

# **Cultural Assimilation and the Cross-National Marriage Ethics in Korea under Japanese Rule: The Transformation of the Fable “The Wedding of the Mouse” in East Asia**

**HyoSun Kim**

The Global Institute for Japanese Studies, Korea University  
Inchon-ro 108, Seongbuk-gu, Seoul, Korea  
Email: uzzanzi@korea.ac.kr

**KaHye Lee**

The Global Institute for Japanese Studies, Korea University  
Inchon-ro 108, Seongbuk-gu, Seoul, Korea  
Email: hirahira8763@daum.net

**Abstract** Japanese translations of Korean literature during the Japanese occupation established the foundations for the translation of Korean literature into other languages, and reflected the political dynamics and colonial agenda in Korea at the time, thereby illustrating the political aspects or dimensions of this body of literature. The objective of this study is to show how traditional Korean ethical imperatives, which are on display in Korean literature, were transformed in the process of the translation of this literature into Japanese. This goal will be approached through a focus on the fable “The Wedding of the Mouse” which originated in India and spread to East Asia and Europe. The original Indian version of “The Wedding of the Mouse” concerns a mouse who seeks a spouse, and it conveys the message that one’s nature does not change. In China, this theme was transformed into the teaching that one should know one’s place, and in Korea, into a moral criticism of the vanity of parents in their seeking of higher status through their children’s marriage.

In the 1920s, Korean literary works were translated into Japanese within the framework of the cultural policies of the ruling Japanese, and Korean-Japanese marriage was promoted in light of the cultural assimilation policy of the era. In such a context, marriage in the Japanese translations of “The Wedding of the Mouse” is

positively portrayed as a process of self-discovery, in light of which these versions also critique in-group marriage and concubinage. This theme resonated with the self-perceived essence of colonialism, through which one nationality sought to expand beyond its own boundaries and to explore new territories with a sense of conviction and adventure, and an eye on the future. This suggests that translations of “The Wedding of the Mouse” during the period of Japanese colonialism served as a tool to accomplish political rule through cultural assimilation.

**Key words** Korea under Japanese rule; cultural assimilation; Japanese translation; “The Wedding of the Mouse”

**Authors** **HyoSun Kim**, Korea University, Professor in The Global Japan Research Center, specialist in Japanese literature and translation in the colonial period. **KaHye Lee**, Korea University, Part-time Lecturer in Institute of Foreign Language Studies, specialist in Japanese literature in the colonial period

## Introduction

In Korea under Japanese rule, various strands of Japanese literature were produced and distributed, including Japanese translations of Korean literary works. These were of great significance in that they reflected changes in the colonial policies and in the Korea-Japan relations of the era, illustrated the political aspects of this body of literature and translation, established the foundations of translations of traditional Korean literature into other languages and influenced the development of modern Korean literature. Through a focus on the fable of “The Wedding of the Mouse,” this paper examines the attempted transformation of Korean social mores in the process of translating Korean literary works into Japanese in the colonial period.

The story “The Wedding of the Mouse” is a piece of folklore that is widespread throughout the world. It originates in the *Panchatantra*, an ancient Indian collection of animal fables dating from the 2nd century BC. Travelers spread the story to Persia, the Arab world, Greece and Europe, and it was further disseminated to East Asian countries such as China, Korea and Japan, accompanied by the spread of Buddhism. As a consequence of its long process of transmission by different agents to different regions, various versions of the story took root in diverse times and places. Most preceding studies on this fable have adopted a cultural-

