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“A LONG, HARD TRIAL”: THE KOREAN TRANSLATIONS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON¹

Gerrit van Dyk

*“Everyone in the Korean Church
knows who translated the first
translation of the Book of
Mormon—Elder Han In Sang.”
—Edwin Jenson²*

While some of the story of the Korean translations of the Book of Mormon is told in fragments throughout the documents chronicling the rise of the LDS Church in Korea, most notably Ronald K. Nielsen’s “*Hangukeopan Mormongyeong Huesaenggwa Noryeok Kyeoshil*,” no one source has the whole story, including the present study. This article will draw on those prior secondary sources as well as accounts from those who lived the events themselves, as told in their personal journals, letters, and reminiscences.³ The epigraph is a common (mis)conception by members and missionaries who have served in South Korea. In fact, Han In Sang was one of several translators who contributed to the first Korean Book of Mormon published in 1967. The history of the translation of the Book of Mormon into Korean is an important chapter in the international history of the Church, illustrating the various challenges of the translation process as well as the cultural significance of religious language in the lives of believers. This paper will explore the untold story

¹ A portion of this paper was read at the 2014 Church History Symposium in Provo, Utah. The author thanks the CHS for the invitation to present this paper, the Church History Library staff and Ronald K. Nielsen for their research support, and the editor and blind reviewers whose comments and suggestions improved this paper considerably.

² Edwin Jenson to Dallin H. Oaks, April 6, 2009, facsimile in possession of the author, courtesy of Ronald K. Nielsen.

³ For clarity and readability, spelling and punctuation have been standardized across the various sources.

of the translation of the Book of Mormon in Korean, along with some textual comparison of the various translation editions.

Christianity and the Bible in Korea

The first Christian missionaries came to Korea centuries before Mormonism. The first known Christian arrived on the Korean peninsula in the late sixteenth century, during the Japanese Toyotomi Hideyoshi Invasion of Korea (1592–1598). One of the Japanese generals under Hideyoshi was a Roman Catholic, Konishi Yukinaga. Yukinaga captured many Koreans and took them back to Japan as prisoners, where many were taught Christianity and some were baptized.⁴

Despite this early contact, Christian missionaries did not establish a permanent presence or begin Biblical translation efforts for another century. After several aborted attempts to begin formal proselytizing the first Catholic congregation in Korea was established in 1784.⁵ It would not be until 1832 that Protestant missionaries began proselytizing in Korea.⁶ While attempts to translate the scriptures into Korean may have been hazarded, we are unaware of any completed translation effort of the Bible until almost fifty years later. This is likely due to the fact that in nineteenth century Korea, most official documents were almost exclusively written in Chinese. The Korean alphabet,

⁴ See Jeong Kyu Lee, “Christianity and Korean Education in the Late Choson Period,” *Christian Higher Education* 1(1): 85–99 (2002).

Readers familiar with Korean culture will note that this was the same invasion in which Korean admiral Yi Sun Shin became famous for his turtle boat victories.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 85; see also James Huntley Grayson, Grayson, *Early Buddhism and Christianity in Korea: A Study in the Emplantation* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985), 70-73.

⁶ Allen D. Clark, *A History of the Church in Korea* (Seoul: Christian Literature Society of Korea, 1971), 59; James Huntley Grayson, *Korea: A Religious History* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 155 and Grayson, *Early Buddhism and Christianity*, 101; Wi Jo Kang, *Christ and Caesar in Modern Korea : A History of Christianity and Politics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 9. Kang suggests that the survivors of two separate Dutch shipwrecks in the 17th century may have been the first to expose Korea to Protestant Christianity but there is no record of any conversion resulting from contact with the Dutch mariners.

hangul, was not used in legal documents and was viewed contemptuously as an unsophisticated form of communication until 1900.⁷ Since most literate believers were able to read the Chinese translation, perhaps there was less of a need to translate into the Korean vernacular. Another likely contributing factor was the Korean government's open hostility toward Christians. In what is known as the Great Persecution approximately eight thousand believers were executed from 1867 to 1871.⁸ A decade later the first translation of the Bible into Korean began in 1881 by a Protestant missionary, John Ross, culminating in an 1887 printing of the New Testament into *hangul*.⁹

Ross's translation was influenced primarily by the Chinese Bible¹⁰ and the English Authorized Version, with some important exceptions. In cases where the term had an equivalent in both Chinese and Korean, the Korean word was generally used.¹¹ For example, Ross changed the term for baptism in Chinese *성세 seongnye* "holy washing" (聖洗) to the Korean *세례 serye* "wash ordinance" (洗禮). Ross was also the first to deviate from the Chinese in terms for deity. Rather than using the Chinese words for God, 上帝 *Shangdi* or 天主 *Tianzhu*, Ross used the Korean 하나님 *Hananim*.

Ross kept Chinese terms like angel 천사 *cheonsa* "heavenly messenger" (天使) and 성령 *Seongnyeong* "Holy Spirit" (聖靈) although even in Chinese these terms were still contested among translators.¹² Ross's choices will later come into play when Mormonism arrives in Korea.

⁷ Young-Key Kim-Renaud, introduction to *The Korean Alphabet: Its History and Structure*, ed. Young-Key Kim-Renaud (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 1–10.

⁸ Grayson, *Korea*, 146.

⁹ Clark, *History of the Church in Korea*, 66.

¹⁰ Sung Il Choi, "John Ross (1842-1915) and the Korean Protestant Church: The First Korean Bible and its Relation to the Protestant Origins in Korea." (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1992), 114, 119-120.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹² Irene Eber, "The Interminable Term Question," *Bible in Modern China: The Literary and Intellectual Impact*, Eds. Irene Eber, et al. (Sankt Augustin: Monumenta Serica Institute, 1999), 135-164.

While Mormonism came to China as early as 1853 (albeit in a short-lived attempt)¹³ and to Japan in 1901, the LDS Church did not come to Korea until just after World War II in which Koreans were exposed to Mormonism by American servicemen.¹⁴ By this time, Christianity was well-established throughout the peninsula but it would take another decade before the LDS Church was formally recognized in Korea, sometime after January 1957, officially registering the church as a corporate body, allowing it to purchase and own property.¹⁵

The first translation of the Book of Mormon into another language was in 1851 into Danish, translated by a missionary in the Denmark mission. This set a precedent that continued well into the 20th century: translations of Church materials, particularly scriptures, was by and large, a mission responsibility.¹⁶ The following year saw the French, German, and Welsh translations and then the Hawaiian translation in 1855.

