Notes towards a History of Korean Fiction*

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Fiction in Chinese

Although the novel in the modern sense began only in the second quarter of the seventeenth century in Korea, its ancestors, legends, anecdotal narratives and tales, are as old as human history itself. In Korea, however, where Chinese literature had a strong hold among the literati and where their proper system of writing developed only in the fifteenth century, it is not surprising that earlier surviving examples of fiction were strongly influenced by Chinese fiction and used the Chinese language as their medium.

There is a rich collection of folk tales in Korea in the form of Märchen, novella, hero tales, sage, pourquoi stories, myths, legends, fables, and jests. The oldest surviving examples of such folk tales are preserved in the Samguk sagi and Samguk yusa, a collection of popular stories and folk tales, records a number of examples, foundation myths of Tangun, Puyö, and of Kara, and other unusual

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4 WANG Ch'ung, Lun hêng (Ssu-pu pei-yao edition) 2, 16a–b; Wei chih 30, 1004b–c.

5 SGYS 2, 108 ff.

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[1] 三国史记
[2] 三国遗事
[3] 樊君
[4] 夫餘
[5] 加羅 駕洛

208
Buddhistic and Shamanistic stories. The book narrates the miraculous birth of the founders of ancient states (i.e., Chu Mong⁶-six, Pak Hyökköse⁸-seven, and Kings T'arhae⁸-eight and Suro⁹-nine), generally from an egg, their marriages (Tangun, Aryöng⁹-ten, T'arhae, and Tohwanyö¹¹-twelve), hero tales (T'arhae, Suro, Hogong¹²-thirteen), and other etiological tales. The Samguk sagi (1145), though an official dynastic history, contains many such stories in the section on biographies (chs. 41–50), especially in chapters 45, 47 and 48—stories of fictitious figures or adventures and superhuman deeds of historical personages. Collections of such unusual stories of folk origin like the Hwarang segi by Kim Tae-mun¹³ (fl. 702–37) and Sui chön by Pak Il-lyang¹⁴ (d. 1096) are no longer extant, but nine stories have survived, finding their way into several other books¹⁴.

In the Koryö dynasty, story collectors were lower governmental officials (p'aegwan¹⁶) who were hired by the court to gather anecdotes and strange stories circulating among the people to be used as reference materials for administration. Collectors of such stories not only gleaned the stories from among the people but also added a personal touch to the stories to make them more entertaining or didactic. In the Koryö dynasty, from the middle of the thirteenth century, story collecting became a vogue owing to several factors. First, with the importation of the Six-Dynasties tales, T'ang ch'uan-ch'i and Sung and Yüan collections of stories, collectors were encouraged to gather the new material from among their own people for new stories. The importation of Chinese books dates back to the beginning of our history. The Shan-hai ching was introduced to Paekche sometime in the third century¹⁵, and San-kuo chih to Koguryö sometime¹⁶ later. The Shou-shen chi was imported to Koryö before 1091, and ch'ing l'an literature in or about the same time. The T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi¹⁷ was already

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¹ SGYS 1, 40–41.
² SGYS 1, 43–45.
³ SGYS 1, 47–48.
⁴ SGYS 2, 109.
⁵ SGYS 1, 44; SGYS 5, 217.
⁶ SGYS 1, 56.
⁷ SGYS 1, 47–48.
⁸ KTJ, 17–19; SGSG 45, 1–9; SGSG 47, 1–9; SGSG 48, 1–6.
⁹ In such books as SGYS, Pirwon chapki by Sŏ Kŏ-jöng¹⁰, Haedong koaeng chön (1215) by Kakun, T'aep'yŏng tongjae, and Taedong unbu kunok (1855) by Kwŏn Mun-hae.
¹⁰ Wakan sanzai zue 1 (Tōkyō, 1929), 207a by Terajima Ryōan (author’s preface dated 1607; see Dai jimmei jiten, IV [1954], 351) says the Shan-hai ching was introduced to Japan by Paekche in 284 (Öjin 15).
¹¹ Chou shu 49, 2336b.
¹² CMP 242, 844b; KRS 11, 167b and CMP 242, 843a say the T'ai-p'ing yü-lan was imported to Koryö in the sixth moon of the sixth year of King Sukchong (1101). The T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi must have been imported at about the same time.
a popular book among the Koreans of the early twelfth century, and one extant Koryö poem 18 sings of this book.

