AN ILLUSTRATED GUIDE TO KOREAN MYTHOLOGY

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to
Korean Mythology

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The *kut*, a Korean shamanistic ritual, is the origin of all Korean oral myths and is the prime mechanism for handing down myths to successive generations. It is certain that no Korean oral myths would exist today without the *kut*. Therefore, the *kut* is undeniably the mother of all Korean oral myths.

In the *kut* the shaman offers a sacrifice and begs the spirits to intervene to solve problems in people's daily lives. To solve a problem that is beyond one's capability, one must request a solution from a god. Koreans believed that all gods possessed different types of divine authority. It was important therefore for Koreans to know the particular divine authority(ies) of all the gods and the processes by which almighty power was obtained because they believed that only the right god would be able to solve their particular problems. Koreans chose to praise the greatness of a god indirectly by praising the process of obtaining almighty power. Thus, by knowing the process and praising it, Koreans believed that the god would eventually solve their problems. Consequently, Korean oral myths are focused on explaining the god's background stories.

As each person has a different background, so, likewise, all gods have different backgrounds. Different backgrounds mean that all gods have different forms of divine power; for example, there is a disease-curing god, an offspring-conceiving god, a god for the deceased, a harvesting god and a family-protecting god. Just as different experts were respected equally, all Korean gods were equally respected in their fields. Koreans viewed all gods as equal because they were there to solve problems in people's lives. Some myths, however, attempted to describe, albeit not very clearly, various rankings among the gods. A good example would be the Taoist King of Heaven, or the Buddhist Lord of Hades. Although they appeared as absolute authorities in some oral myths in which they could direct lower-ranked gods, it would not be a true representation of Korean oral myths. It is simply a result of the inclusion of Taoist and Buddhist stories in traditional oral myths. Therefore, in order to better understand Korean oral myths, it is important to set the premise that the total number of gods is equal to the total number of different types of problems that may occur in everyday living situations, i.e. a collection of all diversified figures and shapes are gods in Korean oral myths.

Korean's oral myths always described problems that gods encountered in the beginning, how gods endured and solved problems affecting the body, and finally ascended as gods. Therefore, Korean gods are qualified to solve
the problems of ordinary humans. That is the limit and the boundary of Korean gods. Korean gods do not demand or request a human to be a god. Gods in Korean oral myths always kept their distance until they heard humans crying-out for help. However, they expected to be treated well if they were called upon for help. If they were treated badly, they retaliated with a series of misfortunes or by taking humans' lives. Korean gods required rewards as much as they provided mercies. In other words, Korean gods turned into either good spirits or evil spirits depending on how they were treated.

How fair they were! Korean gods did not have a hierarchy as did Greek gods, but they possessed their own special fields that they fiercely defended when their authority was challenged. Furthermore, Korean gods either rewarded people or punished people based on how they were treated. So they would be considered the ideal gods because Korean gods always brought humanity and equality to bear in their minds regarding any decisions they might make. Korean gods, however, were not united because all gods appeared in different districts to achieve the same goal. Although it may seem strange, I am sure that you can understand Korean gods if you know that they displayed themselves differently through the kut in which they reflected the special characteristics of different districts.

This volume comprises twenty-eight shamanist myths from the Korean mainland and Cheju Island in addition to two non-shamanist myths. Twelve of them are translated here for the first time; Ch'ŏnjiwangbon'uri (Origin Myth of King Ch'ŏnji), Ch'ŏnggongbon'uri (Origin Myth of Ch'ogong, the Ancestor Gods of Shamans), Sukyŏngrang-Aengyŏnrangsinga (Shamanist Song of Suyŏng and Aengyŏn), Samanibon'uri (Origin Myth of Samani), Sinjungbon'uri (Origin Myth of Divine Gods), Yangimoksabon'uri (Origin Myth of Magistrate Yang), Sehwabonhwangdangbon'uri (Origin Myth of the Village Shrine in Sehwa), Ko Taejangbon'uri (Origin Myth of Ko Taejang), Torangso Ch'ŏngjŏnggaksi Nore (Shamanist Song of Scholar Torang and Bride Ch'ŏngjŏng), Wŏnc'ŏngangbon'uri (Origin Myth of Wŏnc'ŏngang), Ch'ilsongbon'uri (Origin Myth of Ch'ilson Goddesses), Ch'onjisu (Lake Ch'ŏnji).

Korean oral myths have been recorded by scholars and researchers for the past eighty years. In selecting myths for this book, I have chosen those that best illustrate the structure of Korean oral myths. All myths here have been retold according to their main plot and meaning because the original texts' songs by shamans are not easily understood by the layman and non-Korean readers, or even Korean readers and scholars. This is, in most cases, because of many obsolete words and obscure idioms, and shamanistic jargon in the myths. I have been careful, however, not to add new content in the process of retelling them. At the end of every myth, I have given the original title and the
source of the myth – the preceding source is the main text of each myth – and have explained difficult words or phrases in endnotes to help the reader’s understanding of each myth.

I owe a debt of gratitude to many individuals who contributed to the creation of this book. My English teachers, especially Nancy Schmidt and Sandy Bender, and Professor Roger L. Janelli (Indiana University at Bloomington, USA) provided me with valuable advice, and Aldred Benjamin (Graduate Student at Indiana University) contributed in important ways to this work.

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Introduction: Understanding Korean Myths

Many myths are inherited in Korea. Some people think of them as less interesting, since they do not have the well-organized hierarchy of the gods found in Roman or Greek myths. However, the most genuine way of transmitting myths is passing them on through the medium of short stories.

Even within the same ethnic group, myths tend to have slightly different variations. For example, in Korea, there are differences in the way of life between those living on the mainland and Cheju Island, and in turn, these differences generate different forms of myths. As such, our life tends to influence the myths we create, in one way or another. If this is the case, we can say that short stories naturally emerge at the beginning and then gradually merge to take the shape and structure of myths. We need to understand, therefore, that the variations in myths, do indeed, better reflect the reality of life.

Differences in myths found in many cultural groups in the world can be traced back to the specific beliefs or religions inherent in them. All myths, however, reveal essentially identical aspects, including fundamental questions regarding life and death which all human beings seek answers for.

Given this universal truth, we must ask ourselves the question: what is the best way to understand Korean myths, which share essential aspects with other ethnic myths, but are passed on in various different forms? The easiest way is by classifying and explaining them according to their similarities in the way the various gods function. The Korean myths sampled here from different regions, clearly demonstrate that there exist many variations describing gods who take essentially identical roles, but appear in different plots. It is difficult to classify them as different myths. Korean myths tend to focus on the role played by the god who is the protagonist in the story.

Accordingly, I would like to explain Korean myths according to the roles of the gods.

CREATION MYTHS: PHILOSOPHY ORIGINATES FROM MYTHOLOGY

Everything has its origin. Without an origin, nothing can exist. Man’s pursuit of origins can be said to be most sincere in myths and holy narratives that tell or try to tell all the origins. This is most apparent in the many attempts to explain the times when heaven and earth were not separated, especially since we have not experienced it. This is a continuation of unanswered questions: how the sky and the earth that we see everyday have been separated; why we
have only one sun and one moon; why we see the sun during daytime only and the moon during nighttime only; how all the stars in the sky were made; how all the creatures on earth were made at the beginning. Of course, these questions also include the origin of the human race. The creation myths address these questions as sacred stories.

Korean myths, Ch’angsega (Song of Creation), Ssaengut (A Shamanist Rite of the Shaman God), Ch’ogamje (The First of the Shamanistic Rites) and Ch’ônjitwangbonp’uri (Origin Myth of King Ch’ônjî), can be viewed as creation myths. Among these, Ch’angsega is the most creative in its mythological imagination. The separation of heaven and earth, the creation of the sun, the moon and stars, the origin of fire and water, the origin of clothing and cooking, the genesis of humans, and the fight over this world and the underworld are systematically organized and well presented in this story, which conveys the true essence of mythological philosophy.

For example, a chronological conception can be found here, in which the universe and mankind were created in the order sky, earth and humans. It also reveals a spatial conception in that the story begins with the separation of heaven and earth and ends with the separation of the world of humans. In other words, the creation gods who compete over this world and the underworld eventually split the world of humans. The perception of time and space is an essential component of philosophy. In this regard, the creation myth in Korea, which begins with the separation of the universe and ends with the separation of the world of humans, is an excellent philosophical text that most effectively reveals temporal and spatial perceptions.

FLOOD MYTHS: IMITATION AND VARIATIONS OF THE CREATION MYTHS

There are two typical flood myths in Korea. In the brother-sister intermarriage myth, mankind continued its existence through the marriage between a brother and sister who survived a big flood. In the Namu Tôryông (A Son of the Tree God) myth, Namu Tôryông played a similar role in the continuation of our history after a big flood. I will briefly summarize the story of the brother-sister intermarriage myth here, and continue to explain its implications. Once upon a time, there was a big flood and everyone disappeared except for a brother and sister. In order to determine heaven’s will, they climbed a high mountain and rolled a pair of millstones (or watched rising smoke signals merge in the sky). The upper stone rolled by the brother and the lower stone rolled by the sister met each other at the bottom of the hill. After finding the stones sitting on top of each other, the brother and sister decided to get married. Mankind was thereby able to continue its existence and thus our ancestors originated from this brother and sister.

The creation god creates order out of chaos in natural phenomena and human affairs. He separated the sky and the earth, split the sun and moon to create stars, made day and night, separated living spirits from ghosts and let them live in the present world and the other world, respectively. His guiding
principle is ‘creating by dividing’. In other words, he divides what used to be united, and thus creates something that used to be non-existent.

The principles of the creation myth are slightly modified, imitated and varied in the brother-sister intermarriage myth. The role of the creation god was granted to the brother and sister, the only survivors after the big flood. They violated the rules of conduct set by Sakyamuni in the pre-flood world and recreated the human race through brother-sister intermarriage. Depending on the situation, what used to be the order of things can cause complete chaos. This principle is inherent in the creation myth. A good example is ‘destroying multiple suns’, a typical mythological component in creation myths. In the beginning, two (or even more) suns were created by certain principles. However, after they violated the order of things in creating the world, they were eventually destroyed.

It should be noted, however, that the brother-sister intermarriage myth is about creation through combination, not about creation through division. Creation is about both division and combination, and this is the major principle in nature which surrounds us. Many plants reproduce by division, and many animals reproduce by combination. The outcome is identical in that they both result in the creation of new entities, but their mode of operation is entirely different. Therefore, whether it is through brother-sister intermarriage or not, it is impossible to completely replicate and imitate the principle of Maitreya in the creation myth.

THE UNDERWORLD MYTHS: THE SAME BUT STILL DIFFERENT SPACES,
THIS WORLD AND THE UNDERWORLD

Where will you be after death? According to Ch’asabonp’uri (Origin Myth of the Messenger of the Underworld) which has been told from generation to generation on Cheju Island, it is the underworld. There is a proverb: no matter how bad, it is still better to live than to die. But we are doomed to die eventually and the underworld is the place we will go.

Ch’asabonp’uri is the story of Kangim who is a death messenger from the underworld. He is the person who guides the souls of dead people to the underworld. He, however, was originally an officer serving Magistrate Kim Ch’i. Kwayangsaengi and his wife had killed the three sons of the King of Tonggyöng Kingdom to steal their money. The three sons were born again as the sons of Kwayangsaengi and passed the entrance exam to become government officials. But they died suddenly while they were greeting their parents. Kwayangsaengi submitted a petition about this suspicious death. Kim Ch’i asked Kangim to resolve the problem and Kangim threatened the King of the Underworld to resolve the problem. In the meanwhile, it was revealed that Kwayangsaengi had killed the three sons of the king of the Kingdom of Tonggyöng. As a result, Kwayangsaengi was punished and Kangim was invited by the King of the Underworld to serve as the death messenger of the underworld.
One of the most important things we need to note in this myth is that the underworld controls the death of people. In other words, people will go to the underworld after they die. Also even the King of the Underworld can be managed by an officer in this world. It is quite different from the commonly accepted image of a king who has the authority to preside over the underworld. In this world, we often resolve problems by threatening. Apparently, the underworld is not that much different from this world.

This point also becomes clear when Kangim goes to the underworld to chase the King of the Underworld. It is essentially the same as a dead person going to the underworld. Kangim asked Kilnajang, a messenger of the underworld, the way to the underworld and offered Kilnajang a cake as a reward. This shows that you can achieve your goal by being nice to others. In *Samanibonp’uri (Origin Myth of Samani)*, *Changja’uri (Origin Myth of Changja)*, and *Whangch’ŏnhonsi (A Skull God)*, people facing death manage to avoid it by bribing the death messengers. Are the death messengers from this world or from the underworld?

The underworld is different from this world. There is a boundary between this world and the underworld, indicating that they are indeed separate spaces. What is the boundary between them? It is Haenggi Pond. Kangim uses it as the entrance and exit in travelling to and from the underworld. Haenggi Pond most clearly represents our view of the underworld. Haenggi Pond is not a mere passage. If you fall into this pond (this is considered the vertical way), you will be on your way to the entrance road of the underworld (this is considered the horizontal way). This effectively reveals our view of the underworld, which can be vertical and horizontal at the same time.

**BIRTH MYTHS: FROM BIRTH TO AGRICULTURE**

What we should pay attention to in the birth myth is birth and agriculture. These are the main elements in the birth myth. The birth myth is closely related to women, since only women have the secret of reproduction. Thus, the three concepts of birth, agriculture and women (or goddesses) are the important keywords in understanding the birth myth.

*Myŏnginguksaengbulhalmangbonp’uri (Origin Myth of the Birth Goddess)* is the representative myth from which we can learn about the mythological imagination related to birth. There is an interesting story about competition between Samsinhalmang (or Samsŏnghalmang, that is, the Birth Goddess in this text) and Old Samsinhalmang (the former Birth Goddess in this text). They compete for the right of blessing a person with a baby. This is similar to the competition between Taebŭlwang and Sobŏlwang to take over the world. The competition involves making flowers bloom. The only difference is that Old Samsinhalmang plays fair in this story. Anyway, Samsinhalmang became the goddess who can give birth to people in this world, whereas Old Samsinhalmang became the goddess who can take dead children (in other words, who can bring disease to children and take their life away).
An interesting aspect of this myth is that they use a flower to bless a person with a baby. The gender of the baby and his/her success in life are determined by what kind of flower Samsinhalmang gives to each woman. Since Samsinhalmang has full control, she is a goddess of women who are supposed to give birth. The child's health is as important as the birth itself. Therefore, Old Samsinhalmang is also considered an important goddess. However, Old Samsinhalmang is a rather evil goddess who should be expelled from this world.

There are other myths which are related to the birth of children. These are Chesŏkbŏnp’uri (Origin Myth of the Three Chesŏk Gods) or Tanggalmaegi (Goddess Tanggalmaegi) and Samt’aegap’uli (Origin Myth of the Three Brothers) which is recited in Sŏngingut (A Shamanist Rite of the Shaman God) of the Kawnbuk region. Sŏngingut is for wishing longevity, success, wealth and the birth of sons. As such, Samt’aegap’uli is clearly related to giving birth. And even though they appear with different names, the common characteristic of the myths is focused on the ability of the goddess Tanggalmaegi to manage birth. Tanggalmaegi became pregnant after sleeping with a holy monk for just one night and gave birth to triplets. This shows the fertility of Tanggalmaegi.