This practice of using missionaries or local members under the direction of the mission to do translation began to gradually change, beginning in 1939 when the Church hired the first full-time translator for the Spanish language. The Translation Services Department of the Church was formally

¹³ The first mission to China was headed by Hosea Stout in 1853. After a short period of discouragement, illness, and rejection, the mission was ended after only two months. See *On the Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout*. Ed. Juanita Brooks. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1964), 476-483. Entries for 27 April 1853 to 18 June 1853 describe Stout's experiences in Hong Kong.

¹⁴ Dong Sull Choi, "A History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Korea, 1950-1985." (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1990), 81, footnote.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 104-105. Choi shows that Dr. Kim's 1956 appointment to the Seoul Board of Education was instrumental in establishing the church. President Paul C. Andrus records the need for the LDS Church to be recognized officially by the government in order to purchase property in Korea. Up until this time, property was in Dr. Kim's name. Paul C. Andrus, "Church Beginnings in Korea, 1955-1962, Part One," Paul C. Andrus Papers, 2000-2001, MS 17234, folder 3, Church History Library.

¹⁶ Joseph G. Stringham, "The Church and Translation," *BYU Studies* 21(1): 69-90 (1981), 70.

organized in 1965 but the Asian team was not created for another three years.¹⁷

Korea Opened for Missionaries and Translation Work Begins

Before discussing the translation of the Book Mormon into Korean, we must first review the impact of the great pioneer Kim Ho Jik, who is known simply as Dr. Kim among the Korean saints. Dr. Kim was the first documented native Korean convert to the Church.¹⁸ In the aftermath of the Japanese Occupation of Korea (1910–1945) and World War II, Korea was decimated by a food shortage. Dr. Kim was sent by the Korean government to Cornell University to study agriculture, where he earned a PhD. Kim learned about the LDS Church while studying at Cornell and decided to be baptized. Upon returning to Korea at the end of his studies, Dr. Kim became an important political figure in Korea, at one point rising to vice-minister of education in President Syngman Rhee’s cabinet.¹⁹ Because of his connection to Korean government, Kim was able to open Korea’s doors to missionary work, something that might have taken years if not decades without Dr. Kim’s assistance. Dr. Kim even vouched for missionaries and church officials by personally submitting letters of guarantee to the government for visa approval.²⁰

Once Korea was open to missionaries, Mormon terminology had to be translated. The first elders serving in the Northern Far East Mission who were assigned to Korea were Don G. Powell and Richard L. Detton, with Paul C. Andrus presiding.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Korean natives were baptized by American servicemen during the Korean War, but the dates of these baptisms are not certain. It is possible some predated Dr. Kim’s baptism on July 29, 1951, roughly a year after American forces arrived on the peninsula. (See *The Korean War: The Outbreak, 27 June–15 September 1950* [Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 2000].)

¹⁹ Choi, “History of the Church, 1950–1985,” 101.

²⁰ Paul C. Andrus to Don G. Powell, August 30, 1956, Korea Correspondence, 1956, MS 20151, Church History Library. See also Andrus, “A Tribute to President Ho Jik Kim,” Paul C. Andrus Papers, 2000–2001, MS 17234, folder 2, Church History Library and Andrus, “Church Beginnings in Korea.”

They arrived on the peninsula April 20, 1956.²¹ Powell would later say, “We were not really the first missionaries in Korea. The first missionaries wore combat boots, army fatigues, a helmet and carried an M1 rifle,” acknowledging the missionary contributions of military servicemen.²² In May 1956, just weeks after the first missionaries were assigned to Korea, Elder Powell and President Andrus began discussions on translating Church materials into Korean.²³ Terms like “faith,” “priesthood,” “atonement,” and “baptism” have perplexed translators from the earliest days of the Church.²⁴ As with translations of Mormon texts into other languages, there was several difficulties that immediately arose.

The early Mormon-terminology conundrums were heavily influenced by the Japanese equivalents of terms like “Mormon.” This was largely due to two factors, 1) the Church had existed in Japan for more than five decades and 2) the first missionaries to come to Korea had previously been serving as missionaries in Japan. The use of missionaries and Christian terminology from Japan was complicated by the then very near Japanese Occupation, in which Koreans were forced to learn Japanese and some young Koreans were even relocated to the islands to live with Japanese families. There still exists today some understandable animosity in Korea toward the Japanese. In the 1950s the Occupation was still very fresh on the Koreans’ minds. When the first missionaries assigned to Korea arrived in the summer of 1956, the Japanese translations of Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price were being finalized. These translations were completed as a group

²¹ Don G. Powell, “Return to Korea, 2005,” MS 20152, Church History Library. See also Dean M. Andersen, April 20, 1956, Dean M. Andersen Papers, 1952–1954; 1956–1959, MS 19434, folder 4, Church History Library.

²² Powell, “Return to Korea.” For stories of conversions in Korea during the Korean War, see Robert C. Freeman and Dennis A. Wright, *Saints at War: Korea and Vietnam*, (American Fork, UT: Covenant, 2003).

²³ Powell to Paul C. Andrus, May 11, 1956, Korea Correspondence, 1956, MS 20151, Church History Library.

²⁴ See, for example, Marcellus S. Snow, “The Challenge of Theological Translation: New German Versions of the Standard Works,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 17(2): 133-149 (1984).

effort, with Sato Tatsui serving as principal translator. President Andrus was a member of this translation committee and spent much of his time that summer on the Japanese scriptures.²⁵

Since many of these first Korean missionaries had served several months in Japan before their assignment to Korea, they were familiar with the Japanese culture and language. While this prior knowledge of East Asian customs was certainly beneficial, because of the strenuous relationship between the two countries, the missionaries' affinity with Japan also brought certain challenges. Dr. Kim Ho Jik was concerned when the new missionaries brought Japanese Church materials with them. Immediately members began to translate those materials for personal use from the Japanese to their native tongue.²⁶ Dr. Kim was particularly concerned with how the name "Mormon" would be pronounced in the Korean language.²⁷ He felt that English speakers pronounced the name like "moeomon," without a strong "r" in the middle of the word. Dr. Kim said if the Korean saints were to follow that pronunciation, the name would be *moreumon* according to the conventions of the day in translating foreign words into Korean. Dr. Kim called a meeting in November 1956 with early converts, Chang Se Cheon and Cheong Dae Pan, to discuss this issue. Brother Chang had brought his friend, Cheong Dae Pan into the Church, giving him a copy of the Book of Mormon in English and inviting him to church where he met many members, including Hong Byoung Shik.²⁸ He was

²⁵ Andrus to Powell, July 3, 1956, MS 20151, Korea Correspondence, 1956, Church History Library. The Sato translation was later published on May 30, 1957; see Reid L. Neilson and Van C. Gessel, *Taking the Gospel to the Japanese, 1901–2001* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), 242 and Van C. Gessel, "'Strange Characters and Expressions': Three Japanese Translations of the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 14(1): 32–47 (2005).

