

THE MONEY BUG

(옹고집전)

A Play in One Act

by John Holstein

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The Money Bug

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Cast of Characters

In order of appearance

ONG GO-JIP	a nasty, rich miser
MOTHER	Ong's mother
WIFE	Ong's wife
TURNIP	a maidservant in Ong's house
STUMP	a male servant in Ong's house
HAKDAESA	a monk with magical powers
DOSA	a Taoist sage-wizard
PHONG	Phony Ong; Ong's spitting image and nemesis
PANCAKE	a male servant in Ong's house
FUNCTIONARIES	assigned to Satdo
SATDO	magistrate of the region Ong lives in
BEGGAR	Hakdaesa in disguise

The Money Bug

Scene 1: Ong takes inventory

Lights down, the theatre is dark. The sound of a moktak. A spotlight comes up gradually on the monk Hakdaesa, standing at stage right, dressed in a wide-brimmed monk's hat, monk's robes, prayer beads around his neck, holding his moktak (to which the tapper is tied with a string) at heart level. Hakdaesa stops tapping the moktak and recites...

HAKDAESA: *(slowly, enunciating clearly)* ... and the Buddha said, 'Cling to nothing whatsoever as "I" or "mine."

ONG: *(Maintaining rhythm with the monk's "I or mine," exuberantly, startlingly loud)* A-l-l-l *(full lights abruptly)* MINE...!

Ong is sitting on a cushion on the floor in his garden pavilion; past the pillars of the pavilion we can see a palatial main house and sumptuous grounds with sculptures and fountains, streams and miniature mountains fabricated from big rocks. He is taking inventory of his possessions, with a long scroll on the floor in front of him and a few stacks of gold coins around him. The spot on Hakdaesa dims, but not completely, and the monk stays and watches Ong, amusement mixed with concern.

ONG: Mine! All mine! 2,102 sacks of grain, six riding horses, 22 pigs, male and female, 60 chickens. Ten pieces of brassware, three blanket chests, two coin chests, three stacker chests, a floral-motif documents chest, dragon chest, phoenix chest, Japanese chest, a landscape screen, lotus screen, peony screen with plum panel, and an impressive library of the Thousand Basic Chinese Characters, Doctrine of the Mean, Book of Documents, Ceremonies and Rituals, Rituals of Zhou, the Greater Learning, the Lesser Learning, the Analects, Mencius, the Book of Odes, Book of Changes, Chronicles of Lu — or, if you wish, the Spring and Autumn Annals — , the Book of Rites, and the Filial Piety Classic; 20 pair of silver chopsticks, one gold ring; 13 rolls of blue, red and purple silk, 30 rolls

of ramie, 40 rolls of cream-white high-grade silk... (*getting up, looking at his property*) And more!
Much, much more! ALL MINE!

He hears someone approaching and shows fear, covers his gold with the cushion.

ONG: (*angry fear*) Who's that?! What do you want?! Nothing for you here!

Enter Ong's Wife and the maidservant Turnip, along with the manservant Stump, who is carrying Ong's Mother on his back.

WIFE: (*meekly, timidly*) Oh my, I'm so sorry to startle you, husband. But maybe you shouldn't take that money out and count it every day if you're so worried about someone stealing it.

ONG: If I don't count every day how am I going to know how my money fared through the night?

WIFE: How your *money*...? Well... I... But I thought you might want to know how your *mother* fared through the night.

ONG: Mother? (*flippantly*) Oh, is she still alive?

Hakdaesa notes this and walks offstage.

WIFE: Oh my, what a thing to say. And with her getting worse and worse like this...

MOTHER: *Mumble, gurgle, burble, cough, sputter.*

Turnip wipes Mother's spittle off Wife's ear, as if it is standard procedure.

WIFE: Yes, mother, I was just going to... Mother needs nourishment. Please let me take just one chicken for a pot of soup.

ONG: A chicken? A whole chicken? Do you know how much we can get in the market for a whole chicken? *Not selling* one chicken is just like *buying* one chicken. And buying means spending money. And money doesn't grow on trees.

Hakdaesa's eyes peep above the edge of the pavilion floor.

WIFE: But she'll die if we don't give her something.

ONG: And she'll die if we *do* give her something. Eventually.

MOTHER: *Mumble, gurgle, burble, cough, sputter.*

Turnip wipes Mother's spittle off Wife's ear.