**IS Tanggalmaegi ONLY ABOUT THE BIRTH GODDESS WHO MANAGES BIRTH?**

Tanggalmaegi gave birth to triplets. Considering its origin, the word ‘Tanggal’ means village goddess or valley goddess. Therefore, not only being a birth goddess, Tanggalmaegi is also a regional guardian goddess or an earth goddess. Since I believe that you can understand the meaning of regional guardian goddess, let me elaborate the nature of an earth goddess. Tanggalmaegi has the characteristics of an earth goddess in that she gave birth in a cave. It is just like seeds germinating after being buried in the ground. Since birth is creating new life, it is a wish for fertility and prosperity if one considers its relationship to plants and crops. Not only being a birth goddess, Tanggalmaegi’s role extends significantly to include the character of a production goddess. This is because the characteristics of the goddess have kept changing through history. This is evident in Segŏngbŏnp’uri (The Origin Myth of the Agriculture Gods) which is a representative agriculture myth.

An agriculture myth can be discussed within the boundaries of a production myth, since it is closely related to reproduction and prosperity. There is an example in which the agriculture goddess also plays the role of a reproduction goddess. When Chach’ŏngbi, an agriculture goddess, brought five crops from heaven to this world, Chŏngsunam, her servant, complained about starving. She instructed him to ask people working in the field to get food and determined the degree of fertility based on their response.
MYTHS ABOUT SHAMANS

Most Korean folklore is passed on by a shaman who performs a shamanistic ceremony called a kut. Shamans are thus responsible for transmitting myths. Shamans belong to a despised social class, so it is quite intriguing that they served as transmitters of myths which are sacred stories. We can find the answer to this question in the origin myth of shamans.

In ancient times, shamans belonged to the sacred class well respected by the community. This is quite different from their social status in modern society. Shamans even served as kings in the era we often call a theocracy. There is a story in Karakkukki (Memorabilia of Karak Kingdom), which is a section of Samgukyusa (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms, 1285) compiled by Ilyŏn. In this story, six chiefs gather at the summit of Kuji and conduct a dancing ceremony, waiting for a king to be chosen by heaven. As we can tell from their titles, these six chiefs are the heads of their tribe. At the same time, they were masters of ceremony, i.e. shamans.

Therefore, it is quite understandable that there should be myths about the ancestors of shamans, i.e. the origin myth of shamans. By claiming that they have sacred origins, they could elevate their status or consecrate their positions as the only group of people who can solve everybody's problems.

Ch’ogongbon’uri (Origin Myth of Ch’ogong, the Ancestor Gods of Shamans) of Cheju Island is a good example. Three brothers, Chetpugi, were born from the union of a monk and Nogadan’unga jimyŏngagassi and they later became the ancestor gods of shamans. We can imagine that the monk was originally a heavenly god worshipped in shamanism. When Buddhism was combined with shamanism, the shamanistic gods were replaced by the gods in Buddhism. In this regard, Ch’ogongbon’uri of Cheju Island is a myth in which a shaman is described as a great and holy one, something equivalent to the founder in the birth myth of the nation.

Princess Pari is also a great origin myth of shamans in Korea. Born as the seventh princess, she was abandoned by her parents. She became a shaman after she saved her parents from illness. Princess Pari is a great goddess who showed that those who struggled with ordeals in life can truly embrace them. The violence of her father originates from his unfulfilled desire to have a son. This is a typical model of violence in a male-centred society. Instead of complaining about it, Princess Pari embraced reality, and thus revealed her greatness. It is reflected in the fact that she obtained the ability to guide dead people to the underworld by visiting there herself. By showing that shamans can cure disease and guide the deceased to the underworld, this myth describes the shaman as a holy one who manages disease and death of humans.
DISEASE MYTHS: HUMAN-LIKE, BUT HOLY

Disease myths are about the gods who give all kinds of disease to us. The representative myth is Sonnimgut (A Shamanist Rite for All Sonnim Gods). Sonnim refers to smallpox. This is a dreadful disease which comes with fever and headache. A rash spreads over the entire body and people die or carry the pockmark scars from the disease afterwards. It is fatal to children. In the past, many children died from smallpox. That is probably why smallpox was called sonnim (guest). Guests are special ones who visit your home, so you should treat them well. At the same time, a guest stays for a short period and leaves thereafter. It is highly likely that people likened smallpox to a guest (sonnim) they wished to avoid.

The structure of the Sonnimgut myth is very simple. If you serve the god well, you will be granted longevity and happiness. Otherwise, the children in the household will suffer from smallpox or die. This is a very simple structure of confrontation. In this myth, it should be noted that the god who gives us disease also gives us good fortune. Even though you are not rich, your life will be great if you do not have any disease. If you serve the god well, you can avoid disease and also become rich. This is because the role of a god is not clearly perceived and a god is worshipped from a human perspective. Even disease gods who bring smallpox can give us longevity and happiness if they are treated well. Therefore, the role of gods becomes flexible depending on how we treat them. Even after we treat them well, we may not resort to them if we do not need them. However, a god never becomes angry about that. Humans look for gods, not the other way around. Therefore, it is not surprising that myths are all human-centred.

FAMILY MYTHS: BATTLE OF GODS TO KEEP THE FAMILY

There is a heaven god in the heaven and an earth god on the earth. Do not we have a god in our home? There are gods such as the House God (Sŏngju God), Door God (Mun God), or Kitchen Goddess (Chowang). They are well described in family myths, which tell how these gods became associated with houses and families. Sŏngjiup’uri (Origin Myth of the House God) or Sŏngjosinga (Shamanist Song of the House God) is a representative myth.

Sŏngju is a House God who controls the sadness and happiness of a family. This god is also called Sŏngjo God or Sangryang (ridge beam) God, since he lives on the ridge beam. He is the highest among the family gods and controls the blessing of a family from the construction of the house to the success of the family. In this regard, the Sŏngju God encompasses the concept of an ancestor god. If a god controls the happiness and blessing of a family, it should also be considered as an ancestor god. Sŏngju Tanji is a rice jar covered with Korean paper and thus is a holy body containing Sŏngju. Unpolished barley is kept in this jar until the harvest season and it is ground afterwards. Considering this, the Sŏngju God encompasses the role of a grain spirit god.
The role of the Sŏngju God was originally limited to guarding a family. The concepts of ancestor god and crop god have been added. In the myth Sŏngjup'uri, the Sŏngju God, Hwang Uyang, defeated So Chinnang who kidnapped his wife and regained the peace of his family. 'If the House God (Sŏngju God) is uncomfortable, the House-site Goddess (Tŏju Goddess) helps him feel comfortable. If the House-site Goddess is uncomfortable, the House God helps her feel comfortable. If a husband is uncomfortable, the wife helps him feel comfortable. The House God is the king of a family. The House-site Goddess is also like the king of a family. The husband is also the king of a family. The wife is also the king of a family.’ (This aspect is not covered in this volume). We can also understand from the quotation that this myth is focused on the relationship between husband and wife. As Hwang Uyang and his wife became the Sŏngju God and the Tŏju Goddess after they regained the happiness of the family, this myth reflects the wish that husbands and wives get along well with each other just like these family gods. The Sŏngju God reflects such a wish.

What mainly causes distress in a family? It is a third person intervening between husband and wife: a second wife, mistress or stepparents. In Sŏngjup'uri, a problem is caused by a man, but Hwang Uyang’s wife overcomes the problem by moral strength.

Munjŏnbŏnp'uri (Origin Myth of the Door Gods) is a family myth of Cheju Island. In this story, a second wife causes problems. The story is summarized below. Since this story is similar to Ch’ilsŏngp'uri (Origin Myth of the Seven Stars of the Great Bear), however, it is not discussed in this book. Namsŏnbi and Lady Yŏsan were living in poverty with their seven sons. At his wife’s suggestion, Namsŏnbi travelled to the country of Odong to sell rice. He met a girl, the daughter of Noiljedeugiil, and she tricked him into losing his money and selling the boat. He ended up living poorly in her shabby house. Lady Yŏsan had been waiting for her husband to return and decided to go to the country of Odong to find him. The daughter of Noiljedeugiil persuaded Lady Yŏsan to take a bath and killed her by drowning her in the pond. The daughter of Noiljedeugiil disguised as Lady Yŏsan, told Namsŏnbi that she had killed Noiljedeugiil’s daughter, and went back with Namsŏnbi to his hometown. The seven sons realized that she was not their mother. She faked sickness and hired a fortune-teller to kill them. Namsŏnbi was sharpening his knife to kill his sons and take their livers in order to cure his wife, when Old Magu from Mount Ch’ŏngt’ae visited Namsŏnbi’s to borrow embers. She heard that he planned to kill his sons to cure his wife. Old Magu told this to the seven sons. The youngest son Nokdisŏngin volunteered to take the livers of his six brothers. When he went deep into a mountain, he met his mother in a dream and received instructions from her. Nokdisŏngin gave the liver of a wild pig to Noiljedeugiil’s daughter. When she didn’t eat it, he broke into the room and complained to her. When the seven sons became furious and attacked her, she killed herself. Namsŏnbi also ran away, but was killed by being caught in chŏnnang (a bar that is layed at a gate). The seven sons...
obtained a revival flower from the Flower Garden in Sŏch’ŏn, put it on the bones of their dead mother, and fanned it with a golden fan. The mother became the Kitchen Goddess, the father became the Gate God, Nokdisŏngin became the Door God, the other sons became Generals Obang (five directions: east, west, south, north and centre) and Noiljedeugi’s daughter became the Bathroom Goddess.

Unlike in Sŏngiup’uri, the husband and wife in Munjŏnbong’uri did not reunite in a happy ending. But, it shows aspects of the family myth in that the husband and wife became family gods and the sons became the door god and the gods defending the five directions. Munjŏn is the Door God and it is also the title of the myth. It is also called the Protecting Door God, since it protects the entrance door against elements of unhappiness. It is worshipped in family events such as shamanistic rites, as well as in Munjŏnbin’yŏn (small shamanist rite of the Door Gods), which is a small ceremony to wish luck to a family at the beginning of a year. This door god resides in the vestibule. The Door God and the Gate God reside at the entrance of the house. The myth well explains the origin of the Door God. This myth is a story about a husband, his wife, seven sons and his second wife. Problems happened in the family by the intervention of the second wife and the gods of the family emerged after resolving the problems.

Ch’ilsongp’uri in Chŏlla Province is very similar to Munjŏnbong’uri. This myth describes the origin of the seven stars of the Great bear, not family gods. A family overcomes the malicious second wife and reunites. Compared with Munjŏnbong’uri, this is closer to a family myth. The Seven Stars are the gods who preside over everything on earth including the longevity of humans. Since people in Chŏlla Province worship this god for their children’s longevity and family affairs, the Seven Stars are gods who guard families.

HERO MYTHS

Hero myths are about heroes, but the meaning of hero changes from time to time. It becomes most clear when we ask ourselves what our heroes should look like. Our heroes are not those who destroy our enemies in the battlefield. It is not like ancient times when ethnic groups frequently engaged in war against each other. These days, athletic stars representing each country become true heroes when they excel in international competitions. Key players in world-class technological achievements are also thought of as heroes.

Who were heroes during the primitive days? It is highly likely that those who were knowledgeable about natural phenomena, such as why the sun rises or how the rain falls, might have been respected as heroes. Also, those who could control natural forces must have been considered as heroes. Normal human beings usually fall victim to the forces of nature, so those who had the knowledge and power to control such forces were embraced with great respect from the entire group. In human history, therefore, who were they?
Magicians, those who used magical powers to resolve problems, were heroes. In Korean Hyangga (Old Korean Folk Songs, 579–973), we can find Yungch’ŏnsa (seventh century) or Wŏrmyŏngsa (eighth century). They both had powers to solve problems in nature. Yungch’ŏnsa prevented a comet from attacking the Great Bear by chanting the Hyesŏngga (Song of Comet). When two suns appeared in the sky, Wŏrmyŏngsa chanted the Tosolga (Song of Tosol) to remove one. By our scientific standards, these stories are quite absurd. However, these people maintained high social status and received respect in those days. Evidently, they were continuing the pedigree of magicians from ancient times and, self-evidently, society still needed their presence.

Magicians also participated in wars in ancient times. People relied on them for victory in a war. It is probably the reason that heroes appearing in the Mongolian hero epic Janggar or Tibetan hero epic Gesar are also magicians at the same time. What does this mean? This means that magicians follow the pedigree of heroes and become heroes on the battlefield. This is also evidenced by the war hero Koenegetto in Koenegidangbonp’uri (Origin Myth of Koenegi Shrine) of Cheju Island. In the Songdang version that is an expanded Ch’ilildang version, he appears as a war hero. In the Ch’ilildang (Ch’ilil Shrine) version, he is a medicinal person who magically cures eye diseases, but in the Songdang version, he appears as a war hero who contained a riot in the country of Ch’ŏnja.

Just as a magician becomes a war hero, a war hero is also a culture hero. Culture heroes are those who feed the group by bringing in new livestock or crops. Securing food for the entire group is as important as protecting the group against attacks from outside. People took for granted that heroes respected by their entire group should be able to take care of at least such problems.

As we have seen above, there is more than one image of a hero. Depending on the situation, the image of a hero can overlap or be substituted. In addition, we also call those who stand against oppression to defend their own group as heroes, though their lives often end as tragic deaths. A good example is Yangimoksabonp’uri (Origin Myth of Magistrate Yang) or Ko Taejangbonp’uri (Origin Myth of Ko Taefang) of Cheju Island because they are described as resurgent heroes who met tragic ends.

Group, hero and times are three components that are closely related. As such, we can understand our current times through heroes in history and predict what kind of hero we are waiting for.
The Korean Gods

Maitreya and Sakyamuni: Genesis gods only appear in a large-scale shamanistic rite. Although they have Buddhist names, a general speculation is that they may have had other local names originally. Between these two creating gods, Maitreya was the principal god for creation. Maitreya led the Creation of Heaven and Earth and the creation of humans. In the creation of humans, especially, Maitreya used ten bugs in Ch’angsega and used clay in Ssaeng Kut. These two myths explain differently the creation of humans; the former represents evolutionism and the latter represents creationism. Sakyamuni, on the other hand, appears after Maitreya created the world and humans, but he is the one to take control of the world. Sakyamuni’s role is to explain widespread evil in the human world. According to the myth, evil is widely spread in the human world because Sakyamuni took control of the world by cheating. Versions of these gods include Ch’angsega (Song of Creation) and Ssaeng Kut (A Shamanist Rite of the Shaman God), which were inherited in Hamûng, South Hamgyông Province (now North Korea). Now we cannot sure of the transmission of these myths.

