

# KOREAN CULTURE SYMBOLS IN *CHUNHYANG JEON*

## BIỂU TƯỢNG VĂN HOÁ KOREA TRONG *TRUYỆN XUÂN HƯƠNG*

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**Abstract** - *Chunhyang Jeon* is a famous novel of Korean literature from the Joseon period around the 18th century. The work is a collective creation (women), written in Hangul language, and is the crystallization of the indigenous people's thoughts. Therefore, *Chunhyang Jeon* a symbol of national culture. Thus far, Korea has acknowledged and honored the story's imageries as part of its cultural legacy by adapting them across a wide range of art forms. The study analyzes images that have been cultivated by ancient cultural memories to become Korean cultural symbols, such as the model of women, the space containing the sediments of the times, and the way of life in daily activities and beliefs as a model of practice. Through that, the research wants to clarify the two major functions of these cultural symbols: shaping the national cultural identity and becoming a measure of valuation for contemporary perceptions of human dignity.

**Key words** - *Chunhyang Jeon*; Korean culture symbols; Seong Chunhyang; landscapes; religions

### 1. Introduction

For over two centuries, *Chunhyang Jeon* has been highly praised and celebrated. Numerous artistic products, including music, painting, and especially cinema, have adapted this aesthetically rich work into remarkable pieces of art. In modern literature and cinema, many works have reinterpreted the story with a “deconstructive” perspective. Additionally, the lifestyle depicted in the story, as seen through its characters, has become a model for many contemporary Koreans to emulate in their self-cultivation.

What makes this work a national cultural heritage lies in its accumulation of rich folk values, which are deeply revered as the roots of Korean society. As a result, *Chunhyang Jeon* has become a literary “monument” of Korea, remembered as a cultural symbol. The novel, based on pansori, is a written adaptation of *Chunhyang-ga*, which originated from a shamanistic ritual in the mid-18th century. The work was created by common Korean people (primarily women) and was widely appreciated across all societal strata in the past.

Through *Chunhyang Jeon*, readers can vividly observe the context, people, and lifestyle of an era recounted in a simple yet profound manner. It is a journey of constructing belief, transforming what we see into cultural symbols of Korea. By analyzing the imagery and figures in the story through the lens of symbolic studies, it is evident that representations of women, living spaces, and religious practices have undergone a semantic shift, reaching a level of abstraction. This contributes to shaping the national

**Tóm tắt** - *Truyện Xuân Hương* là cuốn tiểu thuyết trữ danh của văn học Korea, vào thời Joseon (~XVIII). Tác phẩm là sáng tạo tập thể (phụ nữ), được viết bằng chữ Hangul, là sự kết tinh tư tưởng của con người bản địa. Vì thế, tự thân nó đã là một biểu tượng của văn hoá quốc gia. Cho đến nay, các hình ảnh/hình tượng trong truyện được đất nước Korea ngợi ca và thừa nhận là di sản văn hoá, bằng sự gọi lại dưới nhiều hình thức biểu đạt khác nhau. Bài viết đi vào phân tích các hình ảnh/ hình tượng được ký ức văn hoá cổ xưa bồi đắp trở thành các biểu tượng văn hoá Korea như hình mẫu người phụ nữ, không gian chứa đựng trầm tích thời đại, nếp sống trong sinh hoạt - tín ngưỡng như một mẫu thực hành. Qua đó, tác giả muốn làm rõ hai chức năng lớn của các biểu tượng văn hoá ấy là việc định hình bản sắc văn hoá dân tộc và sự trở thành thước đo định giá cho nhận thức của thời đương đại về phẩm giá con người.

**Từ khóa** - *Truyện Xuân Hương*; biểu tượng văn hoá Korea; Thành Xuân Hương; cảnh quan; tôn giáo

cultural identity through literature while also demonstrating how contemporary Korean life can trace its roots back to the symbols within *Chunhyang Jeon*, serving as “archetypes” of Korea “collective unconscious”.