Second was the intention of story collectors to write down the great body of oral tradition handed down from the previous kingdom. Third, the literati away from the court recorded or invented such stories as a pastime and their books are primary sources for our study. Collections of essays by famous scholar-politicians contain such current popular stories in Chinese, of which the first example is the Stories of White Cloud (Paegun sosŏl) by Yi Kyu-bo 177 (1168—1241). The P’ahan chip (1214) by Yi In-no 18 (1152—1220), friend of Yi Kyu-bo, is primarily a collection of Chinese verse by scholars, but also records poetic tales, diaries, Silla anecdotes, and the current scenes and manners of Kaesŏng and P’yŏngyang. The third is the Pohan chip (1254) by Ch’un Cha 119 (1188—1260), which contains popular stories current in towns, interesting historical incidents, stories of female entertainers (“kisaeng”), and the like. The Yŏngong p’aesŏl by Yi Che-hyŏn 120 (1287—1367) also records strange stories.

Another group of stories which shows a definite advance in the development of fiction is “personified stories” in which the writer speaks through the lips of a person already deceased or endows inanimate objects (wine, coin, paper) and other living things (bamboo, tadpole, turtle, etc.) with human attributes or feelings. Stories belonging to this class occupy a transitional period in which anecdotes and legends paved the way for real fiction. These stories used the technique of personification chiefly as a vehicle of social criticism. The Kuksun chŏn of IM Ch’un 21 (d. 1170) has as its theme the rise and fall of the household of Kuk Sun (Mr. Yeast Good Wine). The story is strongly autobiographical and contains a satire on the current political instability. It also admonishes the people given to wine, and the hero’s downfall due to the odor of his breath from wine and subsequent illness and death are clearly didactic. His second book, the Kongbang chŏn 22 , personifies the coin and deals with its mintage and usage, while indirectly criticizing the current economic conditions in the country. Yi Kyu-bo wrote two books in this tradition, the first is the Kuk sŏnsaeng chŏn 23 similar in form and content to the Kuksun chŏn. The second personifies the turtle and praises the scholar’s integrity and loftiness in his refusal to accept an offer from the court. The story is implicitly didactic and recommends moral cultivation above all. The Chuk puin chŏn is by Yi Kok 24 , father of Yi Saek, one of the most famous scholars of Koryŏ. The book is again didactic and praises the virtue of woman and

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18 The Hallim pyŏlgok sings of this book in the second stanza; see Akchang kasa (privately hand-copied edition, Seoul, 1957), 12a—13b, especially 12b; KKS 71, 468b—469a.

19 KTJ, 52; PSU, 131—2.

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[17] 李奎報 白雲小説
[18] 李仁老 破洞集
[19] 李滋 補聞集
[20] 李齊賢 檻翁稗説
[21] 林編 高酒傳
[22] 孔方傳
[23] 魯先生傳
[24] 李穀 竹夫人傳
satirizes the disorderly sexual relations of the time. Yi Ch’öm's Chosaeng chön personifies paper and recommends honest admonitions to officials and encourages good administration. The Chông sija chön is written by a monk, Sigyǒngam, and personifies the tadpole. The book, which is a satire on Buddhism and clergy, introduces dialogue and current personages.

Buddhism which flourished from the sixth to the fourteenth centuries as the state religion stimulated many religious tales, lives of famous priests and their miracles. A few titles survive, among which the best known is the Wangnang panhon chön by an anonymous hand. The book reveals in realistic language the power of the Buddha and urges living beings to become devout believers in the religion. In plot and technique, this is a short story, and its woodblocks are preserved in the Tonghwa and Haein Temples.

In the Yi dynasty, collections of tales and anecdotes continued to be produced. Ŭ Suk-kwŏn in his Paegwan chapki lists books of this kind of which the best known is the Yongjeae ch'onghwa by Sŏng Hyŏn. This is a collection of literary essays, historical tales, and character sketches, excellent in style and narrative technique. Sŏ Kö-jŏng's Peaceful Leisure Stories of Humor (T’aep’yŏng hanhwa kalgye chön) was written in 1477 and published in or about 1482. A collection of "risqué" stories, the Kogûm soch’ong, believed to have been compiled by Sŏng In, contains actually three separate books written from the times of Kings Sŏngjong to Injo.