historical perspective in order to link it to the Chinese Zodiac,<sup>1</sup> or have focused on comparative analyses of the Korean and Chinese versions. Induk-Huang, for instance, analyzed the process of transmission and transformation of the tale in China and Korea, pointing out that in Korea the mouse was replaced by the mole to reflect the fauna of Korea,<sup>2</sup> and Park showed in his analysis of *Tai-ping-guang-ji* (太平廣記) and *The Collection of Chinese Folktales* (中國民間古事集成) that the fable of the mouse “contributed to heightening the artistic standards of Chinese literature by enriching and diversifying it,” embodying as it did a piece of “folk literature that contains the rich emotions of commoners in China, reflecting their daily lives and customs” (108).<sup>3</sup> There is however a dearth of academic work on its Japanese adaptations. Gyun Tae Kim for example remarked that “The tale of the mouse wedding” “spread widely and is to be found not only in Korea but also in China and India,” continuing that he had found “no Japanese version yet, although it is likely to be found in Japan as well” (10). On the other hand, the tale is often misrepresented as a Japanese folktale, as exemplified by *The Wedding of the Mouse — A Japanese Folktale* translated by Jeong Im Park, from *The Wedding of the Mouse — A Japanese Folktale* (ねずみのよめいり 日本昔話) (くもん出版、2007年) by Toshio Ozawa (小澤俊夫) and Etsuko Kanaida (金井田英津子). In order to resolve this confusion, the topic should be approached by means of an investigation of its cultural transmission and adaptation in East Asia. With this impetus, this study will employ the integrative methodology of “Border Crossings” (跨境), which “attempts to reach beyond boundaries without disregarding the idiosyncratic circumstances” (5)<sup>4</sup> of diverse regions, to investigate how “The Wedding of the Mouse” was transmitted to East Asia and how its ethical underpinnings were transformed in the process.

1 For example, EuiSuk Kim, *Folklore and Symbolism of the 12 Zodiac Signs — The Mouse*. Seoul:National Archives of Korea Studies, 1997; YeongSuk Song, “A Comparative Study of Japanese 12 Zodiac Stories” (I,II), *Japanese Education /Japanese Literature*. Vol. 46. and Vol.39 (2008):369-389; HoeSeok Yang, “The Zodiac and Mouse Tales,” *Chinese Literature* Vol. 65 (2010):49-66, etc.

2 In Deok Hwang, “A Cross-national Analysis of ‘Mole Marriage’ Stories in India, China, and Korea” *The Research of Language And Literature*.

3 KyongRyong Park, *A Study of Chinese Mouse Tales — A Comparison between Written and Oral Forms*, Master’s thesis PhM dissertation, Jeonbuk University, 2015.1-137; also falls into this category is SanYeom Mang, *A Comparative Study of “Mouse Marriage” Tales in Korea and China*, PhD dissertation, Hannam University, 2013.

4 See *Border Crossings: The Journal of Japanese-Language Literature Studies*. Vol. 1 (June 2015):1-295.

To this end, we will first examine the process by which the story was transformed as it was disseminated to China, Korea and Japan, and how the ethical implications of the search for a spouse were altered in this process. To this end, this essay employs Imamura Tomo's translation of the tale to examine how the Korean value system was transformed in the process of the translation of the Korean versions of the tale into Japanese.

### **The Origin of "The Wedding of the Mouse" and Its Transmission to East Asia**

"The Wedding of the Mouse" originated in the Panchatantra fable, "The Mouse Maid." The authorship of the collection of fables *Panchatantra* is attributed to Vishnu Sharma, a Brahman pandit. In the prelude to the Panchatanta, King Sudarshan despairs of his three sons' inability to learn and he invites Vishnu Sharma to the court to teach them. Sharma accepts the task of making the princes wise within six months and tells them a succession of animal fables, which became the *Panchatantra*.<sup>1</sup>

"The Mouse Maid" is in the volume *Of Crows and Owls*, the third of five books that form the *Panchatantra*. In the frame story, the owl king kills most of the crows, and one crow, alarmed at the loss of his murder, defects to the owl kingdom. The owls debate whether to trust the crow and one owl minister tells the story of "The Mouse Maid" to illustrate that his nature as a crow will remain unchanged. The following is a summary of the story.

1. Once there was a beautiful Hindu hermitage on the bank of river Ganga.
2. As a sage from the hermitage was bathing and praying in the river, a mouse dropped onto his palm from the claws of a kite in the sky.
3. He transformed the mouse into a little girl and brought her to the hermitage to raise her with his wife.
4. When the daughter turned 12, the couple started to discuss finding her a good husband.
5. The sage summoned the Sun to match him with his daughter, but the daughter said that the Sun was too hot for her.
6. When asked who would be a better suitor, the Sun recommended the God of Clouds.
7. They invited the God of Clouds to meet the daughter but she rejected him for being too cold and dark.
8. The God of Clouds suggested the God of Wind as a better candidate.

---

1 Translated by SooIn Seo. *Pachatantra* (Seoul: Taeil Press, 1996): 1-438.

9.The God of Wind arrived at their home and the daughter turned him down for being too whimsical.

10.The God of Wind recommended the God of Mountains as her husband.

11.They invited the God of Mountains, but the daughter did not like him because he was too hard and heavy.