### 2. Research Content

#### 2.1. *Seong Chunhyang: from legendary figure to the archetype of Korean women*

According to folklore, before becoming the renowned protagonist of the novel, Chunhyang was an ordinary girl with a lowly background, both in terms of appearance and character. In ancient times, in the Namwon region, Chunhyang was ostracized by the community and carried her resentment (*han*) to her death, after which she became a vengeful spirit that disturbed the people. To overcome the endless trouble attributed to her, the community sought redemption by worshiping her and retelling her biography. From this point on, she was transformed into a flawless young woman, receiving immense love and respect [1, pp. 69-70]. Recognizing the perfect woman embodied by Chunhyang in her reconstructed legend, women in the Joseon era, through their creative abilities, refined her exceptional traits to establish an ideal model of Korean womanhood. This model served as a standard for evaluating women in society fairly. All these elements were recorded in the pansori novel *Chunhyang Jeon*.

When discussing Chunhyang, one often feels a sense of familiarity yet novelty, as she embodies both the shared aesthetic of East Asia and the unique characteristics of

Korea. Like other talented women, Chunhyang was crafted as an ideal beauty, embodying qualities of appearance (*mao* 貌), talent (*cai* 才), emotion (*qing* 情), and intellect (*shi* 识) [2]. According to popular summaries, she possessed “the beauty of Zhang Jiang, the virtues of Ren and Xu, the literary talent of Tai and Du, the gentle heart of Tai Xu, and the fidelity of the two royal concubines (E Huang and Nu Ying)...” [3, p. 27]. In the eyes of a scholar, she was a perfect statue: “Her face reflected the white of a crane in a blue river under the moonlight on snowy ground. Her lips were rosy, and when she smiled, her teeth shone like jade and stars... Her eyes were like the moon amidst clouds; her lips, crimson like blooming lotuses in a pond” [3, pp. 30-31]. Comparing to Confucian scholars, Chunhyang also exhibited comparable intellectual beauty: “At the age of seven or eight, she was already fond of reading... Her mother was a *kisaeng* (courtesan), but she was as knowledgeable as the daughters of noble families” [3, pp. 17-27]. As a member of society, Chunhyang’s cultivated talents were often perceived as serving the purpose of entertaining the *yangban* (aristocracy), given the societal accusations of her being a *kisaeng*. However, considering her noble father’s lineage, her mother’s decision to abandon the *kisaeng* life, and Chunhyang’s self-awareness, she gained significant inner strength through her intellect. Thus, Chunhyang also symbolizes an educated woman. Although women’s education in Joseon primarily emphasized moral virtues, such as being a filial daughter, a virtuous wife, and a devoted mother [4, pp. 146-151], Chunhyang’s societal condition and self-awareness contributed to affirming the intellectual capabilities of women in the public sphere.

As a social citizen, Chunhyang, despite overcoming her humble origins, stood up for *kisaeng* and, more broadly, for all women. When coerced by the corrupt magistrate Byeon Hak-do, Chunhyang questioned his authority: “- Is forcing women a crime or not?” [3, p. 97]; “I will show you that among *kisaengs*, there are also loyal and virtuous women. Nong Xian, a courtesan in Hae Seo, died and was buried in Dongxian Ling to preserve her fidelity; Sun Chun is listed among the learned; Lun Jie of Jin Ju was posthumously honored with a temple named Zhong Lie Men (Loyalty and Valor Gate),... So, please do not look down on courtesans” [3, p. 96]. Chunhyang’s actions highlight an essential reality in the context of the Korean women’s movement, which lacks a “we” (*woori*) spirit of solidarity among all women. This has caused gender inequality to persist and remain tense, as the contemporary women’s community itself is in conflict due to the overlapping of tradition and modernity.