In the meantime, the Lieh-nû chuan was imported to Korea in 1404 and translated into Korean in 1543. But the Chinese fiction which exercised a great influence in fifteenth century Korea was the Chien-teng hsin-yû by Ch'ü Yü (d. 1433), imported sometime between 1421 and 1465. Kim Si-sŭp (1435–93), the first significant writer of imaginative narrative, wrote his immortal New Stories of the Golden Turtle (Kūmo sinhwa) influenced

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29 See KTJ, 52 and PSU, 133–7 for the Kuk sŏnsaeng chön, Chuk puin chön and Chosaeng chön.
21 PSU, 137–8.
30 KKD, 347–8; KTJ, 26–7; PSU, 139–41.
32 KTJ, 34–5.
33 Ta-Ming hui-tien (Wan-li 15 = 1587 edition) 111, 113 a–b, especially 113 b says the Lieh-nû chuan was given to Korea during the Yung-lo period (1403–24); Ch’ôngjangwan chŏnsŏ (1795) by Yi Tông-mu (1741–93) says it was in the fourth year (1404) of King T’aejong that the book was imported to Korea. See KTJ, 44–5.
by the Chien-teng hsin-yü. Only the first book survives which contains five stories altogether. This book enjoyed a great popularity in Korea as well as in Japan where it was reprinted in 1653 and 1884. The stories in this book differ from those of Koryo in two respects: first, the scenes were set in Korea while the older stories chose invariably China and Chinese characters; second, the endings are tragic in contrast to the happy endings which marked all works of stories produced previously. This book is also unparalleled in its beauty of expression as well as in its rich local color. The Kŭmo sinhwa is indeed a masterpiece in the tradition of the tales of the marvelous.

The next category is personified stories, of which Im Che (1549—87) was an outstanding writer. His Story of Flowers (Hwasa) impersonated various flowers as a means for satirizing party strife at court. In his kingdom of flowers, he borrows the lips of a historian to recount the Confucian view of the role of a virtuous sovereign and his loyal subjects. His Susŏng chi expresses the discontentment and pent-up grievances of a man who has to live in a society which does not promote people according to their qualifications. The fall of the Su Castle and the subsequent reappearance of a happy world at the end of the story reflect the author’s wishes for improving the current political situation of his day. Here Im Che wishes to cleanse society of its evils, to reject treacherous retainers and to give opportunity to loyal subjects for a better government. The last of this kind worthy of mention is the Ch’ŏn’gun yŏn’u by Chŏng T’ae-je (1612—69). The book, consisting of thirty-one chapters, is an allegory on the working of the mind, based on the idealism of Chu Hsi.

The third class of stories consists of satirical stories. The Hŏsaeng chŏn by Pak Chi-wŏn (1737—1805) is a satire on the impracticality and useless booklearning of scholars. Hŏsaeng, Mr. Hŏ, a lover of books, made his wife starve for seven years as a result of his preparation for the civil service examination. But one day, admonished by his wife, he changes his mind, becomes a good businessman, and soon monopolizes the fruit
and horse-hair trade. Thieves attack him to rob him of his wealth, but he advises them to join him and make money. He then buys ships and transports the poor to an remote desert island where he builds a classless Utopia. He also monopolizes overseas trade and finally returns to the capital in triumph. His friend, who once made him a loan for his business, introduces him to a General who is searching for an able statesman. Mr. Hö gives him a series of lectures concerning administration but disappears without trace on the day when the General and his friend come to his home to confer rank upon him.

The author, Pak Chi-wön, was one of the great champions of practical learning in the eighteenth century, and we can trace in this story the plans for social and economic improvements he had outlined for Korea. First he severely satirizes the literati dass which indulges in empty talk. The monopoly of fruit and horse-hair is significant. Fruit is used by the upper class as offerings in ancestral worship and on ceremonial occasions, while horse-hair is used for making the caps they wear. Mr. Hö of the story empties the pockets of the literati and re-distributes it among the poor. Here the author is strongly against the empty etiquette and ceremonies and the imposing of heavy unjust taxes on the lower classes. Mr. Hö's motto to the thieves, "Get rich first, study later" implies that one must first solve economic distress realistically in order to relieve the poor and save the country from hardships. He also stresses the importance of overseas trade as a measure for enriching the country. Finally his horror of the inherent contradictions in the rigid society is expressed in his creation of a Utopia. The book also advocates studies abroad as a measure for importing Western learning, abolition of white clothes, and the cutting of hair. His other stories which have as their theme the hypocrisies of the upper class are the Hojil[39] and Yangban chōn[40]. Two short stories, the Kwangmun chōn[41] and Yedōk sōnsaeng chōn[42], deal with lower class people. The hero of the former story is a young beggar boy living by the Ch'ônggye River in the capital who, after many hardships, finally wins recognition and becomes a faithful employee in an apothecary. The latter is in the form of a conte, dealing with the true friendship between a scholar, Sŏngyulcha, and an old man of lower birth, Mr. Ōm, a night-soil man. The story praises the righteous and virtuous deeds of Mr. Ōm and condemns the false life of the upper class. Our author has to his credit several other stories, but they are variations on the same theme, satire on the upper class life. Pak was himself from the upper class. In his stories,