WIFE: She says when she gave birth to you didn't she care for you like her most beloved and prized possession, croon gently in your ear, "My golden boy, growing up like a beautiful white jade, you mean everything to me, you are my sun and moon," is what she told you.

MOTHER: *Mumble, gurgle, burble, cough, sputter.*

Turnip wipes Mother's spittle off Wife's ear.

WIFE: And she asks you now, how is it you can't see how she's loved you? The river god rewarded Wang Sang in Yuan China with two heavenly carp when he nearly froze to death on an ice-covered river to satisfy his cruel stepmother's taste for fish; you could at least give your loving mother some chicken soup. She says.

ONG: *(to his mother)* The emperor Jin Shi Hwang built the Great Wall, filled his fabulous Abang Palace with 3,000 beautiful courtesans and had his pick of any of them, and tried to live for 10,000 years — and ended up in a dark and dreary tomb just like anyone else. Emperor Jo Pae won a thousand out of a thousand battles — and drowned in the O River. Confucius' brilliant disciple Hyeon Hak-sa was honored by the highest of the high — and died at the tender age of 30. What does a nobody like you expect to accomplish if you live longer than such great men? In the classics they say it's very rare to reach 70, so what's the use of hanging around till 80? And you know yourself what else they say: "The longer you live, the greedier you get." But would somebody as tenacious as you ever let go?

Hakdaesa peeps again from another position.

MOTHER: *Mumble, gurgle, burble, cough, sputter.*

Turnip wipes Mother's spittle off Wife's ear.

WIFE: Mother says if you want to talk about Jin Shi Hwang and Jo Pae, keep on talking till you get to the part about how they loved and honored their mothers.

ONG: Their mothers probably didn't eat as much. Or take up all the space our record-breaking octogenarian is taking.

MOTHER: *Mumble, gurgle, burble, cough, sputter.*

Turnip wipes Mother's spittle off Wife's ear.

WIFE: Mother wants to know what space you're talking about — that cold closet? Husband, she's come down with pneumonia and needs heat.

ONG: Heat? Heat? In the middle of spring? If she survived that whole miserable winter without heat she'll surely make it through the spring. Do I have to remind you that every piece of wood that we burn is one piece of wood that we can't sell in the market? *(throwing up his hands)* You think wood grows on trees?!

MOTHER: *(a fit of loud cackling in delight at what Ong said, then suddenly shows alarm)* Whoops — emergency! Time to go!

They all rush out, except for Ong, who slaps his thighs with an angry grunt and goes back to his inventory.

Scene 2: A poem by Hakdaesa and Dosa

Spotlight on Hakdaesa and the Taoist wizard-sage Dosa, sitting cross-legged, facing each other, in front of the curtain. Dosa has long white hair and a long white beard to match his long white robe.

HAKDAESA: ... And then he shouted, “Do you think wood grows on trees?!”

DOSA: That’s actually a good question, though. What do you think, Hakdaesa, does it grow *on* trees, or *in* trees?

HAKDAESA: Wherever it grows, he is determined to see that his mother never gets any of it.

DOSA: It appears that this mother’s beautiful white jade is jaded through and through — right down to his stone-cold heart. Hm-m-m, I like the sound of that: stone-cold heart. It puts me in the mood for poetry. Are you prepared for battle, Hakdaesa?

HAKDAESA: To match your wits, Master, I am never sufficiently prepared. But I am always willing to learn.

DOSA: Fine. Then here goes: Whatever doth attachment clutch... .

HAKDAESA: it withereth and dieth at this monster’s touch.

DOSA: *(chuckling)* Everything withers, *everything* dies...

HAKDAESA: but grasping it really... really... speedifies.

DOSA: “Speedifies”?

HAKDAESA: Or... *facilifies*?

DOSA: Your wrist, please.

Hakdaesa presents the underside of his wrist and Dosa smacks it with his forefinger and middle finger.

HAKDAESA: Ouch! Not so hard.

DOSA: No pain, no gain, my friend. Shall we commence with the next round?

HAKDAESA: Be my guest.

DOSA: You are too kind. (*begins*) And so with what you love a lot...

HAKDAESA: Hold it lightly, smother it not.

DOSA: Attachment to one thing also distracts you...

HAKDAESA: from tending to others you should give help to.

DOSA: Yes, doting on one thing in such a fashion...

HAKDAESA: keeps others from getting their due compassion.

DOSA: Ah, completed very nicely, Hakdaesa. You see? You gained from your pain!