Living in the Joseon era, when Neo-Confucian moral standards imposed more strict expectations on women, Chunhyang exemplified the ideal family woman. According to Confucianism, a woman was expected to cultivate four aspects of femininity virtue, speech, demeanor, and work before marriage [5, p. 106]. These qualities were fully embodied in Chunhyang as she entered her marriage with Mongryong. Furthermore, Korean women were expected to rigorously learn and

practice the “feminine arts”, including virtues like chastity, obedience, and humility [5, p. 109]. Faced with Byeon Hak-do’s humiliation, Chunhyang remained steadfast, resolutely preserving her fidelity while awaiting Lee Mongryong: “- Fidelity belongs to one husband only; no matter how much I’m beaten, my resolve will not waver” [3, p. 99]. In order to achieve a happy ending with a grand wedding, Chunhyang placed all her trust and determination to protect her love against attitudes that demeaned the female gender and the societal constraints within the private sphere. For this reason, Chunhyang became a symbol of love (Valentine’s Day). Later, the Dano Festival was also associated with Chunhyang, as it marked the day she first met Mongryong: “On that Dano day, the weather was perfect... Chunhyang and her maid Danhyang went out to play on the swings” [6], [3, p. 24]. Today, the city of Namwon is famously known as “The City of Love”, thanks to the beautiful love story of Chunhyang and her lover.

However, for the “New Woman” and “Modern Girl” of today, Chunhyang does not represent a rigidly traditional woman but rather a flexible individual who created her own prominent style, transcending the constraints of her era. She aligns with contemporary feminist ideals of gender equality, particularly in romantic relationships and marriage. This aspect of female autonomy in private relationships reflects a continuation of marriage practices from the Goryeo period and resonates with the romantic, voluntary concept of love in post-independence Korean society (1948~) [7, p. 28]. Chunhyang reinforced standards that belong to women, earning her the title “Gentleman of Women” and being posthumously honored by the Joseon king as “Zhen Lie Furen” (Virtuous and Loyal Wife) [3, p. 153].

From a literary figure, Chunhyang has been reimagined as a living woman through festivals. In popular culture, creating cultural products requires a foundation of values and beliefs to construct, project, and reinterpret icons, heroes, stereotypes, and celebrities. Annually, during the Namwon Chunhyang Festival, the *Miss Chunhyang* beauty pageant crowns women who are not only beautiful but also well-educated and well-mannered.



Figure 1. Chunhyang Shrine at Gwanghallu Garden (Namwon)

Chunhyang is a relatable character and has been adorned with many new identities because the public continuously imagined and desired for a Chunhyang of their own, expressed through diverse cultural forms. The legendary figure of Chunhyang has become one of the foundational values and beliefs that give rise to female gender archetypes in various art forms, including poetry, modern novels, music, theater, cinema, etc. Chunhyang and her wonderful love story are the primary and most influential source material for the birth and development of Korean cinema in the early 21st century, with the most successful example being the film *Chunhyang* (2000) directed by Im Kwon-taek. Perhaps viewing Chunhyang as a case of communal cultural consciousness, in order to develop various creative interpretations of her in contemporary art forms, is due to the Korean public not only perceiving Chunhyang as being confined to the theme of a lesson about female chastity, but also as an acceptance and appreciation of her “secondary” yet broader aspects, such as human liberation.

## 2.2. Housing and living landscapes: from physical residences to the spiritual concept of harmony between humans and nature

The entirety of *Chunhyang Jeon* takes place in Namwon City, Jeolla Province, Korea. Through the story, the people of Namwon recreated a portion of the Joseon era, reflecting the lives of both the government and the populace in this land. More importantly, this location gave rise to a “cultured person” and fostered numerous beautiful life choices associated with humanity.

Namwon is a naturally picturesque region, surrounded by mountains and intersected by rivers, creating a close connection between humans and nature: “In the blue sky, swallows and other birds called to each other and flew in pairs, appearing very affectionate. The north and south were adorned with vibrant flowers. On the willow branches, koikori birds sang to their mates. Trees formed forests, and the cuckoos had flown away” [3, p. 18]. This land was described as a place where “one could hear songs praising peace and bountiful harvests,” where “the people lived stable and joyful lives,” and where the governing officials were virtuous individuals respected by the populace. Thus, when the corrupt magistrate Byeon Hak-do arrived, abusing his power, he faced rightful punishment and the people’s resentment.