Taeb+yowlwang and Sob+yowlwang: Although they appear as So’nmuni and Humuni in some other districts, their roles as creators are alike. Their features as creators regulate the number of suns and moons in the sky and they get rid of the excess suns and moons. Also, they always compete to be the ruler of the living. The common plots of the story are as follows: Brothers bet on the ruler for the living, but the older brother Taeb+yowlwang won every time. Finally, the younger brother Sob+yowlwang suggested ‘growing the flowering pot while in their sleep’ and cheated his brother to win the bet. As a result, Sob+yowlwang became the ruler for the living and Taeb+yowlwang became the ruler for the dead. Versions of these gods include Ch’ônjiwangbonnp’uri (Origin Myth of King Ch’ônji), Ch’ogamje (The First of the Shamanistic Rites) and Sirunai (Shamanist Rite for the Village God and Goddess), which are inherited on Cheju Island and Kyônggi Province.

Scholar Kungsan and Bride Ilwól: Shamans used to worship the sun and moon as a side performance in a big ritual. They believed that Scholar Kungsan and Bride Ilwól became the sun god and the moon goddess, namely personifying celestial objects after their deaths. Although there are some simi-
larities to a narrative folk tale called ‘A Brother Became the Sun and a Sister Became the Moon’, the main body of the storyline is completely different. A wall painting during the Koguryŏ period (BC 1–AD 668) also revealed the impersonated sun and moon. Korean ancestors may have tried to describe the everyday lives of gods using the sun and moon. A version of these gods includes Ilwŏhnorip’unyŏm (Song of the Prayer to the Sun and Moon), which was inherited in Kanggye, North P’yŏngan Province (now North Korea). Now we cannot sure of the transmission of this myth.

**Princess Pari:** This goddess is also called Paridegi, Peridegi or the seventh Princess. Shamans performed this ritual to guide the spirits of the deceased to the underworld. The Princess Pari ritual is also known as Mangmuk Kut in Kwanbuk districts, Saenam Kut in Seoul, Chinogwi Kut in the Middle districts, Ogu Kut in Yongnam districts and Ssitkim Kut in Honam districts; though the names are different from one another, these rituals all are for sending the deceased off to the underworld safely. She is the goddess for the shaman’s origin. One of the shaman’s responsibilities is healing. Princess Pari became a shaman based on her healing ability because she cured her parents’ illnesses. Furthermore, she travelled between the worlds of the living and the deceased to guide restless spirits into the underworld. Therefore, she was respected as the goddess for the dead. Versions of this goddess include Parigongju (Princess Pari), Paridegi or Ch’il Kongju (The Seventh Princess) and can be found throughout Korea.

**The Three Chesŏk Gods:** They are worshiped in Chesŏk Kut (A Shamanist Rite for the Chesŏk Gods). Although the name implies a Buddhist god called ‘Chesŏkch’ŏn,’ this god governs keeping crops healthy throughout the season and ensuring the prosperity of farming. It also appears as the god of fortune or the god of life in a shaman’s ritual prayer songs. Its name was changed to Chesŏk God due to Buddhist influence, but its function as a harvest god in a farming society remained the same. Versions of these gods include Chesŏkbŏn-p’uri (Origin Myth of the Three Chesŏk Gods) or Tanggūmaegi (Goddess Tanggūmaegi) and Samt’aejap’uri (Origin Myth of the Three Brothers) and can be found throughout Korea.

**Tanggūmaegi:** This is a goddess in Chesŏk Kut. She is called Tankūmgaksi, Sŏjanglegi, Sijunagi, Sejunaegi or Chajimyoŋgaegi depending on the performing districts. ‘Tangkūm’ is a compound word of ‘tan’ and ‘kam’. The ‘tan’ means a village or a valley, and ‘kam’ means a god in the old Korean language. Therefore, ‘tankam’ means a village god or a valley god in old Korean. Assuming that a group of hunting or agricultural people settled down in a valley area to form a community, Tanggūmaegi was the goddess to protect the village. Therefore, she is the area protecting goddess or the village goddess. Also, she is the agricultural goddess who controls farm products and is the goddess of birth who controls conception and baby deliveries. Versions
of these goddess include Chesŏkbonp’uri or Tanggūmaegi and Samt’aejap’uri, and can be found throughout Korea.

**Saengbulhalmang:** This is a goddess on Cheju Island. She is worshipped during *Puldomaji (A Shamanist Rite for Inviting the Birth Goddess).* She always holds flowers in her hands, predicts pregnancies, and helps the birth and raising of children. Two other goddesses appear in another version of this myth; the Old Samsŭnghalmang goddess (the former Birth Goddess in this text) and Honhapch’önjakūmsangmanura goddess. The Old Samsŭnghalmang goddess governs the deceased, therefore she causes miscarriages and children’s illnesses. The Honhapch’önjakūmsangmanura goddess causes children’s smallpox. Therefore, originally these three goddesses seemed to be worshipped together as *Puldomaji* was performed. But because Saengbulhalmang (the Birth Goddess in this text) is a very important goddess for children’s health, mythologists generally agree that she stands out among the others. According to the myth, Saengbulhalmang governs a baby’s gender and life by her choice of flowers in the East, West, South, North or Centre. A version of this goddess includes *Myŏngjinguksaengbulhalmang-bonp’uli (Origin Myth of the Birth Goddess),* which is inherited only on Cheju Island.

**Kangim:** He is worshipped during a ritual for Siwang, the Lord of Hades. He guides the spirits of the deceased to the underworld. Although Siwang lives in the underworld, he governs all of the living and deceased. When a human’s natural lifespan expires, he orders his deputy to bring the spirits to the underworld. Kangim is one of his deputy’s names. Because Kangim originally lived in the world, but became a deputy of the underworld, he could reduce humans’ fear of death and the unknown life after death. A version of this god includes *Ch’asabonp’uri (Origin Myth of the Messenger of the Underworld),* which is inherited only on Cheju Island.

**The three Chaetpugi Brothers:** They are worshiped during *Ch’ogongmaji (A Shamanist Rite for Inviting Ch’ogong, the Ancestor Gods of Shamans).* According to the myth, the Chaetpugi brothers were the originators of the shaman’s law, invented the shaman’s instruments and tools, and performed the shaman’s ritual ceremony first. Also, the three brothers are respected as ‘Ch’ogong gods, that is, the ancestor gods of shamans because shamans on Cheju Island thought that the first shamanist ritual performance was invented by the three brothers. Furthermore, the three brothers are also called sammyŏngdu; sword, bell and a fortune-telling block. Cheju shamans seem to treat their tools as gods because shamen on Cheju Island customarily respect sammyŏngdu as their ancestors. A version of these gods includes *Ch’ogongbonp’uri (Origin Myth of Ch’ogong, the Ancestor Gods of Shamans),* which is inherited only on Cheju Island.
Namsaengi and Kōbuki Brothers: They are gods who care for sick children. Shamans in Hamhŭng, South Hamkyŏng Province (now North Korea), after they performed the ritual ceremony of the Namsaengi and Kŏbuki brothers, offered sick children to these gods. According to the Namsaengi and Kŏbuki brothers myth, they were handicapped from birth, but turned normal later in their lives and became gods after death, so shamans believed that these gods could cure sick children. Namsaengi and Kŏbuki are considered to be long-living animals in Korea, so, these animals are used as god-names in this myth which is also related to these gods’ function of curing sick children. A version of these gods includes Sukyŏngrang-Aaengyŏnrangsinga (Shamanist Song of Sukyŏngrang and Aaengyŏnrang), which was inherited only in Hamhŭng, South Hamgyŏng Province. Now we cannot be sure of the transmission of this myth.

The Sonnim Gods: They are worshipped in Sonnim Kut (A Shamanist Rite for All Sonnim Gods) or Paesong Kut (A Shamanist Rite for Sending Off All Sonnim Gods). Generally, they are also called Pyŏlsang, Pyŏlsŏng or Hugu Pyŏlsin and also include Munsin Sonnim, Kaksi Sonnim, Sijun Sonnim and Sidu Sonnim. In myths, the Sonnim Gods bring happiness to a person who treats them well and deliver disease (smallpox) to a person who doesn’t. This is a quite human-centred opinion because they will be nice or bad depending on the attitude of a human. The rite of the Sonnim Gods is always done in the patient’s home. The patient’s parents prepare for the event with the advice of a shaman who they consult a few days before the event. The Sonnim Gods are supposed to leave on horseback decorated with mugwort, and the coachman is a male. Versions of these gods include Sonnim Kut or Sonnim Kŏri. They are mostly inherited by shamans who live on the East Coast.

Chach’ŏngbi: She is a goddess who is worshipped in the shamanist rite of ‘Segyŏng (the agriculture gods)’. According to the myth, Chach’ŏngbi is the lover of Mundoryŏng in Munwangsŏng, the country of Heaven. She went to heaven to find Mundoryŏng and married him after she passed difficult tests. She suppressed a riot and was rewarded with five grains. She came down to the earth with Mundoryŏng and became the agriculture goddess. This kind of myth is called a culture hero myth. Similar myths are found in many nations in East Asia. In the culture hero myth related to the acquisition of crops, the story tends to elaborate the love story. A version of this goddess includes Segyŏngbon’uri (Origin Myth of the Agriculture Gods), which is inherited only on Cheju Island.

Chŏngsunam: He is a god who is worshipped in the shamanist rite of ‘Segyŏng’. In the myth, he was a servant in Chach’ŏngbi’s house. He eventually was killed by Chach’ŏngbi while he tried to threaten her. Chach’ŏngbi’s parents blamed her for this, so she brought reviving flowers from a Flower Garden in Sŏch’ŏn to revive him. He became one of the agriculture gods,
with Mundoryŏng and Chach’ŏngbi who came down to earth. Mundoryŏng became the upper agriculture god, Chach’ŏngbi became the middle agriculture goddess, and Chŏngsunam became the lower god. If you analyse the contents of the myth in more detail, Chŏngsunam is more like a livestock god than an agriculture god. According to the myth, Chŏngsunam became the god who is honoured in Mabulimje held in July. Mabulimje is the ceremony for Chŏngsunam, a livestock god to wish for fertility of horses and cows. A version of this god includes Segyŏngbon’uri, which is inherited only on Cheju Island.

**Ch’ilsŏng Goddesses:** They are snake goddesses worshipped in the shamanist rite of Ch’ilsŏng (a snake). They make people rich by protecting the grain in a jar. According to the myth, a daughter of a noble family had the baby of a monk. She was expelled in a stone box and arrived on Cheju Island. After that her body was changed into a snake and she gave birth to seven daughters. All the daughters were snakes. The mother and daughters became goddesses. The seventh daughter entered under a small shrine called chilsŏng nul behind the house and became the outdoor snake goddess (pugun ch’ilsŏng). The mother got into a jar of rice and became the indoor snake goddess who makes people rich by protecting their grain. This is a religious belief like t’ôju and sejun tanji of the mainland in which they became grain gods. The difference between Cheju Island and other regions is that the religion of snakes is closely related to the religion of agriculture and grain. A version of these eight snake goddesses includes Ch’ilsŏngbon’uri (Origin Myth of Ch’ilsŏng Goddesses), which is inherited only on Cheju Island.

**The Seven Stars Gods:** These gods are worshipped in the shamanist rite which describes the origin of the seven stars, the Great Bear. Because the Seven Stars Gods are believed to have the ability of managing longevity, mothers pray for their children’s longevity to them. This belief seems to reflect this myth’s contents that the second wife was caught while trying to kill the seven children of the first wife and was punished, and the seven children who escaped death became the Seven Stars Gods. This myth is similar to oral epics in the shamanist rite as follows: Salp’uri (A Shamanist Rite for Exorcising Evil Spirits) of Hamhŭng districts, Sŏngsin Kut of P’yŏngyang districts, Munjŏnbon’uri (Origin Myth of the Door Gods) of Cheju Island, but the story that the seven sons became the Seven Stars Gods has been told only in Ch’ilsŏngp’uri (Origin Myth of the Seven Stars of the Great Bear) of Honam districts.

**Onul:** It is not known in which shamanistic rite she was worshipped. The only known fact is that she is a goddess. Since we can see that she helps all kinds of life such as human, animal and plant, we can assume she is related to their welfare. The tale of a journey to seek for fortune, a type of folklore found throughout the world, is close to this story. The goal of the journey is to seek
happiness. Therefore this goddess can be considered as the goddess who brings happiness to humans. A version of this goddess includes Wŏnch’ŏngbŏnp’uri (Origin Myth of Wŏnch’ŏngang), which was once inherited on Cheju Island. Now this myth is no longer sung in a shamanist rite.

**Hwang Uyang:** This is a male god worshipped in the shamanist rite of Sŏngju (the house god). He is a Sŏngju god, that is, a god protecting the house. Considering the myth in which he appears, however, he is also a family god who takes care of the good and bad fortunes of the family. Family gods comprise the Sŏngju god who is a male, the Tŏju goddess (the house-site goddess) who is a female and ancestor gods. Among them, the Sŏngju god and Tŏju goddess are husband and wife. They protect the family and take care of their well-being. Indeed, Hwang Uyang reunites the distressed family by punishing So Chinnang who destroyed his family’s happiness by raping his wife. Versions of this god include Sŏngjup’uri (Origin Myth of the House God), Sŏngjubonga (Myth of the House God), Sŏngjosina (Shamanist Song of the House God) and Sŏngju Kut (Shamanist Rite of the House God), which are inherited in southern Kyŏnggi Province and Tongre in South Kyŏngsang Province.

**So Chinnang:** This is a male god appearing in the shamanist rite of Sŏngju. He kidnapped the wife of Hwang Uyang, but later was punished by Hwang Uyang and became Sŏnang. Sŏnang is a kind of god who lives at boundaries and protects the village. He resides in trees and stones villagers put at the entrance of a village, usually on a hill. In the myth, the Sŏnang god is punished by the Sŏngju god. This is probably because Sŏngju was worshipped by the ruling class, whereas Sŏnang was worshipped by those being ruled. The word Sŏngju literally means the lord of a castle. Castles were artificially built fortresses of a nation and centres for traffic. The ruling class living inside the castle governed people living in the valleys and fields. Versions of this god include Sŏngjup’uri, Sŏngjubonga, Sŏngjosina, and Songju Kut, which are transmitted in southern Kyŏnggi Province and Tongre in South Kyŏngsang Province.

**Koenegitto:** This is a male god worshipped at Koenegit shrine, Kimnyŏng village, Cheju Island. According to the myth, he is the sixth or seventh son of Soch’ŏnguk and Paekjutto. When Paekjutto was pregnant with Koenegitto, Soch’ŏnguk killed and ate not only his cow but also another’s. They broke up afterwards. Later, Paekjutto and Koenegitto visited Soch’ŏnguk, but Koenegitto pulled Soch’ŏnguk’s beard. As a punishment, he was put into a stone chest and thrown into the East Sea. Koenegitto was later married to the youngest daughter of the dragon king of the East Sea and suppressed a riot in the country of Chŏnja. He fought against many-headed monster soldiers in the battle. He returned to Cheju Island, deserted his parents, and settled down in Kimnyŏng village. This story fits into the typical cycle of a hero:
desertion – triumph – return. Koenegitto is an exceptional hero god in the myth of Cheju Island and his story has been transmitted as Keonegidangbop'uri (Origin Myth of Koenegi Shrine).