HAKDAESA: You practically gave me the last line with “fashion.”

DOSA: That’s one difference between you and Ong. You can see what’s right in front of your eyes, but it seems Ong has been blinded by attachment to his possessions. How about paying him a visit, teach him a lesson?

HAKDAESA: Why not just open his eyes with a little magic, Master?

DOSA: No pain, Hakdaesa, no gain.

HAKDAESA: And that reminds me — that last round was mine. Your wrist, please.

Dosa proffers his wrist, and Hakdaesa smacks it. The spot dims, the curtain lowers.

DOSA (*as the curtain lowers*) Ouch! Must you really do it so hard?

Scene 3: Ong abuses Hakdaesa

Spot up on Hakdaesa, in front of the curtain, stage left. Hakdaesa is chanting and tapping his moktak.

HAKDAESA: (*monotone, no phrasing, all in one breath but not fast*) Oh great Bodhisattva of Compassion Kwan-se-eum Bo-sal with your thousand hands and thousand eyes bless with good fortune the great sovereign of this household and after they donate just a small but generous part of their immense wealth to you through this poor monk welcome them to Nirvana Namu Amitabul Kwan-se-um Bo-sal ...

Turnip, an old female servant, has entered through the curtain in back of Hakdaesa, and stands at his side.

TURNIP: (*agitated*) Venerable one, you don't know whose house this is? The master is trying to sleep off his spring fever in the garden cottage, and if you wake him from his nap he's going to cut your ears off and then skin you alive, much less make an offering. Go back to the temple. Go now, or you'll be sorry — and I'll be sorry too, because if the master gets on you, the Buddha will get on me.

HAKDAESA: Would a poor monk be treated in such a way at such an impressive house as this? The Ancients tell us: "The house that sows suffering reaps pain, and the house that sows happiness reaps good fortune." Go tell your master that this humble servant of the Lord Buddha has come all the way from Chwi-am Temple on Weolchul Mountain, where the main hall has fallen into disrepair, and the thousand li that I've traversed over steep mountains and raging rivers for many days to this honorable abode is but a leisurely stroll in a spring garden if I can get a donation of a thousand gold nyang.

TURNIP: My, you do talk pretty. And all in one breath! But a thousand gold nyang from Master Ong? Better luck asking for ten thousand from a beggar!

Turnip throws up her hands and returns inside. Hakdaesa starts tapping again on his moktak, chanting, noticeably raising his voice.

HAKDAESA: Namu Amitabul Kwanseeum Bosal Namu Amitabul Kwanseeum Bosal Namu Amitabul Kwanseeum Bosal Namu Amitabul...

ONG: (*from behind the curtain*) WHAT'S THAT RACKET OUT THERE?!

HAKDAESA: Won't you spare a little for the Buddha?

ONG: BUDDHA SHMUDDHA! In two seconds my servants'll be beating the Buddha out of you if you don't hightail it out of here right now!

HAKDAESA: I will tell your fortune for you, then, give you a face reading ...

ONG: I said OUT OF HERE!

HAKDAESA: ... for free.

A hand reaches through the curtain and yanks Hakdaesa inside. The curtain soon rises and we see Ong's sarangbang, well-appointed with beautiful furniture, scrolls and other ostentatious trappings of the pretentious rich. Ong is sitting on a comfortable cushion with an armrest, while Hakdaesa is sitting on the bare floor.

ONG: Remember, you said free.

HAKDAESA: That is what I said, to be sure. But of course, I would not decline a small tip — maybe a thousand gold nyang? — to fix our temple. When I get back, of course, we will present your contribution along with your name and address and your prayers to the water and earth spirits.

ONG: Ridiculous. When Heaven created humans it divided them into rich (*proudly indicating himself*) and poor (*disdainfully indicating Hakdaesa*), aristocrat (*proudly indicating himself*) and commoner (*disdainfully indicating Hakdaesa*), AND those who can produce offspring (*proudly indicating himself*) and those (*disdainfully indicating Hakdaesa*) who have no idea what that thing is *really* for. In short, the blessed (*proudly indicating himself*) and the cursed (*disdainfully indicating Hakdaesa*). Now, if everybody could get his wish with a few prayers why am I being bothered for handouts by the miserable rabble all around me?

HAKDAESA: The Buddha lives in even the humblest of crea—

ONG: And what have your prayers done for you? Nothing. That's why you vile creatures have to shave your head and don those robes — so you can swindle adults into poverty and lure children off to the temple.