²⁶ Cheong Dae Pan to Ronald K. Nielsen, "*Chungeui Kyeoungjeon Peonyeok Munjei*," June 15, 2011, 1, letter in author's possession, courtesy of Ronald K. Nielsen. Many of these members would have been taught Japanese and likely would have known Japanese much better than English.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Chung Tai Pan [Cheong Dae Pan] and Hwang An Ye, in *The Korean Saints* ed. Spencer Palmer (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1995), 79–87, 82–83.

eventually taught and baptized by Gail E. Carr.²⁹ Brother Chang advocated a bisyllabic name for Mormon, *molmon* primarily because the trisyllabic *moreumon* would sound too similar to the Japanese term and he wanted to avoid any possible hurt this might cause the members.

Another term that caused debate was the name of the Church. The three men discussed the merits of *maril* (末日 literally “last/final day”) and *marsei* (末世 “last people/generation”), ultimately deciding on *maril*.³⁰ Even the name for the Pearl of Great Price was a matter of strong debate. Ultimately they went with a title that was similar but slightly different from the Japanese.³¹ They also discussed the sacrament prayers and had a difficult time deciding on which term to use for “bread,” the more colloquial and common *bbang* or the archaic *ddeok*. They selected *ddeok* because it coincided with the term for “bread” in the Korean Bible.³² Han In Sang would later write that even the phrase, “and it came to pass” presented a translation problem. He recalls, “I didn’t translate that part only as it is, but I included the meaning in every verse and sometimes I didn’t touch that part. There is no proper word for this in the Korean dictionary.”³³ Contemporary Korean Bibles likewise omit this common convention found in the English Authorized Version.³⁴

²⁹ Ibid., 83–84.

³⁰ Cheong, “*Chungeui Kyeoungjeon*,” 1. It is interesting that these are the same characters used for the Japanese term for “latter-day.”

³¹ Ibid.; The Japanese title is *Kouka Na Shinju*, which means “expensive pearl.” The Korean is *Kapjin Jinju*, which means “priceless pearl.” The Korean does not use the corresponding *Koka* for “expensive” but instead a native Korean word (i.e., one that has no Chinese etymology but instead is “pure” Korean) *Kap*, which means “price,” and *Jin*, which means “without.”

³² Ibid., 1. The 1957 Korean Bible for Matt. 26:26 reads, “*Yesuggeiseo ddeogeul kajlsa*.”

³³ In Sang Han, “My Part in Translating the Most Perfect Book Ever Written,” *The White Field* 6(1): 11–18 (1967), 17.

³⁴ The King James Version (KJV) has more than six hundred verses with phrasing similar to “and it came to pass.” While not all six hundred verses have been checked against a contemporary bible, the 1957 and 1965 Korean bibles seem to both omit this phrase throughout the text. See, for example, Gen. 6:1, the first time in the KJV in which

Biblical names also presented a problem. Since the first Christian texts came to Korea from Catholicism, names like Joseph and Jesus were transliterated from the Latin, *Ioseph* and *Iesu*. Accordingly, bibles in the 1950s and 1960s rendered these names into Korean as *Yoseip* and *Yesu*. This presents a problem when you consider 2 Nephi 3, in which Joseph of Egypt prophesies that there will one day be a great prophet named after him. LDS believers understand this future prophet to be Joseph Smith. In the Korean Bible, Joseph is rendered as *Yoseip*, but in English, Joseph is pronounced with a “J.” How could the Church align itself with this prophecy when Joseph Smith is pronounced with a “J”? It appears that early missionaries and leaders in Korea opted for *Joseip* instead of *Yoseip*, so Joseph Smith was *Joseip Smiseu*. Early materials were not translated with *Yoseip* although *Yesu* was. As late as 1965, Joseph was still being pronounced *Joseip* or *Jyoseip*.³⁵ It is possible that this was not changed to *Yoseip* until the final 1967 translation. The newest translation published in 2005 returns to Joseph with a “J,” so members are adapting to calling Joseph Smith *Joseip* again.

Early Translations of the Book of Mormon in Korean

During the opening years of the Church in Korea, missionaries still sold copies of the Book of Mormon to

“and it came to pass” begins a verse. See also Josh. 2:5, Isa. 7:1, and Luke 1:8 for additional examples.

³⁵ Spencer Palmer, ed., “Teaching the Gospel in Korean,” Byron L. Schmidt Mission Publications Collection, 1963–1966, MS 23789, 31, Church History Library. While the publication appears to be undated, Palmer did not become president of the mission until the summer of 1965; see Dan E. Burke, mission journal entry, June 2, 1965, Korean Mission Papers, 1963–1966, MS 23002, folder 2, Church History Library. Also see “*Marilseongdo Yesu Keuriseudo Kyeohoepyeon*,” C. Paul Dredge Mission Papers, 1964–1966, MS 26023, Church History Library. This newsletter is undated, but the included Korean history chronology has a final event dated August 1965; it lists the Articles of Faith, with *Jyosep Seumiseu* as the author. See also Articles of Faith card in Rex M. Lee Correspondence, 1964–1966, MS 19486, folder 2, Church History Library, which lists the author as *Joseip Seumiseu*. Although this source is undated, the order of the materials suggests it was included with a letter dated March 22, 1965.

investigators,³⁶ although they were in English and Japanese. The English version went primarily to students learning English, while the Japanese version was purchased by older investigators who were more familiar with Japanese than English, again largely due to the Japanese Occupation and the resulting mandatory study of Japanese.³⁷ By the time the translation of the Book of Mormon was completed in 1965, missionaries had effectually abolished this practice and only used the English Book of Mormon in rare cases.³⁸ Dr. Kim, other leaders in the Northeastern Asia area, and the members were all anxious to have a copy of the Book of Mormon in Korean as soon as possible.

Dr. Kim was involved in translation efforts from the very beginning, having translated the sacramental prayers and James

³⁶ Journal entry by L. Edward Brown, February 1, 1958, L. Edward Brown Mission Journal, 1957–1960, MS 23415, folder 1, Church History Library.

³⁷ Journal entry by Dean M. Andersen, October 4, 1956, Dean M. Andersen Papers, 1952–1954; 1956–1959, MS 19434, Church History Library. Andersen writes of an investigator who “wants to read the Book of Mormon but he cannot read English and we do not have any [copies] in Korean [or] Japanese.” This brief entry gives the impression that if he had a copy in Japanese he would have sold it to him. Andersen’s journal entry for September 10, 1957, provides much more substantial evidence: “We are selling quite a few Books of Mormon even though we have them only in English and Japanese. Most of the college students read English and most of the older people read Japanese.” See also his entry for April 19, 1958.