The Samgong Gods (Kangiyongsong, Hongunsoch’on and Kamunjangagi): They are a beggar couple and their daughter appearing in Samgongbop’uri (Origin Myth of the Samgong Gods). They are Samgong Gods or Chônsan’gachi Gods. The word ‘chônsang’ can be interpreted in two different ways. First, it means wasting fortunes through uncontrolled drinking or bad behaviour. According to Samgogmaji (A Shamanist Play of the Samgong Gods), people usher in the Samgong Gods and have themselves dispel all the evil spirits from the house. The couple expelled their youngest daughter Kamunjangagi, and soon became bankrupt. They were later invited to a banquet for beggars hosted by Kamunjangagi and dispelled all the evil spirits from the house. Second, it means destiny, occupation, habit or doom. There are good chônsang and bad chônsang: Kangiyongsong and Hongunsoch’on are bad; Kamunjangagi is good. Accordingly, the myth shows both bad and good chônsang. Meanwhile, if one considers this myth from the perspective of Kamunjangagi, it belongs to the ‘I Live Because of My Luck’-type story, which is closely related to ‘The Tale of Sôdong’ in Samgukyusa (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms, 1285). They seem to be somehow related. Samgongbop’uri, which is inherited on Cheju Island, describes these gods.

Kunung Gods: They are gods appearing in Pyölsin Kut (A Shamanist Rite for Non-shrine Gods) of North Kyôngsang Province or Kûn Kut (A Big Shamanist Rite) of Cheju Island, and also called Kunungaegam. They are deified war heroes, but they are worshipped as the guardian gods of villages in Kyônggi Province, and families or family groups on Cheju Island. Wang Kôn (877–943), King Kyôngsunsun (?–978), Chôi Yông (1316–1388), Lee Sông-gye (1335–1408), Im Kyông-up (1594–1646) are worshipped as Kunung gods in these provinces, and all are historical persons. A myth describing their feats, however, was collected only on Cheju Island. In the myth transmitted on Cheju Island, General Wang defeated the Dragon King of the West Sea at the request of the Dragon King of the East Sea and received an inkstone case as a reward. From the inkstone case appeared the daughter of the Dragon King of the East Sea, who married General Wang and gave birth to three sons. This story is very similar and thus closely related to ‘The Tale of Chakchego’ in Koryôsa (The History of Koryô, 1423) and ‘The Tale of Kôt’aji’ in Samgukyusa (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms, 1285).

The Igong God, Hallakkungi: He is a god appearing in Igongbop’uri (Origin Myth of Igong). Igong is his official god-name. The Flower Garden in Sôch’ôn frequently appears in other myths, and this is the place to grow magic flowers that determine the death or rebirth of humans. This is a garden
full of flowers of life, revival and death. Life and death are among the most fundamental questions in any religion. Hallakkungi is the god who keeps the Flower Garden concerning life and death. As such, he is the god who manages the life and death of humans. The story of Hallakkungi and his mother are closely related to the Buddhist narrative Allakkukt’aejakyŏng (The Scripture of the Prince of the Western Paradise) in Sŏkposangjŏl (Detailed Accounts of the Life History of Sakyamuni, 1449) edited by King Sejo in the Chosŏn Dynasty. Myths and Buddhist scriptures seem to have influenced each other. This myth is transmitted only on Cheju Island.
MYTHS ABOUT
COSMOLOGY AND FLOOD
Fig. 1 King Ch’ŏnjii: King of Heaven. After he dreamed that he had swallowed one sun and one moon, he went to Chiguk Castle to be wed to Lady Ch’ongmaeng and punished greedy Sumyŏng Changja there. He married Lady Ch’ongmaeng and returned to Heaven, and Ch’onmaeng gave birth to twins, Taebuyŏlwang and Sobyŏlwang. Courtesy of Kahoe Museum. Date unknown.
CHAPTER 1

The Formation of Heaven and Earth

In the beginning when the heavens and the earth were formed, Maitreya (Mirūk)\(^1\) too came into being. Maitreya decided to separate the heavens and the earth because they were joined together. So Maitreya placed the heavens like the handle of the lid of a kettle and set pillars at the four corners of the earth.

There were two suns and two moons in those times. Maitreya created the Big Dipper and the Archer from the torn pieces of one moon, and created the big stars and the little stars from the torn pieces of one sun.\(^2\) Maitreya ordered that the big stars take charge of the fate of the kings and their vassals, and the little stars\(^3\) take charge of the destiny of the people.

There was no cloth when Maitreya wanted to make clothes. So Maitreya plucked the vines of arrowroot which stretched from mountain to mountain, peeled their bark, boiled them and twisted them into thread. Then Maitreya wove a Buddhist monk’s robe by moving the shuttle up and down after he had laid a loom beneath the sky, and tied his warp to the clouds. The body of the jacket took a whole roll of cloth, the sleeve was a half roll of cloth, the outer collar took five feet, and the collar neck took three feet. Next, Maitreya sheared one foot and three inches of hemp to make a hat, but the hat did not

\[Fig. 2\] Stone-planks carved in the shape of the Great Bear on a dolmen being excavated in Ch’ŏngwŏn, North Ch’ungch’ŏng Province. Date unknown.
fully cover his eyes. Maitreya again snipped two feet and three inches of hemp to manufacture the hat, as the hat also did not veil his ears. Last, Maitreya sheared three feet and three inches of hemp. Only when it fitted perfectly, did the hat cover his lower chin completely.

All of the gods were eating uncooked food in those times, when Maitreya had an idea. They were eating raw grains of rice because there was no fire. Whenever he ate one som® or one mal® of raw grains of rice, Maitreya thought that it would be better to eat cooked rather than uncooked grains of rice.

Fig. 3 The Great Bear that was found on stone-planks of a dolmen (Fig. 2).

Fig. 4 The Great Bear on mural paintings of Koguryo (from Changch’ön 1st Tomb, Chipan). Fourth to fifth century.
Maitreya thought, ‘I can’t possibly live like this. I will have to discover the origins of water and fire because only I can do it.’

Maitreya captured a grasshopper, and put him on a chair reserved for criminals, and hit his kneecap with a stick three times.

‘Talk, grasshopper! Do you know the origins of water and fire?’ asked Maitreya.

‘I’m just a trifle that drinks dewdrops at night and basks in the sun by day. How can I know about it? I think you had better ask the frog which came into being earlier than I’, answered the grasshopper.

Maitreya thought that the grasshopper’s idea was good, so he captured a frog and hit its kneecap with a stick three times.

‘Listen, frog! Do you know about the origins of water and fire?’ asked Maitreya.

‘I’m just a trifle that drinks dewdrops at night and basks in the sun by day. How can I know about it? If you want to know, why don’t you ask a mouse two or three years older than me? Maybe he will know’, replied the frog.

Maitreya thought the frog’s suggestion was a good one, so he caught a mouse and hit its kneecap with a stick three times.

‘Say, mouse! Do you know about the origins of water and fire?’ asked Maitreya.

‘If I tell you, what will you give me as a reward?’ replied the mouse.

‘I will permit you to be in charge of all rice chests in the world’, replied Maitreya.
‘If that’s so, I will tell you. There are two stones, one is quartz, and the other is cast iron from Mount Kümjong. If you strike the two stones together vigorously, you will get fire. And there is a spring on Mount Soha. If you see the murmuring spring, you will find the origin of water,’ replied the mouse.

Finally, Maitreya thought about the birth of humans, once he knew the origins of water and fire.

Maitreya prayed to the heavens with one hand raised holding a silver tray and the other hand raised holding a gold tray. From the heavens, the heads of five bugs fell onto the silver tray and the heads of five bugs fell onto the gold tray. The five gold bugs grew into men and the five silver bugs grew into women. These men and women married, and mankind was started by these five couples.

Mankind enjoyed peaceful times eating one-som or one-mal of rice. But Sakyamuni (Sökga), who was descended from the sky, intended to steal Maitreya’s world.

‘This world is still mine, not yours’, said Maitreya.

‘Your world has already gone. Now I will have my world’, replied Sakyamuni.

‘If you want to deprive me of my world, we should see who will win in a contest, filthy, ignoble Sakyamuni!’ suggested Maitreya.

Sakyamuni agreed to the contest. So Maitreya suspended a gold-bottle with a gold-string and Sakyamuni hung a silver-bottle with a silver-string in the centre of the East Sea.

Before the match started, Maitreya said, ‘If my bottle’s string breaks first, the world is yours. But if your bottle’s string breaks first, it is not your world yet.’

Sakyamuni’s string broke first. But Sakyamuni demanded another contest.

‘Let the winner be the one who freezes the water of Sôngch’ón River in summer,’ said Maitreya.

Sakyamuni said, ‘I accept.’ Whereupon Maitreya performed ‘the winter solstice-rite,’ and Sakyamuni carried out the ‘onset of spring-rite’. Maitreya froze the river first, and Sakyamuni lost the contest. But again Sakyamuni demanded another contest.

‘After we set a peony on our knees we will lay ourselves down. If the peony flowers on my knees, this world is mine. But if it blooms on your knees, this world is yours’, replied Maitreya.

Sakyamuni agreed to Maitreya’s proposal. But tricky Sakyamuni like a thief took a light sleep, whereas Maitreya took a deep sleep. When night fell, the peony bloomed on Maitreya’s knee. When Sakyamuni saw it, he quickly plucked the flower and put it on his own knee.

‘You are filthy and base, Sakyamuni! The peony bloomed on my knee. You stole my flower to put on your knee. Because of this the flower will wither within ten days and even if the flower is planted, it will not last for ten years’, cursed Maitreya.

Maitreya was so annoyed with Sakyamuni’s devious behaviour that he
wanted nothing more to do with him. So, Maitreya decided to pass his world to Sakyamuni.

‘Filthy and base Sakyamuni! If the world becomes yours, every village will have poles for shamanic rituals, every family will have shamans,’ and every

![Image](image_url)

**Fig. 6** The origin of fire, the origin of water (Lee Chiyŏn. 31.8 × 40.9 cm. Mixed materials on canvas. 2004).
clan will have professional female entertainers, widows, rebels, and butchers. And of three thousand monks a thousand will become house-holders. If this happens, your world will go to the dogs.'

Just three days after Maitreya predicted this, a thousand of the three thousand monks became householders.

Maitreya ran away as soon as he saw them.

Sakyamuni and the monks looked for Maitreya. When they advanced into the mountains, there was a roe deer. Sakyamuni caught the roe deer and gave the three thousand monks the roe deer meat on three thousand skewers.

‘To eat the meat on three thousands skewers cut down the old trees on this mountain to make a fire’, said Sakyamuni.

At this time two of the three thousands monks got up and threw the meat away.

They each shouted, ‘I want to become a shamanist god!’

After they said this, they died at that place and later turned into rocks and pine trees on the mountain.

Because of this, people perform an annual sacrificial rite for the spirits of the mountains and streams on a mountain with raw rice and cooked rice, and people go to a mountain to enjoy a spring picnic.

The Original Title: Ch’angsega (Song of Creation)
The Source: Son Chint’ae, Chosôn Singa Yup’yôn (Extant Shamanist Songs of Korea), Tokyo: Hyangt’omunhwasa, 1930.

Notes

1 Maitreya: He is the Buddha of the future, and called Mirûk in the Korean language. Its original name and function may have been lost, adopting the form of Buddhism.

2 The act of getting rid of the extra sun and moon was black magic. Controlling the number of suns stands for preventing heat and drought, whereas controlling the number of moons stands for preventing flood.

3 Korean folks believe that these little stars called chiksŏng influence the destiny of a person according to his/her age.

4 Sŏm: Equivalent to 5.12 US bushels, 47.6 US gallons.

5 Mal: Equivalent to 4.765 US gallons.

6 A female shaman Kang Ch’unok performed Staeng Kut in which Mirûk created humans from clay.

7 He is the historic Buddha, and called Sŏkga in the Korean language. Its original name and function may have been lost in the same way as for Mirûk.

8 The East Sea: It is called Tonghae in the Korean language.

9 Shamans: In this sentence, they are females called mudang in the Korean language.

10 In traditional Korea, these women called kisaeng were singing and dancing in a drinking house.

11 In traditional Korea, butchers called paekjŏng were considered a despised class of people.
This god called a sŏngin or a sein in Kwanbuk district’s kut (shamanist rite). All myths about sŏngin are chanted in Sŏngin Kut or Ssen Kut. These pray for an old man’s longevity, a family’s prosperity, the birth of a son, property’s increase, etc.

Folk would go to the hills for a picnic and some traditional dancing in traditional Korea. And in some regions, pan-fried foods were made with flowers like azaleas and would be served.
When Taebiölwang and Sobyölwang were born, Ch’önji was the King of Heaven. At that time there were two suns and two moons in the sky. Because of the two suns and moons, people burned to death in the daytime and froze to death at night.

One day, King Ch’önji dreamed he swallowed one sun and one moon. King Ch’önji was certain that the dream was a solution for human suffering. So he went to Chiguk Castle to be wed to Lady Ch’ôngmaeng.

Although King Ch’önji visited her without warning, Lady Ch’ôngmaeng wished to treat King Ch’önji well. However, she was so poor that she did not have even a single grain of rice to cook for him. ‘I should borrow some rice from Sumyông Changja,’ thought Lady Ch’ôngmaeng. However, Sumyong Changja was a wicked man. When he loaned her rice, he mixed sand with it.

Fig. 7 The Sky God who rode a phoenix, holding a flag in his right hand (from mural paintings of Ch’onwangjisin-ch’ông of Koguryo. Sunch’on, South Pyongan Province). Fourth to fifth century.
So, Lady Ch’ongmaeng prepared a dinner for King Ch’ŏnji after trying many times to rinse the sand out.

Unfortunately, King Ch’ŏnji chewed sand on his first bite, and said, ‘Lady Ch’ongmaeng, how did you cook the rice? I chewed a grain of sand on my first bite.’

‘It wasn’t intentional, My Lord. I borrowed one toe⁴ of rice from Sumyŏng Changja because I didn’t have any rice to cook for you. However, he put hundreds of grains of white sand in the rice before he gave it to me. Although I washed the rice many times to remove the sand grains, there must have been some grains of sand left when I cooked it. That’s why you chewed a grain of sand on your first bite’, replied Lady Ch’ongmaeng.

‘What a shame, what a shame. He behaved monstrously,’ said King Ch’ŏnji.

‘Whenever we peasants borrow rice from him, Sumyŏng Changja adds either white sand or black sand, and he always gives an egg to gain an ox. This is how he accumulated his wealth. His daughter paid people rotten soy sauce as wages for working in the field while she kept the good soy sauce for herself. This is how they accumulated their wealth. Sumyŏng Changja’s sons are also

Fig. 8 Chŏngnang, a wooden bar set up instead of an entrance gate on Cheju Island. The householder shows herself/himself’s going out with two, three or four wooden bars; laying all bars across means the owner is not at home, putting down all bars means the owner is at home. In case there are three or four wooden bars, the owner can show herself/himself’s going out in detail; a short or long distance. Two long stones named chŏngjusŏk on both sides have holes to put the wooden bars in.
Fig. 9 The Fire God. Date unknown.
wicked. When they were instructed to give the horses water, they urinated on the horses’ feet. Then they cheated people that fed the horses water,’ said Lady Ch’ongmaeng.

