11</sup>

The story seemingly features a love triangle between Yi, Byeon, and Chunhyang. Although this device often serves to magnify the complexity of human desire by provoking jealousy and competition between the men, this translation implies no rivalry between the two male characters. Instead, the translation resorts to the juxtaposition between good ruler and evil ruler.<sup>12</sup> Yi's unassuming attitude contrasts with that of the overbearing and arrogant Byeon, who is described as a "hard-faced, hard-hearted politician," who devotes himself to "riotous living, instead of caring for the welfare of the people" (Allen 1889, 133). Thus, Yi's return to Namwon is depicted as that of a redeemer who will establish social justice by saving Chunhyang and the greater community from the hands of a corrupt governor.

In addition, the translation deemphasizes the Confucian ideal of Chunhyang as a faithful wife. Instead it focuses on Yi's path—birth, courtship, journey, reunion—and recreates the story as a hero's tale. The ending announces Yi's public and domestic success, in which Allen describes him as a virtuous and beloved magistrate and Chunhyang as a doting wife and prolific mother:

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11. "조정의난 막여작이요 향당의 막여치라 하니 보아하니 그만 안사난 알듯한대 어리 그리 미 거용렬하뇨, 여사 하난말이 내 언제 반말하여다고 그러컨니 저러컨니" ["A high-ranking post is best in the court; the oldest age is best when being with colleagues at home. You seem to be a sensible man. Why do you behave so oddly?" Yi replied, "I just spoke to them courteously."] (J. Kim et al 1997a, 105).

12. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues that, within the male-centered novelistic tradition of European high culture, male rivalry is instrumental in maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power, while a female character is appropriated as an object of male desire (Sedgwick 1985, 26–27). Similarly, Yi and Byeon's comparison in the translation encourages readers to pay more attention to the male characters.

The Ussa's conduct was approved at court. A new magistrate was appointed. The marriage was publicly solemnized at Seoul, the Ussa was raised to a high position, in which he was just to the people, who loved him for his virtues, while country rang with the praises of his faithful wife, who became the mother of many children. (Allen 1889, 151)

[SOURCE TEXT]

경사의 이라러 슈의를 밧친 후 그 연유랄 세세이 쥬달하온대 샹이 드르시고 크게 칭창하사 왈 자고로 슈절하난 재만으되 천기로 그리하문 천고의 희한한 일이라 하시고 정절부인을 봉하시이라. (J. Kim et al 1997a, 112)

The original text rewards Chunhyang for upholding her faithfulness despite her former position as a public dancing girl, by elevating her to her husband's yangban status. She is presented with the official honorary title of *jeongjeol buin* (woman of faithfulness) by the king. However, in the translation, the male protagonist's success and virtues take precedence.<sup>13</sup>

Allen's translation can be read as a tale of a carefree, ingenuous male figure who finds love, matures, and fulfills ideal norms to become a qualified leader, while Chunhyang plays an incidental role in Yi's journey into adulthood. The structure centering on the birth of a hero also suggests the translator's association of the patriarchal order as a core feature of Korean society. This version not only emphasizes Yi's filial piety and submission to his father but also reconstructs Yi as a new patriarch, an ideal leader. Simultaneously, Allen's version does not emphasize the cultural implication of Chunhyang's suffering triggered by her rank as a hereditary, low-status daughter of a female entertainer. In this telling, Chunhyang's emotional and physical pain under the magistrate, a central theme in the source text, is relegated to the periphery, and her embodiment of wifely virtue becomes less dominant.

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13. Interestingly, the marginalization of Chunhyang's agency is also found prominently in “Namchang Chunhyangga” (male vocal version of the Song of Chunhyang). Cho Sung-Won argues that the elevation of Chunhyang's social status from *gisaeng* to *seonyeo* (illegitimate daughter of a yangban), identifying her as a daughter of a yangban, rather serves to support the social hierarchy and weakens Chunhyang's voice of resistance (Cho 2004, 119).