³⁸ Bruce K. Grant and Ronald K. Nielsen, interview with the author, April 25, 2014. Also, see Burke to mother, undated, Korean Mission Papers, 1963–1966, MS 23002, folder 4, Church History Library. Although the letter does not have a date, the postscript says “Merry Christmas,” so this is likely December 1963. Burke laments that few investigators can read English so they are not able to share the Book of Mormon well. Dr. Kim Ho Jik himself read the Book of Mormon in English; his own copy held in the Church History Library has handwritten dates, 1/1/59, 2/4/57, 7/1/56, 5/18/53, at the top of 1 Nephi. Throughout his copy he has written dates next to other chapters using the corresponding color of ink, presumably marking his progress during that year as he read. It would appear from his dates that he read the Book of Mormon in English up until the day he died (see Kim Ho Jik, *Scriptures*, 1951–1956, MS 20710, Church History Library.).

E. Talmage's *Articles of Faith*, the book that fostered his conversion while he studied in America.³⁹ Dr. Kim also translated secular books, including Darwin's *Origin of Species*.⁴⁰ In February 1956, a month before the first missionaries were assigned to Korea, Dr. Kim was called to supervise the translation of the Book of Mormon, with the assistance of Brother Chang Se Cheon.⁴¹ Cheong Dae Pan recalls, "Dr. Kim would look at the original [in English] and translate into Korean while Brother Chang Se Cheon would write down the dictation."⁴² This was a slow process due to Dr. Kim's other government and church responsibilities.⁴³ Eventually, Chang took over day-to-day translation duties. This occurred at the same time that the Sato translation was published in Japanese. Chang referred to the Japanese translation during this process and it is possible he used the 1957 translation.⁴⁴ This work, unfortunately now lost, was left incomplete when Brother Chang moved to Utah to attend Brigham Young University in 1959.⁴⁵ Only the first half of the Book of Mormon had been translated to this point.⁴⁶

Shortly thereafter, a second attempt was made to translate the Book of Mormon. Again, partnering with Dr. Kim, a new translator, Hong Byeong Shik was set apart August 23, 1959. Hong was serving as Dr. Kim's first counselor in the Korea District presidency.⁴⁷ He knew Japanese and English well. Hong

³⁹ Ibid., 132. Choi, "History of the Church, 1950–1985," 97; Andrus, "Church Beginnings in Korea."

⁴⁰ *Feed My Sheep: Pioneer of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Korea: Dr. Kim, Ho Jik's Lifetime and Achievements* (Seoul: Hankook Translation & Publication, 2002), 63.

⁴¹ Cheong, "Chungeui Kyeongjeon," 1.

⁴² Ibid. Author's translation.

⁴³ Dr. Kim was serving as the Korea District president.

⁴⁴ Lee In Soon to Nielsen, January 2011, Ronald K. Nielsen Mission Papers, 2000–2011, MS 23933, Church History Library. See also Ronald K. Nielsen, "Hangukeopan Mormongyeong Huesaengwa Noryeok Kyeoshil 2," *Liahona* (Korean) 35(12): 4–5 (2011), 4. Nielsen's work was published in three parts: in October 2011, December 2011, and January 2012.

⁴⁵ Nielsen, "Hangukeopan Mormongyeong," 2.

⁴⁶ Bruce K. Grant, "Important Beginnings on the Korean Translation of the Book of Mormon," *The White Field*, 6(1): 6–9 (1967), 6.

⁴⁷ Andrus, "Church Beginnings in Korea."

had been baptized just twelve days after Joseph Fielding Smith dedicated Korea for missionary work.⁴⁸ He was an early leader in the Church in Korea and had great desires to help build the Church in his native land.⁴⁹ He was in attendance when Elders Powell and Detton disembarked on April 20, 1956, and since they did not speak Korean yet, Hong conversed with them in Japanese.⁵⁰ He translated their early cottage meetings, the elders speaking English and Hong speaking Korean to the investigators. One of those meetings would be with a young man named Han In Sang.⁵¹ Within just a few days, Hong and Dr. Kim discussed the merits of following a more elevated style, similar to the English King James Version of the Bible.⁵² This should come as no surprise considering John Ross used the Authorized Version heavily when conducting his own translation, as did the Chinese translators before him.⁵³ Tragically, Dr. Kim did not ever see a completed translation of the Book of Mormon. On August 31, just eight days after Hong was set apart, Dr. Kim died from a heart attack.⁵⁴ Hong assisted in Dr. Kim's funeral arraignments, along with missionary L. Edward Brown.⁵⁵

Over the next year, Hong Byeong Shik worked tirelessly to complete the task assigned him. His wife served as his scribe.⁵⁶ It is unclear whether Hong used Chang's earlier translation, but

⁴⁸ Hong Byung Sik [Hong Byeong Shik] and Lee Chung Soon, in *The Korean Saints* ed. Spencer Palmer, 101–103, 103.

⁴⁹ “Young Korean Convert Studies Church Plan,” *Church News*, October 29, 1960, 8–9.

⁵⁰ Hong Byeong Shik interview, Ronald K. Nielsen Mission Papers, 2000–2011, MS 23933, folder 12, 4, Church History Library.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵² Nielsen, “*Hangukeopan Mormongyeong*,” 2–3.

⁵³ Choi, John Ross, 173, 362. See also, Jost Oliver Zetzsche, *The Bible in China: The History of the Union Version or The Culmination of the Protestant Missionary Bible Translation in China* (Sankt Augustin: Monumenta Serica Institute, 1999).

⁵⁴ Journal entry by Brown, August 31, 1959, Mission Journal, MS 23415, folder 1, Church History Library. See also entries for August 29–31, 1959, and Nielsen, “*Hangukeopan Mormongyeong*,” 3.

⁵⁵ Hong interview, Ronald K. Nielsen Mission Papers, 2000–2011, MS 23933, folder 12, 12, Church History Library; see also Brown, entries surrounding August 31, 1959, Mission Journal, MS 23415, folder 1, Church History Library.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, MS 23933, folder 12, 8.

we do know that Hong frequently referred to the Japanese translation, since he understood Japanese perhaps better than English.⁵⁷ The translation took more than a year, concluding in the fall of 1961.⁵⁸ The editing and typesetting processes proved even longer. Hong was assisted by several missionaries and Korean church members during the laborious prepublication process.⁵⁹ The manuscript was edited and typeset at least five times between 1961 and 1962, by Bruce K. Grant, D. Lynn Waddell, Lee In Soon, and others.⁶⁰ Due to the lengthy changes in the manuscript, it was decided that only 3 Nephi would be published as a small pocket edition and the rest of the manuscript would be saved for future review. It is difficult to date this publication of 3 Nephi.⁶¹ It was likely completed sometime in late spring, before Elder Waddell returned home from his mission. In any case, Grant and Nielsen recall that Korean members were

⁵⁷ Hong to Nielsen, January 10, 2011, Ronald K. Nielsen Mission Papers, 2000–2011, MS 23933, Church History Library. Although Hong denies ever having seen or even having known about Brother Chang’s translation, Lee In Soon, another member involved in the translation processes, and who would later become Hong’s brother-in-law, claims that Hong “translated it [the Book of Mormon] from the beginning referring to Chang’s translation and Japanese words.” Lee In Soon to Nielsen, January 2011, Ronald K. Nielsen Mission Papers, 2000–2011, MS 23933, Church History Library.