‘A disgusting fellow, he is unpardonable. Call and send General Lightning, Messenger Lightning, General Thunder and Messenger Thunder. Also call the Fire God and General Fire and send them, too,’ ordered King Ch’ŏnji. Upon King Ch’ŏnji’s order, they blocked Sumyŏng Changja’s entrance, chŏngnang, and set fire to Sumyŏng Changja’s house.

King Ch’ŏnji ordered again, ‘Set up seven shrines at the very scene where Sumyŏng Changja’s house’s residents were burnt to death in the fire and have people worship them. Messenger Lightning and Thunder will be worshiped by people where the Fire God and General Fire are visited. Shove broken spoons up Sumyŏng Changja’s daughters’ anuses so that they will be transformed into red-bean maggots. Because Sumyŏng Changja’s sons would not feed water to livestock, let them be reincarnated as crooked beaked vultures, so that they can only lick water drops from their own wings after rain.’

After King Ch’ŏnji issued these decrees, he received a wedding date from a fortune-teller and was married to Lady Ch’ongmaeng on that day. The next day, King Ch’ŏnji said, ‘You will have two sons. You will name your first son Taebyŏlwang and your second son Sobyŏlwang.’

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Fig. 10 The Fire God (from mural paintings of Ohoebun Fifth Tomb of Koguryŏ). Fourth to fifth century.
‘Please leave me evidence of our bond before you go’, requested Lady Ch’onhmaeng.

‘Plant these gourd seeds on the eleventh day of January before you visit me, then you will know what I mean. Also, keep a piece of dragon-shaped comb with you, it will be evidence enough of our bond’, answered King Ch’ŏnjii. After giving her these instructions, King Chŏnji ascended to the Palace in Heaven.

As promised by King Ch’ŏnjii, Lady Ch’ongmaeng became pregnant and gave birth to two sons. Many years went by. The two brothers reached fifteen and went to a school where three thousand scholars enrolled to learn literature and archery.

One day the two brothers heard insulting remarks from the three thousand scholars, ‘Who is your father? You could be a son outside matrimony.’ Insulted, the two brothers promptly questioned their mother as to their father’s whereabouts, ‘Mother, please tell us. Who is our father and where is he?’

‘Your father is King Ch’onji, the King of Heaven,’ answered Lady Ch’ongmaeng.

‘Did he leave you anything as proof of this bond?’ asked the two brothers.

‘Your father gave me two gourd seeds and said, ‘plant these seeds on the eleventh day of January before you visit me.’ He also said ‘A piece of dragon-shaped comb would serve as evidence,’ then he ascended to the Palace in Heaven,’ replied Lady Ch’ongmaeng.

So the two brothers planted the gourd seeds on the eleventh day of January. Suddenly, the two seeds sprouted and the plant grew until the stalk reached to the Palace in Heaven. Making their way branch by branch, the two brothers climbed all the way to the Palace in Heaven. However, they did not find their father, merely an empty dragon-shaped chair.

‘A dragon chair, a dragon chair! This is a chair without an owner!’ cried the two brothers. Because they played roughly, they broke the dragon horn on the left corner of the chair. It fell to the ground. Since then, all Korean kings have sat on a dragon chair with the left horn missing.

At this very moment, King Ch’ŏnjii came in and scolded them, ‘Who are you to barge in and make so much noise?’

‘Our names are Taebyŏlwang and Sobŏlwang. Our mother’s name is Lady Ch’ongmaeng. We came here to meet our father, King Ch’ŏnjii’, replied the two brothers.

‘Do you have any evidence?’ asked King Ch’ŏnjii.

The two brothers gave him the piece of dragon-shaped comb. When King Chŏnji compared it with the piece in his possession, it was a perfect match. He said, ‘You are my sons.’ Then he asked how people’s life was on earth.

‘Because the earth has two sons and two moons, people burn to death during the daytime and freeze to death during the night’, replied the two brothers.

‘Is that so? I will give you two arrows and two bows of a thousand-weight
iron. Why don’t you shoot down one sun and one moon?’ ordered King Ch’ŏnji. Upon King Chŏnji’s order, Taebyŏlwang and Sobyŏlwang shot down the trailing sun and the trailing moon. The trailing sun fell into the East Sea and the trailing moon fell into the West Sea. Since then only one sun rises in the East and only one moon sets in the West.

When Taebyŏlwang and Sobyŏlwang solved the problem for those living on Earth, King Chŏnji gave them another order, saying, ‘Now that all human matters are settled, why don’t you brothers make laws for the living and the dead and take one each.’

So, the two brothers began preparing laws for the living and dead, but both wanted to control the law for the living. In order to resolve this Sobyŏlwang suggested a contest to Taebyŏlwang, ‘Why don’t we have a riddle contest to decide who is going to control the law for the living? The winner will take the law for the living and the loser will take the law for the dead.’

**Fig. 11** Ilwŏlbusang-do (a scene of the sun and moon rising in the sky). Folk-painting from the Chosŏn Dynasty. 18th–19th century.
‘Agreed! Let’s do that’, replied Taebyölwang, and asked, ‘Younger brother, can you tell me why some plants stay green throughout their lives, but some plants shed their leaves?’

‘Elder brother, among all plants, plants that grow short stay green throughout their lives, but plants that are hollow inside shed their leaves’, answered Sobyölwang.

‘My poor younger brother, don’t pretend to know things you don’t know. Both bamboo and reeds are hollow inside in every joint but never shed their leaves’, refuted Taebyölwang. Because the younger brother could not disprove the elder brother’s answer, the younger brother lost the first riddle.

Taebyölwang then asked, ‘My younger brother. How is it that grass on a hill always grows short, whereas grass in a valley always grows long?’

‘When rain falls during the spring time, rain washes dirt from the hill and deposits it into the valley, so grass on the hill grows short, but grass in the valley grows long’, answered Sobyölwang.

‘My poor younger brother, don’t pretend to know things you don’t know. Have you ever seen a man who has short hair on his head, but has long hair on his feet?’ refuted Taebyölwang.

Again, because the younger brother could not rebut the elder brother’s answer, he lost the second riddle as well. ‘Elder brother, why don’t we plant a flower to decide the winner? Whoever’s flower blooms will keep the law for
the living and whoever’s flower withers will keep the law for the dead’, suggested Sobyo̊lwang.

‘Agreed! Let’s do that’, replied Taebyŏlwang.

The two brothers went to King Pagu to learn how to grow seeds, and then went to King Chibu to get flowering seeds. They planted seeds in silver, brass and wooden pots. However, the results were no different. The elder brother’s pots were full of blooming flowers, but the younger brother’s pots were full of withered flowers. The younger brother suggested another contest, ‘Why don’t we bet on whose flowers will continue to bloom and whose flowers will fade after a long nap?’

‘Agreed! Let’s do that’, replied Taebyŏlwang.

The elder brother fell fast asleep as soon as he went to bed. However, the younger brother only pretended to be asleep. After confirming that his brother was asleep, the younger brother switched his flowers with the elder brother’s flowers and said, ‘Elder brother, elder brother, wake up and eat your lunch.’

Awakened by the younger brother’s voice, Taebyŏlwang noticed that his flowers and his brother’s flowers were switched. So he warned the younger

Fig. 13 Stone Statues of Tongja (young boy), holding flowers on his chest. 
Date unknown.
brother, ‘Poor brother, Sobyołwang! I don’t care if you take the law for the living. However, there will be many murderers and much treason in the human world. There will be many robbers. Men will be tempted by other men’s wives and women will be tempted by other women’s husbands.’ After

**Fig. 14** Taebiólwang and Sobyölwang (Lee Chi yön. 32 × 42.5 cm. Mixed materials on paper. 2004).
Taebyŏlwang spoke of these laws, he said, ‘I will prepare the law for the dead. The law for the dead is clean and clear.’

This is the story of the origin of the law for the dead and the law for the living.

**NOTES**

1. Taebyŏlwang: The suffix ‘wang’ means a ‘king’. Taebyŏl and Sobyŏl mean a ‘big star’ and a ‘little star’ respectively. Therefore, a literal translation would be a ‘king of big stars’ and a ‘king of little stars’.
2. The King of Heaven: in this myth, it refers to the heavenly god in Korean shamanism.
3. Changja: one who is wealthy or one advanced in age.
4. Toe: a unit for a volume, equivalent to 0.477 US gallons.
5. People on Cheju Island ask a shaman to perform the Pultchikatūm or Pulssigasim ritual at a burned house to comfort the fire god. They believe that the fire god from the King of Heaven will bring a house fire due to sins committed by people. Therefore, residents of Cheju Island practise a ritual to appease the fire god’s anger when a house fire breaks out.
6. Chŏngnang: a wooden post that crosses in front of the entrance to a house. It is set up instead of the main gate door on Cheju Island.
7. Many Koreans use this expression – Horojasik in Korean – for ill-mannered or rude children.
Lady Myŏngwŏl’s real name was Haedanggŭm. In the first year of their acquaintance, Scholar Kungsan brought up the matter of marriage with Lady Myŏngwŏl. In the second year he received a letter of acceptance. Then in the third year they were married. When he went to her parents’ house for the wedding, he found he had nothing with which to wrap the letter of matrimony. So he gathered the pieces of silk hanging at Kuksadang to wrap it. He found he had no box for the present of silk to the bride. Looking under the veranda he found an old wooden clog, and used that as the box for the silk. He found he had no horse to carry the letter of matrimony, so he loaded it on a rooster. And he married Lady Myŏngwŏl.

Scholar Kungsan stayed at his wife’s home for a few days, then returned home with his wife, and celebrated his wife’s first coming to his home. Thereafter, because his bride was so pretty, Scholar Kungsan could not bear to leave her and so couldn’t work for a living.

One day Bride Myŏngwŏl told her husband, ‘Go and gather firewood today.’ But Scholar Kungsan said, ‘I cannot go to gather firewood.’ ‘Why can’t you go?’ asked Bride Myŏngwŏl. ‘I can’t go and leave you behind’, replied Scholar Kungsan. ‘I will paint you a picture of me’, said Bride Myŏngwŏl.

And when Bride Myŏngwŏl had painted the picture, Scholar Kungsan took it with him when he went to gather firewood. While he was gathering firewood, he hung it on a branch so he could cut some wood. But when he looked at the picture, a violent wind arose and the picture flew away, landing downriver at the house of Scholar Pae.

When Scholar Pae saw the picture, he exclaimed, ‘How beautiful she is, Bride Myŏngwŏl from upriver!’ Scholar Pae filled a boat with gold ore and went to play chess with Scholar Kungsan.

‘I can’t play, because I have nothing to put at stake’, said Scholar Kungsan. ‘If I lose, I will give you a shipload of gold ore. If you lose, you will give me your wife’, said Scholar Pae.

Scholar Kungsan agreed, but when they played, he lost three games three times. There was nothing to be done about it, he had to give away his wife. He went home, spread his bed, and would neither get up nor eat.
‘Why won’t you eat your food?’ asked Bride Myōngwŏl.

‘I played chess with Scholar Pae from downriver. He came with a shipload of gold ore, and if Scholar Pae lost he said he would give me the shipload of gold ore, and if I lost I said I would give him my wife. And I lost. It’s because I will lose you that I am like this’, said Scholar Kungsan.

‘Great! Wonderful! Fine! It will be better to live with someone who has so much, instead of Scholar Kungsan, who has nothing’, said Bride Myōngwŏl.

Scholar Kungsan cried even louder.

‘Look here, my husband, listen to my words! When Scholar Pae comes to take me away, we shall dress up the oldest servant girl of our house in all my finery and you, my husband, will joke with her. I, walking with a limp, hiding my eyes, with an old skirt on, will go to draw water. Then he will be fooled and take the servant along. Now eat your food!’ said Bride Myōngwŏl.

As soon as Scholar Kungsan heard this he cried, ‘Great! Wonderful! Fine! Oh, my dear wife, where does this idea come from? Does it come from your heart? Does it come from your kidneys? Great! Wonderful! Fine!’

Then Scholar Pae from downriver came to take Bride Myōngwŏl.

When he demanded that she be given to him, Scholar Kungsan pointed to the girl with whom he had been joking and said, ‘Here, take her with you!’

Then Scholar Pae looked at her and said, ‘No, I cannot do it. If I take your wife with whom you are supposed to grow old and live a hundred years, you will resent me. Therefore you should give me the servant girl who goes to draw water, down there in the yard.’

There was nothing to be done; Scholar Pae went to take Bride Myōngwŏl with him.

But Bride Myōngwŏl said, ‘Give me but five days, then I will go with you.’

‘Do as you wish’, said Scholar Pae.

When he had gone, during these five days, Bride Myōngwŏl slaughtered a cow, cut thin strips of meat and dried them, and used these to pad Scholar Kungsan’s trousers and jacket. In his collar she put a spool of silk thread and a pack of needles.

Then Scholar Pae came to take her away. He said to her, ‘Now we two will live together. Let’s take Scholar Kungsan with us and leave him on an island.’

‘Let’s do so, then’, replied Bride Myōngwŏl.

So they took Scholar Kungsan along and left him on an island. Because he had nothing at all to eat he tore open his clothes, and found the beef jerky. After he had eaten the jerky, he again had nothing to eat and so with the silk thread and the needles he made a fishing line and fishhooks and kept himself alive by fishing.

Scholar Kungsan was keeping himself alive when a crane from heaven alighted and laid her eggs. After the eggs hatched, the mother crane was arrested because she had committed an offence against the King of Heaven and the baby cranes were left to starve. But Scholar Kungsan caught fish, and fed the baby cranes. The mother crane, cleared of charges, returned and
found that Scholar Kungsan had saved her chicks. Because her gratitude was boundless, she carried him on her back to land.

On his return, with nothing to his name, Scholar Kungsan became a wandering beggar.

At the house of Scholar Pae, Bride Myōngwŏl did not speak or laugh.

‘Why, my wife, don’t you speak?’ said Scholar Pae.

‘Please, fulfil my dearest wish’, replied Bride Myōngwŏl.

‘What is it you wish?’ asked Scholar Pae.

‘If you prepare a three-day beggar’s banquet, I will speak’, replied Bride Myōngwŏl.

‘A three-day beggar’s banquet we shall have’, said Scholar Pae.

Scholar Kungsan, who had become a beggar, came to the banquet.

On the first day he sat at the far end, while the food was served from the near end. As they were short one serving table, Scholar Kungsan got nothing to eat. The following day he sat at the near end, while the food was served from the far end, and again they were short one serving table and he got nothing to eat. The next day he sat in the middle while the food was served from the left and right, and again they were one serving short, and he got nothing to eat.

‘This wretched fate of mine, what kind of fate is this? One year I lose my wife, the second year I become a beggar, and the third year I don’t get anything to eat even at a beggar’s banquet!’ sighed Scholar Kungsan.

