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Paeon to Marital Fidelity in Poverty:
The *Wang Sibung giu gi*,
Korean Romance of the *Thorn Hairpin*

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Introduction

The *Wang Sibung giu gi* (*The Story of a Fortuitous Encounter of Wang Sibung* 王十朋奇遇記)¹ is a tale which was written in classical Chinese and included in the seventeenth century collection *Sindokjae sutaekbon jeongijip* (*Collection of Jeongi Tales Selected by Gim Jip* [1574-1656] 慎獨齋手澤本傳奇集). The collection was introduced to modern scholarship in 1955 by Jeong Byeonguk.² The tale follows the marriage, separation, and reunion of a Northern Song (960-1127) couple, Wang Sibung, a talented man from a poor family, and Jeon Ongnang (Ongnyeon), a devoted woman from a rich family. Ongnang chooses Wang as her husband despite the poverty evident in his only betrothal gift, a thorn hairpin,³ which stands in contrast to a golden hairpin sent by Son Yeogwon, the scion of a rich family. Son's determination to marry Ongnang at any cost causes Ongnang's initial separation from Wang, while later misunderstandings in communication drive them to believe each other dead. Nonetheless, their untainted faithfulness to each other, evidenced by their respective refusals to remarry, leads to their final reunion, in which the thorn hairpin plays a pivotal role, allowing each to recognize that the other is still living. The tale not only praises the unswerving love of the couple but also promotes an ethic that prioritizes virtue over mundane well-being, and the original husband-wife relationship over the relationships imposed by powerful others. The tale carries a strong moral lesson as the couple's love and principles are repeatedly tested by external influences. Such themes and lessons would have appealed

strongly to Korean readers who favored chastity while Ongnang's image would resonate with that of Chunhyang in the *Chunhyang jeon* (*The Tale of Chunhyang* 春香傳).

The story itself is a Korean adaptation of the anonymously written *Jingchai ji* (*The Tale of The Thorn Hairpin* 荊釵記), a Chinese southern drama (*nanxi* 南戲) text, also known as an early *chuanqi* (romance 傳奇) play.⁴ As one of the four great *chuanqi* plays from the transitional period from Yuan to Ming, the *Jingchai ji* has enjoyed great popularity in China.⁵ However, the Chinese tale's arrival in Korea, as early as the seventeenth century, was unknown to scholars until the introduction of the *Wang Sibung giu gi*. Ever since another version in vernacular Korean, titled *Wang Sibong dyeon* (왕시봉뎐, 1685), was discovered in 1997 by Yi Bokgyu,⁶ it has become clear that Korean engagement with the Chinese dramatic tale may have started even earlier—perhaps in the sixteenth century—and spread more broadly than we had previously thought. The original Chinese tale would have required a certain level of popularity and a period of circulation in Korea before it began to multiply, through anonymous Korean translators, writers, and transcribers, into various versions in both classical Chinese and vernacular Korean (Jeong 2001, 199).

The tale *Wang Sibung giu gi*, written in a Tang *chuanqi* (tales of wonder; *jeongi* in Korean 傳奇) format, offers a very different read from the original *Jingchai ji*. Despite having the same main plots and character names, it presents the tale as a typical *chuanqi* tale, familiar to Korean readers at the time, in both content and form. For instance, it drops many elements seen

1. The original text (a collated edition) is available in Jeong 2000, 21-25.

2. Some questions have been raised by scholars (such as Jeong Hwanguk and Yi Bokgyu) as to the dating of the collection and particularly as to whether Gim Jip was the real compiler of the collection. Still, many scholars agree that the tales included in the collection should be considered to be from the seventeenth century as long as there is no evidence to counter that date. Jeong Gilsu (2001, 179) even states that the tales in the collection reflect the trends of seventeenth century classical fiction.

3. A thorn hairpin is a symbol of the faithfulness of a couple in poverty. It alludes to the gift of Liang Hong 梁鴻 (Yang Hong in Korean) of the Later Han (25-220), a virtuous man from a poor family, to his wife Meng Guang 孟光 (Maeng Gwang in Korean). Meng Guang in turn respects her husband deeply, which is often expressed by her gesture of "lifting a food tray up to her eyebrows to show her respect for Liang" 舉案齊眉 (Shen 2010, 182). For a related historical account, see *Hou Hanshu* (*The Book of the Later Han* 後漢書), 83.8. It is also available at <https://ctext.org/hou-han-shu/yi-min-lie-zhuan/zh> (last retrieved October 30, 2018).

4. The *Jingchai ji* consists of 48 acts and has frequently been attributed either to the playwright Ke Danqiu 柯丹邱 of the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) or to Zhu Quan 朱權 (d. 1448), a prince of the Ming (1368-1644). For more on this, see Zhao 2011, 140-41; Yu and Hong 2012, 1. The play is the second of the *Liushi zhong qu* (*Sixty Plays* 六十種曲), edited and compiled by Mao Jin 毛晉 (1599-1659), and all extant full editions are from Ming China. Six main editions of the *Jingchai ji* are available in Yu and Hong 2012 and the two main editions originally included in *Liushi zhong qu* and *Quan Ming chuanqi* (*The Complete Chuanqi Plays of Ming* 全明傳奇) respectively are also available in Yi 2003, 217-490.

5. See Mackerras 1983, 67. The other three plays are the *Baiyue ting* (*The Moon Prayer Pavilion* 拜月亭), *Baitu ji* (*The Story of the White Rabbit* 白兔記), and *Shagou ji* (*The Story of Killing a Dog* 殺狗記). The *Jingchai ji* was steadily popular during the Ming and Qing periods, and is still staged in many dramatic forms such as the Kun opera 崑劇 and Sichuan opera 川劇 (Burch 1973, 228n2; Ye 2008, 301-02).