⁵⁸ Grant, “Important Beginnings,” 6.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* Some of the galleys have been donated to the Church History Library. A fragment of Mosiah is found in “Book of Mormon Translation,” MS 19974, Church History Library, available online at https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE3113566&usedforsort=MS_19974_fo001. Bruce K. Grant confirmed that this is one of the galleys he personally reviewed, even identifying his Korean marginalia (Grant and Nielsen, interview with the author, April 25, 2014).

⁶¹ The book itself records the publication date simply as “1962.” The only other document we have is from Elder Glade Maw, who dates the publication as March 1962, as quoted in Nielsen, “Paving the Way for the Book of Mormon in Korean: Early Efforts in the Translation Process, 2nd Draft,” Ronald K. Nielsen Mission Papers, 2000–2011, MS 23933, Church History Library. The Church History Library record for the book reads, “[Book of Mormon selections]. Korean.” Call number M222.45 B724KOR 1962.

very excited to have even a portion of the Book of Mormon in their own language.⁶² Hong, along with Lee Young Bum, the first native Korean missionary, would later play a key role in translating the temple endowment ceremony into Korean allowing the first Koreans to receive temple ordinances in Hawaii.⁶³

Just a few short months later, in July 1962, the Korea Mission was organized, with Gail E. Carr presiding. Carr was one of the first missionaries sent to Korea in 1956. He returned to preside over the mission just six years later when he was thirty-two years old, making him one of the youngest mission presidents at the time.⁶⁴ By this time, there were five branches and more than one thousand Korean members. After settling into his new role, President Carr turned his attention to translation. He reviewed Hong's manuscript asked to meet with Bruce K. Grant, one of the missionaries who had assisted in the editing, indexing, and typesetting of Hong's translation.⁶⁵ After some discussion on the Book of Mormon translation, Grant suggested gathering opinions from both Korean members and academics. Carr approved the project and extended Grant's mission six months in order to allow him to complete the investigation.⁶⁶ Each individual interviewed was given the most recent galley proofs of the Korean, as well as the published Japanese and English translations to compare.⁶⁷ As was mentioned, the Japanese Book of Mormon had just undergone a new translation a few years before, in 1957. The new edition was clearer and less

⁶² Grant and Nielsen, interview with the author, April 25, 2014.

⁶³ Lee to Nielsen, January 2011, Ronald K. Nielsen Mission Papers, 2000–2011, MS 23933, Church History Library. See also Hong Byung Sik [Hong Byeong Shik], "The First Time in History, circa 1970," MS 969, 6, Church History Library. While Lee was the first native missionary, he did not serve a full term (see Dean M. Anderson, journal entry for September 15, 1956, Dean M. Anderson Papers, 1952–1954; 1956–1959, MS 19434, folder 5, Church History Library). The first missionary to serve a full-time mission was Han In Sang.

⁶⁴ Choi, "History of the Church, 1950–1985," 136.

⁶⁵ Grant, "Important Beginnings," 8.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

archaic than the 1901 translation.⁶⁸ After receiving Grant's report, Carr decided to commission a new translation that would follow the new Japanese translation more closely. Under Carr's direction, Elder Grant called Cheong Dae Pan as translator in April 1964, eight years after working with Chang Se Cheon and Dr. Kim.⁶⁹ "While asking for the help of the Holy Spirit," Cheong remembers, "I prayed for the wisdom and strength to perform this important work correctly."⁷⁰ Han In Sang would later say of Cheong's efforts, "I know that Brother Cheong prayed and fasted many times, and hard, to make that translation possible."⁷¹

Before joining the Church, Cheong had studied at Presbyterian General Assembly Seminary. After receiving his assignment to translate the Book of Mormon, Cheong heard of a

⁶⁸ Reading the 1901 translation of the Japanese Book of Mormon in 1957, Gessel writes, "would be like asking a young American student to gain profound spiritual insights from reading an unannotated text of *Beowulf*." "Three Japanese Translations of the Book of Mormon," 41.

⁶⁹ Burke to mother, undated, Korean Mission Papers, 1963–1966, MS 23002, folder 4, Church History Library. "A Korean brother (District Pres.) is doing the translating while an Elder who was just released from his mission is staying a couple of extra months to proof-read it." This letter is undated other than 1964 but talks of rain and humidity, which implies it could have been summertime. Cheong Dae Pan was the district president at this time, and Grant was over translation efforts until he returned to America in August 1964. Nielsen reports that Cheong Dae Pan and Grant worked together well before Cheong was set apart but Elder Hinckley; see Nielsen, "*Hangukeopan Mormongyeong* 2," 5. Elder Burke reported to the mission home for his assignment as mission recorder in the office in October 1964; see Gail E. Carr to Dan E. Burke, October 7, 1964, Korean Mission Papers, 1963–1966, MS 23002, folder 7, Church History Library. At this point, Elder Burke mentions that "Elder Nielsen was extended three months to help finish" the translation editing; see Dan E. Burke to mother, undated letter on mission stationery, Korean Mission Papers, 1963–1966, MS 23002, folder 4, Church History Library; this letter talks about him working in "the Home."). Cheong Dae Pan is largely seen as the translator of the Doctrine & Covenants, but Grant, "Important Beginnings," 7, claims that Hong Byeong Shik began working on the Doctrine & Covenants while the Book of Mormon was being edited.

⁷⁰ Cheong, "*Chungeui Kyeoungjeon*," 2, author's translation.