When Bride Myōngwŏl looked at the three-day banquet, she saw that one

Fig. 15 The Sun God and the Moon Goddess (from mural paintings of Ohoebun Fifth Tomb of Koguryŏ). Fourth to fifth century.
beggar had got nothing to eat. So she prepared a special table and said, ‘Give
this to the beggar who got nothing to eat at the three-day banquet!’ Scholar
Kungsan received a special table and after he had eaten his fill, he put what
was left into a straw bag. He put the bag on his back and started to leave.

At that point Bride Myōngwŏl said, ‘I will throw this pearl jacket (kusilot)
down, if anyone can pull up the collar, put up the neckband right and wear it,
he will be my husband, even if he is a beggar.’

All the beggars tried to put it on, but could not. Scholar Kungsan put up
the neckband right, pulled up the collar, and put it on. He then flew up into
the sky among the white clouds and came down again.

‘I, too, will try it on’, said Scholar Pae.

He had learned the trick of putting the feather jacket on, but not the trick
of taking it off. He floated in the sky among the white clouds, but because he
could not take off the pearl jacket, he could not come down and died there
among the clouds, turning into a black-eared kite.

Scholar Kungsan and Bride Myōngwŏl lived together again and when they
died, their spirits became the gods of the sun and the moon.4

The Original Title: Illwŏlnorip’unciom (Song of the Prayer to the Sun and Moon)
The Source: Son Chint’aee, Chosŏn Mgyŏk’i Singa, 4 (Shamanist Songs of Korean,
4), Ch’ŏngguhakch’ong, vol. 28, 1937.

NOTES

1 Kuksadang: This shrine was called Mokmyŏksinsa (Mokmyŏk Shrine) in Chosŏn
dynasty, and it was on the summit of Mount Mokmyŏk (the present Namsan). After the
first king of the Chosŏn dynasty chose Hanyang as the capital of the country, he ordered
Mokmyŏk Shrine to be built to protect Hanyang along with Pukak Shrine. Now it is in
Inwangsan, Sŏdaemun-gu Hyŏnjŏ-dong, Seoul.

2 It was called agwi or sinhaeng when the bride first came to her husband’s home. The
bride’s parents sent various kinds of rice cake, meat, alcoholic drinks, etc. to their son-in-
law’s home.

3 The King of Heaven: In this myth, it refers to the heavenly god’s name,
Okhwangsangje, in Taoism.

4 This myth was translated by consulting an existing translation; Seo Dae Seok. Myths of Korea
(Somerset: Jimoondang International, 2000). In the process of my work, I
corrected some errors and omissions that were found in the existing translation.
CHAPTER 4

Origin of the Seven Stars of the Great Bear

Once upon a time, in Ch’ónhagung (the Galaxy Palace) lived Mr Ch’ilsŏng, who was seventeen, and in Chihagung (the Earth Palace) lived Ms Oknyŏ, who was sixteen. Ms Oknyŏ proposed marriage once, but Mr Ch’ilsŏng was not at all interested. After she proposed a second and then a third time, he accepted it as fate.

After sending the document in which the four pillars of the birth year, month, day and hour of the bridegroom-to-be are written to the house of his fiancé,1 and choosing an auspicious day, Mr Ch’ilsŏng was to be married.

Extravagantly dressed with a huge sunshade to the right and a big pole to the left, he gallantly crossed the rainbow towards his bride’s home.2 He arrived, looked into the marriage ceremony hall, and found it splendidly decorated and prepared. Folding screens were spread on the left and right, a tent was set up, all kinds of flowers were arranged, and a chicken and rooster were prepared on the table.3 Arriving at the ceremonial hall, Mr Ch’ilsŏng drank the nuptial wine,4 then entered the decorated room, and consummated his marriage with Ms Oknyŏ.

But after ten years of marriage they had no children.

One day, Mr Ch’ilsŏng said to Mrs Oknyŏ, ‘Dear wife, other people my age have sons and daughters, and raise them well. We have none, so let us bear offspring through devotion.’

The couple made offerings to the Buddha, built a shrine dedicated to the Big Dipper in the back garden, and prayed sincerely for three months and ten days.

One evening, Mrs Oknyŏ had an auspicious dream. Seven stars fell at her feet and when she gathered them in her skirt to look at them, she woke up from the dream. From the fifteenth day of that month, she showed signs of pregnancy, and after ten months, there were signs of labour. After praying with devotion to the Birth Grandmother for an easy labour, she gave birth to a boy as easily as a boat gliding over ice. After the boy came out they waited for the afterbirth but instead another boy came out. Again, they waited for the afterbirth and yet another baby came out. Again it was a son. In this way she continued to give birth to four, five, six, seven babies.

When Mr Ch’ilsŏng heard a voice from outside saying, ‘Tell Mr Ch’ilsŏng that all of his offspring are born,’ Mr Ch’ilsŏng asked a maid, ‘Has she given birth to a boy?’

‘Yes, she has’, said the maid.
Mr Ch’ilsŏng was joyous, so he hurried into the delivery room to record the birth year, month, day, and hour of birth with charcoal and paper. Mrs Oknyŏ and seven children were lying side-by-side on the floor. Mr Ch’ilsŏng saw this and stepping back said, ‘Even the lower animals say that more than two offspring is too many. But how can a human give birth to seven on one umbilical cord? I cannot raise them. I haven’t enough milk or rice.’

Mr Ch’ilsŏng abandoned his wife right then and there, went up to the country of heaven, and remarried.

‘How can I part from my husband overnight and raise fatherless children?’ Mrs Oknyŏ heaved a sigh, so she went to the Evergreen Waters to offer the children as food for the Dragon King, but suddenly the sky rumbled and someone called her, ‘Mrs Oknyŏ, those offspring are sent by heaven. Even if you put them in water or fire, they will not die and will grow up on their own. If you throw them out here, you will become a cripple. So hurry back. If you feed them three spoonfuls of porridge at night and milk seven times during the day, you will see a difference each day.’

After listening to this, Mrs Oknyŏ returned home, made pillows stuffed with black sand, and laid the babies here and there on a blue yarn coverlet. When she gave them three spoonfuls of porridge at night and fed them milk begged from others seven times during the day, the babies grew up quickly and she saw a difference each day. In this fashion, fifteen years passed and all of the children reached the age of fifteen.

One day, the children came together and told their mother, ‘Mother, if we don’t study letters, we will become common ingnorant people. Please, teach us letters.’ So Mrs Oknyŏ enrolled them at a village school where they learned to read and write.

One day in spring, while the schoolteacher was sightseeing in the mountains, the students teased the seven children by saying they were bastards without a father. The seven children were startled and came home crying, ‘Mother, if father is dead, tell us where his grave is. If he is alive, tell us where he went.’

To this the mother replied, ‘Look, my children, how can I deceive you now? Your father was shocked that I bore seven children in one womb, so he went up to Ch’ŏnhagung and remarried.’

‘Mother, we will go and look for our father,’ said the seven children.

Accordingly, the mother prepared for them seven pairs of trousers, seven shirts and seven pairs of lined socks and shoes, and the children set off on their journey. As she watched the children going further and further away, Mrs Oknyŏ was dumbfounded and waited for the return both of her lost husband and now her offspring as well.

The seven children went up to Ch’ŏnhagung and asked a passer-by, ‘Which is the house of the man who was married to Chihagung, but came here and remarried?’

‘It is the house with the blue-tiled-roof over there’, said the passer-by.

The seven children arrived at the blue-tiled house and watched from the
entrance. Mr Ch’ilsong lived without a care in the world in the big house built in the middle of the street with windbells hung on the four corners.

‘We have come to pay our respects, father,’ said the seven children as they greeted him.

Mr Ch’ilsong heard them and said, ‘This is a place not even flying birds or crawling insects can enter. How did you find this place? Are you human beings or ghosts? If you are human beings, enter. If you are ghosts, leave now.’

The seven children entered and said, ‘Father, we have come to pay our respects. We seven brothers have grown up, as you can see, even in your absence.’

Mr Ch’ilsong welcomed them, ‘My offspring. You have found me.’

One day, the stepmother summoned each of the seven children and said, ‘Should I build you a reading hall, or teach you your letters, or let you pass the civil service examination? Even if you were my own offspring, I could not love you more.’

‘Stepmother, please build us a reading hall’, said the seven children.

After erecting the hall, Mr Ch’ilsong taught his seven children their letters and they studied well. Mr Ch’ilsong concentrated only on their studies and came to neglect all housekeeping matters.

One day, the stepmother was lonely and miserable and thought, ‘Because of the first wife’s children, the house will be ruined and even my relationship with my husband will be severed. What should I do?’ Finally the stepmother became ill night and day because of her pent-up anger, and she complained of her lot in life, ‘Ah, my fate! If his first wife fell ill, they would have at least visited a fortune-teller to save her. But since I have fallen ill, they ignore me. The second wife is useless.’

Mr Ch’ilsong heard this and was startled. Entering the room he asked, ‘Are you ill? Let us send someone to the pharmacy and even visit the fortune-teller to cure your illness.’

While Mr Ch’ilsong was sorting out the fortune-teller’s fee, the stepmother left the house and took a short-cut to the fortune-teller.

‘Fortune-teller, are you there?’ asked the stepmother.

‘Has someone come to visit?’ said the fortune-teller.

‘It is me’, said the stepmother.

The fortune-teller opened the door, welcomed the stepmother, saying, ‘What brought you here?’

‘If Mr Ch’ilsong comes to have his fortune told, do not say anything except that reading the Buddhist scriptures, performing a shamanist rite, or taking a drug is useless. Say that the illness is because the seven human beings came from the east, and I will be cured if I am fed the livers of the seven children’, said the stepmother.

The fortune-teller heard this and replied, ‘I cannot fabricate such a fortune. Do you not fear the punishment you will receive for killing seven lives?’

‘We can share the slaves and the paddy fields. I will give you half my fortune’, the stepmother tempted him.
After the stepmother said this, she took off her phoenix hairpin, her gold and jade rings, and gave them to the fortune-teller. After the stepmother left, Mr Ch’ilso-ng arrived. He entered at once and asked, ‘Fortune-teller, are you there?’ ‘Who comes to visit me?’ said the fortune-teller. ‘My wife is ill so I’ve come to have her fortune told’, said Mr Ch’ilso-ng. The fortune-teller opened the door, went out to receive Mr Ch’ilso-ng, and entered. After the fortune-teller positioned his table and threw the yarrow sticks, he said, ‘I cannot tell this fortune.’ Mr Ch’ilso-ng heard this and said, ‘Tell me what you can.’ The fortune-teller divided the yarrow sticks, read the fortune, and said, ‘She became ill because the seven human beings came from the east. Reading the Buddhist scriptures, performing a shamanist rite, or taking a drug, all these are useless. She can only be cured if you feed her the livers of the seven children. These sons are sons only in name. So if you kill all of them, they will be born again as three brothers from one umbilical cord who will become ministers of state.’ After hearing this, Mr Ch’ilso-ng came out of the fortune-teller’s house and sadly lamented to himself, ‘What should I do? What should I do with my seven children who are so good?’ When Mr Ch’ilso-ng did not return home even by the time the seven children had finished their studies for the day and eaten their dinner. They said, ‘Father still has not returned, so let us seven brothers go find him.’ And they went here and there searching for their father. While they were searching, a mournful cry sounded. ‘Brothers, our father is crying. Let us hurry.’ When they found him, Mr Ch’ilso-ng was crying absentmindedly. ‘Father, let us hurry home’, said the seven children. As the seven children took Mr Ch’ilso-ng home, they asked, ‘Father, what of the divination? Did the fortune-teller say mother would pass away?’ ‘My seven sons, if it were said that your mother is to pass away, why would I grieve like this?’ And he related the entire story of what the fortune-teller had said. The seven children stopped and consoled their father, ‘Father, let us feed our livers to mother and save her. Parents, once gone, never return, but children can be born again. Do not worry. Let us return home.’ On their return home, they were about to cross a hill when a deer suddenly appeared and blocked the way. ‘Deer, we are on our way to do important work, do not block us. Move aside’, said Mr Ch’ilso-ng. But the deer stood firmly and said, ‘Mr Ch’ilso-ng, I devoted myself to obtain these sons. What do you think you are doing killing them now? When I gave birth to them, you abandoned me and went up to the country of heaven to remarry. Then my seven sons left to look for their father. Losing my husband and then my sons, I became a mountain deer to save my offspring.’ When the deer told the seven children to step back, they all suddenly
disappeared from sight. And the deer took out seven livers to give Mr Ch’ilsŏng, saying, ‘Put these seven livers through the front gate and watch what the stepmother does through the back gate.’

After the deer said this, she also suddenly disappeared from sight.

Mr Ch’ilsŏng carried the seven livers in his hands and returned to the house. When he put them through the front gate and watched from the back gate, the stepmother held the seven livers in her hand, touched them lightly to her lips, threw them away in the barn, and said, ‘Seven children, you are pitiful. If I gave birth to seven babies, I would feed and clothe them well.’

After six days the stepmother was completely cured.

‘Since seven lives have died to save my life, I need a purifying rite to cleanse the spirits of the seven children’, the stepmother said to herself, so she prepared all kinds of food for the purifying rite.

At this time, a woodcutter carrying an A-frame backpack up the mountain said to himself, ‘Pitiful seven children. Now they are dead and buried in the mountain. There is the purifying rite for you. Even in spirit, return to your home.’

The seven children heard this and ran home in a hurry. They arrived home and entered the main gate, saying, ‘We have come to visit our father and mother.’

The gatekeeper was surprised and uttered a spell, ‘If you are ghosts, depart! If you are human beings, enter!’

When the seven children entered the main gate, they said, ‘Father, we came to pay our respects.’

‘How can this be when our sons are dead? You are not our sons’, exclaimed Mr Ch’ilsŏng.

‘Father, we have come to pay our respects,’ the seven children repeated.

‘Children, are you ghosts or human beings?’ asked Mr Ch’ilsŏng.

‘We are human beings’, replied the seven children.

‘If you are my sons, go out, wear big wooden clogs, and enter the house without a trace’, said Mr Ch’ilsŏng.

The sons did as they were told.

‘God bless me! You are ghosts come to harm me,’ Mr Ch’ilsŏng still suspected them.

‘Father, let us cut our fingers and collect our blood as proof’, said the seven children.

Among many witnesses, they cut their fingers and bled onto a plate filled with water. Mr Ch’ilsŏng’s blood became bones and the blood of the seven children became flesh to congeal together.

Then Mr Ch’ilsŏng ran and hugged the seven children and said, ‘Ah, my sons! I thought you had become ghosts when you disappeared from sight, but you are alive.’

At this time, the stepmother came in from outside, saw the very seven children who she believed were already dead. She pretended to be sick again, giving a cry of pain towards Mr Ch’ilsŏng, ‘I became sick because the seven
human beings came from the east. Nevertheless, you didn’t feed me their livers. Ouch! My head hurts me. Ouch! My bowels hurt me.’

Then Mr Ch’ilso’ng realized completely for the first time how wicked she was. He then looked at her, saying, ‘Take that wicked and impudent woman outside at once and kill her with arrows.’