6. Yi Bokgyu (1998) discovered this vernacular version during his research on *Mukjae ilgi* (*A Diary of Mukjae*) by Yi Mungeon (1494-1567), along with several other vernacular tales. The transcription date of the *Wang Sibong dyeon* is presented as 1685 in Yi 2003, 151.

in the original dramatic texts, including dialogues, direction, musical tones, song-poems, vernacular lexicons, etc. It also simplifies the arrangement of plots and characters, even omitting certain supporting characters (e.g., Ju Byeok 周璧) and scenes, including the trial of the evil character, Son Yeogwon, and the grand denouement honoring Ongnang, Wang Sibung, and the rest of his family, a common ending in Chinese *chuanqi* (romance) play.⁷ The removal of these Chinese dramatic elements, despite its negative effects on the integrity of the original tale,⁸ would have helped Koreans in understanding the Chinese dramatic text by removing the barrier of cultural and linguistic differences.⁹ Korea did not have the same history and traditions of literature for dramatic performance which, in China, had risen to high popularity during the thirteenth century and onward. Koreans' appropriation of Chinese dramatic tales must therefore have necessitated the rewriting of the tales to suit the literary tastes of a Korean readership. This knowledge helps us to posit the nature of the anonymous author of this particular version. The original author of this Korean adaptation must have been among the few who were versed in both *jeongi* literature and Chinese dramatic texts.¹⁰ In the hands of this anonymous expert, the tale *Wang Sibung giu gi* was crafted into a well-rounded *jeongi* tale for Koreans, which most would not have noticed was a Korean adaptation of the *Jingchai ji* without prior knowledge of that tale.

Scholarly research on the relationship between individual Korean versions and between Korean and Chinese versions does not present a clear-cut map of influence.¹¹ *Wang Sibung giu gi* retains some differences from

both the vernacular Korean version and the *Jingchai ji* in the details of its sub-plots, titles, and names. The vernacular version seems more like an abbreviated, translated version of the *Jingchai ji* (Jeong 2010, 115). *Wang Sibung giu gi*, therefore, is not necessarily the basis of the vernacular version, and vice versa. Likewise, it is difficult to say with any confidence that it was drawn directly from the extant versions of the *Jingchai ji*. The possibility that different texts or ways of telling the *Jingchai ji* were introduced to Koreans at different times should not be ignored, nor should the possibility that the extant Chinese and Korean adaptations do not represent all the versions that were circulated. While further evidence and research are needed to scrutinize the evolutionary paths of the story in Korea, the tale *Wang Sibung giu gi* does not seem to be based entirely on any other Korean or Chinese version.

Apart from the dominant theme of the love and virtue of husband and wife triumphing over socioeconomic differences, physical distance, and the ill will of others, the tale poses questions essential to our understanding not only of the story but of its readership. These questions urge us to investigate the kind of reading materials which were available in late sixteenth and seventeenth century Korea, how Chinese dramatic texts were appropriated by Koreans in the textual realms, and how Korean adaptation of Chinese dramatic tales adds to our knowledge of the conditions and topology of Korean literary practice at that time (Jeong 2010, 125-28). The tale unquestionably embodies a uniquely Korean way of appropriating a Chinese dramatic tale which provides a clue to understanding the expanding reading and writing practice of late Joseon Koreans and the development of Korean fiction. I hope this translation will help readers to explore the treasured sea of Korean classical literature, in which subtle currents of culture and creativity meet, intertwine, and create new versions that appeal to different readers.

7. For more information on these changes, see Jeong 2010, 103-28.

8. Jeong Gilsu (2001, 191-94) argues that these omissions caused confusion in terms of the plot development and characterization in the *Wang Sibung giu gi*.

9. The publication of glossaries for novels (e.g., *Soseol eorokhae* 小説語錄解) to aid the reading of Chinese vernacular fiction and drama such as *Shuihu zhuan* (*The Story of Water Margin* 水滸傳), *Xiyou ji* (*The Journey to the West* 西遊記), and *Xixiang ji* (*The Romance of the Western Chamber* 西廂記) attests to the Korean literati's difficulty in understanding Chinese vernacular language and literature (Yun 2008, 152).

10. There has been little scholarly exploration of whether and to what extent Koreans appreciated and appropriated Chinese dramatic texts despite their significance to the history of Korean prose literature and the literary and cultural exchange between China and Korea. Some notable research on Korean engagement with Chinese dramatic texts and performances has nonetheless been done. See, for example, Yi 2004; Seong 2004.

11. The extant research on this tale and other vernacular versions is rudimentary. Little has been

achieved since the pioneering works of early scholars such as Jeong Byeonguk, Yi Bokgyu, Bak Jaeyeon, and Jeong Hakseong. In China, the situation is similar; amongst the many scholarly works on the *Jingchai ji*, few have discussed Korean adaptations, and those few have been fairly preliminary. Nonetheless, the prospect for research into this tale and other Korean adaptations from the Chinese is positive, with interest likely to grow as more and more texts become available to scholars.

Translation

1. 王十朋 宋太原韻士人也。早失父奉母居。家計雖貧。氣像不凡。才冠百家。

Wang Sibung¹² came from the Taewon¹³ area during the Song dynasty.¹⁴ He was a noble man with a scholarly disposition. His father had passed away when Sibung was still young. After that, he lived alone with his widowed mother. Although he was poor, he was always high-spirited. His talent exceeded all others.