## Sacred Womanhood in James Gale's Translation

James Gale (1863–1937) was one of the pioneering missionaries in Korea in the late 19th century. After obtaining his BA from the University of Toronto in 1888, he traveled to Korea as a volunteer with the YMCA. From 1888 to 1927, Gale lived in Wonsan and served on the board of official translators of the Korean Bible, working closely with Henry Appenzeller, Horace Underwood, William Scranton, and William Reynolds (Rutt 1972, 12–22). While serving in Korea, Gale took a keen interest in Korean language and was most active in translation work.<sup>14</sup>

Gale's translation strategy resembles that of free translation. Although he valued retaining the original text's historical, cultural, and national traits in translation as an informant of Korean culture and history (S. Yi 2010, 389), he paid more attention to the readability of the translated text, hoping thereby to improve Westerners' accessibility to the Korean sources (Baek 2014, 296). Gale's translation often includes his own interpretations while excluding particular scenes and elements and eliminating non-fluent and refractory expressions.<sup>15</sup> This inclination is evident in his translation of "The Tale of Chunhyang," although the source text itself (*Flower in Prison*) integrates modern elements and includes points that diverge from tradition.

Under the influence of the source text, the treatment of the Chunhyang character is exceptional, with her morality and actions even more heightened, in Gale's "Choon Yang." Chunhyang is not a stereotypical female entertainer; rather, she is an impeccable woman equipped with virtues and knowledge. For example, the translation avoids directly mentioning Chunhyang's physical interaction with Yi, although she violates cultural norms regarding premarital sex.

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14. Gale also translated John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* into Korean, which is regarded as the first translation of a Western story into Korean (Finch 2012, 39).

15. This stance is also reflected in his Korean translation of the Bible. Gale argued for a natural and "easy-flowing" translation (Yu 2015, 17). He believed the translator should be given great latitude of expression and preferred "the insertion of parallels from Western history to facilitate his reader's comprehension of the context of the stories" (Park and King 2016, xxxi).

He yawned and pretended all kinds of weariness. At last she laid the comforts for the night and took her departure. The two then remained alone, diffident and somewhat bashful before each other, till Choonyang [Chunhyang] took down a harp that she had, and played to him in a way that broke all restraint. "That's lovely," said he, "better than the flute of Yellow Crane Pavilion so long ago; prettier than the midnight bell-calls of the Hansan Monastery." Delighted at the music, he took her in his arms and told how his thoughts found their fulfillment of joy in her as in no other. (Gale 1917 [October], 446)

[SOURCE TEXT]

춘향모 이어나 금침 내려 까라주고 밤이 매오 김헛스니 일즉 좀으시오 하직 하고 건너갓갓다 춘향과 도령님 단둘이 안젓스니 그 엇지 될 거이나 도령님 띠 끌으니 춘향이 이어나 도포 밧아 의장에 걸 제 벽상에 걸닌 검은고 도포 자락에 씻치며 스프렁 하난 소리 도령 도화라고 도타 도타 황학루 취적성이 이에서 더하며 한산사야반종성 이에서 더할소냐 네가 먼저 버셔라. (H. Yi 2004, 34)

The source text does not hesitate to elaborate on the consummation and provides the audience with an erotic view of Chunhyang. Meanwhile, the translated version actually removes the sexual act, ending the scene with the lines, "Days passed, one, two, five, ten. How they loved and delighted in each other" (Gale 1917 [October], 447).<sup>16</sup> The deliberate omission or reduction of the sexual details in Gale's translation prompts readers to understand Chunhyang and Yi's relationship as physical but also platonic.<sup>17</sup> In addition, the translation attempts to present the midnight rendezvous as nuptial behavior by titling the section, "Oriental Marriage." Although their

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16. Such nuance is also found in Allen's translation: "Each night the young man's apartments were deserted, while he spent the time in the house of his wife" (Allen 1889, 129). Unlike this, the source text elaborates on the male and female protagonists' coupling in detail.

17. Yi and Yi's study points out the intentional omission of swearing, vulgar expressions, and sexual liaisons between Yi and Chunhyang in Gale's translation and connects this to Gale's exercise of self-censorship and the influence of Victorian literature (Yi and Yi 2015a, 276-277). However, this paper attributes Gale's exclusions to his position as a Christian missionary and his accompanying worldview.

commitment to marry was private and personal, in the translation they initiate a conjugal agreement through Yi's verbal commitment: "If you give permission, though we cannot have the marriage by all the Six Forms of ceremony, still as I am a gentleman whose word is his honour, let us swear the oath and write out the contract, and as sure as loyalty and filial faith hold good let me never waver" (Gale 1917 [October], 444-445).<sup>18</sup> The detailed account of Yi and Chunhyang's mutual commitment is necessary to convey Chunhyang's self-affirmation as a wife. Such a clear mark of her marital status enables the female character to legitimize her claim as a formal wife before the new magistrate and furthers her depiction as a wholesome character.