32 Kim Ki-dong & Im Hŏn-do, op. cit., 259–61; KKD, 108–10; KTJ, 135; PSU, 357–8.
33 KKD, 111–6; KTJ, 136; PSU, 358–60.
he was not so much interested in advocating the overthrow of his class
as in appealing to them for self-examination and for criticism of their blind
resistance to practical learning. What he satirizes is, therefore, not the
yangban class itself but their obstinate conservatism and their exploitation
of the lower classes. Though his stories are in Chinese, the plot and scenes
are laid in Korea and materials are derived from the real life of the time.

The stories and novels bearing in their titles the character "dream"
(mong in Korean) are among the most popular love stories in the Yi
dynasty. The first of this type, the Cloud Dream of the Nine, written in
pure Korean, will be discussed in the next chapter. The second novel, the
Dream of the Jade Chamber (Ongnu mong) was written probably by
Nam Yong-no in Chinese in the time of King Sukjong (1675–1720). The
hero, Mun Ch’ang-sŏng, in the celestial world is condemned to the earth
for playing with five angels in the Jade Chamber. Born as a mortal with
the name Yang Ch’ang-gok, the hero meets a famous kisaeng, Kang Nam-
hong, who is one of the five angels condemned to earth. They fall in love
and vow marriage, but fate decrees otherwise. Yang, our hero, passes the
civil service examination and obtains the coveted chinsa degree. But he
marries the virgin Yun, another of the five condemned angels, upon the
recommendation of his mistress, Kang. However, he is soon forced to
marry another virgin, Hwang, by royal command, another fallen angel,
and then is exiled to a remote place on a false charge where he meets
another angel. When a remote province of the country is invaded by
southern barbarians, Yang leads his troops to repulse the enemy, which is
led by no other than the hero’s mistress. The invasion force is defeated,
and during the course of the combat, one of the enemy general’s daughters
falls in love with the hero. The hero takes her to the capital on his
triumphant return to the court. After leading a prosperous life with his two
legally married wives and three concubines, the hero is finally reinstated
in heaven with the five fallen angels. The Dream of the Jade Chamber is a
long novel of sixty-four chapters, but in its plot and scenes, which are laid
in southern China, the novel owes much to the Cloud Dream of the Nine.

Another love story written in Chinese, the Hongbaekhwa chŏn is
by an anonymous hand. In the Ming dynasty, there lived two close friends,
Kye Tong-yöng and Sun Kyŏng-hwa. Kye had a son, Ilchi. Sun had a
daughter, Chikso. The parents arranged for their matrimony in their child-
hood. But upon the death of Mr. Kye, Mr. Sun changes his mind and engages
his daughter to a son of Minister Yŏ. Chikso then sets out to search for her
former fiancée, disguised as a man. For many thousands of miles she
wanders about and lives in the household of a certain Mr. Sŏl with whose
daughter she vows matrimony. Chikso goes to the capital under the

31 Kim Ki-dong & Im Hŏn-do, op. cit., 171–232; KKD, 117–20; KTJ, 89–91;
PSU, 284–6.
32 KKD, 121–2.

[43] 玉樓夢
[44] 紅白花傳

214
pretext of passing the civil service examination and meets the most successful candidate, Ilchi, her fiancée. But the Emperor had already decided to wed his daughter to him. Chikso visits the princess and reveals her whole story, whereupon the princess consents to marry the son of Minister Yö instead. Chikso and Ilchi are married and live a hundred years.

