

The Reimagination of *Ch'unbyangjŏn* during the Golden Age of Korean Radio Drama: *Obal Ch'unbyangjŏn* (1964–1965) and *Sŏul Ch'unbyangjŏn* (1965)

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This study aims to provide an in-depth examination of the radio dramas *Obal Ch'unbyangjŏn* (誤發 春香傳, 1964–1965) and *Sŏul Ch'unbyangjŏn* (서울 春香傳, 1965), produced by Tonga Pangsong (DBS) during the 1960s, the golden age of Korean radio drama. The paper will analyze how these radio dramas reflect the contemporary South Korean society, considering their relationship with the classic *Ch'unbyangjŏn* (春香傳). The dramas followed the style of existing *Ch'unbyangjŏn* parodies—the cartoon *Modŏn Ch'unbyangjŏn* (모던 春香傳, 1932–1933) and the novels *T'alsŏn Ch'unbyangjŏn* (脫線 春香傳, 1951) and *Nairon Ch'unbyangjŏn* (나이론 春香傳, 1954). Although their titles differ, *Obal Ch'unbyangjŏn* and *Sŏul Ch'unbyangjŏn* are the first and second parts of a single work by the dramatist Yi Yongch'an. The former tells the story of Ch'unhyang and Mongnyong from their first meeting to their wedding, whereas the latter continues their story after the wedding. These dramas are particularly noteworthy as they were extremely popular and inspired many more contemporary dramatizations of Korean classics by DBS. Yi retained the narrative structure of the classic *Ch'unbyangjŏn* and shifted the historical background to the 1960s in an attempt to satirize the contemporary money-dominated South Korean society and provide hope for overcoming it through a new Ch'unhyang figure. Notably, the heroine of his radio dramas is a much more confident and independent figure than the classic Ch'unhyang. These dramas held significance not only as the pioneering modern dramatizations of *Ch'unbyangjŏn* but also for resonating with the contemporary audience through a modern reinterpretation of this classic literary work.

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Introduction

Obal Ch'unhyangjŏn (誤發 春香傳, 1964–1965) and *Sŏul Ch'unhyangjŏn* (서울 春香傳, 1965) were produced and broadcast by Tonga Pansong (DBS) in the 1960s, widely recognized as the golden age of Korean radio drama.¹ This study analyzes how these radio dramas reflect the contemporary South Korean society, considering their relationship with the classic *Ch'unhyangjŏn* (春香傳, Tale of Ch'unhyang). *Ch'unhyangjŏn* is one of the most loved Korean classic literary works and has been re-created in various art forms, including *ch'anggŭk* (唱劇), theater, film, novels, poetry, animation, radio and television dramas, musicals, operas, ballets, *madangnori gŭk* (마당놀이 劇), and webtoons. The original *Ch'unhyangjŏn*, which was performed as *p'ansori* (판소리) or published as *p'ansorigye sosŏl* (판소리系 小說) in the late Chosŏn (朝鮮) dynasty, was not a text created by a single writer. It was shaped and modified by many *p'ansori* singers and unknown novelists over a long period. In this respect, none of the existing versions of *p'ansori Ch'unhyangga* (春香歌, Song of Ch'unhyang) or *p'ansorigye sosŏl Ch'unhyangjŏn* can be called the original. However, numerous *Ch'unhyangjŏn* texts produced in the late Chosŏn dynasty have fixed backgrounds, characters, and events, and these elements imply a common idea; therefore, we can call the summation the classic *Ch'unhyangjŏn*. By considering the relationship between the classic *Ch'unhyangjŏn* and the modern versions of *Ch'unhyangjŏn* as well as the distance between them, we can obtain a deep understanding of the underlying meaning of modern adaptations of *Ch'unhyangjŏn*.

Since the 20th century, various versions of *Ch'unhyangjŏn* have emerged in new art forms. These adaptations have attempted diverse variations in narratives. The film *Ch'unhyangjŏn* (춘향뎌, 2000) by Im Kwŏnt'aek (林權澤) is one example of a reproduction of the classic *Ch'unhyangjŏn* that visualized the *p'ansori Ch'unhyangga*.² However, it is a rather exceptional case. Even works that closely followed the story of the classic *Ch'unhyangjŏn* were actually quite distant from it. For example, Yi Kwangsu's (李光洙) novel *Ch'unhyang* (1925–1926), published in *Tonga ilbo* (東亞日報), portrayed Mongnyong (夢龍) as the epitome of a modern leader, demonstrating the writer's resolve to liberate the Korean people from the Confucian moral code and social hierarchy.³ In contrast, *Ch'unhyangjŏn* (1936), a play by Yu Ch'ijin (柳致眞),

¹ In the 1960s, radio dramas entered a golden age with the successive openings of private broadcasting stations such as MBC, DBS, and TBC. "Uri moksori 50 nyŏn pansong e mudŏtchyo," *Kyŏngnyang sinmun*, December 8, 2004. <https://www.khan.co.kr/article/200412081716591>

² Even in this case, the director made some modifications to suit his own purposes. Kwŏn Sungŭng, "Kojŏn sosŏl ūi yŏnghwahwa: 1960 nyŏndae ihu *Ch'unhyangjŏn* yŏnghwa rŭl chungsim ūro," *Kososŏl yŏn'gu* 23 (June 2007): 195–98.

³ Eun Young Seong, "Toward a New Affiliation: Competing Interpretations of the Korean Folktale *Ch'unhyangjŏn* in Colonial Korea," *Acta Koreana* 25, no. 2 (December 2022): 51–54.

portrayed Ch'unhyang as an independent, strong-willed woman from the lower class who resisted the corrupt ruling class.⁴ On the other hand, most *Ch'unhyangjŏn* films produced in South Korea after the Korean War focused on conflicts related to love rather than those related to power or status inherent to the classic *Ch'unhyangjŏn*.⁵

In many cases, adaptations of the classic *Ch'unhyangjŏn* have reflected contemporary society. Kim Kyut'aek's (金奎澤) cartoon *Modŏn Ch'unhyangjŏn* (모던 춘향傳), which was published in *Cheilsŏn* (第一線) from November 1932 to March 1933, moved the story's background to the 1930s and depicted Ch'unhyang and Mongnyong as the quintessential modern girl and modern boy.⁶ The cartoon reflected the popular taste for "ero-guro,"⁷ which was widespread at the time, and portrayed a Korean colonial culture that stimulated decadence and amusement, while maintaining a critical distance from it.⁸ The satirical parodies that began in *Modŏn Ch'unhyangjŏn* continued in the 1950s novels *T'alsŏn Ch'unhyangjŏn* (脫線 春香傳) and *Nairon Ch'unhyangjŏn* (나이론 春香傳).⁹ *T'alsŏn Ch'unhyangjŏn*, by Yi Chuhong (李周洪), was originally created for the theater or *chaedamgŭk* (才談劇, humor theater), but Yi adapted it into a humorous novel and published it in 1951. While the novel retained background and narrative structure of the classic *Ch'unhyangjŏn*, it included details that criticized the Chayudang (自由黨, Liberal party) dictatorship, supported democratic politics, and promoted women's rights.¹⁰ Furthermore, Cho P'ungyŏn's (趙豐衍) *Nairon Ch'unhyangjŏn*, published in *Han'guk ilbo* (韓國日報) in 1954, moved the story's background to the dollar black market of 1950s Seoul. The novel satirized public desire to imitate foreign things, represented by America, and revealed that the America that people envied was nothing more than an illusion.¹¹

The radio dramas *Obal Ch'unhyangjŏn* and *Sŏul Ch'unhyangjŏn* were an extension of this satirical parody trend. These dramas moved the story's background to South Korea in the 1960s and depicted the social concerns of the time while retaining the narrative structure of the classic *Ch'unhyangjŏn*. The two dramas are the first and second parts of a single work. The former covers the story from Ch'unhyang and Mongnyong's first meeting to their wedding, while the latter continues the story after the wedding. 143 episodes of *Obal Ch'unhyangjŏn* were broadcast from October 1, 1964, to April 19, 1965, while *Sŏul Ch'unhyangjŏn* consisted of 59 episodes broadcast from April 20, 1965, to July 16, 1965. It was uncommon in South

⁴ Seong, "Toward a New Affiliation," 58–61.

⁵ Kwŏn Sungŭng, "Kojŏn sosŏl ūi yŏnghwahwa," 198–99.

⁶ Ch'oe Hyejin, "Kim Kyut'aek *p'ansori* munhak chakp'um ūi kŭndaejŏk t'ŭkching kwa ūimi," *P'ansori yŏn'gu* 35 (2013): 256–58.

⁷ "Ero-guro" is a term derived from the Japanese words "ero" (erotic) and "guro" (grotesque). It refers to a genre or artistic movement that combines elements of eroticism and the grotesque, which emerged in early 20th-century Japan and expanded to colonial Korea in the 1930s. So Raesŏp, *Ero gŭro nŏnsensŭ: Kŭndaejŏk chagŭk ūi t'ansaeng* (P'aju: Salim Ch'ulp'ansa, 2007), 8–11.