Namwon, now known as the “City of Love,” is celebrated as the birthplace of the beautiful love story between Chunhyang and Mongryong. Thus, every turning point in the characters’ love journey is tied to a specific landscape. The “meeting” phase between Chunhyang and Mongryong is associated with Kwanghallu Pavilion, amidst a bamboo forest with the scene of swinging (Geune ttwigi). The “love” and “separation” phases are set within the private space of Chunhyang’s room. The “loyalty” phase takes place in the prison cell.

Kwanghallu Pavilion is a quintessential example of Korean pavilion architecture. It belongs to the *nugak* style, characterized by structures with only a foundation, pillars, and a roof, lacking enclosing walls. These pavilions are

typically built on elevated terrain with scenic surroundings, distinct from the *nudae* style, which features pavilions constructed on earthen or stone platforms. Standing in a *nugak* pavilion, one can fully admire the breathtaking natural beauty that envelops the structure – a reflection of humanity’s harmonious relationship with nature. In Korea’s feudal society, gatherings to enjoy the scenery, recite poetry, drink wine, and engage in similar leisure activities on such pavilions were considered a cultural indulgence of the aristocracy [8], [9]. In the story, Gwanghallu Pavilion serves as the setting for Chunhyang and Mongryong’s first meeting. Lee Mongryong paused here, marveling at the scenery: “Under his gaze, the landscape in all directions was truly magnificent... In this direction, parrots and peacocks flew amidst blooming white and pink flowers. The fragrant pine branches swayed gently in the spring breeze. A waterfall cascaded into a wide stream; along the stream’s banks, flowers smiled brightly” [3, p. 22].



Figure 2. Kwanghallu Pavilion in Namwon, Korea

The intertwining design of landscapes and human presence, as described above, reflects the *pungbyu* aesthetic sensibility of classical Korean culture. Lee Mongryong practiced this cultural essence within such scenery through the refined pleasures of everyday life: “Lee drank a cup of wine. Inspired by the wine’s effect, he paced back and forth with a pipe in his mouth... The red, green, pink, and white hues of the house, combined with the song of the oriole, evoked the springtime spirit in him” [3, p. 24]. From this interaction with nature, Mongryong spotted Chunhyang in Dang Lim forest, where the beauty of humanity and nature harmonized, accentuating each other’s charm: “When she swung on the swing, her beautiful legs were exposed, her figure floating amidst the white clouds, her inner white dress and outer pink skirt fluttering in the southeast wind. Her skin was as white as gourd flesh; her entire body, at times hidden and at times revealed among the white clouds, was clearly visible to me” [3, p. 29].

In the literary tradition of “Caizi Jiaren” (talented scholar-beautiful maiden) novels, authors often create private spaces for couples to express their love and fulfill their life-long promises. These private spaces are typically the study rooms of young men or the boudoirs of talented women. While *Chunhyang Jeon* reutilizes such traditional

spaces, it imbues them with deeper layers of meaning. In this story, the private space is Chunhyang's room - a setting for many pivotal events involving the character. First and foremost, the room reflects the personality and virtues of its owner. In traditional Korean culture, the arrangement and preparation of a home were often used to assess women, as they were considered the primary caretakers of the household. When Lee Mongryong visited Chunhyang's residence for the first time, he was astonished by the elegance of her living quarters. The room not only contained numerous feminine ornaments but also displayed famous paintings and featured a poem written by Chunhyang herself about preserving loyalty: "In front of Chunhyang's desk was a poem she had written about maintaining fidelity" [3, p. 47]. It was in this very room that Lee Mongryong pledged his love to Chunhyang. This space became the setting for their physical and emotional romantic adventure, as well as the witness to their tearful separation.