2. 隣有全恭元。有一女。乳名玉蓮。年甫三歲。慈母見亡。爲叔父母所養。父恭元娶後妻崔氏而居焉。

A neighbor named Jeong Gongwon¹⁵ had a daughter whose childhood name was Ongnyeon. When she turned three years old, her mother died, leaving her in the care of a paternal uncle's family. Her father was remarried to a woman whose surname was Choe, and lived with her.

3. 玉娘幼承庭訓。工刺繡學詩書。才色卓越。花容月貌。眞國色也。

From early childhood Ongnang¹⁶ received a good education at home. She was very skilled at embroidery and learned both poetry and calligraphy.¹⁷ Her talent and beauty were extraordinary. She possessed a flowerlike face and her composure resembled the moon's. She truly was one of the rarest beauties of the country.

12. This translation, despite the fact that the tale was originally set in China, uses the Korean readings of names and places that appear in the original text. Because the base text is a Korean translation of the Chinese tale that was circulated and evolved among Koreans, the Korean reading reflects a Korean savor and traces of Korean reading habits, evoking the cultural connotations which the Chinese names and places held among Koreans. The name Wang Sibung is drawn from Koreans' conventional reading of the Chinese characters "Sipbung" 十朋 which appear in the Korean translation of the tale. Jeong Hakseong said "Sipbung" seems to have been read as "Sibung" among seventeenth century Koreans because "Sibung" was closer to the Chinese reading, at the time, of the characters, "Shipeng."

13. Taewon (Taiyuan in Chinese 太原) is a historic city located in Shanxi province, China. It was called Jinyang (Chinyang in Korean 晉陽) during the Spring and Autumn Period (771-403 BCE) and remained an important site in traditional Chinese culture. In most *Jingchai ji* editions, Wang Sibung hails from Wenzhou 溫州 in Zhejiang area, which is also the case in the vernacular Korean edition *Wang Sibong dyeon*.

14. Song 宋 China (960-1279).

15. Jeon Gongwon (Quan Gongyuan in Chinese 全恭元). In the *Jingchai ji*, this character appears as Qian Gongyuan (Scholar Qian 錢貢元), whose name is Qian Liuxiang 錢流行.

16. Starting from here, the original text refers to Ongnyeon 玉蓮 as Ongnang 玉娘.

17. "Poetry and calligraphy" is a translation of *siseo* 詩書, which can also mean the *Sigyeong* (*The Book of Poetry* 詩經) and *Seogyong* (*The Book of History* 書經).

4. 恭元一日 謂崔氏曰 王十朋爲人 今雖貧矣 未久爲大人 吾欲爲婿。

One day, Gongwon said to his wife, Lady Choe, "Although he is poor now, I believe Wang Sibung will become a great man someday. I want to have him as my son-in-law."

5. 崔氏答曰 夫婦人倫之大綱 豈可只見目前之才 而不計異日之遠慮乎。

Lady Choe said, "Husband and wife is one of the cardinal relationships in human life. Yet you only see what you can see now: his talents. You have not thought carefully about the problems that will fall upon your daughter's life with him in the distant future."

6. 恭元答曰 吾知擇婿而已 何必論財之有無乎。崔氏與養母 不能違其志 因修媒妁之禮 遣媒於王家。

Gongwon replied, "My only wish is to find a good son-in-law and I believe I know how to select one. Whether he is rich or poor doesn't matter." Having failed to dissuade Gongwon, Lady Choe and Ongnang's foster mother began preparing for the proposal, sending a matchmaker to Wang Sibung's house to discuss the marriage.

7. 王公喜聞其言 約其納采 及其期日 貧不能備禮 只送尺牘與荊釵 以定花燭之期。Delighted, Wang Sibung promised to send them a formal marriage request by the chosen day.¹⁸ When the day came, however, his poverty left him unable to perform the proper formalities. He sent only a marriage letter and a thorn hairpin to fix the wedding date.

8. 傍有孫汝權者 居計稍富者也。見其玉娘之才色 求婚於崔氏。

In the same neighborhood, there lived a man named Son Yeogwon, who had considerable wealth. Having noticed Ongnang's talent and beauty, he too sent a marriage proposal to Lady Choe.

18. This sentence describes *napchae* 納采, the first stage in the traditional wedding known as "six marriage rites" 六禮. *Napchae* consists of 1) the groom's family making a formal marriage proposal and the rest of the six rites are as follows: 2) asking the bride's name and date of birth 問名; 3) presenting divination results and betrothal gifts 納吉; 4) sending wedding gifts to the bride's home 納徵; 5) requesting a wedding date 請期; and 6) welcoming the bride in person 親迎 (Pang-White 2018, 9).

9. 崔氏更告家翁曰 王家至貧 孫家至富 求貧以作獨女之耦 而終使零替乎。
強取孫家之金釵 而更囑家翁。家翁荊金兩釵 盛于一櫥 使玉娘選取之
以作伉儷。

Lady Choe spoke to her husband, "Whereas the Wang family lives in extreme poverty, the Son family is very rich. Why did you pick a poor man to marry your only daughter, knowing that the rest of her life could be burdened?" Unwilling to give in, she persuaded the Son family to send a golden hairpin and, showing it, again tried to persuade her husband. Her husband decided that he would present the thorn hairpin and the golden one in a cup together and ask his daughter to choose her future husband by picking one.

10. 玉娘曰 王家雖貧 荊釵至賤 先到吾家 稱吾夫之物也 孫家雖富 金釵至貴 追到吾家 既取王家之物也 而又取孫家之物 何異於事二夫乎 門戶之辱 何可洗也 傍人之嗤 何可免乎。

Ongnang said, "Although Wang's household is poor and the thorn hairpin is a lowly object, it arrived at our house first, so I regard it as something sent by my future husband. Son's household is certainly prosperous and the golden hairpin is a valuable item, but it arrived later. Having already received a gift from the Wang family, accepting another from the Son family would be equivalent to serving two husbands. Our family would be disgraced beyond repair and draw sneers from our neighbors."