Gale's translation uses general terms to paint Chunhyang as a noble and decent woman. It reconfigures Chunhyang not only as a woman loyal to her husband but loyal in general, and Chunhyang's words and deeds not only reflect wifely virtue but a kindness and generosity bestowed on all her relationships, as exemplified in the following scene.

The two yamen floggers' hearts beat a tattoo inside their breasts, and for once the daylight before them seemed turned to darkness. Just then [Chunhyang's] mother came in. "Well, boys" said she, "are you not footsore in coming so far to my house? ... There are no special dainties on hand but bring some sool [liquor], plenty of it." (Gale 1918 [January], 23)

[SOURCE TEXT]

더 사령들이 생전 춘향에게 그런 대접 못받아보다가 손을 잡고 말을 하니 몸에 두드러기가 이러날 대경이로고나 여보소 동생 왜 나왔나 병중에 축상 하리 어서 드러가세. 방으로 드러안지니 사령드리 가삼이 두근두근 단박에 낫눈이 어둑고나 춘향모 건너오며 오 자식들 오날 내 집에 오기 발병이나 아이 낫나냐 늙은 엄이를 한번도 와서 아니 보아. (H. Yi 2004, 65-66)

18. “張皇히 嘲弄말고 한 말을 決斷하면 六禮는 못이루나 兩班의 子息으로 一口二言 엇지 하며 兩班의 平生事를 盟誓 아니 할 수 있나 不忠不孝하기 前에 저를 엇지 이지리오” [“I would not ramble any more. I cannot marry you with formalities of the six rituals. But, as a descendant of yangban, I would not speak with a forked tongue. As far as my honor is concerned, I would be loyal to the state, filial to my parents, and also become a faithful husband to you in my whole life.”] (H. Yi 2004, 31-32).

Gale’s translation simply describes how warmly Chunhyang’s mother treats the floggers who arrive with the new governor’s order to bring Chunhyang to the court. However, in the vernacular version, Chunhyang and her mother attempt to bribe them with food and money, and the floggers find such gracious treatment to be out of the ordinary. To indicate this, the source material uses a sarcastic tone, insinuating Chunhyang’s capricious and superficial disposition. The translation is deprived of the floggers’ cynicism toward Chunhyang; rather, her generosity is so impressive as to “fill [their] souls.”

“What have you done with [Chunhyang]? What do you mean by [Chunhyang’s] arresting you? To the rope with every one of you.” Then one of them explained, “[Chunhyang] is very ill, at the point of death, sir, and she earnestly made request of us. She filled our hungry souls, too, with good drink and savoury sweets till we are most ready to yield up the ghost. She gave us a *yang* of money as well, and so according to the law of human kindness, we had no heart to arrest her; but if Your Excellency says we have to, even though I have to fetch my mother in her place, I’ll do it. By the way my mother is a beauty who surpasses [Chunhyang].” (Gale 1918 [January], 25)

[SOURCE TEXT]

이놈 춘향은 엇지하고 춘향사령 잡아드렸다니 저런 죽일 놈이 잇나 한 놈이 알외는데 춘향이가 병이 드러 거의 죽게 되얏난대 간절히 말을하며 도훈 술 도훈 안주를 배아지가 터지게 먹이웁고 돈 삼량 주기로 세 놈이 한량식 난오앗사온대 인정간에 못잡아왔사오니 다시 분부하옵시면 인제난 춘향을 못잡아오면 소인의 엄이라도 대령하오리다 소인 엄이가 춘향보다 일색이지요. (H. Yi 2004, 67–68)

The translation continues to highlight Chunhyang’s fulfillment of cultural norms by depicting her as an obedient daughter to her mother, a faithful wife to her husband, and a charitable woman to others. Even during imprisonment, Chunhyang is concerned about her mother’s health, despite the fact that her mother was the one who encouraged Chunhyang to accept Yi as a husband, then severely scolded her for being abandoned (Gale 1918

[February], 75). Chunhyang also asks her maid, Hyangdan, to comfort her mother with the finest food and drink rather than being concerned for her.