12.When the God of Mountains recommended a mouse as the most suitable candidate, they invited the King of Mice. The daughter liked him very much and asked the sage to turn her into a mouse so that she could marry him.

13. Using his spiritual power, the sage turned her into a mouse and gave her hand in marriage to the King of Mice.

As seen above, the original fable “The Mouse Maid” has a Hindu religious background and features the element of transformation. In the search for a spouse the daughter is an active agent who attends to her own instincts throughout the selection process of a groom. The ultimate moral of the story is that one’s nature does not change.

There are two distinct forms of Chinese adaptation of “The Wedding of the Mouse.” The first is the group of adaptations that maintains the characteristics of the Indian fable, and the other is comprised of the versions that became indigenous to China and displays little trace of the original story. An example of the former is presented below.

1.A hermit rescues a young mouse from the talons of a hawk.

2.Using his mystical power, he transforms the mouse into a girl.

3.The mouse enters adulthood and the hermit tries to find her a promising husband.

4.The hermit invites the Sun, the Dark Clouds, the Strong Winds, the Himalayas and the Mouse one after another, and the mouse eventually turns out to be the most suitable candidate.

5. The hermit turns the girl back into a mouse and sends her to the mouse burrow.<sup>1</sup>

The element of transformation in the original story is preserved in this version. However, differences can be found in that the Hindu monk in the original is

1 Liu YuanQing (劉元卿). “The Marriage of the Mouse Daughter (老鼠嫁女).” Edited by Liu ShouHua (劉守華), *Research on the Types of Chinese Folk Tale* (Wuhan: Central China Normal University Press, 2002): 66-75.

replaced by the Taoist hermit and the mountain range is specified as the Himalayas. In contrast, a multitude of versions are completely divorced from the Indian version and incorporate elements indigenous to China. Examples of the more indigenous variants can be found in *The Collection of Chinese Folktales* (中國民間故事集成) (1984-1990). This volume documents 1,840,000 regional folktales that have been passed down from ancient to modern times, 86 of which are mouse tales. Among those, 12 stories have the theme of a wedding, as follows: “The Wedding of the Mouse Daughter (鼠女出嫁),” “The Marriage of the Mouse Daughter (老鼠子嫁姑娘),” “The Mouse Wants to Get Married (老鼠攀親),” “The Wedding of the Mouse Son (老鼠娶親),” “The Marriage of the Mouse Girl (老鼠嫁女: 河北),” “The Marriage of the Mouse Girl (老鼠嫁女: 湖南),” “The Mouse and His Daughter’s Marriage (子耗嫁姑娘: 貴州),” “The Marriage of the Mouse Daughter (耗子嫁女: 遙寧),” “The Marriage of the Mouse Daughter (老鼠嫁女: 安徽),” “The Marriage of the Mouse Daughter (老鼠嫁女: 黑龍江),” “The Mouse and His Daughter’s Marriage (老鼠嫁女: 浙江),” “The Marriage of the Mouse Daughter (耗子嫁女: 四川).”

These versions further diverge into two categories. One is comprised of a group of stories such as “The Marriage of the Mouse Daughter (鼠女出嫁: 山東),” in which the mouse becomes overly grasping, marries a cat and eventually causes everyone to be eaten by the cat, which is summarized below.

1. The mouse, the mother of four sons and a daughter, looks for a spouse for her daughter.
2. A blowfly introduces them to a potential groom, who it transpires is a cat.
3. All the mother’s five children are eaten by the cat.

The other type of stories maintain the original plot of the mouse assessing potential grooms and marrying a mouse in the end. The following is an example of such stories.

1. An old man saved a mouse in trouble.
2. The mouse wanted to become a daughter of the old man and he turned the mouse into a girl with magical power.
3. The old man realized how beautiful she was and started looking for a son-in-law with power and status.
4. The old man visited the Sun, the Clouds, the Wind and the Wall to see if

they would suit her, but chose a mouse in the end.

As seen above, this version shares a plot with the Indian version, where the mouse is transformed into a human but marries her own kind in the end, but here the theme becomes the importance of knowing one's place. The parents make decisions for the daughter's marriage in Chinese versions such as this of the story. This element reflects the conventions of Chinese feudal society which dictated a strict hierarchy of social classes and the primacy of parents in the arrangement of marriages. The characteristic moral of the stories is that one should know one's place and refrain from being greedy.