‘Ah, Father, but she is still a mother. How can we kill her with arrows?’ the seven children implored.

Then Mr Ch’ilso’ng ran and kicked the stepmother this way and that, and she became a viper, a frog and then a mole.

‘You have committed a great sin in Ch’ŏnhasu, so how can you live to see the sun? Become a mole so that you can never see heaven’, Mr Ch’ilso’ng cursed her, and then said to his sons, ‘My seven sons, let us find your true mother. Let us go to your true mother who lives alone having lost her husband and sons.’

When Mr Ch’ilso’ng and the seven children came down to Chihagung and saw their old house, the front wall was torn down, the back wall had collapsed, and the courtyard was a mugwort field. They asked a passer-by, ‘What happened to the woman who used to live here?’

‘It has been three months and ten days since she drowned herself in this pond after losing her husband and sons,’ said the passer-by.

The seven children heard this, shed tears for their mother, and entered the pond. As if the pond itself realized this, it began to dry up. When the seven children called for their mother, the pond dried up even more. And when they called for their mother a third time, the pond dried up completely, and their mother’s corpse came into sight.

As the seven children saw the corpse, they cried much mournfully. Then a mysterious big bird came forward suddenly and said, ‘I can take you on my back and fly to a garden in the west where life-giving flowers are growing if you give twelve lumps of jerked meat made of a big cow to me. Then you can revive your dead mother with the flowers.’

The seven children mounted the big bird’s back after they prepared the jerked meat.

‘I can fly between here and the garden if you each feed me six lumps of the jerked meat while I am coming and going’, said the big bird.

So the seven children got the life-giving flowers with the big bird’s help; then they stuck them in their mother’s corpse so that her bones and flesh regenerated and her breath returned.

As their dead mother revived perfectly, they said together, ‘Ah, Mother, we have brought back father whose departure fuelled your despair while you were alive.’

Then she came out of the pond, saying, ‘Ah, my sons! You are filial sons sent from heaven. You seven brothers have brought back your father’, and she went up to Ch’ŏnhasu with her husband and seven sons.

One day Mr Ch’ilso’ng summoned the seven children and asked, ‘What are your wishes?’
Fig. 16 The God of Seven Stars. Date unknown.
‘We regret that we could not live with both our father and mother. But now that we are together again, we have no more wishes. We will now return to the seven stars,’ said the seven children.

‘Go to the north, south, west and east’, said Mr Ch’ilsong. And so he sent them to the Great Bear in the north, to the seven stars in the south, to the seven stars in the west and to the seven stars in the east. And Mr Ch’ilsong and Mrs Oknyo became the Herdboy (Altair) and the Weaver (Vega) in the sky.\(^6\)

**NOTES**

* Im Sŏkjae’s version and Kim T’aegon’s versions are very similar to each other. Here I translated Im’s version, but I modified three parts with Kim’s version. (1) The stepmother asked Mr Ch’ilsong for the seven children’s entrails in Im’s version, but livers in Kim’s version. I chose Kim’s version because the livers are more appropriate than the entrails to bring about a cure. Actually, from ancient times, Koreans have eaten animal liver for curing their chronic diseases. (2) When his seven children who disappeared suddenly with the deer on their return home came back to his home alive, Mr Ch’ilsong killed his wife (stepmother) after the blood test of his seven children in Im’s version. But the reason for killing his wife (stepmother) was not clear. Mr Ch’ilsong already saw that his wife didn’t eat the livers that he gave her, and knew that his wife had cheated him. Given the evidence he could have killed his wife (stepmother) at that time. But he couldn’t kill his wife. It was because he still wasn’t very sure of the evidence. Therefore, I added the reason from Kim’s version to Im’s version. (3) The seven children revived their dead mother with flowers, but there was no explanation about how they got the flowers in Im’s version. So I added the explanation in the same way as for (2).

1 According to Korean traditional marriage customs, at the home of the bride-to-be marital harmony was predicted with the document, depending on the fortune-teller. If the couple’s chemistry was bad, their wedding ceremony would be cancelled.
2 According to Korean traditional marriage customs, the marriage ceremony had to take place at the house of the bride’s family. And there the bridegroom lived with his wife’s family until their children grew up. These marriage customs were hard to change during the process of Confucianization of Chosŏn society. The wedding ceremony still continued to take place at the bride’s home, but the new couple moved to the bridegroom’s home after a one or three-day sojourn. And the bride was supposed to leave her native place upon marriage and become a family member of her husband’s lineage group. So a woman never was supposed to return to her original family. See Cultural Landscaped of Korea (the Academy of Korean Studies, 2005, pp. 20–22).
3 These chicken and rooster stand for fecundity.
4 Nuptial wine: Wine exchanged between the bride and bridegroom at a Korean traditional wedding ceremony.
5 In Korean traditional society, the upper-class’s dwelling was mostly divided three parts: the men’s room called *sarangbang*, the women’s room called *anbang*, and the servants’ room.

6 This myth was translated by consulting an existing translation; Seo Dae Seok. *Myths of Korea* (Somerset: Jimoondang International, 2000). In the process of my work, I corrected some errors and omissions that were found in the existing translation.
Once upon a time, there was a tall tree. In the tree, there was a celestial, beautiful creature who, from time to time, came down to earth. She would often rest in the shade of the tall tree. In time, she married the tree god and they had a son, named Mok Toryŏng because his father was a tree god.

When Mok Toryŏng was around eight years old, his mother left him with his father, the tall tree, and returned to her home in the heavens. Soon after, it began to rain heavily when a terrible storm suddenly arose. For days on end the rain poured down on earth, until all the earth was under water. Soon mountainous waves began sweeping towards the tall tree, the father of the young boy. Father-tree called to his child and said, ‘My son, I shall soon be uprooted by this terrible storm. When I fall, you must climb into my branches and perch on my back. Otherwise, you will drown.’

The storm became more and more violent until at last the tall tree fell down. Quickly, the boy climbed on his father’s back and held tightly to the

Fig. 17 The Sacred Tree (from mural paintings of Changch’ŏn 1st Tomb of Koguryŏ). Fourth to fifth century.
branches as the tall tree floated on the rushing waters. For days and days it drifted on and on, at the mercy of the angry waves.

How far they went! They heard a cry for help. When they looked, a great number of ants were struggling in the water. The poor ants, on the point of drowning, cried, 'Save us!'

Mok Toryŏng felt sorry for them and asked his father, 'Father, shall we save the ants?'

'Yes, my son,' his father replied.

'Climb up on my father's back,' Mok Toryŏng called to the ants, 'and you will be saved. Hurry!'

So Mok Toryŏng helped the tired and weary ants get up out of the turbulent waters onto the tree.

Soon after, a great cloud of mosquitoes flew in through the storm. They, too, were tired, for there was nowhere to land and rest their weary wings.

'Help!' the mosquitoes buzzed.

Again, Mok Toryŏng asked, 'Father, shall we save the mosquitoes?'

'Yes, my son,' his father replied.

So Mok Toryŏng helped the tired mosquitoes alight on the leaves and branches of his father's back.

As Mok Toryŏng and his father and the ants and the mosquitoes drifted along, they heard the cry of a child. They looked into the waves and saw it was a boy about the same age as Mok Toryŏng. Mok Toryŏng thought about helping the boy because he had already saved ants and mosquitoes.

'Save me!' the boy cried.

Mok Toryŏng felt sorry for the boy. 'Let's save the boy too,' he said.

But this time his father did not answer.

Again the cries of the boy came pitifully across the raging waters. Again Mok Toryŏng said, 'Please, father, let's save that boy.'

Still there was no answer from Father-tree.

'Save me!' appealed the boy again.

When Mok Toryŏng heard the cry, he could not endure any longer. Mok Toryŏng pleaded with his father a third time, 'Father, we must save that boy!'

The father finally answered, 'Do as you wish, I leave it up to you. But you will regret it if you save this boy.'

Mok Toryŏng was relieved and called to the boy to come and climb up onto his father's back. So the boy was saved too.

After a long time, the Father-tree, Mok Toryŏng, the ants, the mosquitoes and the boy who had been saved from the waves came to an island. It was the peak of the highest mountain in the world. As soon as the tree reached the island, the ants and the mosquitoes thanked Mok Toryŏng and took their leave.

The two boys wandered over the island and came upon a small straw-thatched hut. An old woman and two young girls came out. The two young girls were about the same age as the two boys. One of the girls was the old woman's natural daughter, while the other was adopted.
After the heavy rain stopped, the two boys descended from the mountain to look around. The water and storm had destroyed everything on earth except for this small island. The only people left in the world were the two boys, the old woman, and the two girls. No other place existed where the boys could stay. So from that day forth they lived with the old woman, working for her as servants.

The years slipped past, and the boys and girls grew up to be men and women. The old woman thought to herself, ‘The two boys will make fine husbands for my two girls.’ But the old woman could not decide which one should marry her real daughter. Neither of the two boys wanted to get married to the adopted daughter. So she called the two of them to her and said, ‘Whichever of you is the more skilful shall have my own daughter for his wife, and the other shall have my adopted daughter.’

The boy who had been saved by Mok Toryŏng during the flood wanted very much to marry the real daughter. One day, he thought of a way to get her for his own.

‘Grandma’, he said, ‘Mok Toryŏng has a strange power which none of the rest of us has. For example, you can pour an entire sack of millet onto a pile of sand and mix them together and he can have the millet and sand separated in no time. Let him try it and show you. But he will not show it to a stranger.’

The old woman was astounded to hear it. ‘Is that so?’ she said. ‘I would like very much to see his wonderful ability. Come, Mok Toryŏng, let me see if you really can do this amazing thing.’

Mok Toryŏng knew he certainly could do no such thing. He knew the other youth was trying to get him into trouble. So he refused and the old woman became very angry because she thought that Mok Toryŏng was deceiving her.

‘If you don’t do it, or if you can’t do it, I won’t give you my daughter in marriage’, the old woman said.

Mok Toryŏng saw no way out. He sighed. ‘Very well, then, I will try.’

The old woman emptied an entire sack of millet onto a pile of sand and mixed them together. Then she left, saying she would return in a short while to see how he was getting along.

Mok Toryŏng gazed hopelessly at the pile of millet and sand. What was he to do? It was not humanly possible to sort the millet from the sand.

Suddenly, Mok Toryŏng felt something bite his heel. He looked down, and there he was a large ant.

‘What is troubling you, Mok Toryŏng?’ the ant asked. ‘I suppose you no longer remember me, but I am one of the ants you saved a long time ago in the flood. Tell me, what’s the matter?’

Mok Toryŏng told the ant how he must separate the millet from the sand or else be unable to marry the old woman’s natural daughter.

‘Is that your problem? Then your worries are over. Leave it to me and I will repay your kindness.’

No sooner had the ant said this than a great mass of ants came swarming from all directions. They attacked the huge pile of sand and millet, each ant
carrying a millet grain in its mouth and putting it into the sack. Backwards and forwards the ants hurried, until in a twinkling of an eye all the millet was back in the sack.

When the old woman came back, she was amazed to find that Mok Toryŏng had finished an impossible task in so short a time.

The other youth was surprised too, and chagrined that his trick had failed. But he still wished to marry the old woman’s daughter and pleaded with her, ‘Please, old woman, give me your real child for my wife.’

The old woman hesitated. She thought for a moment and replied, ‘You are both very dear to me, so I must be absolutely fair. Tonight will be a moonless night. I shall put my two daughters in separate rooms. One will be in the east room and the other in the west room. You two will stay outside and when I say ‘ready’, both of you will come into the house and go to the room of your choice. The girl you find there will be your bride. I am sure that this is the best and fairest plan.’

That night the two youths waited outside for the old woman’s command. Suddenly Mok Toryŏng heard a mosquito flying close to his ear.

‘Buzz, buzz,’ said the mosquito, in a wee voice. ‘Mok Toryŏng, you must go to the east room. Buzz, buzz. Remember, go to the east room.’

Mok Toryŏng was overjoyed to hear this. He felt sure the mosquito was one he had saved during the flood.

‘Ready!’ cried the old woman.

The two boys went into the house. While the other boy was still hesitating, Mok Toryŏng went straight to the east room. There he found the daughter of the old woman. She was to become his wife.

The other youth could not complain any longer. So he took the adopted daughter for his wife.

Their children spread throughout the world. And again the earth was filled with people.

The Original Title: Mok Toryŏng (A Son of Tree God)

NOTE

1 Mok Toryŏng: ‘Mok’ means ‘a tree’, ‘Toryŏng’ means ‘an unmarried young man.’
MYTHS ABOUT
BIRTH AND AGRICULTURE
Fig. 18 Ten Kings of Hades who take charge of the lives of human beings. Two messengers of the underworld stand at the right and left at the bottom of part of the painting, holding a big sword and a trident. Yomradaewang (the Lord of Hades) is writing their charges in front of a couple of prisoners. The view of Hades like this in Korean shamanism was formed by the influence of Buddhism. Date unknown.
CHAPTER 6

The Grandmother Goddess of Birth

In the year when Myŏngjinguk’s daughter turned seven, on the first day of the first month, at the time of the tiger, the King of Heaven issued an order that she should become ‘the Birth Goddess (Samsŭnghalmang) who blesses humans with babies in this world’.

When the Birth Goddess descended, a woman was dying because her baby could not be born easily and it looked as if she was going to die, so she saved the baby’s life and the baby was born. She cut the umbilical cord with silver scissors, tied it carefully with thread, and brought the baby to the bedroom where she bathed it in warm water. She called for the wet nurse and fed the baby breast milk. To the new mother she fed seaweed soup. Three days later, she had the new mother bathe in mugwort water, burned the placenta, and dressed the child in baby clothes. After only seven days, the child sat up in a bamboo basket.

After only one hundred days, the child could roll over by itself. Around that time, the former Birth Goddess (Kusamsŭnghalmang) came and said, ‘I am in charge of birth. Who came and performed that function for this child who I should have helped with the birth?’

When the Birth Goddess was struck by the former Birth Goddess, she went to the Palace of Heaven and made an appeal to the King of Heaven. The King of Heaven thought this strange, so he sent the yellow-turbaned strongman, messenger Chungwŏn, and messenger Iron-Net, who caught the former life goddess.

The King of Heaven asked, ‘What kind of woman are you to hit the Birth Goddess?’

‘I am a Tongjŏngguk’s daughter of the Dragon Palace in the East Sea. When I was one, I committed the sin of striking my mother’s bosom; when I was two, I committed the sin of pulling out my father’s beard; when I was three, I committed the sin of scattering the grain; when I was four, I committed the sin of pulling out the seedlings; when I was five, I committed the sin of overturning a rock onto the seedlings; when I was six, I committed the sin of talking back to my parents; when I was seven, I committed the sin of swearing at the village elders; when I was eight, I committed the sin of pulling down the fence around the field; when I was nine, I committed the sin of striking innocent animals. In this way I committed nine types of sin. The king my father said, ‘Your sins cannot be forgiven,’ and he punished me. He put me in an iron chest and wrote on it that within was the Tongjŏngguk’s
daughter of the Dragon Palace in the East Sea, then threw the chest into the ocean. After it floated under the sea for the three years and on top of the sea for three years, a subject of the Dragon Palace in the South Sea discovered the chest. And when he opened it and looked inside, he found me holding a luminescent gem. ‘Who are you?’ he asked. And I told the long story of being punished by my father the king and about the container that brought me there under the water for three years and on top of the water for three years.