Alongside Gale's idealization of Chunhyang as a quintessential woman, the translation also reveals his Christianization of the source text. In the story, while Chunhyang is in jail, she dreams of drifting on the Sosang River (Xiaoxiang in Chinese),<sup>19</sup> where she encounters Ehuang 娥皇 and Nuying 女英,<sup>20</sup> who empathize with her pitiable situation. Gale's description transforms sentences rich with literary symbolism and allusions into text reminiscent of Christian epistemology, such as "a spirit travels about on the wind," "the spirit of Choonyang [Chunhyang] in the flesh of a moment" and "angels dressed in beautiful white garments."

Into the mountains and valleys of mystery he went, there found in a fairy bamboo grove a Picture Palace on which the night rain was falling. This is the manner in which a spirit travels about on the wind and through the air mounting high up into heaven or going deep into the earth. Thus, the spirit of [Chunhyang] in the flesh of a moment, had gone thousands of *lee* to the Sosang River. She dreamed not where she was, but went on and on, till she was met by angels dressed in beautiful white garments, who came up to her and bowed courteously, saying "Our Lady Superior invites you, please follow." (Gale 1918 [February], 76)

[SOURCE TEXT]

실갓치 남은 혼백 바람인지 구름인지 한 곳을 당도하니 텅공디활하고 산명 수려한대 은은한 쥬김 속에 일층화각이 밤비에 잠겨서라 대저 귀신 단이난 법이 배풍어긋하고 승천이비하나니 춘향의 혼백이 침상편시에 만리소상강을 갔던 것이였다 춘향이 아모런 줄 모르고 사면으로 방황할 제 안으로 단정이 소복한 차환이 춘향 압을 당도하야 공손이 읊하야 왈 우리 랑랑끼서 랑자랄 청하시니 이리로 오옵소서. (H. Yi 2004, 80)

19. The Xiaoxiang region is both a real and imaginary location, frequently depicted as a place for exiles in traditional Korean literature (Rutt 1974, 246).

20. These are the daughters of King Yao (堯) who became the consorts of King Shun (舜), another mythical emperor. According to legend, King Shun died near the Xiaoxiang River. The two traveled to the spot to grieve, crying bitterly. Then they drowned themselves in nearby rivers (Murck 2000, 9–10).

In the passage, *honbaek* in the source text is envisioned as a Christian concept, although from the Confucian perspective, the term *honbaek* 魂魄 (*hunpo* in Chinese) originally referred to both the human body and the soul, which separate upon death. Within this dualism, every living human has both a *hun*—spiritual, ethereal, *yang*—soul, which leaves the body after death, and a *po*—corporeal, substantive, *yin*—soul, which remains with the corpse of the deceased. But the translator combines both into the word “spirit” and thus transposes native concepts into Christian rhetoric.

This transposition is also found in Gale’s deliberate chapter divisions. The chapter titles are tinged with religious aspects, signifying Gale’s attention to Korean religious practices and his tolerant attitude toward the indigenous form of Korean culture, specifically, in his accounts of Buddhist worship in the chapters “Before the Buddha” and “The Blind Sorcerer.” Although the text demonstrates Gale’s efforts to translate Korean culture, his desire to reconstruct the story to fit into a Christian framework is even more prominent. A list of the author’s 24 chapters shows the consecutive placement of “Feast,” “Judgment,” and “The Laurel Wreath,” which run parallel to Christ’s last meal, his suffering, and his victory after the crucifixion (see Table 1). Reshaped into a tale of suffering and triumph, Gale’s story molds the Chunhyang character into a sacred woman relatable to his Christian readers.

**Table 1.** Table of Contents of James Gale’s “Choon Yang”

	Preface
I	Rivers and Mountains
II	The Vision of Choonyang
III	The Limitations of Home
IV	Love’s Venture
V	An Oriental Wedding
VI	It Never Did Run Smooth
VII	Partings Are Sad
VIII	Resignation

IX	The Glories of Office
X	The World of the Dancing
XI	The Man-Eater
XII	To the Jaws of Death
XIII	Under the Paddle
XIV	In the Shades
XV	Honours of the Kwago Examination
XVI	Incognito
XVII	Before the Buddha
XVIII	The Blind Sorcerer
XIX	At the Hand of Farmers
XX	The Mother-in-law
XXI	The Prisoner
XXII	Feast
XXIII	Judgment
XXIV	The Laurel Wreath

Source: *The Korea Magazine* (December 1917–July 1918).