**Fiction in Korean**

We have mentioned that the *New Stories of the Golden Turtlet* marks the first stage of the novel in the literary history of Korea as an outstanding example of the *ch‘uan-ch‘i* tradition. Although stories and novels continued to be written in Chinese, it was not until the seventeenth century that the novel attained a distinct form as a genre. It was about the same time that writers began to write novels in pure Korean using the new alphabet, evidently to meet the taste of the rising public. Historically, the second and third stages of the novel during its period of growth coincide with political and social development in the country. After the Japanese and Manchu invasions, the middle class began to awake. The literati class betrayed their inefficiency in handling national affairs, and the middle and lower class people began to re-evaluate the past and look forward to the future with fresh perspectives. A new literary movement replaced Neo-Confucianism, which stifled emotional development and spontaneous expressions of life. New novelists were driven to reveal their innermost experiences in native rhythms adequate to encompass the richness and complexities of indigenous culture. Changes in form and emphasis in the novel were, therefore, due to changes in attitude towards "man" and his manners and destiny. The rise of the novel, therefore, coincides with the diffusion of education, the social and economic ascendancy of the middle class, and the rise of practical learning. Nevertheless, the development of plot, characterization, setting, and tone was also made possible by a constant flow of Chinese novels among which the most influential were the *Shui hu chuan* and *San-kuo-chih yen-i* (*"Romance of the Three Kingdoms").

The second landmark in the Korean novel was achieved by Hö Kyun [46] (d. 1618), author of the *Hong Kiltong chon* [46], perhaps the first novel written in Korean, reminiscent of the picaresque novel in Europe, especially the German *Räuberroman*. As an illegitimate son of Minister Hö Yöp, the author went through hardships and from his childhood displayed an interest in social revolution. He actively organized reform movements but was captured and executed on a charge of *lèse majesté*. The hero of our story, Hong Kiltong, an illegitimate son of Minister Hong, follows a fate similar to that of the author, and the setting is laid in

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contemporary society, the time of King Sejong. Our hero, unable to suffer persecutions any longer, starts on a roving journey. He reads widely in military tactics and Taoist magic. With ingenious tricks as the head of a band of robbers, the Hwalbindang, whose aim is the deliverance of the poor, he mocks every sanctity of bureaucracy and of the feudal world. The government hotly pursues him, but nobody can capture the hero. He finally is crowned as the king of the Chin Island, builds a classless Utopia, and happily lives with his wife until his death at the age of seventy-two. This work is clearly a problem novel. Though inspired by the Shui hu chuan, the novel is inferior to its Chinese model in plot and characterization. There still are elements of the ch'uan-ch'i in such episodes as the miraculous removal of grains from government granaries. The novel is also strongly autobiographical, and the hero is the ideal of the author. The novel advances the following ideas: 1) the abolition of the class system, especially as it includes discrimination against the illegitimate son; 2) the improvement of the contradictions inherent in contemporary society; 3) liquidation of wealth unjustly amassed by avaricious officials and grasping underlings; 4) overseas expansion of the Korean people; 5) anti-Buddhism as implied in the hero's attack and plundering of the Haein Temple. Another sociological novel is the anonymous Chön Uch'i chön.

The historical novel, chiefly dealing with the personages and events during the Japanese and Manchu invasions, is a distinct type of fiction in the Yi period. Most of the historical novels are anonymous, and can be divided into the historical romance and the historical novel proper. Historical romances are mostly influenced by the Romance of the Three Kingdoms, and their stage is invariably set in China, chiefly Ch'ing-chou, Chi-chou, and Ching-chou. Even their narrative technique, especially the beginning and end of chapter, is strongly reminiscent of the Chinese model. Hyperbolical descriptions appearing in the Chinese model re-appear in their character sketches. Description of the hero is often limited to that of physical appearance, seldom given to the psychological aspect. Heroes are often masters in astronomy, military tactics, and magic, and their rise is mostly foretold by children's songs. Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism underlie the thought of these romances, especially Taoism.

In the Imjin nok by an anonymous hand, famous generals who fought against the Japanese become heroes of the book. Events related to them are not often historical. The Yu Ch'unungyol chön, Cho Ung chön, Chang Kukchin chön, and Kwön Ikchung chön are some
of the representative works of this type. Structurally, the last two consist of two parts, the first part dealing with the love or marriage of the hero, and the second, with his military exploits.