⁷¹ Han, "My Part," 11.

new Bible translation commissioned by the Korea Bible Society. He discovered that one of his old seminary professors, Reverend Pak Chang Hwan, was involved in the new Bible translation. Cheong decided to visit Pak to see if he could offer any translation advice. Pak lent several books to Cheong to assist in the translation process.⁷²

A month later, Cheong was called as the Korea District president, the second native Korean to preside over the branches in the country after Dr. Kim Ho Jik. For months Cheong would travel between Seoul, Pusan, and Taegu, the three largest cities in the country, each with its own branch, attending meetings and discharging other administrative duties. Eventually, his calling began to conflict with his translation efforts and Cheong requested a release.⁷³ Brother Lee Ho Nam was called in his place.⁷⁴ Cheong continued to work on the translation with the help of Elder Grant and then later Ronald K. Nielsen. The translation process was difficult and by this time in late 1964, almost a decade after the Church had been formally recognized, there was still no complete, published Korean edition of the Book of Mormon. This was a mission-wide concern. Elder Rex M. Lee, one of the missionaries serving at the time, solicited prayers from his family”

[P]lease pray for the translating of the Book of Mormon. They told us that the Book of Mormon was almost complete but at the rate things are going it would take three years to even get it proofread. Then there isn't any printing company in Korea that is qualified to print the Book of Mormon. These are just a few of the problems so won't you please pray for the work?⁷⁵

Elder Dan Burke recalls that missionaries fasted each week: “It's [the translation of the Book of Mormon] taken, and is taking, a lot of hard work but will surely be an asset when it's completed. To do our parts all of the Elders are fasting on

⁷² Cheong, “*Chungeui Kyeoungjeon*,” 2.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷⁴ Choi, “History of the Church, 1950–1985,” 146.

⁷⁵ Rex M. Lee to parents, October 12, 1964, Rex M. Lee Correspondence, 1964–1966, MS 19486, Church History Library.

Sundays.”⁷⁶ Cheong states that he completed the translation “in the spring of 1965,” but other sources leave this in doubt.⁷⁷ In any case, we have no record of the manuscript going to print in any portion.

Han In Sang and the Publication of the Korean Book of Mormon

Just before the conclusion of his assignment as mission president, Carr assigned one of his missionaries, Han In Sang, to again review previous translations and create a new translation. Han was converted and baptized in 1957. Shortly thereafter Han began his government-mandated military service. Upon returning from his service in the Korean military he decided to pursue missionary service. Han In Sang was the first native Korean to serve a full-time mission. He served from 1964 to 1966. He was overwhelmed by the assignment to translate the Book of Mormon, a call that came less than eight years after becoming a member. While serving in Taegu, Han contracted hepatitis. President Carr called Han back to the mission home to recuperate. “One day,” Han writes, “while I was lying in my bed, President Carr brought me a manuscript of the translation of the Book of Mormon.”⁷⁸ Carr asked Han to review it and assigned Ronald K. Nielsen to assist. Han dates this conversation as

⁷⁶ Burke to mother, 1964, Korean Mission Papers, 1963–1966, MS 23002, folder 4, Church History Library. While this letter is undated, Burke mentions serving in the mission office, an assignment he received on October 12, 1964 (Gail E. Carr to Burke, October 7, 1964, Korean Mission Papers, 1963–1966, MS 23002, folder 7, Church History Library), placing this letter likely around the same time as Lee’s letter to his parents regarding the Book of Mormon.

⁷⁷ Cheong, “*Chungeui Kyeongjeon*” 3, author’s translation. R. Lanier Britsch acknowledges Cheong Dae Pan’s attempt with Grant and Nielsen’s help but treats it more as an unfinished project than a completed translation: “but these men did not complete the book.” R. Lanier Britsch, *From the East: The History of the Latter-day Saints in Asia, 1851–1996* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1998), 183. Nielsen refutes this. According to him almost all of the Book of Mormon was finished by the time he left Korea to return home in November 1964 (interview with author, April 25, 2014).

⁷⁸ Han, “My Part,” 11.

sometime in the fall of 1964, which was well before Cheong says he completed the translation. While it is unclear how much Cheong had done by that fall, we do know that Han understood he was reviewing Cheong's translation.⁷⁹ It would seem that while Han was studying Cheong's work, Cheong continued translating, concluding as he says, in the spring. Cheong recalls that after he finished his work on the translation, Han came to him and "asked if it would be okay if he did some rewriting of my translation; I consented."⁸⁰ Cheong would later speak at a meeting celebrating Han's mission release.⁸¹ At some point between the fall of 1964 and early spring 1965, Han concluded his review of Cheong's translation and contacted President Carr to recommend a new translation. Carr sent Han to Pusan to retranslate the Book of Mormon on April 1, 1965.⁸² By June, Han's assignment was known throughout the mission.⁸³ During the process of translation, he consulted the published 3 Nephi portion of the Hong translation, the Cheong translation, and the English version.⁸⁴

Han later acknowledged the difficult circumstances of prior translators" "[T]hose former translators had many temptations, tests, and had many troubles."⁸⁵ Han felt similar difficulties while engaged in his own translation work. In addition to struggling with his own health issues, he was also helping his girlfriend through some difficult family times. He felt that God was supporting him in his translation but that the devil was opposing him.⁸⁶ Han writes:

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Cheong, "*Chungeui Kyeoungjeon*," 3, author's translation.

⁸¹ "*Han In Sang Changnoeui Hwansonghoe*," Byron Schmidt Mission Publications Collection, 1963–1966, MS 23789, folder 2, Church History Library.

⁸² Han, "My Part," 11.

⁸³ Lee to parents, June 24, 1965, Rex M. Lee Correspondence, 1964–1966, MS 19486, Church History Library; Burke to mother, August 30, 1965, Korean Mission Papers, 1963–1966, MS 23002, folder 5, Church History Library.

⁸⁴ Han, "My Part," 11.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 13.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 18.; Church Historical Department, "Han In Sang interview, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1991 September 4–24," OH 2286, Church History Library.

I had too many troubles and difficulties especially when I was working on the translation as a Mormon missionary. However that was the [happiest] time that I've ever experienced in my life. That was spiritual, and that was pure, and that was joy. You may understand the meaning of the kind of joy that comes after a long, hard trial or a journey.⁸⁷

After working on the translation for several months, Han was transferred to Seoul in August 1965.⁸⁸ He finished the translation on August 28.⁸⁹ "I did it, but I didn't do it," Han would later say, "I was a tool in His hand, just a tool."⁹⁰

Because Han had to report for a two-week military training camp, the manuscript did not go to the printer until September.⁹¹ It would take another eighteen months for an index and cross references to be added to the manuscript for publication.⁹² Several individuals were involved in the indexing, referencing, and pronunciation guide.⁹³ A comparison of the Hong galley of Mosiah and the 1967 published edition of Mosiah shows a strong resemblance between the footnotes; in many cases they are identical.⁹⁴ The 1962 3 Nephi Pocket edition, based

⁸⁷ Han, "My Part," 15.

⁸⁸ Journal entry by Burke, August 8, 1965, Korean Mission Papers, 1963–1966, MS 23002, folder 2, Church History Library.