11. 父母不能違其志 怒不待佳會之日 馱送於王家 玉娘入其門 婦道甚修 善事其姑。

Unable to change her mind, her parents were very upset and sent their daughter on horseback to the Wang family well before the wedding day. From the day she arrived at Wang's house, Ongnang worked diligently to fulfill her wifely duties and served her mother-in-law very well.

12. 未幾 王公赴舉京師 孫汝權以其非材 故與王公偕至京師 共栖一里 同入科場 孫則落榜 王公則得捷巍科 遊街三日 卽拜朝陽判官 聲播遠邇。

Before too long, Wang Sibung set out for the capital city to take the civil examination. Son Yeogwon, although incompetent to take the exam, deliberately took the opportunity to travel with him. They stayed together in the same town before reporting to the examination place. Son did not pass, but Wang won first place. After three days of celebration and marching in the

streets, Wang was appointed judge of Joyang¹⁹ and soon his fame spread far and near.

13. 傍有一宰相 見其王公之才 欲作之婿 謂王公曰 吾止有一女 欲事君子 其肯乎。Nearby, there was a minister who recognized Wang's talents and wanted him as his son-in-law. The minister said, "I would like my only daughter to serve you as a wife. What do you think?"

14. 王公離席曰 生以荒蕪末學 幸登高科 舍其糟糠之妻 更爲高門之婿 於情不能所忍爲也 宰相慘不復言。

Wang rose from his seat to reply, "With the little knowledge I had, I was so fortunate as to pass the civil service examination. My first wife was always by my side during difficult times.²⁰ I am not so heartless as to abandon her just to become a son-in-law to an illustrious family like yours." Embarrassed, the minister did not speak of it again.

15. 王公將向朝陽 汝權使他人謁王公而誣曰 明天下歸本鄉 不其寄手書乎。

When Wang was about to leave for Joyang, Son Yeogwon sent a messenger to him, requesting an audience. [When he met Wang,] Son said deceptively, "I am going to return home tomorrow. Would you like to send a letter home?"

16. 王公喜聞 折簡上書于母親曰 息得參高科 又拜朝陽判官 某日抵其官 送人馬 母親與新婦 偕至于官 治民孝親 俱盡於吾心 伏維慈鑒云云 封緘 授之汝權。

Delighted at the offer, Wang wrote a letter to his mother, which read: "[My Dear Mother] *Your son was placed first in the civil examination and appointed judge of Joyang. My assignment begins on a certain day. I will dispatch some people and horses to help you and my wife move here. I will devote myself to governing my people and becoming a filial son. Your dutiful son, Wang Sibung.*" Wang sealed the letter and handed it to Son.

19. Joyang (Chaoyang in Chinese 朝陽). In the *Jingchai ji*, Joyang appears as 潮陽 (Chaoyang in Chinese), a district in Guangdong province.

20. The original text uses the expression *jogang ji cheo* 糟糠之妻, which refers to a wife who endured the hardship of poverty with her husband while eating distillers' dregs and husks. It also connotes a first wife who supports her husband before he succeeds.

17. 汝權取其書 改曰 息今幸登科 仍拜朝陽判官 爲宰相之婿 挈此新室 下去朝陽 送從人馬母親獨來 在家妻則送于其父家 吾不願更見云云. 改書還封 送于王公之母.

Son, after taking charge of the letter, forged a similar missive saying: “[My Dear Mother] *Fortunately, your son passed the civil examination and was appointed judge of Joyang. I also became the son-in-law of a minister. Soon I will head to Joyang with my new bride. I will dispatch some people and horses to help you move here. Please come alone. Send my wife back home to her family. I do not wish to see her ever again...*” Son enclosed the forgery in the original envelope and sent it on.

18. 王公之母 開拆見之 一喜一悲. 玉娘問其故 姑答曰 子登科 又爲朝陽倅 母之榮華雖多 子改娶後室 今爲率去 婦則送于君父家 以此一悲也.

Wang’s mother was both happy and sad to read the letter. Ongnang asked her mother-in-law what was troubling her. She replied, “As a mother, I am so thrilled to hear that my son became judge of Joyang after passing the examination. However, I am also saddened to learn that he has married another woman, taking her with him, and wants me to send you back to your family.”

19. 婦答曰 妾自入高門 接持井臼 溫清之奉 甘旨之養 妾盡其誠 又與家翁 定爲偕老百年之約 結爲死歸同穴之盟 何若是去絕乎. 姑不忍離移.

Ongnang said, “Ever since I joined this family, I have devoted myself to the household and to you. I diligently fetched water and ground grain in the mortar with my own hands. With a faithful heart, I kept you warm during the winter and cool during the summer while treating you to delicious food.²¹ My husband and I promised that we would grow old together and swore an oath that we would be buried in the same grave.²² After all that, how could he just leave me, breaking off our relationship?” Her mother-in-law could not find it in her heart to leave Ongnang behind to join her son.

21. These three expressions—“personally fetching water and grinding grain with the mortar” 操持井臼, “keeping your parents warm during the winter and cool during the summer” 溫清之奉, and “treating them to delicious food” 甘旨之養—are commonly used in both China and Korea to describe the praiseworthy conduct of a virtuous wife and daughter-in-law.

22. The original text has traditional expressions for the companionship between husband and wife: “aging together for one hundred years (a whole lifetime)” 百年偕老 and “making an oath to be buried in the same grave” 同穴之盟.