The Im Kyŏng'ŏp chŏn [53] 43 and Pakssi chŏn [54] 44, on the other hand, are examples of historical fiction proper. The former is a story of General Im, who repulsed the Manchu invaders but was murdered by a villainous retainer, Kim Cha-jŏn. The latter deals with Yi Si-baek and his wife, née Pak, who distinguished themselves during the Manchu invasion. This book lays stress on the wife's accomplishment in magic. A woman who saves the state in a great crisis later became a type in such historical fiction. This technique in the book was to attract women, who were the novel-reading public of the day.

The court novels belong to historical fiction proper. The Kyech'uk ilgi [55] 45 is a court diary written by an anonymous court lady. The book, consisting of two parts, records in realistic language the political upheavals and court intrigues between the years 1609 and 1623, especially Tyrant Kwanghae's misgovernment and massacre of the family of Queen Mother Inmok. The heroine of the novel is the Queen Mother herself (1584—1632), and the persecutions she suffered and her secluded life are the main themes. The Hanjung nok [56] 46 is actually a book of court diaries but is sufficiently artistic to be read as a novel. The author is Princess Hyegong [57] (1735—1815), née Hong, the consort of Prince Sado (1735—62), son of King Yongjo. The King was estranged from his son, who, owing to the King's persecution, became insane and died a cruel death at the age of twenty-eight. Princess Hyegong, who had to spend the rest of her life in seclusion and sorrow, wrote down her memoirs in epistolary form, the first part in her sixty-first year and second and third parts in 1805 for the reading of King Sunjo. The book records in simple but moving language the cause of the death of the Prince, her secluded life after his death, and the persecutions she suffered at the hands of treacherous slanderers. Contemporary court life is vividly described in court language which abounds in graceful turns of speech and honorifics. The Tale of Queen Inhyŏn (Inhyŏn wanghu chŏn [58]) 47 is an anonymous story of court intrigue involving two queens. After the death of the first queen, King Sukchong marries Queen Inhyŏn (1667—1701). Being unable to beget a crown prince, the Queen asks the

43 KKD, 134—9; KTJ, 80: PSU, 221—3.
44 KKD, 128—33; KTJ, 73—6; PSU, 261—7.
King to take a certain lady, Chang, as a concubine. After begetting a son, Lady Chang intrigues to advance herself to the position of queen, finally succeeds and expels Queen Inhyön. The King, however, feels remorse and when Lady Chang’s faction murders most of the deposed Queen’s supporters, he reinstates Inhyön as the Queen and kills Lady Chang.

The period of the maturity of the novel is marked by Kim Man-jung (1637—92) and his two extant novels. The Cloud Dream of the Nine (Kuun mong), the third landmark in the Korean novel, was written at the place of his exile, Sŏnch’on, to console his ailing mother. Kim was an arch-priest of the movement to keep the Korean language undefiled and preached the usage of Korean instead of Chinese in literary works. The plot of the Kuun mong is laid in T’ang China, and the novel is a romantic tale of the Buddhist idea of resignation, that all fame and glories of the human world are but a dream. A buddhist saint, Taeyŏ (Great Master Yukkwon), sends out his best disciple, Sŏngjin, on an errand to the Dragon King of the Tungt’ing Lake. At the same time, a fairy-matron, née Wi, sends her eight fairies to the Master to inquire after his health. On his way home, Sŏngjin meets the eight fairies with whom he frolics till sunset. As a punishment Sŏngjin is sent to the Ruler of the Underworld who takes pity on him and causes him to be born in a certain Yang family in Suju, with the name Yang So-yu. The eight fairies, too, are condemned to earth as humans. They are born beautiful girls and grow up to be either famous kisaeng or daughters of respectable families. The hero establishes himself as a man of fame, securing a high position at court after passing the civil service examination. Various romances develop one after another as the hero meets all of the eight women. Thus, the hero who was reborn in the human world enjoys the pleasures of man with eight fairies who were condemned to the human world. One day, he climbs the hill west to his palace, is suddenly awakened to the transience of life, comprehends the essence of the three religions (Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism), and chooses Buddhism as the path to his salvation. He returns with the eight fairies to his master, becomes a Bodhisattva, and enters the Promised Land. The three religions are incorporated into the texture of the novel, and the novel stands out for the degree of their integration and artistic intensity. It also can be said to afford an interesting indication of the current social attitude toward three ways of thought. Confucian bureaucracy was mainly identified with realistic and utilitarian pursuits, Taoism with Epicureanism, and Buddhism with quietism and the renunciation of the world. Buddhism is however predominant, especially the workings of karma. The three

worlds in Buddhism — past, present, and future — are well linked together to achieve coherence and artistic integrity. One critic offers another view: the book is a reflection of man's ideal Weltanschauung in authoritarian society.