HAKDAESA: Maybe we will find the answers to your questions in your face.

ONG: It's about time. Now get on with it.

HAKDAESA: First, the most obvious thing: The corners of your mouth are lower than the center — another way of saying your mouth is cast firmly in a perpetual pout. It appears that this face hasn't cracked a smile in 40 years.

ONG: What's there to smile about?

HAKDAESA: Not much, the way you live.

ONG: Cut the sermons. All I want to know is when am I going to get my next million?

HAKDAESA: Very soon, for all I know. But you are not going to enjoy it.

ONG: Not enjoy it! What — am I going to lose it right away?

HAKDAESA: With a frown like you have, it is plain to see you have not been enjoying your first few million much at all. So why should you enjoy the next million? But the sermon can wait till we finish with the face. Hmmm ... Your eyebrows are long and your brow is broad, which tells me that your name and influence are spread far and wide...

ONG: You finally got something right.

HAKDAESA: ... and your face is small, which means you do not listen to others.

ONG: What's anybody got to tell me that I'd want to hear? Come on, when are we going to get to the good stuff? Let's get back to that next million you were talking about.

HAKDAESA: I cannot see it in your face. Let me see your hands. Hmm, quite small. Feet, too. I am afraid this means you are going to die a violent death; it will not be peaceful, anyway, in bed. Robbers? Burglars, perhaps? Or bandits — yes! In the middle of the night, on a lonely mountain road... No, wait! I think I see a high, high, windswept cliff, and somebody is falling...

ONG: I've heard enough. (*Stomping over to the door and yanking it open*) Stump! Pancake...! Pancake! Stump...! (*To himself*) Never there when you need them... (*Losing patience, screaming*) Somebody! In here — NOW!

Pancake and Stump come running, bumping into each other, bowing and scraping with every step. (Throughout the nasty treatment that follows, Hakdaesa is miraculously well-composed.)

ONG: Grab him, boys. (*They grab him.*) Okay, now I'll do the talking. The only good monk is a dead monk. (*ONG takes off Hakdaesa's hat.*) Or a former monk, like Chin Do-nam in the classics, who left the temple in disgust and became a hermit. (*Ong slips Hakdaesa's beads from around his neck.*) Or a defrocked monk. (*Ong picks at Hakdaesa's robe.*) Okay boys, go to work!

PANCAKE: Which one this time, sire? The ear punch?

STUMP: The nose lop?

PANCAKE: The bamboo buster?

STUMP: The fillet?

ONG: I told you — beat the frock out of him.

Pancake and Stump carry Hakdaesa out of the room and offstage. The sound of beating and grunting.

ONG: (*hand to ear, grinning with perverse pleasure; sarcastically*) Well, whaddaya know — I'm smiling! (*A loud crash, and he frowns.*) What was that crash?! Whatever you broke comes out of your wages!

Scene 4: Hakdaesa creates Phong

Chwi-am Temple, Weolchul Mountain, inside the prayer hall. Five young novice monks are sitting cross-legged on the floor in a line in meditation, each droning a mantra to himself. The one at the end of the line, Stage Left, is nodding off to sleep, and finally leans against the one to his right and starts snoring a gentle, quiet snore; the one to his right nods off, leaning on the one to his right and beginning to snore; and so on, till the one at the far right is leaning on nothing and all are snoring.

Hakdaesa enters, sees them sleeping, picks up the bamboo switch, goes to the novice at the end of the line Stage Right, smacks him lightly but firmly on the shoulder; the novice straightens and resumes his mantra, which causes all the others, one by one, to straighten, stop snoring and resume their mantras, till all are droning their mantra again, just as at the beginning.

HAKDAESA: (*gently*) Earth calling.

Each novice — in the order of stage right, stage left, stage left, stage right, middle — raises his head and opens his eyes. Then they all see Hakdaesa and excitedly approach him, palms pressed, bowing.

DO-WON: Venerable Hakdaesa, you really had us worried! The rumor was that Ong Go-jip had you beaten.

HAKDAESA: It was all an illusion, as you see. A little more meditating and a little less dozing might help you understand that.

DO-GWANG: Yes, venerable one. But did you find out what's wrong with Ong?

HAKDAESA: Another illusion, but he does not know it. He thinks his unhappiness is from not having enough. Where do you suppose all that unhappiness really comes from, Do-il?

DO-IL: From clinging to all that stuff as if it's really his.