20. 玉娘父母 聞其言 叱其言而怒曰 王公學文雖優 貧不能赴舉 留京之資 行路之費 吾家盡辦 賴我之力 得參高科 遽生驕意 更爲宰相之壻云 其爲不肖 何可勝道.

Ongnang’s parents soon heard the news. They condemned their son-in-law’s words, exclaiming angrily, “Although he was knowledgeable and well versed in writing, our poor son-in-law would not have been able to afford to take the civil examination if our household had not paid for his lodging in the capital city and all the extra expenses of travel. Indeed, it is our support that allowed him to pass the civil examination. Nonetheless, his haughtiness has led him to become the son-in-law of a minister. His cruelty is indescribable!”

21. 即送人馬玉娘率來曰 王公又娶勢家之女 向汝疎薄 何至於此也

And they took a coach to bring Ongnang back to their house. They admonished Ongnang, saying, “Your husband married another woman from an influential family and broke off his marriage with you. How could he leave you so harshly?”

22. 玉娘曰 王公雖無狀, 待我之情 豈至於如是薄乎. 此非王公之意 而恐有中間狡詐者之所爲也.

Ongnang said, “Although my husband is without achievements or good deeds, I don’t believe he is capable of breaking my heart so harshly. No, this could not possibly have been his own idea. I suspect that some deceiver has come between us and is scheming to tear us apart.”

23. 父母又曰 孫公自京下來 其人必知虛實矣. 往問孫公 孫公之答與簡辭無異焉. 父母又曰 斯言若此 豈不實歟而已.

Her parents spoke, “Mr. Son also returned from the capital city. Surely, he knows the truth,” and they went to inquire. Son’s information was, of course, consistent with the content of the letter. Her parents soon returned and said to Ongnang, “Son’s words were in agreement. The letter speaks none other than the truth.”

24. 孫公性狡詐者 厚賂於崔氏 崔氏更告家翁曰 王公既爲他室 願不更見 寧以孫公爲壻 致辱於王公 有賴於玉娘 不亦可乎 父傾聽其言 招其玉娘 且勸且誘.

Son was a sly and manipulative man. He next gave Lady Choe a large bribe to take his part. She told her husband, “Wang is already remarried to another

woman and he clearly indicated in the letter that he did not wish to see Ongnang ever again. Perhaps, we should ask Son to become our son-in-law. That way, we can make Wang feel ashamed, and Ongnang will have someone to depend on. Wouldn't that be wonderful?" Ongnang's father listened attentively. Soon after, while gently consoling her, he suggested to Ongnang that she marry Son.

25. 玉娘答曰 王蠋云 忠臣不事二君 烈女不更二夫 妾何爲人斯 只聞難信之言 不覩吾夫之所遣 豈更二夫乎。

Ongnang responded, "According to Wang Chok,²³ a loyal subject does not serve two kings, and a chaste wife does not marry a second husband. That is how I should live. I cannot decide to remarry solely on the grounds of a letter that is so hard to believe. Besides, I never saw the letter and cannot be certain it was truly sent by my husband."

26. 父母强欲孫公爲壻 玉娘給曰 父母之所命 何不從焉。父信聽其言 以定佳會之日。

But, her parents were determined to have Son as a son-in-law. Unable to resist their will, Ongnang eventually lied, pretending to agree "How can I defy my parents' wish?" Her father trusted her words and picked a day for the wedding.

27. 玉娘及其期夜 沐浴更衣 端坐椒房 挺身以出 不知去處 親戚奴僕 訪水尋山 第二日 乃得其鞋 鞋棄於紅蓼之岸 慮必投江而死 莫得其屍 舉家痛哭而已。

On the wedding night, Ongnang took a bath, changed her clothes, and sat elegantly upright in the bridal room, careful to draw no suspicion. [At the first opportunity, however,] she snuck out of the room and disappeared. Her family and their servants anxiously searched the nearby mountains and waters. On the second day, they found Ongnang's shoes abandoned on a riverbank lush with red smartweed. They concluded that Ongnang must have jumped into the river to her death but, search as they might, they couldn't locate her body. The whole household lamented.

23. Wang Chok (Wang Zhu in Chinese 王蠋) is a minister of the Qi 齊 state during the Warring States Period (ca. fifth century-221 BCE). He is known for his remark that "a loyal liege man does not serve two kings, and a chaste wife does not change her husband by marrying a second husband" 忠臣不事二君，貞女不更二夫. A related record is found in the "Tian Dan liezhuan" 田單列傳 of the *Records of the Grand Historian* 史記. For an English translation, see Yang and Yang 1979, 89-93.

28. 玉娘投江之日 全自夏爲福州刺史 挈其室家 適泊舟于江滸。全子(自)夏假寢於船頭 纔成蝴蝶之夢。有一人自天降而來 謂全公曰 今夜一女來此投江 此乃君前生之女也 君須濟而養之。未答 倏然而去。

On the same day when Ongnang was believed to have leaped into the river, a man named Jeon Jaha was appointed as prefect of Bokju.²⁴ That evening, traveling with his family, he anchored his ship to the riverbank. As he dozed on the bow, he had a short dream.²⁵ In his dream, a figure descended from heaven and spoke to him, "Tonight, a woman will come here to jump into the river. In your former life, she was your daughter. You must save her and look after her." Before Jeon Jaha could ask a single question, the figure vanished.