The occupation of Chunhyang's private room by the two characters transcends traditional taboos and instead focuses on the purity of *pungbyu* spirit, characteristic of late Joseon aesthetics. This spirit emphasizes humanity's inherent goodness, attention to the present, and the natural emotions of individuals, their lives, and the societal conflicts they face [10]. Folk authors utilized such private spaces to express fertility beliefs (*saengsik sinang*), embedding them within the narrative. In *Chunhyang Jeon*, the depiction of nudity and the intimate connection between the young couple vividly illustrates an intense longing for love - a love that aspires to purity in body, spirit, and intellect. The portrayal of their romance is detailed and daring, rejecting the reserved and modest aesthetic often associated with Eastern traditions. Chunhyang and Mongryong's joyful union, in which time seems to stand still, symbolizes a profound aspiration: "Their unrestrained nudity, brimming with desire, becomes a symbol of an ideal to be achieved" [11, p. 522]. This aspiration aligns with the ideological world of their society - a world of life and humanity unshackled from foreign cultural constraints. The representation of human desire, through the elevation of physical longing, also serves as a means of preserving Korea's cultural heritage. This resonates with the nation's strong sense of nationalism, reflecting its commitment to safeguarding its unique identity. Even today, in Korea, the preservation and reverence for such beliefs remain evident through ritual practices, daily activities, historical records, and literary creations. These mediums continue to celebrate and uphold the rich cultural legacy of fertility worship, offering profound insights into the nation's historical and cultural consciousness.

In contrast to that beauty is the dark prison cell that confined Chunhyang for resolutely rejecting the magistrate. Folk writers of the past constructed these opposing spatial symbols - "the room of love" and "the prison" - as a subtle yet powerful condemnation of hostile powers and the overreaching authority of the ruling class. The "room of love" represents joy and the legitimate

aspirations of human life, while the "prison" embodies the decay of a corrupt society, the filth of the ruling class, contrasting sharply with the purity and resilience embodied by Chunhyang. Her unwavering spirit amidst the darkness highlights the triumph of human dignity and the enduring beauty of enlightenment ideals over societal corruption. The prison space is elevated to a symbol through the use of exaggerated writing: "The prison door was broken. The walls were rotting. Fleas biting people covered the dirt floor" [3, p. 106]. The depiction of the prison, coupled with Chunhyang's steadfast endurance, transforms her into a figure of universal admiration respected by both saints and ordinary people alike.

To date, the Namwon region has evolved into a prominent cultural site, characterized by vibrant festival practices inspired by the legend of Chunhyang - a woman renowned for her admirable love and virtue. Since the construction of the Chunhyang Shrine in 1931, annual traditional folk festivals have been organized, initially held in early April according to the lunar calendar. However, the festival was later rescheduled to coincide with the Duanwu Festival (Dano) in May. Visitors to Namwon not only have the opportunity to immerse themselves in the serene natural landscape but also to relive a part of the nation's historical legacy [6]. This historical immersion is facilitated through the reenactment of *Chunhyang Jeon* using mannequin displays - life-sized figures modeled after the portraits of characters from the story. These mannequins are arranged in alignment with character arcs and narrative scenes, effectively recreating pivotal moments from the tale. This reenactment incorporates an interactive dimension, akin to the "role reversal" technique commonly employed in theatrical performances. By assuming the roles of various characters, visitors are afforded a unique opportunity to engage deeply with the narrative, gaining insights into the characters' fates, roles, and gender dynamics. This innovative approach not only enhances cultural engagement but also serves as a mechanism for preserving and promoting the historical and cultural values embedded in the story.

From the vantage point of the Gwanghan Pavilion, one can observe the vibrant spring activities of the villagers, including the traditional Korean folk game of swinging, which was vividly depicted by Chunhyang in her tale. Swing riding, one of the most popular outdoor games for young women, is traditionally played during the Duanwu Festival. Chunhyang recreated the swinging scene during the festival in the past [3, p. 24], and to make it easier to visualize, the scene appears in the famous 2000 film *Chunhyang* by director Im Kwon-taek or in the 18th-century painting by artist Shin Yoon Bok (Figure 3). In traditional Korean society, the Duanwu Festival, along with recreational activities such as swing riding, provided young women with a rare opportunity to experience freedom and enjoy moments of self-expression, as their daily lives were often constrained by household duties. For these women, swing riding offered a thrilling sensation of soaring into the air, symbolizing liberation. Interestingly, some men also participated in this activity [12, p. 171]. The