⁸⁹ Han, "My Part," 16.

⁹⁰ Church Historical Department, "Han In Sang interview."

⁹¹ Journal entries by Burke, August 23 and 31 and September 25, 1965, Korean Mission Papers, 1963–1966, MS 23002, folder 2, Church History Library.; see also, Burke to mother, August 30, 1965, Korean Mission Papers, 1963–1966, MS 23002, folder 5, Church History Library: "I've been assigned to work with Elder Han In Sang, one of the first Korean missionaries. He's in charge of all translations and just this past week, you'll be happy to hear, finished translating the Book of Mormon! Now they are proof reading it and soon it will be ready for printing. A great step forward for the Korean Mission"; Han, "My Part," 16.

⁹² Nielsen, "*Hangukeopan Mormongyeong*," 2.

⁹³ Han, "My Part," 16–17.

⁹⁴ "Book of Mormon Translation," MS 19974, Church History Library. The Church History Library only has the galleys for Mosiah. No other galleys of other books from the Book of Mormon are extant.

on Hong’s translation, does not have any footnotes. It is possible that the index and pronunciation guides were likewise borrowed heavily from the Hong galleys. Delays continued to occur in this process, culminating with a frustrating encounter with the Sam Hwa printing company. Apparently, the Church had purchased the paper to print the Book of Mormon on at some earlier time. By the time the translation was complete and the printer was able to begin printing, the paper’s condition had deteriorated to the point that it could not be used.⁹⁵ Eventually, the manuscript was printed on newer paper and the Book of Mormon was published in Korean on March 29, 1967, almost ten years after Dr. Kim and Chang Se Cheon began the work.⁹⁶ Finally, the Korean saints had a complete copy of the Book of Mormon in their language.

Comparison of the Hong and Han Translations

As was mentioned, the footnotes to the 1967 edition of the Korean Book of Mormon owe significantly to the Hong galleys. The text itself, however, differs widely between the Hong Mosiah galleys and the 3 Nephi pocket edition, including the chapter headings. While terms like “baptism” “God” and “atonement” match in both translations, the grammatical structure of each is quite different. Table 1 demonstrates the extent of these differences, comparing the Hong galley and 1967 versions of Mosiah 12: 11.

Table 1: Mosiah 12:11 Comparison I

Hong Mosiah Galley	1967 Edition	English
또 그는 당신이 풀줄기와 같이 참으로 맹수들이 지나다니며 발로 짓 밟는 들의 마른 풀줄기와 같이 되리라고 말하였나이다	당신께서는 뛰어 다니는 들짐승들에게 짓밟히며 시달리는 들관의 마른 풀줄기 같다고 말하였고	And again, he saith that thou shalt be as a stalk, even as a dry stalk of the field, which is run over by the beasts and trodden under foot.
And he said thou wouldst become like a stalk, even like a dry stalk of the field, trampled by the feet	He said thou art afflicted like the dry stalk of the field which is trampled by the	

⁹⁵ Han, “My Part,” 18.

⁹⁶ Choi, “History of the Church, 1950–1985,” 148.

of wild beasts as they pass over	movement of wild animals	
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Some of the terms, like *마른 풀줄기 mareun puljulki*, are found in both versions but the tense (wouldst become and art) differ and Han chooses a variant of animal *들짐승 deuljimseung*. Table 2 shows another example of the changes from the Hong 3 Nephi pocket edition, which was based on Hong’s translation, as with the Mosiah galleys. The Han translation differs in the opening and conclusion of the verse with some portions that are identical, such as *평화를 누리던 것은 불과 몇 해에 지나지 pyeonghwareul nurin geoseun pulkwa myeot hae jinaji*. Based on these examples, it is clear that Han laboured over his own translation, not merely borrowing from the Hong version. However, the amount of overlap does make his translation time from April to August seem more plausible. We also must remember there was another major translation effort in between Hong and Han by Cheong Dae Pan. Without having access to Cheong’s manuscripts (however far he may have made it in the process) it is impossible to know what deviations between the Hong version and the Han version are from Han’s own labor or from Cheong’s translation.

Table 2: 3 Nephi 6:16 Comparison I

1962 Pocket Edition	1967 Edition	English
이리하여 사탄은 백성들의 마음을 유혹시켜 모든 악행을 하도록 하였으므로 백성들이 평화를 누리던 것은 불과 몇 해에 지나지 않았다.	이같이 사탄이 백성들의 마음을 사로잡아 온갖 간악함을 행하게 한지라 저들이 평화를 누리던 것은 불과 몇 해에 지나지 아니하였느니라.	And thus Satan did lead away the hearts of the people to do all manner of iniquity; therefore they had enjoyed peace but a few years.
In this way Satan tempted the hearts of the people to do all evil deeds; thus the	And so Satan captured the hearts of the people and caused them to do all kinds of wickedness and they had	

people had not enjoyed peace for but a few years.	not enjoyed peace for but a few years.	
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The Church’s 2005 Translation

The 1967 translation of the Book of Mormon went through several editions. It was the book that thousands of Korean converts would read and second-generation saints would grow up studying at home and in church meetings. Eventually, the Translation Department of the Church began a new translation specifically translated from the 1981 edition of the English scriptures, part of a Church-wide initiative in which it re-examined all foreign language translations.⁹⁷ This process began as far back as the early 1990s.⁹⁸ The recent translation also coincided with a change in the Church’s name in Korean from *Maril Seongdo Yesu Keuriseudo Kyohoe* (“The Last Day Saints Church of Jesus Christ”) to *Yesu Keuriseudo Hugi Seongdo Kyohoe* (“The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day/Second-term Saints”). Not much is publically known about the history of this translation and the author was unable to obtain access to the Church’s records regarding this translation, despite repeated efforts. The changes in the text are considerable. Table 3 shows a comparison between the 1967 edition of the same passage from Mosiah examined above and the 2005 edition.

Table 3: Mosiah 12:11 Comparison II

1967 Edition	2005 Edition	English
당신께서는 뛰어 다니는 들짐승들에게 짓밟히며 시달리는	그리고 또 그가 말하기를 왕이 줄기같이, 곧 짐승들이 그 위로 달리며 밭 아래 짓밟는 들판의	And again, he saith that thou shalt be as a stalk, even as a dry stalk of the field, which is run over by

⁹⁷ Ross Cole to Nielsen, February 9, 2011, Ronald K. Nielsen Mission Papers, 2000–2011, MS 23933, Church History Library; see also Hugh G. Stocks, “Book of Mormon Translations” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism Vol.1*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 213-214.

⁹⁸ Grant and Nielsen, interview with author, April 25, 2014.