Unlike Allen's work, Gale's version does not put Yi in a purely positive light. He is often inconsiderate and frivolous. When he disguises himself as a poor vagabond to investigate the Namwon magistrate's case, he flirts, asking a woman to sit by him and sing to him (Gale 1918 [June], 271). In addition, Gale's translation reveals his compassion toward Korean women. According to Rutt, "[Gale] was gallantly fascinated by the female sex.... [He] presented Korean women as forceful and effective, usually beautiful, and always beguiling" (Rutt 1972, 54). Gale also noted, "The Korean woman has convictions of soul that hold fast through foul and sunny weather. Her influence on the present generation is the most hopeful possible" (Rutt 1972, 54). This view is observed in *The Vanguard* (1904), Gale's novel on the Western missionary experience in Korea. In the novel, Kim, a Confucian man, describes his wife as "his servant and not a real person," but Willis (modelled after missionary Samuel Moffett) convinces Kim that women have souls and spirits, and men and women are "all alike before God" (Gale

1904, 45). Although there are numerous examples of patriarchy’s pervasive power to shape women’s everyday lives in “The Tale of Chunhyang,” Gale’s vision of Korean women motivated him to present an empowered version of Chunhyang.

### **Orientalism, Domestication, and Evangelical Zeal**

The examination of Allen’s and Gale’s texts not only forces us to consider the influence of the translators’ roles as missionaries but also to confront the possible influence of Orientalist discourse, the entrenched dichotomy between the East and West, on the writers. Korean tales often served to disseminate Orientalist fantasies to Japanese and Western readers and to reinforce hierarchical power relations between the regions. In Japan, “The Tale of Chunhyang” became popular in the 1930s, and the theatrical version, produced by a Korean writer, Jang Hyeok-ju, was first performed in a theater in 1938. Jang’s version, which integrated *changgeuk* and Japanese *kabuki* elements, not only generated considerable interest but also yielded administrative support. However, the performance of “The Tale of Chunhyang” exposes the risk of fabricating exotic otherness, since it was considered an effective means of promoting the Japanese colonial assimilation policy of emphasizing the bond between the Japanese (empire) and the Koreans (colony) while retaining discriminatory cultural policies against the latter. As a result, its performance in Japan established an association of Korean culture with the exotic and primordial, inscribing the difference between the colonizer and the colonized and also invoking a “sentimental longing for a period of the past” and “the lost object” among the Japanese (Kwon 2014, 118). Not surprisingly, the phenomenon was negatively received by Korean elites, who alleged that the sentiment and cultural values were misrepresented in the story’s consumption in Japan (Suh 2013, 56).

The translations by Anglo-American authors address a different type of dilemma stemming from the vexing relationship between language and culture, namely, the cultural dominance imposed by the Western

language and worldview. While the translators consolidate a wide variety of indigenous elements into a target text, they tend to abandon vulgar elements and language, resulting in a modulated, consistent, and unified voice. First, the writers juggled conflicting elements and attempted to rationalize differences in the translation process by avoiding the use of colloquialisms or foreign (or esoteric) concepts. To make the story more fluent and easier to read, Allen has Yi regain his power and become a true hero, while Chunhyang is reconstructed as a revered woman in Gale's version of the story. As a result, the characterization of Chunhyang as a loyal wife (*yeollyeo*) of Confucian decorum is extended to that of a venerable woman familiar to Western readers.

Translated as "faithfulness" in English, *yeol* conveys the Confucian moral standard applied to women, who are expected to display chastity, obedience, and faithfulness, rather than denoting a woman's virginity or chastity per se. In the source text, the new magistrate, outraged by Chunhyang's defiance, inflicts excruciating pain on her when she refuses to comply with his request. Chunhyang's obstinate refusal can be interpreted as a symptom of passionate love, but more importantly, it affirms her moral superiority as she artfully shapes herself as a *yeollyeo* (a faithful woman). Chunhyang's resistance to the new magistrate can be better understood when set against a backdrop of moral sentiment espoused by Confucian culture. As the translation of such emotion requires the adoption of interchangeable and compatible feelings, translation therefore removes emotions or behaviors that are not easily characterized and invents similar feelings that are expressed one-dimensionally.<sup>21</sup>