⁸ Ch'oe Hyejin, "Kim Kyut'aek *p'ansori* munhak chakp'um ūi kŭndaejŏk t'ŭkching kwa ūimi," 263.

⁹ No Chisŭng, "*Ch'unhyangjŏn* p'aerŏdi sosŏl kwa 1955 nyŏn yŏnghwa *Ch'unhyangjŏn*: Chŏnhu munhwa pyŏndong kwa 'chŏnt'ong' ūi palgyŏn," *Hanminjok ŏmunhak* 55 (December 2009): 58–59.

¹⁰ Kwŏn Sungŭng, "*Ch'unhyangjŏn* ūi kŭndaejŏk pyŏn'gae wa chŏngch'i ūisik," *Minjok munhwa yŏn'gu* 83 (May 2019): 485–94.

¹¹ No Chisŭng, "*Ch'unhyangjŏn* p'aerŏdi sosŏl kwa 1955 nyŏn yŏnghwa *Ch'unhyangjŏn*," 60–64.

Korea at the time for a radio drama to run for such a long period of time. As such, the one hundredth episode of *Obal Ch'unhyangjŏn* was greeted with some fanfare.¹² Radio listeners, who were tired of endless tearjerker melodramas, were won over by the fresh take on the classic *Ch'unhyangjŏn*.¹³ After the success of these dramas, DBS went on to produce modern dramatizations of other Korean classics, including *Malŭtti Ch'unhyangjŏn* (말띠 춘향傳, 1966), *Nolbu wa Hŭngbu* (놀부와 흥부, 1966), *Modŏn Pangjajŏn* (모던 房子傳, 1966), *Sinp'an Hŭngbyŏn* (新版 興夫傳, 1970–71), and *Kaksŏl Simch'ŏngjŏn* (각설 沈淸傳, 1971).

Obal Ch'unhyangjŏn and *Sŏul Ch'unhyangjŏn* were the first radio dramas to present modern versions of *Ch'unhyangjŏn* during radio's most influential period in South Korea. They received positive reviews from the press and a favorable response from the public and inspired the production of many follow-up works. However, no academic studies on adaptations of *Ch'unhyangjŏn* have investigated either *Obal Ch'unhyangjŏn* or *Sŏul Ch'unhyangjŏn*. Indeed, few radio dramas produced in South Korea in the 1960s have received scholarly attention, primarily due to the lack of recordings and scripts. At the time, broadcasting companies tended to reuse expensive imported reel tapes and rarely preserved recordings.¹⁴ The scripts were also discarded after the dramas aired. As such, it is difficult to find source material unless the writer published the script.

This study was possible due to my discovery of the recordings of episodes 1, 102, and 143 of *Obal Ch'unhyangjŏn* and episode 144 of *Sŏul Ch'unhyangjŏn*. These are all the original recordings produced by DBS. They have been preserved by the *Tonga ilbo* company since November 30, 1980, when DBS closed down due to media consolidation measures by the Chŏn Tuhwan (全斗煥) regime. The important characteristics of the dramas can be grasped through the remaining recordings. In addition, the memoir of the dramatist Yi Yongch'an (李容燦)¹⁵ and newspaper articles of the time provide insights into the background to the production of the dramas, the motivations of the producers, and the creation of the scripts. Based on these sources, this paper focuses on examining the use of satire and the reimagination of Ch'unhyang in *Obal Ch'unhyangjŏn* and *Sŏul Ch'unhyangjŏn*.

Background to the Production and Planning of *Obal Ch'unhyangjŏn* and *Sŏul Ch'unhyangjŏn*

DBS planned and produced *Obal Ch'unhyangjŏn* as part of its October 1964 program reorganization.¹⁶ *Obal Ch'unhyangjŏn*, written by Yi Yongch'an and directed by Sim Yŏngsik

¹² "Se pŏntchae ŭi paek hoe tolp'a: *Obal Ch'unhyangjŏn*, chinan 17 il rosŏ," *Pangsong*, February 21, 1965.

¹³ "Changp'yŏn pangsonggŭk DBS sŏ ch'ŏt sido: *Uri appa ch'oego wa Obal Ch'unhyangjŏn*," *Kyŏnghyang sinmun*, January 18, 1965, 5.

¹⁴ Yi Yujin, "Tonga Pangsong (DBS) p'ansori tŭrama yŏn'gu," *Kubimunhak yŏn'gu* 46 (September 2017): 265.

¹⁵ Yi Yongch'an, "Tonga Pangsong kwa na," *Tonga Pangsongsa*, ed. Tonga Pangsongsa P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe (Sŏul: Tonga Ilbosa, 1990), 399–402.

¹⁶ "Saenggi rŭl tŏuk todwŏ: DBS naewŏl put'ŏ p'ŭro chŏnmyŏn kaep'yŏn," *Tonga ilbo*, September 29, 1964, 6.

(沈英植), began airing on October 1, 1964, and finished on April 19, 1965. The drama was broadcast from 9:35 to 9:45 p.m. every day, except on Saturdays and Sundays. According to DBS's basic programming schedule, it was prime listener time.¹⁷ *Sŏul Cb'unhyangjŏn*, again written by Yi Yongch'an but directed by An P'yŏngsŏn, was broadcast in the same time slot.¹⁸ The show's first episode (numbered Episode 144 to reflect the fact that it was an extension of *Obal Cb'unhyangjŏn*) aired on April 20, 1965, and its last episode on July 16, 1965.

Yi's memoir provides information about the motivations behind the production of these dramas. Ahead of DBS's October 1964 program reorganization, the broadcaster asked him to "modernize *Cb'unhyangjŏn* and write at will (춘향전을 현대화하여 '마음대로 쓰라')." Yi interpreted "write at will (마음대로 쓰라)" to mean "It doesn't matter how you satirize the world or whether you humorously criticize the overall corruption of social ethics, including affairs, let's write a fun modern version of *Cb'unhyangjŏn* to make the general public feel happy and refreshed (어떠한 형태의 세태 풍자를 하든 애정문제를 포함한 사회윤리의 전반적인 타락을 해학적으로 꼬집든 상관없으니 재미있는 현대판 춘향전을 써서 일반 대중의 마음을 즐겁고 후련하게 해주자)."¹⁹ Yi reflected this interpretation in his work. At the time, DBS was under pressure for broadcasting news and commentary criticizing government policies.²⁰ However, radio dramas remained relatively free from censorship as they had not to this point directly criticized the government.²¹ As a result, Yi enjoyed considerable freedom to write the drama as he saw fit.²² As this was the first attempt to produce a modern version of *Cb'unhyangjŏn* in all fields of drama, including broadcasting, theater, film, and *ch'anggŭk*, Yi grasped the opportunity with substantial enthusiasm.²³

Producing a modern version of *Cb'unhyangjŏn* for radio was a difficult task. A major consideration was ratings. No Chisŭng argues that after the Korean War, the South Korean

¹⁷ Tonga Pangsongsŏ P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe, ed., *Tonga Pangsongsŏ* (Sŏul: Tonga Ilbosa, 1990), 524.

¹⁸ On June 16, July 2, July 14, and July 16, 1965, "Onŭl ŭi Tonga Pangsŏng" (Today's DBS) in *Tonga ilbo* described *Sŏul Cb'unhyangjŏn* as "written by Yi Yongch'an and directed by Sim Yŏngsik," which is incorrect. An P'yŏngsŏn directed *Sŏul Cb'unhyangjŏn* from beginning to end. An P'yŏngsŏn, telephone interview with the author, July 29, 2022.

¹⁹ Yi Yongch'an, "Tonga Pangsŏng kwa na," 399. Translation by the author.

²⁰ Tonga Pangsongsŏ P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe, *Tonga Pangsongsŏ*, 147–57.

²¹ DBS received a warning from the Broadcasting Ethics Committee in 1967 and stopped broadcasting the serial drama *Teishinttai* (테이신타이), which addressed the trafficking and abuse of so-called "comfort women" by the Japanese military. According to An P'yŏngsŏn, this was the first and last time that a DBS serial drama was discontinued due to a warning from the Broadcasting Ethics Committee. Yi Yŏngmi, *2018 nyŏndo Han'guk kŭnhyŏndae yesulsa kŭsul ch'aerok yŏn'gu siriji 298 An P'yŏngsŏn* (Sŏul: Han'guk Munhwa Yesul Wiwŏnhoe, 2020), 237.