29. 全公欠伸而覺 忽有投江之聲 急招舟子而拯之 乃玉娘也。脫其濕衣 着其燥衣 熾炭暖其體 湯酒潤其腸 以調血脉 董以得甦。

Yawning and stretching, Jeon Jaha woke from his dream. Suddenly, he heard the sound of someone splashing into the river. He quickly cried out to the skipper to pull the person out of the water. It was none other than Ongnang [chilled and unconscious]. They called for her to be quickly stripped off her wet garments and dressed in new dry clothes. A brazier was brought in to warm her and warm wine soup was gently poured into her mouth to improve her blood circulation. After a while, Ongnang regained consciousness.

30. 全公使其內室 問其姓名居址 與投江之故。女答曰 妾太原居全恭元之女 爲王十朋之妻也 家翁前月 拜朝陽判官 自京赴任 隣居狂暴者 欲逼妾 妾寧葬魚之腹 不可爲狗彘之匹 故敢此投江。

Jeon Jaha asked his wife to inquire about her name, place of residence, and reasons for jumping into the river. Ongnang replied, "I am the daughter of Jeon Gongwon, who lives in Taewon, and the wife of Wang Sibung. Last month, my husband was appointed to be judge of Joyang and prepared to move from

24. Prefect of Bokju 福州刺史. Bokju (Fuzhou in Chinese) is a city in present-day Fujian province. Later in the text, Jeon Jaha is described as the governor of Bokgeon (*geonswi* in Korean 建倅) while Wang Sibung is mentioned as the prefect of Bokju 福州刺史 or the governor of Bokju (*bokjuswi* in Korean 福州倅). To reduce confusion in the translation, I refer to Jeon and Wang by their names.

25. The original text has "a dream of a butterfly" 胡蝶夢, the famous dream found in the *Zhuangzi*, in which Zhuangzi (Zhuang Zhou, 369-286 BCE) himself becomes a butterfly. After he wakes, he cannot discern whether he was Zhuangzi dreaming of becoming a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming of becoming Zhuangzi. However, the butterfly dream in this passage, as in many other fictional narratives, seems to mean a short precognitive dream.

the capital city to his new post. A vicious man in our neighborhood seized the opportunity and tried to force me to be his wife. I could not become a mate to an animal [a dog or a pig] so, deciding that I would rather be eaten by fishes, I leaped into the river.”

31. 全公慘聽其言 欲知其實 遣吏於朝陽 吏往朝陽界 素輻丹旌²⁶ 來次江際 見其名旌. 名旌曰 朝陽判官王公之柩. 問其下人 則到任未久 得疾而死. 吏者未究其實 只以忖度王十朋之死也 急還來報.

Her words broke Jeon Jaha's heart. He sent one of his underlings to Joyang to investigate. Arriving at the outskirts of Joyang, the man saw a funeral procession with a red banner resting by a riverbank. The banner read, “The Coffin of Judge Wang of Joyang.” He accosted a servant walking with the procession and inquired. The servant told him that the judge had been struck with illness and died shortly after arriving at his new post. Without looking into the matter further, Jeon's underling assumed that Wang Sibung had died and hastily returned to report his discovery.

32. 玉娘實聽其言 驚悼失色 肝摧腸裂 幾至死門. 全公更勸饘粥 率來福建 倍增憐愛.

Ongnang accepted the grievous news without a moment's doubt and sank into despair. She became pale and her heart was crushed. Overwhelmed with grief and sorrow, she began to fade into death. Jeon Jaha brought her bowls of rice porridge and encouraged her to eat so that she could regain strength. He took her with him to Bokgeon,²⁷ where he continued to look after her and soon became very fond of her.

33. 玉娘告建倅曰 夫死久矣 而既不爲一奠 又未能一齋 願一設齋筵 以追冥路 使死夫薦拔. 建倅雖知異教之虛誕 玉娘之情 亦未可忤也 故許之.

One day, Ongnang asked Jeon Jaha, “A long time has passed since my husband's death, but I have yet to offer a memorial service or a cup of wine before his spirit. I would like to perform a ritual for the dead to ease his passage to eternity.” Jeon Jaha secretly thought the ritual was a foolish practice from a heterodox religion but chose to allow it because he did not want to break her heart.

34. 玉娘持其香燭 往吉祥寺 虔設齋筵 適有福州倅 亦喪室設齋于此矣. 玉娘以帳穴微見其貌 恰似王公之容體 齋罷而還 與其侍婢細言曰 日間山寺設齋之員 彷彿乎吾家翁矣. 建倅往側舍聽其言 招玉娘問其言.

Ongnang took incense and went to the Temple of Gilsang²⁸ to prepare for the ritual. While she was there, a governor of Bokju was also at the temple, holding a ritual for his deceased wife. Ongnang glimpsed him through the curtains and thought he resembled her husband Wang Sibung. After performing the ritual, she returned home and talked quietly with her maid, “The official performing the ritual at the temple today very much resembled my husband.” Jeon Jaha happened to hear their conversation on his way to the outhouse. Later, he summoned Ongnang and asked about what she said.

35. 玉娘答曰 往寺之時 偶見其人之面貌 與吾家翁依稀而似 故敢發此言而已 豈有他意哉.

Ongnang replied, “When I was at the temple, I happened to see an official who looked something like my deceased husband. I only brought it up casually. I did not mean it any other way.”

36. 建倅竊以爲怪 遣吏於福州 問其倅姓名 則吏回報曰 王十朋來莅福州. 建倅與其他邑太守 營辦設酌 相與談話 福州倅獨有傷心感感之態 建倅與福州倅問曰 君除受某官 而今來福州乎.

Struck by her unusual encounter, Jeon Jaha dispatched a subordinate to Bokju to find out the name of its governor. The man returned and reported, “Wang Sibung currently serves as governor of Bokju.” Jeon Jaha soon brought together all the governors and magistrates of nearby towns. As wine was served the gathered guests talked pleasantly with one another. However Wang Sibung, with a broken heart and a sad countenance, did not mingle with the crowd. Jeon Jaha asked Wang Sibung, “What was your post prior to coming to Bokju?”

