

CLASSIC KOREAN TALES

With Commentaries

by Choe, Key-sook

£18.99
softcover

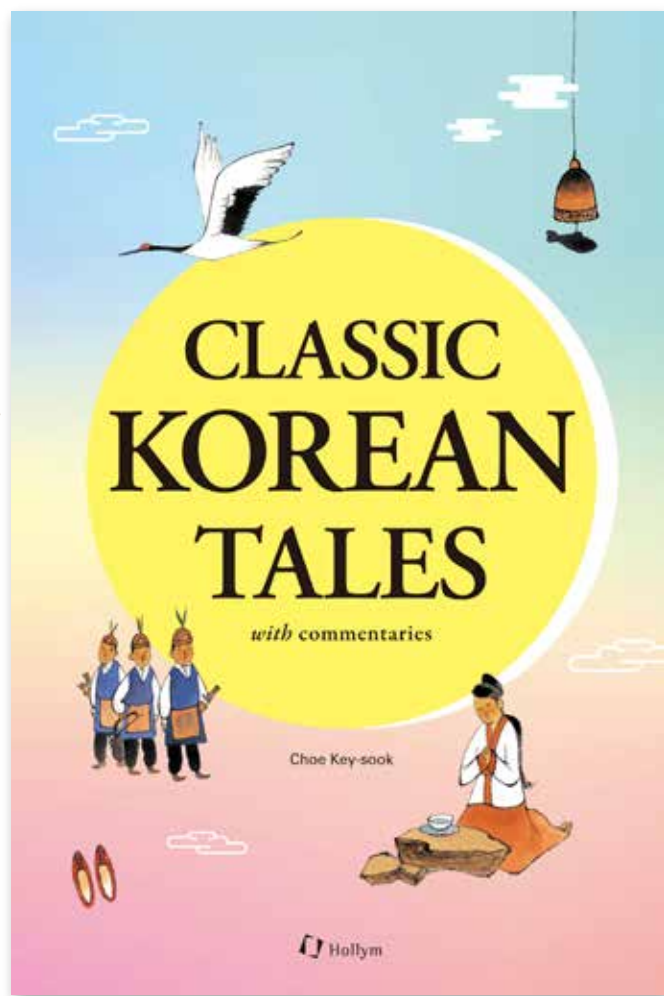
240 pages; 210 x 140mm
41 colour illustrations | 40 colour photos
isbn 978-1-56591-489-6

August 2018

published by
 **Hollym**

Represented by

 **Kodansha Europe Ltd.**
info@kodansha.eu / www.kodansha.eu



A Way of Communicating with Time: The World of Classical Imagination

A book can provide you with a sense of direction. It can contain your dreams and hopes, and provide you with a sense of yourself. However, someone else has written the books that you have selected. How is it possible that reading a book becomes an opportunity to meet yourself and becomes a way to gain insight into how to live your life? The book you are reading is not one you have written, but you are the one who reads and understands the story, becomes moved, gains wisdom, or falls into deep contemplation. If you become curious about the behaviour of main characters and share their sorrows and pleasures while reading a book, you walk on the same path as the writer and swim in the same sea of feelings. The sense of empathy you develop while reading is similar to the feeling you get while listening to music you like; you nod or shake your shoulders and move your feet to the rhythm and feel that you have become one with the player.

The story world that you newly encounter through reading sometimes plays an important role in your life. When you feel that the main character is similar to you or is someone you are afraid of or dislike, it means that you are finding yourself in the book; furthermore, you are coming to understand humans as they are. In this respect, reading is not only a pleasant journey in which you discover yourself, but it can also be a chapter in which you learn about things in life that are difficult, but that you need to know. While trying to assimilate a story world or understand it, you decide your attitude toward life and what kind of person you want to be. In that sense, reading is not only a discovery of self, but also a precious experience that forms your future.

The olden days captured in the classics have disappeared in the flow of time, but in these stories, the dreams and hopes, worries and sadness, pleasure and joy of people from that time remain. A lonely boy becomes a hero who establishes a nation; a daughter who is abandoned becomes a goddess who manages death; a wife and husband, both ordinary people, become a queen and king in a foreign country or the gods of a country. These stories show you that if people take advantage of their merits and use their strength in support of others, they can accomplish wonderful things and gain happiness: even if they possessed nothing special. The reason that the classics survive for so long and still move the people who read them is that the thoughts and feelings in these stories are universal and precious.

What brings classics alive is the readers' empathy. The world of classics —both interesting and mysterious— also contains the dreams and hopes of contemporary people. Even though the past has disappeared, you are encountering the dreams and aspirations of people from ancient times as you read and fall into the world of these stories. Reading the classics is similar to the experience of

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communicating across time. If the world that came from people's imagination in the old days is not different from your world of imagination, you will discover that some aspects of people and life are constant over time. If you find that people these days behave differently than people in the old days, you will come to realize that some aspects of humanity change over the flow of time and you will experience that change. You will discover the elements that should not change over time and also what should not be missed in the flow of historical change. If this book can show you how to time travel and the way the world flows becomes clearer and appears more virtuous to you, I believe this will bring great intellectual reward.

(paraphrased from the author's Preface)



KEY FEATURES

- To describe this book as a collection of classic folk tales would be to grossly misrepresent and under-value it. It is a literary work by an academic which sets out to define the genres, exemplify each, contextualise, characterise, explain.. and demonstrate the shared values and relevance to contemporary life.
- The genres within 'Classic Tales' are defined by the author as *Narratives About Origin and the World of Myths, Stories of Love and Marriage, Beautiful Person: Beautiful Mind, The World of Fantasy*.
- Each genre is exemplified by 2 or 3 complete tales, illustrated by beautiful watercolours by Lee, Hyun-a. Each story is followed by illustrated *Commentaries*, in which the author interprets the substance and motifs of the story and its parallels today.



An Associate Professor in the Institute of Korean Studies at Yonsei University, **Dr. Key-sook Choe's** main research fields include Korean classical narrative, Korean printed media during the early modern period, gender studies, and affective studies. She received her Ph.D. from Yonsei University, where she specialised in Korean classical literature. Her books include *Cheonyeo-gwisin* (Female Ghosts), 2013; *Joseon sidae Eorini Inmunhak* (Humanities for Children in the Joseon Period), 2013; and *Hwansang* (The Fantastic in Literature), 2003. Collaborations include *Jipdan Gamseong-ui Gyeobo* (A History of Collective Affects), 2017; *Bonjour Pansori!* (in French), 2017; *Gamseong Sahoe* (Affective Society), 2014; and *Gamjeong-eui Inmunhak* (Humanities of Emotions), 2013.

this is a book which offers A RARE INSIGHT into the KOREAN PSYCHE