²² In March 1965, the dramatist Kim Chŏnguk, who wrote the script for *Songaji* (송아지), was arrested on charges of violating anti-communist laws and then released. *Songaji* was a radio play broadcast by KBS from its Taejŏn station in November 1964. "Pangsŏnggŭk *Songaji* malssŏng: Pan'gong pŏp chŏgyong," *Kyŏnghyang sinmun*, March 5, 1965, 2; "*Songaji* chakka Kim Chŏnguk ssi sŏkpang," *Kyŏnghyang sinmun*, March 15, 1965, 7. Cho Hangje suggests that this incident, which occurred outside the capital area, may not have had a significant impact on the broadcasting industry, which was based in Seoul, but may have indirectly influenced radio drama directors and writers, making them reluctant to deal with social issues. Cho Hangje, *Han'guk pangsŏng ŭi yŏksa wa chŏnmang* (Sŏul: Hanul, 2003), 197–98. However, when Kim was arrested, *Obal Cb'unhyangjŏn* was nearing its conclusion. It is therefore unlikely that this incident had any influence on the development of the plot of *Obal Cb'unhyangjŏn*.

²³ Yi Yongch'an, "Tonga Pangsŏng kwa na," 399.

public preferred film versions of the classic *Ch'unhyangjön* to parody novels that modified it.²⁴ The public's enthusiastic response to *Ch'unhyangjön*, a film by Yi Kyuhwan (李圭煥), on its release in 1955 supports her argument. Although the film did not reproduce the exact story of the classic *Ch'unhyangjön*,²⁵ it stayed true enough to the original that it gave the audience the same feeling.²⁶ Following its box office success, several films depicting the pre-modern world of the classic *Ch'unhyangjön* appeared. Among them, *Söng Ch'unhyang* (成春香, 1961) by Sin Sangok (申相玉) became a box office success. In contrast, following the publication of the novel *Nairon Ch'unhyangjön* in 1954, it was a full decade before another modern version of *Ch'unhyangjön* appeared.

In this context, DBS made a bold move in producing a modern version of *Ch'unhyangjön*. As a new broadcasting station, founded in 1963, it was strongly motivated to innovate and spur the evolution of Korean broadcasting culture. One of its greatest achievements was its significant expansion of the landscape of South Korean radio dramas, which had been dominated by melodramas.²⁷ DBS produced the serial documentary drama *Yömyöng 80 nyön* (黎明 80年), which was extremely successful and influenced other broadcasting companies, resulting in a boom in serial documentary dramas.²⁸ It also created new formats for Korean musical dramas, such as *yönsok ch'anggük* (連續唱劇) and *p'ansori* drama, by combining *p'ansori* with radio drama.²⁹ In addition to developing new drama formats, DBS promoted the diversification of drama materials and genres to present novel works distinct from existing radio dramas.³⁰ Its plan to create a modern version of *Ch'unhyangjön* was a direct result of this pioneering spirit, and *Obal Ch'unhyangjön* was a huge success.

The South Korean public, which had preferred film adaptations of the classic *Ch'unhyangjön*,³¹ appreciated the modern reimagination of the classic literary work in the radio dramas. South Korea's rapid industrialization since the early 1960s had brought significant changes to society and the lives of its citizens. The favorable response to a modern version of *Ch'unhyangjön* is thus not surprising given that the world of *Obal Ch'unhyangjön* and *Söul Ch'unhyangjön* was similar to their real world, allowing them to empathize with the characters.

The influence of these dramas was considerable. Radio was by far the most popular media of the time and was at the forefront of popular culture in South Korea in the 1960s.³²

²⁴ No Chisüng, "Ch'unhyangjön p'aerödi sosöl kwa 1955 nyön yönghwa *Ch'unhyangjön*," 76–77.

²⁵ Kwön Sungüng, "Kojön sosöl üi yöngwahwa," 185.

²⁶ No Chisüng, "Ch'unhyangjön p'aerödi sosöl kwa 1955 nyön yönghwa *Ch'unhyangjön*," 78–80.

²⁷ Tonga Pangsongsä P'yönch'an Wiwönhoe, *Tonga Pangsongsä*, 100.

²⁸ Mun Sönyöng, "Pangsönggük i sohwanhan 3.1 undong üi kiök: 1960 nyöndaek tak'yument'öri tūrama *Yömyöng 80 nyön üi chungsim üro*," *Uri munhak yön'gu* 67 (July 2020): 191.

²⁹ Yi Yujin, "Tonga Pangsöng (DBS) *yönsok ch'anggük yön'gu*," *Kubimunhak yön'gu* 56 (March 2020): 131–68; Yi Yujin, "Tonga Pangsöng (DBS) *p'ansori tūrama yön'gu*," 263–92.

³⁰ Yun Kūmsön, *Radio p'unggyöng, sori ro tūnnün tūrama* (Söul: Yön'gük kwa In'gan, 2010), 297–306.

³¹ No Chisüng, "Ch'unhyangjön p'aerödi sosöl kwa 1955 nyön yönghwa *Ch'unhyangjön*," 76–77.

³² Kim Yönghui, "Han'guk üi radio sigi üi radio suyong hyönsang," *Han'guk öllonhakpo* 47, no. 1 (February 2003): 158; Chu Ch'angyun, "1960 nyön chönhu radio munhwa üi hyöngsöng kwajöng," *Midiö kyöngje wa munhwa* 9, no. 2 (May 2011): 8–9.

In April 1963, 66.5% of households owned radios in Seoul, 46.8% in other cities, and 42.5% in small rural townships, while 55.4% of people regularly listened to radio broadcasts.³³ This golden age of radio saw major commercial radio stations such as Munhwa Pangsong (MBC), DBS, and Radio Sŏul (RSB, the predecessor of TBC) opening and a surge in the advertising market. Han'guk Pangsong (KBS) TV opened in 1961 and Tongyang Pangsong (TBC) TV in 1964, but TV did not yet have a significant influence on the general public because TV sets were not widely distributed.³⁴

In the 1960s, radio listeners preferred dramas over other types of programs. According to a 1961 survey, the most popular program at the time was *Yŏnsok pangsonggŭk* (連續放送劇), a serial drama (25.2%), while 27.4% of listeners wanted to listen to more dramas.³⁵ A survey in 1967 revealed that 33% of respondents had a preference for serial dramas, a much higher number than for any other radio programs, such as music and news.³⁶ As a result, radio broadcasters scheduled dramas at peak time in the evening.³⁷

According to statistics gathered at the time, the main radio listeners in the early 1960s were women, predominantly married women. The most avid listeners in 1961 were mothers (33.0%), followed by fathers (21.3%), sons (20.0%), and daughters (14.1%).³⁸ The large number of women who apparently listened to the radio may reflect the fact that mothers spent more time at home as homemakers. However, serial dramas were broadcast in the evening when all family members were at home. As such, family members likely listened to these dramas together, making it unlikely that the audience was predominantly of a particular age group or gender. An article in the *Kyŏnghyang sinmun* commented on the effect of *Obal Ch'unhyangjŏn*: "... it reverses the gloomy mood that has taken hold of the common people since the New Year and inspires a happy feeling for a moment (서민의 우울한 정초 '무드'를 잠깐 동안이라도 逆回轉시켜 잠시 흐뭇한 감정을 가질 수 있게 한다)."³⁹

Satirical Depictions of a Money-Dominated Society

Yi Yongch'an chose to make his adaptation a comedy with the intention of writing "a fun modern version of *Ch'unhyangjŏn*."⁴⁰ At the time, mainstream radio comedy programs were situation home comedies, which comically depicted the daily life of an ordinary family.⁴¹ However, Yi did not follow this trend and instead wrote a comedy with a strong satirical tone.

³³ "Radio kajin chip tu chip e han chip kkol," *Chosŏn ilbo*, August 25, 1963, 5.

³⁴ Ch'oe Hyŏnch'ŏl and Han Chinman, *Han'guk radio p'ŭrogŭraem e taeban yŏksajŏk yŏn'gu* (P'aju: Hanul, 2004), 109.

³⁵ "Sinmun kwa matsŏnŭn radio," *Tonga ilbo*, May 29, 1961, 4.

³⁶ "Orak esŏ kyoyang ũro: Pangsongin semina ne chuje," *Chungang ilbo*, April 15, 1967, 5.

³⁷ "Tŭrama p'ungnyŏn," *Tonga ilbo*, September 4, 1962, 5.

³⁸ "Sinmun kwa matsŏnŭn radio," 4.

³⁹ "Changp'yŏn pangsonggŭk DBS sŏ ch'ŏt sido," 5. Translation by the author.

⁴⁰ Yi Yongch'an, "Tonga Pangsong kwa na," 399.

⁴¹ Mun Sŏnyŏng, "Radio k'omidi pangsonggŭk ũi hyŏngsŏng kwa pyŏnch'ŏn," *Ōmullonjip* 51 (2012): 317–20.