swing itself served as a symbol of love, with its rhythmic back-and-forth motion through the supporting frame carrying deeper connotations [7, p. 319]. Beyond the *physical, swing*, the authors also incorporate other symbolic imagery, such as the *mortar and pestle*, the *unextinguished flame*, and more into the poetic lyrics and songs, the story becomes refined, subtle, and civilized, particularly during moments of dialogue and courtship between characters. By employing these symbols as a form of lyrical expression, the author emphasizes the yearning for union, the hope for growth and vitality, and the flourishing of all things born from youthful love. This core humanitarian aspiration reflects the values of ordinary people in the past, who sought to embed their desires and dreams into a work that resonates with the spirit of their era. The festival-like essence, from its literary creation to its realization in real life, has been preserved and developed by collective efforts. This continuity bridges the past and the present, encouraging individuals to overcome hesitations in dialogue and embrace a new mindset in contemporary contexts. This is especially relevant in addressing conflicts, particularly those arising from human relationships, such as those between men and women.



**Figure 3.** “Dano Pungjeong” (단오 풍경) – “Spring Festival Scenery” by artist Shin Yoon-bok, 18th century

### 2.3. Religious practices: from metaphysical beliefs to a source of liberation in the secular world

In Korean religious beliefs, while Buddhism and Confucianism are often associated with imposing significant restrictions and disadvantages on women, Shamanism serves as a sanctuary for women. Within this spiritual domain, each individual is endowed with divine power and authority, enabling them to harness their strengths and potential. As such, *Chunhyang Jeon*, as a work created by and about women, incorporates elements of indigenous Shamanistic culture to express human desires within the constraints of a Confucian society.

In the Korean worldview, the supernatural forces that govern the world have never disappeared. The reason Shamanism endured and continued to support people during the harsh Joseon era is because it provided practical benefits in human life, namely peace and happiness [13]. *Chunhyang Jeon* employs numerous Shamanistic elements because it represents a spiritual and religious ideology that

is inherently fair, unaligned with any political power, and solely attuned to human emotions and desires.

First, through the spiritual element of the gut ceremony, Chunhyang transforms from an unattractive, ostracized girl into a woman desired by many of her peers. And it is also thanks to the spiritual cultural customs of ancient Korean people that Chunhyang is once again reborn into the human realm. In *Chunhyang Jeon*, Chunhyang was originally a child conceived through prayer. The courtesan Wol-mae, despite being over 40 years old and unable to bear children, reflected on ancient methods of conception, then advised her husband, and together they “bathed thoroughly and sought a place to pray” [3, p. 15]. In earlier times, to conceive a child, people would often visit temples or famous mountains to sincerely perform ceremonies requesting a child, evoking the worship culture of Samsin halmioni (the goddess of childbirth and fate). After examining the landscape, the couple decided to choose Ban Ya Peak, where they erected an altar and arranged offerings. Indeed, at midnight on the Dano Festival day, Wol-mae had a dream and subsequently gave birth to a beautiful daughter named Seong Chunhyang. This inexplicable miracle contributed to the iconography of this exceptionally beautiful woman, a character born through supernatural forces. Therefore, Seong Chunhyang’s identity and status are quite unique, unlike many female characters in the East Asian “scholar-beauty” narrative tradition. The deification of Chunhyang’s origin is the key that allows her to overcome society’s prejudicial views. Without divine intervention, many events such as the meeting and engagement of Chunhyang and Mongryong would have been difficult to realize. Their love was heaven-ordained: “Dreams are not unreal. Last night, mother dreamed of a dragon in the Bi Tao Chi (Jade Peach Pond). This must be an auspicious sign, so today’s events are not coincidental. And mother heard that the magistrate’s son is named Mongryong. ‘Mong’ means dream; ‘Ryong’ means dragon, so it matches perfectly” [3, p. 30]. By invoking supernatural forces through “dreams”, Chunhyang and other characters in the story were able to save themselves from moral transgressions.