Another novel by Kim, the Sassi namjong ki[60] (c. 1689—92) is a satirical remonstrance against the institution of concubinage, allegedly against King Sukchong who gave ear to his concubine and banished Queen Inhyŏn, as recorded in the Inhyŏn wangu hu chŏn. The setting is laid in Ming China, but the story is an exact parallel to that of Queen Inhyŏn. When one considers that the author was banished from the court for his opposition to the King's move to degrade the Queen, the motive of the novel becomes transparent. This novel is inferior in plot and narration to the Kuun mong, but as a first domestic novel it set up a pattern for such later novels as The Tale of Rose Flower and Pink Lotus (Changhwa hongnyŏn chŏn[61],[66].

Written by an anonymous hand, The Tale of Rose Flower and Pink Lotus is a story of a cruel stepmother who maltreats the two daughters of the flower names. The stepmother, in an attempt to slander her stepdaughters, hides a large skinned rat in their bed at night. Next morning the stepmother accuses one of having a miscarriage, and has the girl, Rose Flower, drowned in the river. The other girl, Pink Lotus, is informed of her sister's death in a dream, and following a blue bird, goes to the scene of the murder where, in great grief, she plunges into the waters. The spirit of the two virgins then become malicious ghosts and frighten the magistrate of the province. The ghosts harrass the people so much that a renowned warrior, Chŏng Tong-u (real name: Chŏng Tong-ho), is dispatched from the capital. When he meets them, the ghosts appeal to the warrior to punish their stepmother and cleanse their names. The stepmother is executed for her crime, and the bodies of the two daughters are reclaimed from the river and given a decent burial. Satisfied, the malicious ghosts are reborn again as two daughters to the father who re-married a virtuous woman, née Yun. The parents and daughters live happily ever after.

The action of the kongan[62] novel always takes place in a law court. The Changhwa hongnyŏn chŏn can be considered to be an example of this type, when the court investigates the petition of the ghosts of the two girls in question and decides to avenge the stepmother on their behalf. The Chin Taebang chŏn[63],[64], Pak Munsu chŏn[65],[62], and Ongnangja chŏn[66].

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[63] KT, 142; PSU, 385—7.
[64] KKD, 288—9; KT, 141—2; PSU, 384—5.

[66] 謝氏南征記
[67] 蕖花紅蓮傳
[68] 公案
[69] 陳大方傳
[70] 朴文秀傳
[71] 玉嬌子傳
belong to this group. These novels are chiefly didactic in tone, and reproval of vice and promotion of virtue is a recurrent theme. The magistrate’s sermon generally emphasizes the five principles of human conduct, but the novels are rich in the description of the family life of the common people.

The masterpiece of the Korean novel is unequivocally the *Life of Spring Fragrance* (*Ch’unhyang chŏn*) by an anonymous hand, the most popular novel in Korea. Written sometime in the eighteenth century, the novel was expanded with new parts added during the course of reprints so that the original version is difficult to trace. The novel is the story of a romance between the son of an upper class family and the daughter of a socially despised kisaeng. A male servant of the hero is cast in the important role of spokesman for the common people of the time. Yi Toryŏng (Yong), the son of a yangban, falls in love with Spring Fragrance, the kisaeng daughter, on a spring day in the Kwanghan Pavilion. After turning down the repeated overtures of the hero through his cunning and comical servant, Pangja, Spring Fragrance finally succumbs. The hero, however, is soon ordered to accompany his father, who has been nominated Minister of Personnel, to the capital. After a tearful scene of farewell in which they exchange tokens of remembrance, a mirror and a jade ring, the couple pledge eternal love, the girl promising that she will wait forever for his return. After the hero’s departure for Seoul, the provincial governor, enraptured by the beauty of Spring Fragrance, commands her mother to deliver the heroine up as his concubine. The proposal being firmly turned down, the governor imprisons the girl and inflicts on her sadistic torture, which Spring Fragrance endures with amazing fortitude. In the meantime, the hero returns to town in the guise of a beggar in the role of the *amhaeng ŏsa* (secret royal inspector) of the provincial administration. Discovering the tragic fate of his love, he reveals his identity and hands out stern punishment to the governor and rescues the girl.