The Ch'unhyang that Yi portrayed in his radio drama was the daughter of a former *keisaeng* (妓生) who ran a small liquor store in Namwŏn, while Mongnyong was the son of the branch manager of a bank in Namwŏn.⁴² This meant that the status of Ch'unhyang's mother was practically the same as in the classic *Ch'unhyangjŏn*. On the other hand, the status of Mongnyong's father, who was the Namwŏn *pusa* (府使) in the classic *Ch'unhyangjŏn*, was different in this version. This reimagination focused attention on the preoccupation with and power of material wealth in South Korean society in the 1960s. Quoting a column from *Tonga ilbo*, it was the time "when politics and education were changed by money, and status, fame, power, or anything could be bought with money (政治도 教育도 돈으로 바꾸어지고, 또 地位와 功名과 權勢도 돈이면 뭣이나 살 수 있는 때)."⁴³

The Chosŏn caste system, in which social status was inherited according to maternal lineage, was abolished long ago; nonetheless, capitalist societies created a new caste system through the inheritance of money. Those who had money became richer by monopolizing all rights and opportunities and could build a citadel of wealth by passing their fortunes onto their children. Conversely, those who did not have money became poorer because they were deprived of all rights and opportunities; passing their debts on to their children, they fell into a morass of poverty with their children.

While the Pak Chŏnghŭi (朴正熙) government pursued a five-year economic development plan, the gap between the rich and the poor widened significantly. This situation became the subject of comment in numerous articles in major newspapers of the day. On January 1, 1964, *Tonga ilbo* published a roundtable discussion which claimed that the gap between the rich and the poor had worsened since the May 16 Military Coup.⁴⁴ Similarly, on January 31, 1964, *Kyŏngbyang sinmun* published a special article which criticized the government for the increased burden on the general public caused by its poor economic policies and corporate tyranny and the widening gap between the rich and the poor.⁴⁵ The following year, on December 18, 1965, *Chosŏn ilbo* published an editorial pointing out that the polarization between the rich and the poor had become so extreme that there were now two classes of people in the country.⁴⁶ As the wealth gap grew, money became more important in South Korean society. Accordingly, desires for money intensified, which progressively led to unethical behavior and corruption.⁴⁷

The surviving broadcast recordings from DBS show how *Obal Ch'unhyangjŏn* and *Sŏul Ch'unhyangjŏn* satirized the reality of the money-dominated society of the 1960s. In the first scene from the first episode of *Obal Ch'unhyangjŏn*, Mongnyong and Pangja (房子) have the following conversation.

Pangja: "Hey, Mongnyong! What can you do with your forearms? They are as thin as

⁴² Yi Yongch'an, "Tonga Pangsong kwa na," 399.

⁴³ "Hoengsŏl susŏl," *Tonga ilbo*, May 4, 1964, 1. Translation by the author.

⁴⁴ "Saehae sallim sari t'ajin 1," *Tonga ilbo*, January 1, 1964, 7.

⁴⁵ "Kyŏngje wigisŏl ūi anp'akk (wan): Kiŏp ūi hoengp'o," *Kyŏngbyang sinmun*, January 31, 1964, 4.

⁴⁶ "Semal kwa in'gan ch'ŏndae," *Chosŏn ilbo*, December 18, 1965, 2.

⁴⁷ "Hoengsŏl susŏl," *Tonga ilbo*, May 4, 1964, 1.

bird's legs.”

Mongnyong: “Who says that power can only be found in forearm muscles?”

Pangja: “You’re right. Money comes first. As a matter of fact, since I owe you a favor....”

Mongnyong: “Bullshit! I don’t care about that.”⁴⁸

방자: 그렇지만 몽룡아, 야! 고 새 다리 같은 팔뚝 개지고 네가 어카간?

몽룡: 팔뚝에 알통만 힘이라더냐?

방자: 맞아. 우선 돈이고 말이야. 나두야 사실 말이지 너한테 신세를 져 놔설라무니...

몽룡: 지랄하네. 그까짓 건 일없어, 야.

Mongnyong, who is attending college and studying for the bar exam, does not worry about money thanks to his father, who is a bank manager. However, his friend Pangja is from a poor family and is beholden to him. Pangja makes fun of Mongnyong’s thin forearms, but when Mongnyong asks, “Who says that power can only be found in forearm muscles?” he concedes the point and says, “Money comes first.” Money is not a big deal for Mongnyong, who grew up in an affluent family. However, for Pangja, who came with his mother from North Korea during the Korean War, money is the most powerful force and takes precedence over everything.

Pangja: “It’s been several months since your father was appointed Namwŏn branch manager, right? Almost a year?”

Mongnyong: “Probably. I’m not interested in that.”

Pangja: “Don’t be such an ass! Count your blessings.”

Mongnyong: “What? An ass?”

Pangja: “No, Big Brother! But, as he is the branch manager of Hansŏng Bank, he is probably the most powerful person in Namwŏn. I mean he’s holding an iron bag.”⁴⁹

방자: 너희 아버지가 남원지점장으로 간 지도 여러 달 됐지? 1년 가까이 되냐?

몽룡: 그렇게 되지 아마. 난 그런 거 관심 없다.

방자: 복에 겨워 육갑하네.

몽룡: 뭐? 육갑?

방자: 아이고, 형님, 형님! 그렇지만, 한성은행 지점장이면 말이지, 남원 천지에선 최고로 세갔다, 야. 이거야, 쇠 주머니를 쥐고 있으니끼니 말이야.

Pangja says that Mongnyong’s father, the manager of the Namwŏn branch of Hansŏng Bank, is probably the most powerful person in Namwŏn because he holds an “iron bag”—the vault. However, this is not merely a subjective judgment by Pangja, but an idea shared by most people of the time. Just as Pangja in the classic *Ch’unhyangjŏn* represented the lower classes of

⁴⁸ *Obal Ch’unhyangjŏn*, episode 1, directed by Sim Yŏngsik, written by Yi Yongch’an, aired October 1, 1964, on DBS. Translation by the author.

⁴⁹ *Obal Ch’unhyangjŏn*, episode 1. Translation by the author.

the late Chosŏn dynasty, so too does Pangja in *Obal Ch'unbyangjŏn* represent ordinary people in South Korea in the 1960s. In 1964, when *Obal Ch'unbyangjŏn* began its run, South Korean society was facing a crisis due to extreme inflation. In April 1964, the standard of living of most people had reached its most severe state since the Korean War.⁵⁰ Whether one was a salaried worker or a small business owner in a city or a resident of a farming or fishing village, it was equally difficult to make ends meet.⁵¹ Moreover, most of the general public could not obtain bank loans and had to pay high interest rates on private debt.⁵² According to the Bank of Korea, in 1964, commercial bank loans were concentrated among a very small number of big borrowers.⁵³ The difficulty of obtaining bank loans during this period was evident in the popular use of the idioms “the bank threshold is high (은행 문턱이 높다)” and “getting a bank loan is picking stars in the sky (은행 융자가 하늘의 별 따기).” In this sense, for most people in South Korea, a bank manager who had authority over bank loans was “the most powerful person” in the area.

Pyŏn Hakto (卞學道), who appears as the new Namwŏn branch manager after Mongnyong's father transfers to Seoul, uses his power in this position to satisfy his greed. He approaches Ch'unhyang under the pretext of providing a loan but plans to rape her.⁵⁴ However, Pyŏn is not the only one who uses his position at the bank to satisfy his greed, as the following scene illustrates.

Mongnyong's mother: “More wedding gifts are arriving than expected.”

Mongnyong's father: “There may not be anything special on the wedding day?”

Mongnyong's mother: “Will that be the case given your position? Some people will probably think it is polite to bring a gift a day or two before the wedding.”

Mongnyong's father: “Well. What is that?”

Mongnyong's mother: “Let's unwrap it.”

Mongnyong's father: “What is it? Oh, is it a key?”

Mongnyong's mother: “Yes. It's a good luck key made of pure gold.”

Mongnyong's father: “Who sent it?”

Mongnyong's mother: “Here is the name.”

Mongnyong's father: “Hmm. He made a big decision.”

Mongnyong's mother: “My goodness! I'd forgotten. Just before you came in, the assistant manager, Pak, left 30,000 won in cash.”

Mongnyong's father: “What? 30,000 won? Even 10,000 won would be a lot. 30,000 won is too much for his circumstances. Let's return it.”

Mongnyong's mother: “Should we return what he brought? Let's just grant his wish. It

⁵⁰ “Mulga ch'use, chŏnggye e k'ŭn chagŭk,” *Kyŏnghyang sinmun*, April 15, 1964, 1.

⁵¹ “Hoengsŏl susŏl,” *Tonga ilbo*, September 22, 1964, 1.

⁵² “Ödin ka chalmot twae itta 2: Ŭnhaeng kwa ton,” *Chosŏn ilbo*, February 20, 1964, 1.

⁵³ “Ŭnhaeng yungja t'ŭksu ch'ŭng e p'yŏnjung,” *Kyŏnghyang sinmun*, August 8, 1964, 4.