*Chunhyang Jeon* extensively exploits the mystical elements of Shamanism through characters entering the dream realm. “Dreams” have historically created pathways to celestial realms and the underworld, becoming a motif in creative techniques; allowing “the disempowered” to express themselves, and more significantly, to actualize deeply suppressed desires. By incorporating folklore materials into their creations, folk artists have transformed dreams into beliefs that redeem the human soul. In the darkness of night, within the desolate prison, Chunhyang journeys into sleep. There, she encounters immortals who were once renowned talented women. They express their sympathies regarding Chunhyang’s unjust situation and praise the radiant qualities of a woman wrongfully labeled as a courtesan. In her imprisonment, exhausted from weeping and resentment, Chunhyang sinks into a dream where she ascends to paradise to meet celestial maidens, reuniting

with E Huang, Nu Ying, and other ill-fated beauties with unfortunate destinies [3, pp.106-113]. Through these conversations, readers come to recognize the commendations of Chunhyang's virtuous character. Divine validation serves as the foundation for human strength of belief, enabling individuals like Chunhyang to overcome the harshness of fate, providing additional motivation for her to struggle to the end in perfecting truth.

Connected to these dreams is the element of dream interpretation and the appearance of a blind fortune teller at night near the prison where Chunhyang was detained. The unexpected presence of the prophetic fortune teller serves to reinforce human faith and makes the plot more engaging. In ancient Korean folk religious culture, practices of worship, divination, and spirit possession were considered polytheistic folk beliefs called Minsok Chonggyo. The intermediaries who performed these roles were quite diverse but could be divided into three basic categories: "shamans" (female called mudang, male called paksu), "ritual masters" called chegwan, and "fortune tellers". Among these, "fortune tellers" were further divided into different types according to their specialties, such as "fate diviners" called chomjaengi, "geomancers" called jigwan, and "day-selectors" called ilgwan. Among the "fate diviners", there was a special category of "blind fortune tellers", known as p'ansu. In the prison, "late at night, as rain poured down, birds cried 'queek', 'queek', window shutters flapped noisily; the wails of ghosts those who had been beaten to death, strangled, hanged... echoed everywhere" [3, p. 114], suddenly a blind fortune teller from the countryside passed by and was invited by Chunhyang to meet. The presence of this "blind fortune teller" character opened up an opportunity and instilled faith, serving as a lifeline for Chunhyang to gain strength while awaiting reunion. In response to Chunhyang's utterly sincere prayer, the blind diviner shook his divination tube, drew out a stick and said: "- Look: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, good. The divination is very favorable. This is 'Qi Gen Shan' (Seven Gen Mountain). This hexagram will achieve great success because 'the fish can resist the net'. In ancient times, King Wu of Zhou obtained this hexagram when he was an official and succeeded before returning to his homeland. Even relatives thousands of miles away will know about you. You will resolve your lifelong grievances through your husband. Your husband will arrive here very soon. Please do not worry" [3, p. 118]. What the fortune teller saw aligned with what Chunhyang had dreamed the previous night: "a broken mirror, fallen peach blossoms outside the window, human figurines hanging in front of the house, then a great mountain being destroyed, and the sea waters drying up" [3, p. 118].

### 3. Conclusion

*Chunhyang Jeon* does not merely serve a literary function as a beautiful novel expressing the freshness of young love; folk authors have also delicately embedded numerous cultural values through images and details that are elevated to symbolic status. Reading *Chunhyang Jeon* through an analysis of Korean cultural symbols such as people (female gender), landscapes, and religions will thoroughly help in decoding the contemporary issues raised in the work and evoke interesting associations. At the same time, identifying these cultural symbols has contributed to creating historical premises, becoming cultural standards that provide contemporary people with reference models for arguments on related issues, especially those concerning women's rights.

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