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There are four editions printed in block letters of which the Kyöngp’an (printed in Seoul) and Wanp’an (printed in Chönju) editions are our reliable sources for this novel. Besides, there are two other editions printed in woodblocks and eight manuscript editions. The Wanp’an edition demonstrates a later stage in the development of the novel than the Kyöngp’an edition. The former differs from the latter in the following details: 1) Spring Fragrance is not a kisaeng daughter but a girl from a middle class family; 2) Yi Toryöng’s name is changed from Yong to Mongnyong, the name used in all subsequent editions; 3) Yi is engaged to Spring Fragrance only with the consent of her mother; and 4) Hyangdan, a servant girl, always accompanies Spring Fragrance. Furthermore, while the Kyöngp’an edition is in prose, the Wanp’an edition is in verse, in the kasa form, chiefly meant to be sung or recited.

People of all classes claim that the Life of Spring Fragrance is the ripest production of the Korean novel. It is. The Ch’unhyang story enjoyed a long evolution in the course of its development, and its Stoff is the property of all people. Its source might have been a simple story current among the people about love and feminine virtue. But when an anonymous writer wrote it down in the eighteenth century, it became a book which epitomized the Korean people’s manners and customs, dreams and beliefs of the time. The novel contains brilliant characters, who live in every reader’s memory, and abounds in human and humorous action. Beautiful and virtuous Spring Fragrance and her devoted and shrewd kisaeng mother (Wölme), passionate and upright Yi Toryöng and his cunning yet loyal servant are masterly inventions. Yet Spring Fragrance’s chastity and virtue suffuse the entire novel, giving a special reality and poignancy to the work. The people delight to see in Spring Fragrance a paragon of chastity and a model of the virtuous wife; but others also read the book for its protest against the privileged class and defence of human rights.

Except for a few imitations of the Life of Spring Fragrance and minor works, the classical novel entered its period of decline in the nineteenth century. One of the notable works of this period, however, is probably the anonymous Imhwa Chöngyön, in its length and magnitude comparable to War and Peace. It presents altogether several hundred characters, of whom seventy are cast in important roles. The leading roles belong to four women, Im, Hwa, Chöng, and Yön, all of whom develop a human panorama of immense scope around the hero, Imsaeng. Other noteworthy titles are the Ch’aebong kambyölkok and Pae p’aejang chön. The former is a mixture of novel and ballads while the latter employs much

55 Its full title is: Imhwa chöngyön sammun ch’wirok.
56 KKD, 198—203; PSU, 449—52.
57 Kim Sam-bul, ed. Pae p’aejang chön. Onggojip chon (Minjok munhwa ch’ongsö VI), Seoul, 1950; KKD, 216—9; PSU, 452—5.
dramatic dialogue. The *Urform* of the former was a dramatic narrative sung by a ballad singer. When written down in its present form the novel became a satirical and humorous piece of literature.

We have omitted discussion of fables, children's stories (e.g., *K'ongjwi p'atchwi*), and legends turned into novel (*Simch'ong chon* and *Hüngbu chon*).

With the importation of Western civilization and culture towards the end of the Yi dynasty, traditional verse and prose forms rapidly gave way to the new literature. Modern Korean fiction modelled upon the Western style will be discussed on another occasion.

**Abbreviations**

AY: Asea yŏn'gu (Koryŏ taehakkyo Asea munje yŏn'guso).

CHB: Ch'oe Hyŏn-bae sŏnqaeng hwangap kinyŏm nonmunjip (1954).

CM: Ch'yo munhak.


HM: Hyŏndae munhak.

KK: Kugŏ kungmunhak.


KKY: Kugŏ kungmunhak yŏn'gu (Ch'ungang University).

KRS: Koryŏ sa (Kokusho kankaol-edition, Tokyo, 1908–9).

KTJ: Kim Tae-jun, *Chosŏn sosŏl* sa, Seoul, 1933.

KTN: Kyŏngbuk taehakkyo nonmunjip.

MH: Minsok hakpo.


SG: Sasanggye.

SGTN: Sŏnggyungwan taehakkyo nonmunjip.


STN: Seoul taehakkyo nonmunjip.