들판의 마른 풀줄기 같다고 말하였고	마른 줄기같이 되리라 하나이다.	the beasts and trodden under foot.
He said thou art afflicted like the dry stalk of the field which is trampled by the movement of wild animals	And again he says the king will be like a stem, even he will become like a dry stem of the field which is run over by beasts and trampled underfoot.	

Here is an example of how the 2005 edition tries to follow the English version’s grammar more closely, including initial clauses that would typically be dropped in early editions like, “therefore” or “and again.” It is interesting to note the use of dialogue here, where the 2005 edition gives the impression that Noah’s priests are actually quoting Abinadi directly which is a possible interpretation of the English.⁹⁹ Table 4 examines the 3 Nephi passage above more closely with the English.

Table 4: 3 Nephi 6:16 Comparison II

1967 Edition	2005 Edition	English
이같이 사탄이 백성들의 마음을 사로잡아 온갖 간악함을 행하게 한지라 저들이 평화를 누린 것은 불과 몇 해에 지나지 아니하였느니라.	이에 이같이 사탄이 백성들의 마음을 이끌어 내어 온갖 죄악을 행하게 한지라, 그러므로 그들이 평화를 누린 것은 불과 몇 해에 지나지 아니하였더라.	And thus Satan did lead away the hearts of the people to do all manner of iniquity; therefore they had enjoyed peace but a few years.
And so Satan captured the hearts of the people and caused them to do all kinds of wickedness and	And thus Satan drew out the hearts of the people and caused them to do all kinds	

⁹⁹ The use of the grammatical structure 말하기를 … 되리라 denotes a quotation rather than a paraphrase. This coupled with the use of 왕이 “king” rather than an honorific 당신께서는 “thou” argues even more strongly for a direct quotation.

they had not enjoyed peace for but a few years.	of iniquity, therefore they had not enjoyed peace for but a few years.	
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We see a much closer translation between the two versions, but again “therefore” 그러므로 *keureomeuro* is included in the 2005 edition to more closely align with the English sentence structure. Finally, Table 5 shows the omission of “and it came to pass” from a verse in Jacob (a book for which we have no Hong version) in Han and its inclusion in the 2005 edition.

Table 5: Jacob 7:26 Comparison

1967 Edition	2005 Edition	English
나 야곱이 연로하여지고, 이 백성들의 사적을 니파이의 다른 판에 기록해야 할 것이매 이 기록을 끝맺으면서	그리고 이렇게 되었나니 나 야곱은 늙게 되었고, 이 백성의 기록은 니파이의 다른 판에 기록되고 있나니, 그런즉 나는 이 기록을 끝맺으면서	And it came to pass that I, Jacob, began to be old; and the record of this people being kept on the other plates of Nephi, wherefore, I conclude this record
I Jacob, becoming aged, and since the history of this people which must be recorded on the other plates of Nephi, I conclude this record	And it came to pass I Jacob, became old, and the record of this people being recorded on the other plates of Nephi, wherefore I conclude this record	

The most recent version includes the translation of “and it came to pass” but also adds “wherefore” 그런즉. Even the redundant “I” 나는 at the end of the passage is included, which in this context is unnecessary in Korean grammar, but gives the 2005 edition a tight adherence to the English.

Conclusion: The Korean Book of Mormon and Translation

The story of the Korean translations of the Book of Mormon is much greater than commonly known. Delays due to illness, death, political upheaval, and printing concerns were just the highlights of the storms these translators faced. Many other players were involved in the translation and it is important for their stories to be told.

One of the major hindrances to the work was the inability of individuals to agree on a suitable translation. The earlier attempts were each set aside by later administrators and translators due to content and style, both subjective criteria. This sentiment persists today. Some of the older generation of Korean saints and early missionaries were concerned about the new name for the Church and the new Book of Mormon translation. Some even sent a petition addressed to the First Presidency calling for the reinstatement of previous versions of the name of the Church and the sacramental prayers.¹⁰⁰ However, as Joseph Stringham from the LDS Church Translation Department reminds us, “the only people who do not seem to be at all certain about what a perfect translation is are those doing translations.”¹⁰¹ Translation, at its core, is a human endeavour. We all translate the words of another and attempt to create meaning from those words, whether they are spoken in our own tongue or a foreign one. The translation of secular works is difficult enough, and indeed ultimately a work in failure as no translation can hope to be one hundred percent accurate. The translation of the sacred is even more problematic. David Tuggy, a notable linguist, maintains that the debate over the translation of holy writ “is probably fiercer . . . because of people’s perception that what is at issue is the very words of God himself. If someone is . . . playing fast and loose with God’s truth, that is worth fighting about.”¹⁰²

The epigraph gives the impression that Han was a sole translator. The real story is that he was the final contributor in a series of attempts that were considerably revised each time. Han

¹⁰⁰ Copy in author’s possession.

¹⁰¹ Stringham, “The Church and Translation,” 71.

¹⁰² David Tuggy, “The Literal-Idiomatic Bible Translation Debate from the Perspective of Cognitive Grammar,” in *The Bible through Metaphor and Translation*, ed. Kurt Feysaerts (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 239–281, 239.

himself acknowledged this. “I worked on it as a proofreader with Elder Nielsen” he wrote in 1967, “the translation that I worked on was Brother Cheong Dae Pan’s. . . . That was a good translation.”¹⁰³ The work of translation is not done in a vacuum. Every translator consults prior translations for inspiration and counterpoint.

Appendix: Major Events in the History of the Korean Translations of the Book of Mormon

- 1901 LDS missionaries arrive in Japan
- 1902 Kim Ho Jik born in Pyoung An Province (present day North Korea)
- 1910 Japan annexes Korea
- 1945 WWII ends; Korea divided at 38th Parallel
- 1948 Syngman Rhee elected first president of South Korea
- 1950 Korean War breaks out; American servicemen sent to Korea
- 1951 Kim Ho Jik baptized and returns to South Korea
- 1953 Armistice signed
- 1955 Northern Far East Mission created
- 1956 LDS Church incorporated in Korea; first LDS missionaries arrive in Seoul
- 1957 Dr. Kim and Chang Se Cheon begin translation
- 1959 Hong Byeong Shik assigned to the translation; death of Kim Ho Jik
- 1960 April Revolution; Syngman Rhee resigns
- 1961 Park Chung Hee coup
- 1962 3 Nephi Korean pocket edition published; Korea Mission created
- 1963 Park Chung Hee elected president
- 1964 Cheong Dae Pan assigned to the translation
- 1965 Han In Sang revises and concludes translation; treaty between Japan and Korea signed
- 1967 Complete Korean Book of Mormon published; Park re-elected president
- 2005 Church publishes new translation of the Korean Book of Mormon

¹⁰³ Han, “My Part,” 11.