HAKDAESA: And what if he does have this illusion? Isn't he just hurting himself?

DO-JIN: Not just himself! You can't have compassion for others if you're so attached to things. That's probably why he treats his mother and everyone else like dirt.

HAKDAESA: So what do you think ought to be done about this?

DO-YOUNG: We'll use your magic to get the King of Hell to send his enforcer to arrest Ong and send him down into hell so deep he'll never know where he came from.

HAKDAESA: Will that help him learn compassion? Do-won, help us here.

DO-WON: You become a falcon and soar up, up, way up into the blue sky and hover over the Mountains of the Setting Sun waiting for Ong. And then when he shows up you pounce. You grab his noggin, you squeeze it so hard it pops like an overripe watermelon.

HAKDAESA: Talk about illusions! Do-gwang?

DO-GWANG: Become a fierce tiger from the deepest valley in the bluest mountains. At midnight jump the wall of his compound, and then snatch him in your jaws, drag him off into the mountains where no human soul ever set foot. Then you eat him up, bones and all.

HAKDAESA: That will certainly stop him from treating others badly. But if I eat him up what will there be left of him to be happy? That does make a great koan, though. Work on it. Do-il, how about it?

DO-IL: Should've asked me first. You know the fox spirit from Mystery Mountain, well, you turn yourself into a really gorgeous girl — ivory skin, long hair, silk robe and all that — and let him get you into bed...

HAKDAESA: Have mercy!

DO-IL: If you think that's bad, wait'll you see what's coming. So you've got him in bed, and you smile with your ruby lips and pearly teeth and bewitch him ever so charmingly with... uh... okay, how's this: "Your humble servant is the Heavenly Maiden of the Moon Palace, but I offended the Lord of Heaven. So he kicked me out, into the realm of humans... but... I didn't know where to go, so... so Mountain Spirit called me and told me my stars are crossed with your Excellency's, so I came to you." Course, you have to get a tear or two in there. Use all your wiles and charms and he'll eventually fall for you. And then his passion will eat away at him and of course there goes his life force, his chi.

HAKDAESA: "Turn yourself into..." Hm-m-m... You've come up with the perfect solution, Do-il. Go get me a bundle of straw.

Do-il runs off and comes right back with a bundle of straw.

DO-IL: (*holding up the bundle*) It was sitting right outside the door!

HAKDAESA: (*taking the bundle*) All right, gentlemen, you wanted magic and you are going to get it. Along with a little pain.

Hakdaesa turns his back to the audience. He soon turns back around, steering the real live Phony Ong around with him.

HAKDAESA: Gentlemen, meet Phony Ong. (*PHONG shakes himself free of Hakdaesa's hold.*) Or shall we call him Phong?

PHONG: What do you mean Phong? My name is Ong. Ong Go-jip. And I do NOT like being handled, much less by a monk. I'm outa here — this place reminds me of a temple!

Phong struts out arrogantly.

HAKDAESA: Well done, Phong. Yes, you go back home. Give Ong a good look at himself.

- CURTAIN -

Afterword

The Story

Ong Go-jip was a rich miser in the eighteenth century, when the Chosun dynasty was starting to feel its age. The Confucian morals and values that had energized the dynasty at its beginning in the fourteenth century and kept it going strong for two more centuries were now withering and giving way to a growing interest in acquiring wealth. A new scent of money was in the air. Commerce began to grow in the early seventeenth century; commoners were making money as merchants, and buying yangban land.¹ Roles switched. Many yangban forsook their role as models of Confucian morality for commoners and even followed the commoners' example of making as much money as they could in any way they could. Ong was one of these yangban.

Scholars say that different versions of the story have different themes. All agree that it, just like all pansori novella, has didactic intentions in addition to its purpose of entertaining, but in some versions the didactic intention is to espouse a mainly Buddhist theme and in others a Confucian one. Some teach a Buddhist lesson of developing proper perspective, of distinguishing real value from ephemeral value, of not forming attachment to those things you can't take with you, and refocusing on family and fellow man. One scholar ventures that Phony Ong is Ong's alter ego, who forced Ong to find his real self before he could resume his role as father and husband.² Other stories are directed more at teaching respect for Buddha and Buddhism.