Accordingly, the text's subversive message is undermined in its translations. In both translations, Chunhyang's lowborn status is not considered a serious social barrier that interrupts the pursuit of love. Furthermore, Allen indicates that Yi rescues Chunhyang from Byeon's

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21. Yi argues that Gale's translation transformed the story toward a Confucian story embodying the quintessential ideal of *yeol* (wifely virtue) rather than a triumph of romantic love over the adversity of the class system (S. Yi 2010, 403). This study, however, provides a different interpretation that, in Gale's version, Chunhyang's virtue was transferred to that of a female saint in a universal sense rather than that of a loyal woman in a Confucian relationship.

hands, but to punish Byeon, Yi simply "sends him to the capital" and "turns his eyes to the affairs" of the office (Allen 1889, 150). Allen addresses the new magistrate's corruption and tyrannical rule but does not bring his punishment to light, nor does Allen show the conscious and unconscious desires of the lower classes to free themselves from the constraints of the social status quo. Such an ending does not suggest the dismantling of hierarchy or the realization of social justice as a fundamental characteristic, as in the source text. Similarly, Gale's work focuses on discrimination against women rather than the problem of social stratification. It also downplays Chunhyang's sexuality or shrewdness and, instead, encourages readers to imagine her as an untainted, holy character. Allen's and Gale's missionary backgrounds and their target audience reinforce their desire to impose a biblical message on the source text. Gale is more explicit in framing the story in evangelical terms, attempting to transform elements of indigenous Korean culture into Christian parables.

As an affluent missionary and diplomat in the late 19th century, Allen had relatively more literary freedom in assessing traditions and constructing the story in English, compared to Gale, who witnessed the decline of the Joseon dynasty and Korea's annexation by Japan, and who felt responsible for accurately preserving Korea's literary sources through his own writings. Allen's lack of Korean studies or language proficiency prevented him from acquiring the literary and cultural knowledge needed for a deeper understanding of "The Tale of Chunhyang." The translation also reveals Allen's assessment of Korean culture as a male-centered one rooted in Neo-Confucianism, which triggers him to situate Chunhyang's sexuality within the patriarchal system, especially in the swing scene. Likewise, Allen's translation tends to depict Chunhyang as being domesticated through *naeoebeop* (the gender norms of inner and outer spheres), and her fate is intervened on and transformed by a male agent rather than by her own will. Additionally, Allen's translation, with its additions and omissions, replaces a marker of historical particularity and the features of the *pansori* genre in the original tale that distinguishes Korea from other cultures with that of the Western *bildungsroman* genre. The adjustment of the text to fit Westerners' palates was executed as a way to enlighten Western readers with Korean

tradition through the provision of traditional fiction.

On the other hand, Gale's translation was published after Korea had lost its sovereignty in 1910. Although Gale was neither deeply involved in the independence movement nor in the manipulations of imperial power, his translation reveals that, while making conscious efforts to seek a solution through Christianization, he was nonetheless curious about the indigenous and folk practices that he believed hampered Korea's modernization.<sup>22</sup> It is also important to note that the target audience of Gale's translation was, of course, English speakers, mostly Western missionaries and their families who had settled in Korea. Gale published his translated version in *The Korea Magazine* because he aspired to inform other Anglo-American residents in Korea of the significance of missionary activities and encourage them to become involved in missionary service (Jeon 2014, 127–128). The audience's familiarity with Christianity also stimulated Gale's inclination to employ the lexicons and vocabulary of biblical culture into his retelling of the source text.

The translations were conceived by the translators' desire to preserve the vanishing culture of Korea under the threat of imperialist powers, accompanied by a missionary impetus to proliferate Christianity. Allen and Gale show how different aspects of the tale could be suppressed or transformed, and their ambivalent position reshaped "The Tale of Chunhyang" in their translations, which eventually emphasized new dimensions of the hero and heroine as they engaged in subtle and complicated readings of the source text.

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22. Gale was well aware of Korea's situation under Japan, stating that political turmoil brought opportunity, as there was a moment when "men's hearts began to fear and to turn toward Christianity... It was the beginning of the awakening in the Korean's soul to the helpless condition of his country" (Gale 1909, 37). He also wrote, "[T]he possibility of a poor Korean, really and truly under such circumstances, knocking at the palace gates of heaven and making application for citizenship in the name of Jesus, being received, his name recorded and a happy peaceful heart given as proof thereof is like a fairy tale of the Taoists" (Gale 1909, 42).

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