⁵⁴ “Onŭl ŭi Tonga Pangsong,” *Tonga ilbo*, November 24, 1964, 8; “Onŭl ŭi Tonga Pangsong,” *Tonga ilbo*, December 14, 1964, 4.

doesn't seem impossible.”

Mongnyong's father: “So, he wants to work at the head office, right?”

Mongnyong's mother: “A transfer or a loan to fund a business—he wants either of them.”

Mongnyong's father: “Well, let's see after Mongnyong's wedding.”⁵⁵

몽룡 어머니: 생각보다도 결혼 선물을 많이들 가져오네.

몽룡 아버지: 정작 결혼 당일엔 별게 없으려나?

몽룡 어머니: 당신 위치가 있는데 그럴 리야 있겠어요? 당일보다도 하루 이틀 전에 가져오는 게 정중할 것 같다고 생각하는 사람이 미리 하는 걸 테죠.

몽룡 아버지: 글썄. 그건 또 뭐요?

몽룡 어머니: 어디 끌러 봅시다.

몽룡 아버지: 뭐야? 아 열쇠 아니야?

몽룡 어머니: 아유, 네. 순금 행운의 열쇠네요.

몽룡 아버지: 누가 보냈지?

몽룡 어머니: 여기 있군요, 이름.

몽룡 아버지: 음. 그 사람 큰맘 먹었네.

몽룡 어머니: 그리고 참. 깜박 잊어버리고 있었네. 저 아까 들어오시기 조금 전에 말이죠. 박 대리가 돈을 3만 원이나 놓고 갔지 뭐예요.

몽룡 아버지: 뭐? 3만 원? 만 원이라도 많을 텐데. 그 사람 처지에 3만 원은 너무 과한 걸. 도로 돌려주지.

몽룡 어머니: 가져온 걸 돌려줄 것까지야 뭐 있어요? 소원이나 풀어주죠. 불가능한 일도 아닐 것 같던데.

몽룡 아버지: 본점에서 일하겠다 그거지?

몽룡 어머니: 그렇게 해주시든가, 장사 밑천으로 용자를 좀 해주시든가, 둘 중에 한 가지를 해달라는 거죠.

몽룡 아버지: 음, 몽룡이 결혼식이나 치르고 봅시다.

Mongnyong's father, who has been promoted to a high position at Hansŏng Bank (probably that of bank president), is busy receiving gifts ahead of his son's wedding. He pretends to be indifferent to the expensive gifts but inwardly welcomes them. His wife tells him that the assistant manager of the Namwŏn branch, Pak, left a large amount of money.⁵⁶ The money, of course, is not just a congratulatory gift but also a bribe for a transfer to the head office or a loan to fund a business. Despite knowing this, Mongnyong's father does not return the money. It appears that he is not averse to accepting bribes for preferential treatment or loans.

Mongnyong's father in *Obal Ch'unhyangjŏn* is not the man of integrity who was praised by

⁵⁵ *Obal Ch'unhyangjŏn*, episode 143, directed by Sim Yŏngsik, written by Yi Yongch'an, aired April 19, 1965, on DBS. Translation by the author.

⁵⁶ The 30,000 won that Pak gave as a bribe was equivalent to several months' salary for an urban worker. For reference, in 1965, the monthly salary of a grade 4 B-class public official was 6,350 won. “Kūnal e kyŏnjwŏ pon onŭl ūi sallim,” *Tonga ilbo*, August 14, 1965, 12.

the people for his good conduct in the classic *Ch'unhyangjön*.⁵⁷ However, he does persuade his wife to abandon her prejudice against Ch'unhyang's background.⁵⁸ Still, it is not just Pyön, a wicked and shameless figure, but also Mongnyong's father, an apparently decent and sensible figure, who indulges in corruption. This is a clear attempt to satirize the corruption that was rampant in South Korean society in the 1960s.

Söul Ch'unhyangjön further depicts the reality of the deepening gap between the rich and the poor through the story of the wedding of Ch'unhyang and Mongnyong.

Mongnyong's mother: "At the wedding hall earlier today...."

Pangja: "Yes."

Mongnyong's mother: "Mongnyong's father's position at the bank is such that many clerks came."

Pangja: "A lot of clerks came and took care of things."

Mongnyong's mother: "Well, anyway, what did I tell you? I told you to stand at the reception desk for the groom's side, where guests were rushing in, to receive congratulatory money and guide the special guests, right?"

Pangja: "I did as much as I could."

Mongnyong's mother: "You were standing there awkwardly and seemed very concerned about the bride's side."

Pangja: "I felt sorry for Hyangdan because she was sitting alone...."

Mongnyong's mother: "Are you saying that you belong to the bride's side and not to the groom's because you have a relationship with Ch'unhyang's family?"

Pangja: "No, it's not that."

Mongnyong's mother: "You too, Assistant Manager Pak. You may not be used to it here, since you came from the countryside. But what did I tell you?"

Pak: "Well, I also felt sorry that Hyangdan was sitting alone at the bride's side. So, I helped her. But only a bit."

Mongnyong's mother: "I don't want to hear it. If you do this kind of thing, what can I ask Mongnyong's father for you?"⁵⁹

몽룡 어머니: 그 아까 결혼식장에서 말이지...

방자: 예.

몽룡 어머니: 몽룡이 어르신네께서 은행의 그럴만한 위치에 계시니까 행원들이 많이 나와설랑.

방자: 참 많이들 나와서 일들 봐주더만요.

몽룡 어머니: 글썄 그러나. 아무리 그렇더라도, 방자 자네더러 뭐라고 그랬지? 정신 못 차리게 손님이 밀어닥치는 신랑 측 접수 칸에 좀 붙어 서서 축의금 받는 것도 살펴보고

⁵⁷ Chöng Hayöng, *Ch'unhyangjön* (Söul: Sin'gu Munhwasa, 2006), 102.

⁵⁸ *Obal Ch'unhyangjön*, episode 143.

⁵⁹ *Söul Ch'unhyangjön*, episode 144, directed by An P'yöngsön, written by Yi Yongch'an, aired April 20, 1965, on DBS. Translation by the author.

귀한 손님 안내도 허고 그래 달라고 그러지 않았어, 응?
 방자: 저, 힘닿는 데까지는 했지요.
 몽룡 어머니: 엉거주춤, 신부 측이 몹시도 못 미더운 모양이더군 그래, 뭘.
 방자: 향단이 혼자서 앉아있는 게 딱해설라무니...
 몽룡 어머니: 자네, 춘향이네 집하고 약간의 연고가 있다고 해서, 그래 아무려면 신랑 측이 아니고 신부 측이란 말인가?
 방자: 그런 거야 아니지요. 내레 이거 참.
 몽룡 어머니: 그리고 박 대리도 그렇지. 시골서 올라와서 익숙지는 않을 테지만, 내 박 대리더러도 뭐라고 그랬어, 응?
 박 대리: 금메 소인도 신부 측이라고 향단이 혼자 양거있는 것이 안 되어서 말씀입니다. 꺾간씩 들여다봐준 것인디.
 몽룡 어머니: 듣기 싫어요. 그래 가지구 몽룡이 어르신네한테 무슨 청을 드리겠소. 안 그래?

After the wedding, Mongnyong's mother calls Pangja and Pak back to her home and reprimands them for going to the reception desk for the bride's side when there were many guests rushing to the reception desk for the groom's side. Unlike the many guests at the groom's reception desk, there were few guests at the bride's reception desk. However, Pangja and Pak went there because Hyangdan was sitting there alone. Pangja and Pak explain the situation to Mongnyong's mother, but she is not interested in their excuses.

At the same time, Wölmae (月梅) is drinking hard liquor and complaining that only her in-laws are benefiting from the marriage.

Hyangdan: "Oh, Aunt! You shouldn't drink so much *soju*."
 Wölmae: "Nonsense! Let me keep drinking, Hyangdan. How can I stand it without drinking liquor, huh?"
 Hyangdan: "You should think of your health, though."
 Wölmae: "What kind of custom is that? The groom's reception desk and the bride's reception desk are divided! Our side was so quiet that you were about to yawn, but the other side was so crowded with guests that the congratulatory money was piling up like a mountain! I'm taken aback."
 Hyangdan: "It's all like that."
 Wölmae: "Damn wedding! I raised my only daughter like a princess, but now I've allowed her to be stolen, and my in-laws get all the benefits."⁶⁰

향단: 아이, 아주머니! 소주를 그렇게 잡수시면 어떡해?
 월매: 쓰잘데기없는 소리. 내비뉘라, 향단아. 술이라도 안 먹고 어디 견디겠냐, 응?
 향단: 그래도 몸을 생각하셔야지.
 월매: 뭘 풍습이요, 그메? 신랑 측 접수라, 신부 측 접수라 딱 나눠갖고, 이쪽은 한산하니 하품을 할 지경인디, 저쪽은 문전성시로 축의금이 산더미를 이루고! 내 참 기가 차서

⁶⁰ *Sŏul Ch'unhyangjŏn*, episode 144. Translation by the author.