In Korea, versions of "The Wedding of the Mouse" can be found with different titles in various books such as "The Wedding of the Mole" in *The Essays of Hyobin* (效嘸雜記), "The Wedding of the Mole" in *The Historical Story of Eou* (於于野談), "The Wedding of the Mole (鼯鼠婚)" in *Soono-Ji* (旬五志) by Hong-Manjong, "The Marriage of the Mouse and the Mole" in The Korea Institute of Mental Culture's *The Korea Folklore Encyclopedia*, "Finding the Mole's Husband" in *The Korea Folklore Encyclopedia*, "The Wedding of the Mole", and in "The Wedding of the Mouse" in Seong-Giyeol's *The World of the Korean Folk Tale*. The two following versions are representative Korean adaptations of the story.

The first is contained in *The Essays of Hyobin*, the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> volumes of *The Collection of TaeChon* (泰村集) by San An GO (高尚顔, 1553-1623), and which contains the unofficial histories, anecdotes and fables of China and Korea. "The Wedding of the Mole" in this collection can be summarized as follows:

1. A mole has a beautiful daughter and thinks that nobody on earth seems to be an appropriate husband for her.

2. The mole asks the Sun to marry her, but the Sun thinks that the Moon will be a better match, for his light is brighter in the night.

3. The Moon declines and gives the opportunity to the Clouds, who can cover his light.

4. The Clouds yield to the Winds, who can blow them adrift.

5. The Winds yield to the stone statue of Buddha, who they can never blow away.

6. The statue yields to the mole, who can dig underneath him and fell him.

7. In the end, the daughter marries the mole.

8. The idiomatic phrase "the mole's marriage" is used to describe a situation in which one has high expectations but eventually chooses the most

natural option.

This version lacks the element of transformation whereby a mouse turns into a human, and features a stone statue of Buddha in place of the mountains or the wall in the Indian and the Chinese versions, in this way incorporating a Buddhist dimension. The daughter does not play an active role in choosing her husband. Instead, her parents look for plausible candidates and the Sun, the Moon, the Clouds and the Wind themselves make judgements about who will be the best suitor for her. The story shows how the daughter finds her place, and it teaches the concrete and practical lesson that one should marry someone of the same status, unlike the original moral of the fable which ordains that one's true character does not change.

Another notable version is "The Wedding of the Mole" in *The Historical Story of Eou*. It is the first published collection of Korean folktales, written by the scholar MongIn Yu ( 柳夢寅, 1559-1623) in the mid-Joseon Period. It contains stories with a wide range of themes including the meaning of life, the role of literature, the status of dreams, the reality of ghosts, the centrality of folk customs, and the prevalence of sex. It also features various social classes from the royal family to the commoners and the merchants, evincing the author's criticism of society, which is conveyed through his satirical sense of humor. "The Wedding of the Mole," described below, is no exception in its display of a critical attitude.

1. The mole parents decide their son should marry the noblest entity in the universe.
2. They think that the Sky is ideal, but the Sky finds the Clouds better, for the Clouds can cover the Sky.
3. The Clouds believe the Winds to be better suited, for the Winds can blow the Clouds away.
4. The Winds find the Buddha statue in Gwacheon better, because the statue can never be blown away.
5. The statue finds the mole better, for the mole can fell the statue by digging beneath it.
6. They conclude that moles themselves are the noblest of all and the son marries another mole.

This version displays the influence of Buddhism in that it replaces the mountains or the wall with a stone statue of Buddha. One of its remarkable characteristics is that

the subject of the desired marriage is the son of the moles, not their daughter. This feature distinguishes the story from other versions deriving from India, China, Japan and Korea, in which the daughter looks for a husband. Here however, the parents make the decision to look for a bride for their son and they discuss the issue with the candidates in order to judge who would be the most suitable for him. The story's moral is not very different from that of the Chinese versions, which convey the idea that parents should know their place and refrain from being overly ambitious. In the Joseon dynasty, when Confucianism formed the basis of the ethical system that prevailed, parents made decisions about their children's marriages, and this version of the story is a criticism of grasping parents who try to attain higher social status through marriage between families. It begins by stating that "Since a long time ago, there have been numerous records of conflicts caused by marriages between royal families ( 國婚 ) and commoners. Even a mole marrying its own kind is better than those who pursue such nonsense"(Yu 96); and it ends by saying that "a mole is better than a person who does not know his place and dares to marry into a royal family for fame and wealth, only to cause a catastrophe for himself and others." (Yu 97) The ending of the story strongly expresses the author's critical attitude towards the nobles of Joseon, who favored the marriage of their offspring with members of the royal family in their pursuit of power or status.

