Onūli, the Goddess of Fortune-telling

A girl as beautiful as jade lived alone in a field. One day, some people found her there and asked her from whence she came.

‘I rose from Kangrim Field’, said the girl.

‘And what is your name?’ asked the people.

‘I know neither my own name nor that of my family’, said the girl.

‘How did you survive all by yourself in this field?’ asked the people.

‘When I rose from Kangrim Field, a crane came along and laid one wing beneath me, blanketed me with the other wing and put one marble in my mouth to protect me. That’s how I was able to survive’, said the girl.

‘How old are you?’ asked the people.

‘I don’t know that either’, said the girl.

‘How about we name you Onūli and call today your birthday since you don’t know your name or birthday?’ asked the people.

After that everyone called her Onūli.

One day, she visited Mrs Paek, the mother of King Paki.

‘Aren’t you Onūli?’ said King Paki.

‘Yes, I am Onūli’, said Onūli.

‘Do you know about your homeland?’ asked King Paki.

‘I do not’, said Onūli.

‘You are from Wŏnch’ŏngang’, said King Paki.

Onūli was happy to hear the news and decided to visit her country. She asked Mrs Paek for directions to Wŏnch’ŏngang, ‘You must go the Pyŏlch’ŭng Arbor on Paeksa Street. There you will find a young boy reading a book. Ask him for directions to Wŏnch’ŏngang.’

Onūli thanked Mrs Paek and went to Pyŏlch’ŭng Arbor. She waited outside all day. At dusk, she went inside, saying, ‘Excuse me for barging into your place. I am a traveller.’

The young boy asked, ‘Who are you?’

‘My name is Onūli, and you?’ said Onūli.

‘My name is Changsangi. The King of Heaven ordered me to sit here and read books forever. What brings you here?’ asked the young boy.

‘I am from Wŏnch’ŏngang and I happened to pass by this place on my way back to my homeland’, said Onūli.

‘Why don’t you stay here for the night since it is already dark out?’ asked the young boy.

Onūli gladly accepted the young boy’s offer and went inside. She told him
about Mrs Paek and asked him for directions to Wônch’øngang, ‘Take the left road until you see Yônghwa Pond. You should see a lotus tree in the pond. Ask the lotus for directions. It should answer your question. In return, can you do me a favour? When you arrive at Wônch’øngang, can you find out the reason why I must read books day and night and why am I bound to stay inside this castle? If you could find this information for me, I would be most grateful.’

Onüli promised him she would find the answers. As day broke, she started her journey to Yônghwa Pond. As she approached Yônghwa Pond, she saw the lotus tree within. She politely approached the lotus and said, ‘Lotus, can you give me directions to Wônch’øngang?’

‘Why do you want to go to Wônch’øngang?’ asked the lotus.

‘My name is Onüli and people tell me that Wônch’øngang is my homeland. I wish to return to that country’, said Onüli.

‘Ah, that is wonderful. Can you find out about my mysterious status when you arrive there?’ asked the lotus.

‘What mysterious status?’ asked Onüli.

‘My root has buds during winter time. Those buds come out in January, become branches in February and blossom into flowers in March. However, only one branch on the top blooms with flowers. My other branches do not bloom at all. Can you tell me why?’ said Onüli.

Onüli promised the lotus she would find the answer.

‘Follow the road straight ahead. You will meet a big snake rolling around. It should know the directions to Wônch’øngang.’

Onüli continued along the road until she came to a big snake rolling around. To the big snake she said, ‘Can you tell me directions to Wônch’øngang?’

‘It’s easy to tell you the directions. However, you must do me a favour before I give you directions,’ said the big snake.

‘What do you want?’ asked Onüli.

‘Any other snake can turn into a dragon and rise up to the heaven if they hold one magic gem in their mouth. However, I cannot turn myself into a dragon, even if I have three magic gems in my mouth. Can you find the reason why I cannot change myself into a dragon?’ asked the big snake.

The girl promised the big snake she would find an answer. The big snake put her on its back and swam across the blue sea, and said, ‘You will meet a girl named Meili if you go straight ahead. Ask her for directions to Wônch’øngang.’

Onüli followed the snake’s directions and met Meili. Meili was reading a book at Byôlch’ung Arbor in the same manner as Ch’ônggûidongja. Onüli greeted her and asked for directions to her homeland, Wônch’øngang. ‘If you follow this road you will meet some weeping maids. Ask them for directions. By the way, when you arrive at your homeland, can you find out the reason why I must read books all day long?’

As Onüli followed the girl’s directions, the weeping maids came into sight. Onüli approached and asked them why they were crying. ‘We used to be