참말로.

향단: 그런 거죠, 뭐.

월매: 결혼식이라고 젠장! 내 판에는 금지옥엽맹이로 키운 딸자식 앓기고 사돈네 좋은 일만 시켜주고.

Wölmae, who comes from the countryside, is shocked to experience the new wedding custom of setting up separate reception desks for the bride and groom at the entrance of the wedding hall and receiving congratulatory money. In addition, seeing all the guests for the groom's side, she cannot help but feel a sense of relative deprivation. Ironically, the two families that are being united by marriage are divided at the wedding hall.

The episode in question deals with changes in wedding customs in south Korea at the time. In the 1960s, the tradition of holding weddings at home gradually disappeared, and the custom of renting a wedding hall and having a Western-style wedding took root.⁶¹ Guests invited to a modern wedding had to stop by a reception desk for either the bride or groom, depending on which side invited them, and hand in envelopes with congratulatory money. Koreans had traditionally helped relatives or neighbors who were holding wedding ceremonies by giving them money or goods, but this tradition changed as the modern wedding format took hold. The new custom was not welcomed by everyone. Some people were reluctant to give money as a gift, as it seemed like an admission fee for the wedding.⁶² However, as the number of wedding guests gradually increased, it became more convenient to set up a reception desk at the entrance to the wedding hall and take the money there rather than receive it from different guests separately at multiple locations.

It soon became clear, however, that this convenient method did not benefit everyone equally. As materialism spread along with industrialization in the society, human relationships centered on profit became more common. Therefore, the number of guests and the amount of congratulatory money were proportional to the social status of the parents of the bride and groom, and in many cases, the congratulatory money was a bribe. As such, after a grand wedding at a wedding hall, rich, influential families enjoyed affluence, while poor, powerless families suffered poverty. *Sŏul Ch'unhyangjŏn* shed light on these problems and satirized the deepening wealth gap in the increasingly materialistic society of South Korea.

Sŏul Ch'unhyangjŏn also satirized how individuals and society fell prey to dreams of making a fortune. For example, it addressed the issue of the prevalence of pyramid *kye* (契) fraud in Seoul in 1965. The first pyramid organization appeared in Seoul on April 25, 1965, and six similar organizations formed within a month. By June 7, they had collected 4,833,518 won from 25,161 members. The victims of the pyramid *kye* fraud were ordinary people. They joined these organizations because they were deceived by false promises of making a large return on a small investment.⁶³ The pyramid system claimed to be a profit-generating

⁶¹ Chang Hagyoung, "Han'guk sahoe pyŏndong e ttarŭn hollye kwanhaeng ŭi pyŏnhwa," *Han'guk kajŏng kwalli bakhojeji* 14, no. 1 (March 1996): 156–58.

⁶² "Yŏja ŭi ch'ang: Kibarhan kyŏrhon sŏnmul," *Kyŏngnyang sinmun*, February 21, 1966, 6.

⁶³ "Sinjong *kye*," *Chosŏn ilbo*, June 10, 1965, 3.

business based on mathematical theories and was rumored to have been invented by a retired bank president in Japan.⁶⁴ *Sŏul Ch'unhyangjŏn* borrowed the concept and told the story of Pyŏn planning to start a pyramid *kye* in Seoul after retiring from the bank.⁶⁵

As reviewed above, *Obal Ch'unhyangjŏn* and *Sŏul Ch'unhyangjŏn* actively satirized the money-dominated reality of South Korea in the 1960s. These satires were humorous rather than cutting and serious. The dramas entertained their audience by conveying critical messages about society in a lighthearted manner. In this respect, they successfully advanced the tradition of humorous satire achieved by *p'ansori* literature, including the classic *Ch'unhyangjŏn*.

The newly-discovered recordings show that *Obal Ch'unhyangjŏn* and *Sŏul Ch'unhyangjŏn* contain rich elements of humor. They create a humorous atmosphere through funny theme songs, cheerful transition music, fast-paced dialogue, comical voice acting, and other verbal-humor techniques. Exaggeration is one of the most frequently used techniques in these dramas. For example, Pangja says, Mongnyong's forearms are "as thin as bird's legs."⁶⁶ Similarly, after Ch'unhyang and Mongnyong's wedding, Wŏlmae says, "Our side was so quiet that you were about to yawn, but the other side was so crowded with guests that the congratulatory money was piling up like a mountain!"⁶⁷

Other humor techniques used in the dramas include sarcasm and wordplay. While Pyŏn pursues his plan to marry Ch'unhyang, the fact that he has a wife becomes known. To deal with this situation, he sends Pak to Wŏlmae and Ch'unhyang to try to convince them that he is divorced. As she greets Pak, Ch'unhyang says sarcastically, "I thought Sir Pyŏn would pay a visit, but somehow you came alone (변학도 선생께서도 왕림하실 줄 알았더니 어째 혼자 오셨네)."⁶⁸ Her overly polite language mocks Pyŏn's authority and indirectly reveals that he is a reprehensible hypocrite. Subsequently, Wŏlmae meets Pyŏn to ascertain whether he is in fact divorced. Pyŏn begins his excuse with a lengthy statement: "I am a person who has never regretted anything. This is because I am inherently optimistic and do not know pessimism. Moreover, I have only walked looking ahead with effort (내 원래 후회라는 걸 해본 일이 없는 사람입니다. 성질이 본시 낙천적이라 비관을 모르는 데다가 애써 앞만 보고 걸어왔으니까요)." Wŏlmae embarrasses him by retorting, "Does anyone look behind themselves while they walk, then? (하든 뒤를 보고 걷기도 한당가요?)"⁶⁹ Her wordplay provokes laughter by thwarting Pyŏn's ploy to deceive her with flashy speech.

The vulgar expressions frequently used by several supporting characters, such as Wŏlmae and Pangja, are also an important element of humor. For example, Wŏlmae calls Ch'unhyang and Hyangdan "*gŏt* (것)," Pangja calls Mongnyong "*saekki* (새끼)," and they both call things "*nom* (놈)." These expressions are not of hostility or aggression, but rather evidence of their

⁶⁴ "Sinjong *kye*," 3.

⁶⁵ "Onŭl ŭi Tonga Pangsong," *Tonga ilbo*, July 2, 1965, 4.

⁶⁶ *Obal Ch'unhyangjŏn*, episode 1. Translation by the author.

⁶⁷ *Sŏul Ch'unhyangjŏn*, episode 144. Translation by the author.

⁶⁸ *Obal Ch'unhyangjŏn*, episode 102, directed by Sim Yŏngsik, written by Yi Yongch'an, aired February 19, 1965, on DBS. Translation by the author.

⁶⁹ *Obal Ch'unhyangjŏn*, episode 102. Translation by the author.

unaffected personalities and sources of amusement. In addition, the Chöllado dialect of Wölmae, Hyangdan, and Pak and P'yöngando dialect of Pangja soften the dialogue and bring liveliness to the drama, doubling the humorous effect. In this way, *Obal Ch'unhyangjön* and *Söul Ch'unhyangjön* both caused their audience quite a bit of amusement through the variety of humor techniques they used to satirize South Korean society of the 1960s.

Ch'unhyang Reborn as a South Korean Woman of the 1960s

Obal Ch'unhyangjön and *Söul Ch'unhyangjön* satirized the reality of the money-dominated South Korean society of the 1960s. However, the ultimate purpose of these dramas was not to reveal the darkness of reality but to provide hope that it was possible to overcome this darkness. Just as the classic *Ch'unhyangjön* tells the story of a brave woman who overcomes her humble status and achieves her dream in the caste-based society of the late Chosön dynasty, *Obal Ch'unhyangjön* and *Söul Ch'unhyangjön* tell the story of a brave woman who overcomes an adverse environment and achieves her dream in the capitalist society of South Korea in the 1960s. This Ch'unhyang is raised by a single mother who runs a small liquor store in the countryside. However, she overcomes prejudice and discrimination and marries an intelligent, upper-class young man from Seoul. In this respect, her story is not very different from that of the classic Ch'unhyang.

Nonetheless, the heroine of *Obal Ch'unhyangjön* and *Söul Ch'unhyangjön* is not a replica of the classic Ch'unhyang. The distance between the two versions of Ch'unhyang is most evident in the differences in their beauty. The classic Ch'unhyang is a natural beauty. In the 84-sheet version of *Yölyö Ch'unhyang sujölga* (烈女春香守節歌), Mongnyong calls Ch'unhyang to Kwanghallu (廣寒樓) to get a closer look at her and admires her unadorned natural beauty. He praises her by saying, "Your face and your attitude are not of a worldly person (네 얼굴 네 태도는 세상 인물 아니로다)," comparing her to a *sönnnyö* (仙女, Taoist fairy).⁷⁰ In the *Ch'unhyangjön* texts of the late Chosön dynasty, Ch'unhyang is always compared to a *sönnnyö*. This idiomatic expression attaches mystery to her beautiful appearance. In short, the beauty of Ch'unhyang in the classic *Ch'unhyangjön* is innate, natural, and special.