37. 州倅答曰 幸叅高科 初拜朝陽判官 未久旋替 以王自恭爲代 右公赴任之月 得疾而死云 我則今來爲福州刺史矣.

Wang replied, “I was fortunate enough to pass the civil examination and was posted in Joyang to serve as a judge. Shortly after, I was reassigned and Wang

26. 名旌 could be an error of 銘旌.

27. Bokgeon (Fujian in Chinese 福建) is a province in the southern part of China.

28. Temple of Gilsang (Jixiang si in Chinese 吉祥寺).

Jagong came to replace me. Sadly, Wang Jagong was struck with illness and passed away within a month after his appointment, while I came here to serve as the prefect of Bokju.”

38. 建倅又問曰 夫人以何疾卒於何地乎 州倅答曰 某太原人也 娶同鄉人全恭元之女 去年赴京登科 仍拜朝陽判官 因遷福州時 母則陪來于邑 而妻則獨在本家 不知其某事投江而死云 故欲拾骸骨 送人久矣 而迄不來也。

Jeon Jaha then asked, “Regarding your wife, of what illness and where did she die?” Wang Sibung explained, “I am originally from Taewon. I married the daughter of Jeon Gongwon, who lived in the same village. Last year, I went to the capital city to take the civil examination and passed. I was immediately appointed as judge of Joyang. Later, when I was assigned to Bokju, I brought my mother there so that she could stay with me. My wife however, stayed behind at her family’s house. Under mysterious circumstances, she threw herself into a river and died. I sent people to search along the river for her remains. However, to this day, they have not been found.”

39. 又問納采時 以某物爲幣乎 州倅答曰 貧不能備禮 以慈母之荊釵送矣。

Jeon Jaha went on, “What betrothal gifts did you send to the bride’s house with your marriage proposal?” Wang Sibung replied, “I was too poor to meet the formalities. I sent only the thorn hairpin that belonged to my mother.”

40. 建倅答曰 君內室既亡 不可復生 吾有養女 侍奉巾櫛 不其可乎。

Jeon Jaha said, “Your wife is long gone and not coming back alive. I have an adopted daughter. Why don’t you marry her? She can attend to your needs and help to manage your household.”

41. 州倅答曰 吾與荊妻 誓海盟山 故不失其節 至於投水而死 吾若更娶後室 異日何面目更見於地下。

Wang Sibung said, “With the seas and mountains as a witness, my wife with the thorn hairpin and I made a wedding vow to be faithful to each other. She must have jumped into the river to honor that vow by her death. If I marry another woman, how can I face her again when we meet in the underworld someday.”

42. 建倅答曰 不孝之中 無后爲大 若不娶妻 何以爲承宗祀 享先祖其不替乎。

Jeon Jaha said, “It is a great lack of filial piety to have no descendants. Without

a wife, how can you have a son to carry on the family name and continue your traditions by paying tribute to your ancestors?”

43. 州倅顧左右而言他 略無改娶之意 建倅乃出荊釵而示之曰 吾得此物 無乃尊門之物也。

Wang Sibung abruptly changed the subject of their talk, looking uneasily to his left and right to convey that he had no intention of remarrying. [Encouraged,] Jeon Jaha drew out the thorn hair pin and showed it to Wang Sibung, saying, “I happened to acquire this object. Does it not belong to your family?”

44. 州倅變色曰 此物乃吾母親所送吾夫人之釵也 良久撫玩 痛哭徹天 揮淚而問曰 此物從何以來此 建倅曰 此物之主 亦在于內矣。

Surprise transformed Wang’s countenance. He exclaimed, “That is the hairpin that my mother personally sent to my wife!” For some time, he could only caress the hairpin and lament. The sound of his cries pierced the heavens. Finally he wiped his tears and asked, “How did you acquire this hairpin?” Jeon Jaha said, “Its owner is in the inner quarters.”

45. 州倅始認其室 不勝蘇到之際 玉娘窺伺窓隙 快知其良人 亦痛哭相聚於一榻 喜極欲狂焉。

As Wang Sibung finally realized that his wife was there, he almost fainted. Meanwhile Ongnang peeked through a slightly open window and immediately recognized her husband. She wept with joy. Reunited at last, the ecstatic couple felt as if they would go mad with delight.

46. 玉娘先敘其情曰 插荊釵於蓬髮 操高節於三貞 修婦道於一生 奉箕箒於慈室 盟偕老於百年之樂 願共處於一穴之藏 君奈何捷龍頭於丹墀 佩虎符於鈴閣 薄恩愛於荊布 重寵情於新娘 何送書於慈母之前 使迫令於舊妻之黜 是乃慈父不教以節義 因繼母惹起之邪言 豈惟繼母之邪言 獨汝權之狡計 擬珠沉於滄海 庶邂逅於羅幃(幃) 遺首吏於朝陽 忽來報而垂死 聞其訃而驚悼 摧其膽而裂腸 欲遣之於冥道 虔設齋於山寺 微見君之彷彿 還訝妾之夢魂 今日踐舊盟於鈴軒 何異逢故人於湘岸 念拯溺之勤勞 恩豈殊於爺孃 夫婦相携痛哭 日之夕矣。