Yet other versions focus on teaching a Confucian lesson of filial piety. Filial piety was a fundamental element in Korean society. In the Introduction and other plays we discussed Confucianism's five principles of human interaction; more basic to society's well-being were the three fundamental bonds "between sovereign and subject, parent and child, and husband and wife."³ One Chosun dynasty novel reports that yangban propriety required even adult sons to perform a ritual of visiting their parents every morning and evening, and presented a powerful anecdote that shows us how important the virtue of filial piety was. "Chung In-eung, the subject of [his mother] Kyo-wan's most intense affection, aids Chung In-seong [his brother, whom his mother despised] to escape his mother's plots and thereby frustrates his mother. Chung In-eung goes as far as to drink the poison [that the mother] intended for In-seong as a means of saving In-seong within the boundaries of filial behavior towards his mother."⁴

Another of Korean society's fundamental relationships was the one between husband and wife. Involved in this relationship was the prohibition against a wife having personal contact with a man other than her husband (even as she was expected to assent to her husband having a concubine). But Ong's wife actually lived with another man, and even bore that man's children. It appears implausible that a yangban wife could do this without suffering catastrophic consequences; any yangban worth his title would have sent his wife out of the house upon discovering that she had committed adultery. Even though the yangban class was degenerating, ritual and propriety were crucial in determining a family's and its clan's well-being. The clan's rivals for power in the government could use any hint of impropriety to have an offender of the puritanical code officially disgraced, which could destroy the entire clan. Women were responsible for ensuring adherence to rituals and propriety in the home.⁵ Ong, as a self-respecting yangban, should have tossed his wife out of the house when he discovered her cohabitation with the fake Ong. All he did, though, was get a little jealous and make one subtle humorous reference to his wife's new skills. We might account for this by pointing out the fact that novels in the old days considered general theme and sentiment more important than logical consistency in detail. Moreover, many "improper" and "vulgar" devices for entertainment were employed in the pansori and novellas of that period, in spite of — and possibly because of — its repressive code of propriety.⁶

Origin

Several scholars have expressed opinions on the evolution of this story;⁷ even a brief summary of each opinion would take up too much space, so it might be better to simply present a chronological arrangement of documented tales that may have influenced our tale. Generally, then, the first tale is a third century B.C. Buddhist jataka; its next appearance is in a Chinese translation of the Mahayana sutras; we find a similar story later in Korea in a story about a legend in the Koryo' dynasty (890 – 1392 A.D.), another in the sixteenth century, yet another in the seventeenth century, and find the fully developed story in eighteenth-century pansori and nineteenth-century pansori novella. Our story began with a rich, mean miser and an imposter, picked up a straw man here and a Taoist immortal there, flavored it with references to Chinese literature and mythology, and ended up with a lot more than a simple jataka tale.

In the oldest known story, the jataka *The Miserly Treasurer*,⁸ the deceased father of the wealthy and compassionless miser Illisa came back in the form of his son in order to reform the son. He convinced everyone that he was Illisa; the real Illisa was chased away, and the imposter gave away all Illisa's money to the poor. Illisa's father told the king what he did and why, the king threatened Illisa with death if he didn't reform, Illisa did reform, and lived the rest of his life as a model Buddhist.

The Koryo dynasty story is about Gyeong, another rich miser, who treated a monk badly when the monk asked for some rice.⁹ The monk then approached Kim, a neighbor, who treated the monk with kindness. After the monk left, Kim found an old man in the room where the monk had rested, and the old man gave Kim enough treasures to make him very wealthy. Gyeong found out about this, then got the monk to send the old man to his room too. But the person that Gyeong found waiting in his room looked just like himself, and claimed ownership of Gyeong's estate. The imposter (after convincing family, neighbors and authorities) succeeded in getting Gyeong evicted, and then gave away all of Gyeong's wealth to the poor. Then the monk showed up, hit the phony Gyeong with his walking stick, the phony turned into a bundle of straw, and the monk disappeared into thin air. (In *The Gourds' Rewards*, Nolbu, jealous of Hungbu's reward, tried to trick Heaven and eventually got his own reward, especially tailored to match his dirty deed. This similarity in the two stories is a good example of how, in oral literature, different stories' elements get exchanged over centuries of transmission, resulting in many different versions.)

There is a record from the sixteenth century¹⁰ of a long and complex incident of one brother's disappearance and an imposter's later claim to be that person; when he is found out he is taken off to

prison but commits suicide on the way. This story has no straw man or other supernatural phenomena, but this widely known true incident probably contributed a dramatic charge to the existing tale that troupes of kwangdae had long been reciting.