In contrast, the beauty of Ch'unhyang in *Obal Ch'unhyangjön* and *Söul Ch'unhyangjön* is artificial.

Wölmae: "Ah! I wish my Ch'unhyang would eat so much."

Ch'unhyang: "Oh, Mother! Eating makes you gain weight. I would rather die than become fat."

Wölmae: "Oh, that's nonsense. When I was young, it was my wish to gain weight."

Ch'unhyang: "These days, you must be skinny to be beautiful."

Wölmae: "You don't need to be. You are a matchless beauty without any flaws because

⁷⁰ Chöng Hayöng, *Ch'unhyangjön*, 115. Translation by the author.

this Wŏlmae gave birth to you.”

(...)

Wŏlmae: “Ah, so you paint your nails with a glossy, glossy red color?”⁷¹

월매: 아이, 야! 우리 춘향이가 고로콤 좀 먹어줬으면 한이 없겠구먼!

춘향: 아이, 어머니! 밥 많이 먹으면 살이 쪼요. 똥똥보가 되는 건 난 죽기보다도 싫은데.

월매: 아이고, 이 말 좀 들어보소. 이. 우리 소싯적엔 살 좀 쪼보고 싶은 것이 소원들이었는디.

춘향: 요샌 훌쩍해야 미인이예요.

월매: 글 안해도 넌 인물이여. 나무랄 데 없는 천하일색이란 말이여. 이 월매가 뽑아놓은 귀동팔인디.

(...)

월매: 아, 그래서 너 손톱에 한낱 삐알간 빛깔을 번들번들 칠하고?

Here, Wŏlmae says that Ch'unhyang is a matchless beauty because she gave birth to her. However, Ch'unhyang does not entirely inherit her beauty from her mother. Unsatisfied with her natural appearance, she diets and paints her nails to align with the standards of beauty in South Korea in the 1960s. Unlike the beauty of the classic Ch'unhyang, her beauty can only be obtained and maintained through constant effort.

This Ch'unhyang reflects South Korean society's perception of the female body. During the Chosŏn dynasty, the body was understood as an expression of the mind in step with Confucianism, and it was valued as an object of *ye* (禮, propriety) and *sŏn* (善, goodness). As a result, women were required to be clean and modest and were discouraged from using make up or other forms of adornment.⁷² However, in post-war South Korean society, the female body came to be seen as an object of sexual desire or a product. This led to increased demand for and interest in the beautiful female body. The Miss Korea contest has been held annually in South Korea since 1957, and in the 1960s, beauty contests such as this attracted great public interest. These contests defined the beautiful female body according to Western standards. Such standards, which included ideal height, weight, and chest and waist measurements, prompted many women to focus considerable effort on attaining the perfect appearance, and this trend spread quickly with the development of mass media. In the 1960s, women's magazines in South Korea drove this obsession with a “body to show” and frequently published tips to help women make themselves more beautiful.⁷³

The character of Ch'unhyang in the radio dramas is not, however, merely a critical reflection of South Korean society consuming women's bodies and the obsession with a “body to show.” She is also someone who possesses the will to overcome the unfavorable environment she was born into. The classic Ch'unhyang was born to a *keisaeng* but refused to become one herself. Instead, she became a *yŏjung gunja* (女中君子, a woman of virtue) by

⁷¹ *Obal Ch'unhyangjŏn*, episode 1. Translation by the author.

⁷² Kwŏn Sunhyŏng et al., comps., *“Mom” ūro pon Han'guk yŏsŏngsa* (Sŏul: Kyŏngin Munhwasa, 2011), 231–32, 243–45.

⁷³ Kwŏn et al., *“Mom” ūro pon Han'guk yŏsŏngsa*, 321–26.

demonstrating the Confucian virtues and erudition that were praised by Chosŏn society. She also refused to settle for being the wife of a man of an equivalent rank and sought to become the wife of a *yangban* (兩班).⁷⁴ Similarly, Ch'unhyang in the radio dramas, a provincial girl raised by a single mother, aspires to becoming a woman suitable for an "intelligent young man from Seoul"⁷⁵ and works on developing a beautiful appearance and cultured attitude to achieve this. She is not simply a foolish young woman who is overly preoccupied with her appearance.

Hyangdan: "Anyway, the side dishes are so bland that I can't eat anymore. Aunt, we've been looking at the salted dry fish hanging over there long enough. Let's eat it now!"
 Wölmae: "Oh, it's too salty. It's saltier than salt."
 Hyangdan: "It's okay. I love salty side dishes!"
 Wölmae: "Ch'unhyang, do you want to eat it?"
 Ch'unhyang: "No. Eating really salty food raises your blood pressure. Salt is the worst."
 Hyangdan: "I don't care about that, Aunt."⁷⁶

향단: 아, 그리고 저리고, 반찬 싱거워서 인제 더 못 먹겠다. 아주머니, 저기 대롱대롱 매달아놓은 자반 그만큼 봤으니깐 그만 먹어 치웁시다요!
 월매: 아유, 너무 짜, 야. 소금보다두 더 짠디.
 향단: 괜찮아요, 난. 난 짠 반찬이 좋더라!
 월매: 춘향이 넌 먹을라냐?
 춘향: 아뇨, 너무 짠 걸 먹으면 혈압이 오른대요. 염분이 제일 나쁘대.
 향단: 전 그런 거 상관 안 할래요, 아주머니.

In this episode of *Obal Ch'unhyangjŏn*, Ch'unhyang is careful about what she eats in order to protect her appearance and health. Hyangdan begs Wölmae for salted dry fish, which is expensive. Wölmae, who is quite miserly, will not give Hyangdan the whole fish and asks Ch'unhyang if she wants to eat it. However, Ch'unhyang declines and says that eating salty food raises your blood pressure. This suggests that Ch'unhyang is a cultured woman who possesses sound general knowledge and applies it to her own life. Conversely, Hyangdan cannot control her appetite and insists on eating the salted dry fish, even after hearing Ch'unhyang's warning. Hyangdan's instinctive attitude contrasts with Ch'unhyang's cultured attitude. Their accents also contrast. Hyangdan tends to speak in a Chŏllado dialect, while Ch'unhyang consistently uses standard language.

Ch'unhyang's cultured attitude is further highlighted in the following scene in which she talks with Mongnyong.

⁷⁴ Yi Yujin, "P'ansori e tamgin ch'ŏrhakchök murŏm tŭl kwa haedap tŭl," *Kubimunhak yŏn'gu* 37 (December 2013): 8–10.

⁷⁵ "Onŭl ŭi Tonga Pangsŏng," *Tonga ilbo*, October 2, 1964, 4.

⁷⁶ *Obal Ch'unhyangjŏn*, episode 1. Translation by the author.

Mongnyong: “Anyway, don’t you feel good?”
 Ch’unhyang: “Yes. I feel okay. But isn’t the boy from the Onsujang pitiful? We could have gone there.”
 Mongnyong: “It wouldn’t be bad. But I’m disgusted with the mind of a thief who cleverly presents his hotel as a more famous one.”
 Ch’unhyang: “Why didn’t our hotel send anyone to meet us?”
 Mongnyong: “I’ve discovered they were late.”
 Ch’unhyang: “Maybe they’re too confident to care about pleasing us? The one who steals is bad, but the one who is robbed is not necessarily good either.”
 Mongnyong: “Yeah, you’re right.”⁷⁷

몽룡: 아무튼, 기분 좋지?
 춘향: 네. 기분은 좋은데, 아까 그 온수장이라는 데서 나온 사람 좀 안 됐죠? 그리 가 줄 걸 그랬나.
 몽룡: 한번 가 봐도 좋지만 말이야. 고 소갈머리가 말이야, 저희보다 좀 이름이 나 있는 호텔을 어물쩍 그 교묘하게 가장하려는 그 도둑놈 근성 같은 소갈머리가 꽤 씹해서.
 춘향: 이 호텔에선 왜 손님 마중을 안 나왔을까?
 몽룡: 알아보니까 좀 늦었다는군.
 춘향: 자신이 있어서 그랬나? 도둑질이라든가 못된 짓 하는 쪽도 하는 쪽이지만, 당하는 쪽도 좋진 않아.
 몽룡: 하긴, 그렇지만.