This is clearly a practical and specific criticism of parents who are full of vanity and who do not know their place, and who compel their sons or daughters to marry a member of the royal family in an attempt to sate their greed for social status.

Thus far, no study has compared Japanese versions of the fable "The Wedding of the Mouse" and Korean, Chinese and Indian versions, perhaps because Japanese versions have been much more difficult to locate, as KyunTae Kim recently pointed out. However, tales of "The Wedding of the Mouse" were in fact widely disseminated in Japan from the late Muromachi period ( 室町時代 ) to the Edo period ( 江戸時代 ), appearing frequently in children's stories. A version also appeared in *Ukiyokoto* ( 浮世床 ) by Shikitei Samba ( 式亭三馬 ) in a varied form, "The Naming of a Cat." In *Rakugo* ( 落語 ), the story is often employed as the opening tale as well. And *Shasekishyu* ( 沙石集 ) (1283), a collection of tales dating from the Kamakura period ( 鎌倉時代 ), features the following story "The Wedding of the Mouse."

The mouse wants to find the greatest husband of all time for his daughter. Thinking that the Sun that lights the whole world would be the one, the mouse tells the morning sun that he wants to give his beautiful daughter to him. However, the Sun says he should ask the Clouds instead, for the Sun can never win through

when faced with the Clouds. He asks the dark Clouds to marry the daughter, but the Winds turn out to be better, for the Winds can blow away the Clouds. The Winds decline the offer as well, for they can never pass through the earthen wall. The wall also gives in, for the mouse can make a hole in the wall at his leisure. In the end, the mouse realizes that mice are the greatest beings in the universe and gives his daughter to a mouse.

As shown above, this Japanese version of “The Wedding of the Mouse” does not differ much from the indigenous Chinese versions, albeit with a simplified narrative structure. The story also emphasizes the importance of knowing one’s place just as its counterparts in China or Korea do, but it does not exhibit a strong critical bent.

### **Marriage Ethics Implied in the Japanese Translation of the Korean “The Wedding of the Mouse”**

The Japanese colonial government employed the policy of cultural assimilation to ensure the efficient rule of Korea, propagating the slogans “Japan and Korea as one body ( 內鮮一體 )” and “Same ancestry, same roots ( 同祖同根論 ).” One of the core components of the cultural assimilation policy was the encouragement of Korean-Japanese marriage. Following the Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty of 1910, the empire began to establish a system of Korean-Japanese marriage as an efficient method of integrating Koreans into the Japanese cultural sphere. On March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1912, the government issued the “Decree on Civil Matters in Korea,” which was aimed at reforming the family structure of Korea into a new one that would facilitate the enactment of the new Japanese policies. Its impetus was the recognition that the Korean family system had to follow Korean conventions, and in 1915, the laws on civil marriage registration were reformed to enable Korean-Japanese marriages to be registered. However, the census registration systems of Korea and Japan were not entirely compatible, and this led to marriages between Japanese women and Korean men being deemed null or illegitimate. In 1918, a set of shared rules was applied to both systems in order to promote Korean-Japanese marriages. In 1919, as a result of the March 1<sup>st</sup> Movement, the Japanese had to change their system of colonial rule, which led to an evolution away from force and compulsion and towards cultural homogenization. In this context, Korean-Japanese marriage was officially approved within the framework of the Japanese census registration system. In the second amendment of the Decree on Civil Matters in Korea, the Korean common-law marriage system was replaced by a formal law-based system and the Japanese census registry laws were enacted in Korea.

Subsequently, the Sino-Japanese war broke out in 1937 and General Minami Jiro enacted powerful assimilation policies, implemented in the form of the name-changing program and the promotion of Korean-Japanese marriage. He encouraged Korean-Japanese marriage by awarding mixed couples prizes in his name. And on November the 3rd, 1939, he revised the *Decree on Civil Matters in Chosen* (朝鮮民事令) to achieve the thorough adaptation of the Japanese census registry system, which is known as “Je (家)” in Korea. Such active measures and administrative adjustments established the legal basis of Korean-Japanese marriage.