All we know about the eighteenth century pansori is a very brief synopsis presented in *Kwanu-heui*, an informative record of the kwangdae and several of their performances, written by a yangban named Song Man-jae.¹¹ It tells of a miser named Ong, his misadventures with a straw imposter, and how an amulet saved Ong.

This story and *The Legend of Hungbu* (our *The Gourds' Rewards*) were both being performed as pansori at the same time. The *Hungbu* pansori was more complex and technically superior and had better character development,¹² and when Shin Jae-hyo (the one who first wrote down the pansori scripts in the nineteenth century) had to decide which plays to devote his limited resources to, he chose *Hungbu's* story over *Ong Go-jip's*. Four other pansori (including *Chun Hyang's* and *Hare's* stories) made it into script form, and the others eventually stopped being performed. After this story was dropped from the active pansori repertoire the pansori novella appeared. Now we have eleven of the novella versions written in that period, the first one written in 1874.¹³ There are many differences among the versions in addition to broad theme and focus: Ong is not only cruel to his mother but actually evicts her, his father and his wife from the house; *Hakdaesa's* treatment of Ong is motivated by intentions of revenge, not compassion; Phony Ong and Ong's wife have one hundred straw babies; Ong doesn't actually reform; Ong reforms after he is reinstated; Ong reforms but is not reinstated. And so on.

The Play

Dosa was probably modeled on *Dokseong*, "The Lonely Saint," a Taoist immortal.¹⁴ *Dosa* means ("practitioner of the way"), and because he has learned "the way" he is endowed with magical powers. Though he's Taoist, Buddhists also claim him as one of their own, and have enshrined him in the Shaman hall in their temples. They say that he's an arhat, which means that he has achieved enlightenment and is ready to shed his human life and proceed on to Nirvana, but has chosen to stay behind and help the rest of humanity toward enlightenment. This may explain the compassion *Dosa* showed Ong when he got *Hakdaesa* to help Ong. *Hakdaesa* is also a kind of *dosa*, because he can work magic, but not necessarily an immortal; 'dosa' is used pretty loosely, and we can hear it applied these days to anyone who is supremely skilled at something.

In the story that our play is based on, Ong's mother holds Wang Sang up to Ong as an example of filial devotion. This refers to the Chinese boy Wang Xiang, who lived during the Jin Dynasty (265-420). His stepmother treated him badly and always slandered him in front of his father, with the eventual result that he had the love of neither parent. One day, in the middle of winter, his stepmother had a yen for fresh fish. Without even being asked, Wang went out to the river to get some, but the river was frozen; so Wang took off his coat and laid it on the ice to melt the ice. Suddenly, the ice thawed by itself and a pair of fish jumped out. The River God had been moved by Wang's filial piety.¹⁵

For this play I used the pansori novella referred to as the Jeong version (written in 1908), but, like the writers of the other versions, I took the liberty of embellishing a bit. None of the pansori novellas that I studied provided a satisfactory account for Ong's exile or his enlightenment; there were few details about his year in exile, and the hardship that he was said in very abstract terms to have experienced didn't seem sufficient explanation for his enlightenment.

The books mentioned at the opening of the play are all Confucian books; all of them are explained in several sites on the Internet.

Notes

1. Cho Dong-il in Choi, Rae-ok, p. 572.

2. Choi.

3. Park Chan, footnote 7, p. 278.

4. Chung, Byung-sul.

5. Chung, Byung-sul.

6. Pettid. "Beneath the surface of 'official' Chosun society was another set of values and beliefs that was dominated by common human emotions such as passion and sexuality... the people found one outlet for their desires in humorous narratives of sexual activities." pp. 61-85.

7. Chung, Chung-gweon; In; Kim Hyeon-yong; Choi Rae-ok; Chang Seok-gyu.

8. Illisa Jataka (Jataka No. 78), in Kawasaki, Ken.

9. In, 1995.

10. Kim, Hyeon-yong. "The Incident of Yu and Yu" (*Yuyusago'n*) in *Chronicles of the Chosun Dynasty* (Chosun Wangjo Shillok), 1562.
11. Chung, Chung-gweon, p. 326. This story is in verse 17.
12. Choi.
13. Chung, Chung-gweon and In provide descriptions of these novellas.
14. Covell, Alan.
15. Xu, Xiaomin. "Er Shi Si Xiao" is a collection of 24 stories teaching filial piety. Guo Jujing wrote this book during the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368).