Ongnang told him first how she had felt during their separation, “Since my first day with you, with the thorn hairpin in my hair, I worked hard to achieve the

three exemplary conducts²⁹ and fulfill the womanly way every day of my life, diligently managing the household. We made a vow that we would enjoy one hundred years of happy marriage and wished to be buried together in the same grave. But how could you, a man who won first place in the civil service exam at the red terrace of the palace,³⁰ and wore a tiger-shaped tally³¹ at the pavilion of a bell,³² abandon your old wife, belittling the virtue and affection you had developed with her when you were poor and humble, and valuing more your affection for your new wife? How could you send your mother a letter to drive me out of the house so cruelly? Although my father, influenced by the cunning words of my stepmother, did not advise me to be faithful, it was not her words alone that caused the turmoil. It was primarily Son Yeogwon who played vile tricks on us. I decided to take the path of a precious pearl sinking into the deep sea to end my life so that I would not have to stand again before the silken [wedding] screen. The messenger sent to Joyang swiftly returned and reported your death. The news stunned me and tore apart my heart. I hoped to send your spirit to the underworld in peace, so I went to the temple to perform a ritual. There, I glimpsed someone who closely resembled you. I thought I was dreaming but wasn't certain. Today in this government building, I am able to keep our old vow, as if meeting an old friend at the bank of the Xiang River.³³ Remembering Jeon Jaha's grace in pulling me out of the water to save my life, I feel I am indebted to him forever, just as I am indebted to my own parents for their love." Clapsed securely in each other's arms, the couple cried until the day grew dark.

29. The original text has *samjeong* 三貞, a woman's three virtuous conducts toward her parents, parents-in-laws, and her husband. For more information on *samjeong* and an English translation of related records, see Pang-White 2018, 116-17.

30. The literal translation of this passage is "winning the head of a dragon at the vermilion terrace" 捷龍頭於丹墀. The head of a dragon means "winning the first place in the civil service exam" (a top graduate 壯元). The vermilion terrace is an open, flat place (or series of steps) leading up to a palace hall.

31. "A tiger-shaped tally" is a translation of *hobu* 虎符, a typical token used by military officials as proof of authorization to command the army.

32. "Pavilion of a Bell" is a translation of *ryeonggak* 鈴閣, an official place or residence for soldiers to conduct military business.

33. The Xiang 湘 River (in present-day Hunan province) frequently appears as a place for missing and parting from friends. For example, Liang poet Liu Yun's 柳惲 song-poem "Tune of Jiangnan" 江南曲 includes the line, "While there is a returning guest in the Dongting lake, we meet an old friend at the Xiao and Xiang Rivers" 洞庭有歸客 瀟湘逢故人. Likewise, a poem by Northern Song poet Zhang Shunmin 張舜民 titled "Seeing the Plum in Full Blossom when the Boat Embarks at the Bank of the Xiang River" 舟行湘岸見早梅盛開 has a line which sings the heart of a man who thinks about the coming of his old friend at the Xiang River 襟懷重似故人來.

47. 王公聞其始末之情 多謝倍蒙 不知所言. 因遂留宿 相與極娛 樂昌之鏡 延平之劍 從此而再合也.

Wang Sibung, after hearing the details of his wife's ordeal, thanked Jeon Jaha until he ran out of words to further express his appreciation. He lingered, enjoying their reunion, like finding the mirror of Akjang³⁴ and the sword of Yeonpyeong.³⁵

48. 翠日挈去福州 自茲以後 往來省建倅 一旬三度焉. 玉娘請王公曰 父之繼母養母 送人馬奉邀.

Next day, Wang Sibung returned to Bokju with his wife, but they routinely returned to greet Jeon Jaha three times on every tenth day. Ongnang said to Wang Sibung, "Let's send some people with horses to bring my father, stepmother, and foster mother here."

49. 王公如其言而送之 則繼母曾有盲死 養母亦以作故. 父獨在堂 侍來于官 生養兩父 事之如一.

Wang agreed. In the interim, however, the stepmother had gone blind and died. The foster mother had also passed away. Alone in his home, only Ongnang's father remained. He was soon brought to Bokju. Thereafter, the couple served Ongnang's father and foster father [Jeon Jaha] equally.

50. 王公又生男子 皆捷壯元 子孫兢兢 門戶赫赫 不稱其名 只稱王壯元耳.

[Time passed and] Wang Sibung had a number of sons. All of them later won first place in the civil examination. The household grew, generating many

34. "Mirror of Akjang (Lechang in Chinese 樂昌)" is a story about Princess Lechang during the Chen 陳 dynasty (557-589). When the Sui 隋 dynasty (581-618) invaded, Princess Lechang and her husband Xu Deyan 徐德言 were about to part. Her husband broke a mirror in two and gave her half as a token of their promise and a hope for reunion. Later, Xu Deyan happened to see a broken piece of a mirror, which led him back to his wife. Lechang's mirror is a common trope for the reunion of a couple.

35. The sword of Yeonpyeong (Yanping in Chinese 延平) also represents the reunion of two treasured swords, called Longquan jian 龍泉劍 and Tai'a jian 太阿劍, which were discovered by Lei Huan 雷煥 at the order of Zhang Hua 張華. Lei Huan gave one sword to Zhang Hua, while keeping the other for himself. However, Zhang Hua predicted that the two swords would be reunited again. Later, Zhang was killed, and his sword disappeared. Soon after, Lei Huan also died. One day, Lei Huan's son set out carrying his father's sword. As he passed the bridge of Yanping, the sword leapt into the river and disappeared. He searched for the sword but couldn't find it, seeing only two dragons intertwined together. This tale indicates the destiny of the two swords to be united. The related record may be found in the "Biography of Zhang Hua" 張華傳 in the *Book of Jin* 晉書.

descendants, and the family name shone. People no longer even remember them by their names; they simply call them “Top Graduate Wang.”

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