In support of the transition from rule by decree to cultural assimilation after the advent of the March 1<sup>st</sup> Movement, the Japanese Government-General of Korea was actively engaged in researching and documenting Korean literary works in order to achieve a better understanding of Korean culture. Thus, with the support of the government, many Korean literary works were translated into Japanese in the 1920s. For example, the Japanese Government-General of Korea supported a project to translate and publish ancient Korean texts. Government officials and researchers in Gyeongseong Imperial University unearthed, documented and translated those literary works in a systematic and organized way. The preface of *Popular Korean Novels* (通俗朝鮮文庫) by Hosoi Hijime (細井肇, 1886.2-1934.10.19) explicitly discusses the purpose of this project. He attributes the advent of the March 1<sup>st</sup> Movement to “the ruling policy which disregarded the peculiarities of Korean culture and the Korean mentality that had been passed down for thousands of years,” and recognizes that “It is of great importance to study Korean culture to achieve successful cultural integration” (Park 109,110). He also clarifies that he undertook the translations contained in *Popular Korean Novels* in order to “understand the people of Korea, [and] to fulfill the responsibility of the leading country to guide and enlighten them with the spirit of “Japan and Korea as one body” in the crisis arising from the March 1<sup>st</sup> movement” (Park 110). In other words, the Japanese translation of Korean literature in this period was a way to understand Korean culture, ultimately in order to support the period’s assimilation policies, in light of the heightened nationalist spirit which prevailed after the March 1<sup>st</sup> movement.

Taking such context into account, we will examine the link between the era’s colonial policies and the Japanese translation of “The Wedding of the Mouse” by Tomo Imamura (今村鞆, 1870-1943.). Imamura was a government official in the Japanese Government-General in Korea, who is known for his research into Korean culture and literature, which can be seen in publications such as *A Collection of Korean Folklore* (朝鮮風俗集, 1914), *Cultural-Historical Korean*

*Tales* ( 歴史民俗朝鮮漫談 , 1928), *Korea on the Ship* ( 船の朝鮮 , 1930), *The History of Ginseng* ( 人蔘史 , 1934-1940), the essay collection *Rubbing the Nose* ( 鼻を撫りて , 1940), and *A Review of Folklore Documentation before Koryeo* ( 高麗以前の風俗關係資料撮要 , 1941). It is thus likely that his version of “The Wedding of the Mouse” in *THE CHOSEN AND MANSHU* reflects the colonial ideology of the author, who served as a police officer and a bureaucrat in the colonial government. We will analyze the ethical dimensions and exigencies of marriage in Imamura’s translation of “The Wedding of the Mouse” with regard to such considerations.

It is the story of a mouse that lives under the statue of Buddha in Chungcheong-Do Nonsan. The mouse wants to find a strong wife, unlike others of his own kind. He tries to take the Sun as his wife, but clouds are covering the Sun. The mouse then wants to take the clouds as his wife, because the clouds seem to be stronger. However, the wind scatters the clouds and the mouse then wants to marry the wind. Then he sees the stone statue of Buddha, which stands firm against the gale. When he decides to marry the statue, it starts to tilt to the side, because of a hole that he has dug underneath it. In the end, he realizes that he is the strongest of all.

The essential features of the story are that the subject of the marriage is a male and that it incorporates the Buddhist element of the stone statue of Buddha. In this sense, the story is comparable to “The Wedding of the Mole” in *The Historical Story of Eou* ( 於于野談 ). However, instead of his parents making decisions about his marriage, the mouse himself independently makes such decisions. The story also lacks the element of transformation or birth which is seen in the Indian and Chinese versions. It begins with the sentence, “Once there was a mouse living under a huge stone statue of Buddha in Chungcheongnamdo Nonsan,” without mentioning the parents at all. The mouse simply decides to get married by his own will, realizing that “I have become a fully-grown man and want to look for a wife.” Thus, the moral of the story is evidently different from that of other stories which criticize the over-ambition of parents. Conversely, his decision to seek a spouse is implicitly represented in a positive light. The following passage describes his motivation in this quest.