This excerpt is from Episode 144 of *Sŏul Ch'unhyangjŏn*, in which Ch'unhyang and Mongnyong go to a hot spring on their honeymoon. As soon as they get off at the train station, they meet a boy they believe is from their hotel and get into his car to go there. However, the car goes to the Onsujang (溫水莊, Hot water hotel) and not the famous tourist hotel they had booked. Realizing that the boy has tricked them, Mongnyong yells at him and tells him to turn the car around and go to the “real tourist hotel.” After arriving at the tourist hotel, Ch'unhyang sympathizes with the boy and expresses her regret for not going to the Onsujang. Unable to tolerate injustice, Mongnyong criticizes the Onsujang for pretending to be the famous tourist hotel. However, Ch'unhyang disagrees and points out that the tourist hotel is at fault for not meeting them on time. In the end, Mongnyong agrees with Ch'unhyang that while someone who comes early and steals someone else’s customers is bad, the one who comes late and lets others steal his or her customers is also not good. Mongnyong’s view on the incident is very much black and white. However, Ch'unhyang looks at the incident from multiple perspectives and discerns the truth.

The fact that Ch'unhyang expresses her opinion so confidently here marks her as the epitome of a cultured, new-generation woman. Her husband, who became a newspaper reporter after passing the bar exam, is unquestionably an intellectual, as in South Korea in the

⁷⁷ *Sŏul Ch'unhyangjŏn*, episode 144. Translation by the author.

1960s, newspaper reporters were “enlighteners” who suggested the way forward for society and taught the public.⁷⁸ However, here, Ch’unhyang challenges him on his observations and in fact changes his perspective on the incident. After the April 19 Revolution in South Korea in 1960, there were active discussions on women’s political and social responsibilities. In this respect, being cultured was seen as the duty of new-generation women, and uncultured women from previous generations became the object of criticism. In addition, after the May 16 Military Coup in 1961, the government emphasized the importance of women contributing to the development of the nation as mothers, the main pillars of the family.⁷⁹ Ch’unhyang represents this ideal woman of the time.

In this environment, Mongnyong’s parents are able to accept Ch’unhyang as their daughter-in-law, even though she is a provincial woman raised by a single mother.⁸⁰ In the 1960s, South Koreans placed significant value on culture—as well as health and personality—when choosing a daughter-in-law.⁸¹ Given Wölmae’s economic situation and her deep love for her only daughter, it is presumed that Ch’unhyang is a high school graduate. At the time, a high school graduate fit an important criterion for being an upper-class daughter-in-law in South Korea. However, what makes her a truly cultured woman is not her educational background but her ability to construct and put forward sound views on a range of issues. Here, she echoes the classic Ch’unhyang, who established her own views based on Confucian teachings and practiced these in her life. In resisting Governor Pyön, she focuses not on the Confucian virtue of *chöngjöl* (貞節, fidelity) itself but on the fact that she has the right to pursue Confucian virtues as he does.

One difference between the two versions of Ch’unhyang, however, is in their capacity for autonomous action. In the classic *Ch’unhyangjön*, Pyön has Ch’unhyang flogged and imprisoned for disobeying him. While waiting for her death, she is then rescued by Mongnyong, who appears just in time. She then becomes his legal wife by order of the king. In contrast, the heroine of the radio dramas escapes Pyön’s machinations herself and subsequently, obtains approval to marry Mongnyong directly from his parents. Compared to the classic Ch’unhyang, who is granted the right to marry Mongnyong as a reward for sacrificing her life to maintain her fidelity, the modern Ch’unhyang is much more confident and independent.

The modern Ch’unhyang was able to exercise this autonomy because of the changes in South Korean society in the 1960s. Although the society was still characterized by an unequal class system based on money, significant economic imbalances between Seoul and the

⁷⁸ Kang Myöngku, “Hunmin kwa kyemong: Han’guk chönöllijüm ün wae aegukchök in’ga,” *Chösüt’isü* 134, no. 2 (February 2013): 515–16.

⁷⁹ Kim Poksun, “Chönhu yösöng kyoyang üi chaebaech’i wa chendö chöngch’i,” *Yösöng munhak yön’gu* 18 (December 2007): 38–41.

⁸⁰ *Obal Ch’unhyangjön*, episode 143.

⁸¹ Kim Poksun, “Chönhu yösöng kyoyang üi chaebaech’i wa chendö chöngch’i,” 41.

provinces,⁸² and severe discrimination against women,⁸³ educated women had opportunities. In this respect, the happiness that the modern Ch'unhyang achieves provides hope that dreams can be realized.

Conclusion

From its foundation in 1963, DBS, with its strong motivation to innovate in Korean broadcasting culture, developed new radio drama formats and promoted the diversification of radio drama materials and genres. *Obal Ch'unhyangjŏn* and *Sŏul Ch'unhyangjŏn* emerged from this pioneering spirit. According to Yi Yongch'an, until that time, no modern dramatization of *Ch'unhyangjŏn* had been attempted in any field.⁸⁴ While retaining the narrative structure of the classic *Ch'unhyangjŏn*, Yi moved the historical background of the work to the 1960s in an attempt to satirize a South Korean society that had become dominated by money. He then reimagined Ch'unhyang to present hope that this reality could be overcome.

Obal Ch'unhyangjŏn and *Sŏul Ch'unhyangjŏn* were important not only because they were the first modern dramatizations of *Ch'unhyangjŏn*, but also because they struck a chord with the contemporary public by reinterpreting the classic literary work from a modern perspective. Considering the pervasive influence of radio in South Korea at the time, these dramas likely had a far-reaching impact. This study prompts further exploration into the lasting impact and legacy of these radio dramas.

⁸² According to statistics released by the Bank of Korea in 1965, per capita income in Seoul was 19,279 won in 1960, more than twice the national average of 8,308 won. By contrast, Gangwon-do's per capita income, the second highest after Seoul, was 8,278 won, which was lower than the national average. "Uri nara ū pinbu," *Tonga ilbo*, July 24, 1965, 2.

⁸³ In the 1960s, many provincial women moved to Seoul to earn money, but most of them found only precarious jobs, were paid less than men, and often experienced human rights violations in the workplace. Kim Chŏnghwa, "1960 nyŏndae yŏsŏng nodong: Singmo wa pŏsŭ annaeyang ūl chungsim ūro," *Yŏksa yŏn'gu* 11 (December 2002): 81–107.

⁸⁴ Yi Yongch'an, "Tonga Pangsŏng kwa na," 399.

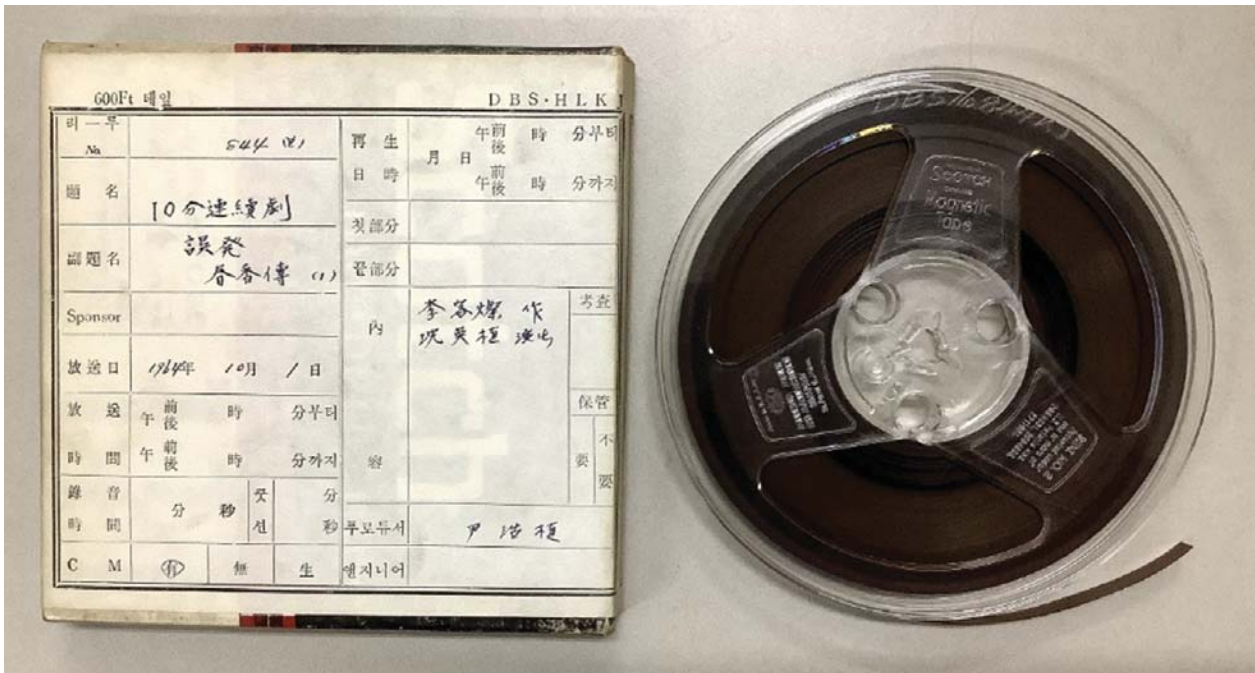


Figure 1: An original recording of Episode 1 of *Obal Ch'unhyangjŏn* (Photo: Yi Ch'aeyŏng, 2021).

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