The mouse formed some thoughts about finding a wife. Then he had to think about his friends. They had all married other mice, their own kind. Those were marriages without wedding ceremonies and unlike in the case of human marriage, it was not always clear who was marrying whom. One male mouse had two or three wives. Another one chose only one wife among four or five

female mice who came to him. To make matters even worse, they always fought over their wives, sometimes taking the wives of others and sometimes losing theirs to others.<sup>1</sup>

The excerpt above constitutes a criticism against ingroup marriage and concubinage. It can be assumed that this reflects the realization that the distrust between Koreans and Japanese was an obstacle to the policy of promoting Korean-Japanese marriage. Another story element that displays the implicit support for colonialism is the attitude of the mouse and the reaction of the other mice. When the mouse shouts out to the Sun that he wants to take her as his wife, the other mice around him refer to his behavior as “total nonsense,” and we are told that “everyone laughed, rolling on the floor and clapping their hands.” However, the mouse strives to find a spouse and coolly and analytically weighs the advantages and disadvantages of each candidate. The story ends with his realization that he himself is the strongest of them all. In sum, his search for a wife is depicted as full of intent, adventurous and forward-looking.

As discussed above, the mouse’s search for a wife in “The Wedding of the Mouse” by Tomo Imamura is seen as a positive process of discovering one’s identity, motivated by the shortcomings of ingroup marriage and concubinage. Such a positive portrayal of intergroup marriage evidently shows that the author, who was a police officer and a bureaucrat in the colonial government, had the objective of indirectly propagating the colonial policies of the Japanese government, which encouraged Korean-Japanese marriage as part of the assimilation process during the colonial era.

### **Conclusion**

The original Indian fable “The Mouse Maid,” based on Hindu tenets, emphasizes that one’s true character does not change and will eventually be revealed after many trials. In the strictly feudal society of China, where marriages were arranged by parents, the parable was retooled in order to teach the lesson that commoners should know their place and refrain from being hungry for status. In Korea, various versions of the story feature a statue of the Buddha, thereby incorporating a Buddhist dimension and inculcating the specific and practical lesson that vanity-induced marriage between members of the royal family and commoners was

---

1 Tomo Imamura (今村 勲). “The Wedding of the Mouse,” *The Chosen and Manshu* 194 (1924):68-71. Edited and translated by HyoSun Kim. HyeKyung Song. *Koreans from the View Point of the Japanese in Chosun 2* (Seoul: YoukRack, 2016) 153,154.

self-defeating. The Japanese versions of the story are similar to the Chinese, and generally teach that one should know one's place.

However, the moral of Imamura's translation of "The Wedding of the Mouse" is very distinct from that of any other versions. In the context of the cultural assimilation policy of the 1920s and the promotion of Korean-Japanese cross-national marriage, Imamura implicitly criticizes ingroup marriage and concubinage and depicts the mouse's search for his spouse as a positive process in which he discovers his true identity, a theme which is compatible with the ideology of colonialism. In this way his translation serves as an example of the political dimension of the translation of Korean literary works into Japanese in the colonial period.

**Acknowledgements:** This work was Supported by a Korea University Grant (K1803401).

### Works Cited

- Hwang, Deok. "A Cross-national Analysis of 'Mole Marriage' Stories in India, China, and Korea." *The Research of Language and Literature* Vol.48 (2005): 301-326.
- Kim, GyunTae. "The Narrative Structure of 'Mouse (Mole) Marriage' Tales and its Application to Literature Therapy." *Institute of Literature Therapy* 26 (2013): 9-37.
- Kim, EuiSuk. *Folklore and Symbolism of the 12 Zodiac Signs — The Mouse*. Seoul: National Archives of Korea Studies, 1997. 1-210.
- Kim, HyoSun & HyeKyung Song. *Koreans from the View Point of the Japanese in Chosen*. Seoul: YoukRack, 2016. 1-327.
- Liu, YuanQing. (劉元卿). "The Marriage of the Mouse Daughter (老鼠嫁女)." Research on the Types of Chinese Folk Tales. *Wuhan: Central China Normal UP*, 2002. 66-75.
- Mang, SanYeom. *A Comparative Study of "Mouse Marriage" Tales in Korea and China*. PhD dissertation. Hannam University, 2013.1-144.
- Park, KyongRyong. *A Study of Chinese Mouse Tales — A Comparison between Written and Oral Forms*. Master's thesis PhM dissertation. Jeonbuk University, 2015. 1-137.
- Park, SangHyun. "A Study of Japanese Translation of Janhwa Hongryeon Jeon (薔花紅蓮傳) by Hajime Hosoi (細井肇)." *Japanese Cultural Studies* 37 (2011):109-027.
- Yu, MongIn (柳夢寅). *The Historical Story of Eou (於于野談)*. Seoul: Dolbegae, 2006.