Fig. 19 The Dragon King. A male god takes charge of a tidal storm and wind, whereas a female goddess takes charge of rain and clouds. Date unknown.
The subject said, ‘In order to atone for your sins, you must go to the world of humans and help women in labour.’ And so I have done that for the humans’, responded the former Birth Goddess.

The King of Heaven listened and said, ‘You too are not an ordinary person.’

And so, for both the former Birth Goddess and the Birth Goddess the King of Heaven planted pairs of flowers in a silver basin and said to them, ‘As soon as the flowers bloom you must go and do your work.’

Fig. 20 Lady Yonggung (the dragon queen) and two servants. Date unknown.
The former Birth Goddess’s flowers were at first healthy, but then they withered. Whereas, the Birth Goddess’s flowers were at first weak, but later they thrived. And forty-five thousand six hundred types of flowers thrived.

So the King of Heaven said, ‘Former Birth Goddess! Go to hell and take care of the young dead children. Birth Goddess! Go and take care of birth for humans.’

The former Birth Goddess appealed to the King of Heaven. ‘If you let me go and manage childbirth, I will work diligently.’ But the King of Heaven would not listen and sent her to hell.

The King of Heaven then spoke to the Birth Goddess, ‘Go up to the Buddhist sanctuary in the Western Paradise and attach a wind bell with a fish clapper to the three-storey pavilion and live there.’

So following his command, the Birth Goddess went up and built a palace of glass and a pagoda of iron and affixed windows of jade. While living there, she studied astronomy and geography. In addition, she achieved leadership of every class of bodhisattva such as Heaven Bodhisattva, Baby Bodhisattva, the Merciful Goddess and Amitabha, etc.

One day, Heaven Bodhisattva reported to the Birth Goddess, ‘There is a paradise of four warm seasons. It is in the middle of Mount Ayo, Mount Ch’ongryong, Mount Yongch’onkūmsin, and Mount T’ae.’

The Birth Goddess accompanied the bodhisattvas there and it was obviously a paradise.

After getting rid of the weeds, they made a table from a good stone and planned to establish a flower garden in the Western Paradise. Because they had no flower seeds, they consulted with the king of the underworld, who said there were some in the heavens. They went to the King of Heaven to obtain the flower seeds and, on the third day of the third month, they planted coloured flowers in the five directions. In the east they planted blue, in the west they planted white, in the south they planted red, in the north they planted black, in the centre they planted yellow. After that, in the east blue-
flowered trees grew up, in the west white-flowered trees grew up, in the south red-flowered trees grew up, in the north black-flowered trees grew up, in the centre yellow-flowered trees grew up. The east’s blue trees with blue flowers gave life to boys, the west’s white flowers gave life to girls, the south’s red flowers gave long life, the north’s black flowers gave short life, the centre’s yellow flowers allowed men to pass all the civil service examinations and have successful careers.

As soon as the flowers prospered, the Birth Goddess gave life to humans. But whenever she returned home, someone had been plucking flowers. So she requested a flower warden from the King of Heaven.

The King of Heaven called the King of the Underworld to the Palace of Heaven and asked, ‘Is there a suitable person in the land of humans?’

‘There is a Kim Chŏngguk’s son born after his parents prayed to the Buddha of the Tonggyenamsangju Temple. This child has committed no sins since being born into the world, his behaviour is good as well, and I believe he is a suitable candidate’, replied the King of the Underworld.

The King of Heaven at once called Kim Chŏngguk’s son to the Palace of Heaven and appointed him the flower warden in the Western Paradise.5

The Original Title: Myŏngjinguksaengbulhalmbonpu'uli (Origin Myth of the Birth Grandmother Goddess)
The Source: Ak'amatsu Chijo & Ak'iba Tak'ashi, Chosŏn Musokū Yŏngu, Sang (Studies in Korean Shamanism, First Half), Osak'a: Okhosŏjm, 1937.

Notes

1 The time of the tiger: 3 a.m. to 5 a.m.
2 The King of Heaven: in this myth, it refers to the heavenly god’s name, Okhwangsangje, in Taoism.
3 The Life Goddess: a literal translation would be ‘the Life Grandmother Goddess’. It may have been called that because the goddess is shown in the image of grandmother in a shamanist play related to this myth. I, however, took off the word ‘grandmother’ for readers to understand this myth easily.
4 The former Life Goddess: A literal translation would be ‘the former Life Grandmother Goddess’. However, I took off the word ‘grandmother’ in the same way as for the Life Goddess.
5 This myth was translated by consulting an existing translation; Seo Dae Seok. Myths of Korea (Somerset: Jimoondang International, 2000). In the process of my work, I corrected some errors and omissions that were found in the existing translation.
Once upon a time, there were Sir Chimjinguk and Lady Chajiguk. They were rich with a lot of land and servants, but unfortunately they did not have a child until they were fifty years of age.

One day, while Sir Chimjinguk was playing chess in the shade to relieve the ennui, he heard a laughing sound. Attracted by the sound, Sir Chimjinguk followed it. There was a beggar sitting in a small straw-thatched hut with a wooden hinge and a door made of matting. The beggar was laughing loudly with a baby in front of him. He said to himself. ‘What’s the use of money? What’s the use of land? How deplorable it is to live as the richest but childless!’

Seeing this, Sir Chimjinguk locked his room and lay down. As Lady Chajiguk dressed herself and asked after his condition, he explained the vexatious thing that he saw. To comfort him, the lady tied up a silver bottle with a string and rolled it here and there, but failed to make him laugh.

The couple sat together, sighing and bemoaning their lot. Then a monk from the Sangju Temple visited to request an offering and said that if they offered a thousand pounds of white rice and prayed for a hundred days, Lady Chajiguk would become pregnant. Thus, Sir Chimjinguk and Lady Chajiguk went to the Sangju Temple and prayed there for a hundred days.

On the hundredth day, the monk weighed what the couple had offered and said, ‘Sir, if the offering weighed a thousand pounds, you would have a son, but because it weighed less than a thousand pounds, you will see a girl. Go home and sleep together on an auspicious day.’

They came home and slept together on an auspicious day and, indeed, Lady Chajiguk felt a sign of pregnancy from that day. The flesh, the bones, the internal organs, and the bowels were formed of white blood from the father and dark blood from the mother. After ten months, a daughter was born who looked as if she had the sun on her forehead, a moon on the back of her head and stars on her shoulders.

When the baby turned three, the lady asked, ‘What name do you want to give her?’

‘Because she was born voluntarily, what about naming her ‘Chach’ôngbi’?’ replied Sir Chimjinguk.

‘That sounds good’, said the lady.

The child grew year by year, playing in her father’s arms. When she became fifteen, the father built her a separate house and installed a loom so that she could practise weaving on the loom.
One day, while Chach’ongbi was weaving fabric on the loom, she saw a maidservant standing beside the loom and said, ‘How do you make your hands and feet so white and fine?’

‘Young lady, you still need to learn more. To make your hands and feet white, do washing at the pond of the Chuch’on River’, said the loom.

Chach’ongbi went to do washing at the pond of the Chuch’on River with a bamboo basket containing laundry. At that time, Munwangsong, the son of Mungoksong who was the King of Heaven, was coming down to learn from Master Gomu on earth. He saw the beautiful and lovely girl washing at the pond of Chuch’on River, and approached the pond in order to talk to her, ‘I am a traveller passing by. I am so thirsty. Could you draw a gourd of water for me?’

Chach’ongbi drew water in a large gourd, floated three willow leaves, and brought the water to Mun.

‘Why did you set the willow leaves afloat on the water?’ asked Mun.

‘Sir, you still need to learn more. If you drink water hastily and the water sits heavy on your stomach, there is no medicine for that. I saw your dry throat and your heart burning, so I put the willow leaves on the water’, said Chach’ongbi.

‘It makes sense’, said Mun.

‘Sir, where are you going?’ asked Chach’ongbi.

‘I am going to Master Gomu to learn from him’, said Mun.

‘Sir, I have a younger brother who looks exactly like me. My brother also needs to learn from Master Gomu, but up till now he couldn’t find anyone to go with him. What about going together with him?’ asked Chach’ongbi.

‘I will do as you asked’, said Mun.

Chach’ongbi put wet laundry into the basket and walked towards her house with Mun. When she came near the house, she asked Mun to stand by the alleyway. She called the maidservant and instructed her to hang out the wet clothes and entered her father’s room, saying, ‘Dad! Mum! I want to go and study.’

‘What is the use of studying for a girl?’ the father chided her.

‘Dad! You have only a girl to assist you in your old age. If you pass away tomorrow, who will write a mourning paper for your memorial service?’ said Chach’ongbi.

‘You are right. Then go and learn.’

With the permission of her parents, Chach’ongbi entered her room, took off her clothes, then put on a man’s clothes in a man’s room. Holding an armful of books and a handful of brushes, she said goodbye to her parents and, leaving via the rear gate, she approached Mun and exchanged names.

‘Let me introduce myself. I am Munwangsong, the son of the King of Heaven’, said Mun.

‘I am Chach’ong. I heard you are going to Master Gomu to learn from him. Can I go with you?’ asked Chach’ong.

‘Yes, you can’, said Mun.
Mun and Chach’ŏngbi found Master Gŏmu. They read books together at the same school, eat together at the same table and slept together in the same bed. In this way, they spent their time day by day, and two years passed. Mun seemed to be aware that Chach’ŏngbi had a woman’s body. One day, Chach’ŏngbi played a trick on him. She put a silver washbowl with water beside her bed and put silver and brass chopsticks on the washbowl. And then she went to bed.

‘Why do you sleep, putting a silver washbowl with water and silver and brass chopsticks on the washbowl?’ asked Mun.

‘My father said to me before, ‘When you sleep at night, put a silver washbowl with water beside your bed and put silver and brass chopsticks on the washbowl. If you sleep until the silver and brass chopsticks fall off, you will become rusty in reading’,’ said Chach’ŏngbi.

‘Then I will also try’, said Mun.
When he went to bed, Mun also put a silver washbowl with water beside his bed and silver and brass chopsticks on the washbowl, but he could not sleep, worrying about whether the chopsticks would fall off. Next morning, when he went to school, he could not concentrate on reading, but dozed off. Chach’ôngbi did not mind whether the chopsticks fell off or not, and she slept soundly until daybreak, so her reading at the school was the best among the three thousand students.

‘We came at the same time on the same date, learned from the same teacher, ate at the same table, and slept in the same room and with the same blanket, but my learning is poorer than his. This is an unbearable shame on me.’ Talking to himself like this, Mun said to Chach’ôngbi, ‘Your literary talent is superior to mine, but you cannot beat me in other talents.’

‘It is hardly possible for me to fall behind you’, said Chach’ôngbi. ‘Why don’t we pass water and see whose water reaches furthest?’ asked Mun.

‘Go ahead’, agreed Chach’ôngbi.

Mun passed water and it reached six feet and a half. However, Chach’ôngbi, who was a girl, had cut a bamboo shoot and held it in her pants. As she passed water, it reached twelve feet and a half. Defeated even in that game, Mun could not help yielding to her.

Next morning, when Mun was washing his face, a Bung bird from the King of Heaven dropped a letter from his front wing. The letter was from the King of Heaven, saying ‘You have finished learning for three years. Now come back and get married to the daughter of King So-su.’

Mun entered the room with the letter and said, ‘Chach’ông! I have to stop learning now and go back home. My father sent a letter, telling me to stop studying and come back to marry the daughter of King So-su.’

‘Then I will also stop studying and go back home’, said Chach’ôngbi.

They packed their books and left for home. On the way, Chach’ôngbi thought to herself. ‘If my father sees me going together with Mun, he will try to cut my throat with the leaf of a green bamboo, and if my mother does, she will do so with the leaf of a black bamboo. Then I had better walk separately from Mun.’ Thus, at a brook, Chach’ôngbi said to Mun, ‘Mun, come over here. We have studied for three years and our bodies must have become dirty. Let’s bath here.’

‘I would certainly like that,’ said Chach’ôngbi and went into the upper stream while Mun went into the lower stream. When Chach’ôngbi observed Mun in secret, he was completely naked. Chach’ôngbi just removed the upper garment and pretended to take a bath, making the sound of water, and wrote using a willow leaf: ‘Insensible and foolish Mun! Haven’t you noticed even after sleeping in the same blanket for three years?’

She floated her note down the stream, put on her upper garment and ran to her father without stopping. Mun who was bathing saw the willow leaf. Thinking it strange, he opened it and quickly got out of the stream. He could see Chach’ôngbi’s head in the far distance. ‘How can I let him go alone after
having studied together at the same school for three years?' Falling and stumbling, Mun pursued Chach'ongbi. Looking back at Mun, Chach'ongbi took pity on him and said to him, ‘Sir Mun, I, as a girl, have deceived you until now. Why don’t you see my father and mother, take a rest at my room, and leave tomorrow?’

‘Yes, I will’, said Mun.

Chach’ongbi asked Mun to wait in the alleyway and entered her house and paid her respects to her father and mother.

‘How have you been for the three years’ study?’ asked her father.

‘I have been fine, but I have something to tell you. Outside the gate is standing a student who studied with me at the same school for three years. Because his feet have swollen and the sun is setting in the west, how about letting him stay with me and leave tomorrow?’ said Chach’ongbi.

‘Man or woman?’ asked the father.

‘Man’, said Chach’ongbi.

‘Then, if he is fifteen or older, send him to my room, or let him stay in your room if younger,’ said the father.

‘He is not yet fifteen’, said Chach’ongbi.

‘Then take him with you’, said the father.

Immediately Chach’ongbi took off the man’s garments and put on her own clothes, and guided Mun to her room.

Chach’ongbi hid Mun behind the folding screen, prepared dinner, brought the table by herself, and they ate together at the same table. After saying, ‘Have a good night,’ she wove on the loom outside the room and soon it was the middle of the night. As Chach’ongbi did not come in until late, Mun got up quietly and went out to the courtyard.

‘Oh dear! Why have you come out? If my parents see you, they will cut you through with the leaf of a green bamboo and the leaf of a black bamboo. Hurry, return to the room. I will follow you soon’, said Chach’ongbi.

Hearing this, Mun returned to the room. Soon Chach’ongbi came in. The two lay together, revealing their love that had been concealed for three years.

How much time had passed? The rooster began to crow.

‘Sir, the day is dawning. It’s time to leave. Climb up the rope to the King of Heaven’, said Chach’ongbi.

Then they parted from each other, Mun gave a gourd seed to Chach’ongbi.

‘Plant the seed and, if I don’t come back until it bears gourds, regard me as dead.’

They divided a comb made from an empress tree into two pieces and kept one part each. Mun climbed up the rope to the King of Heaven. Soon Chach’ongbi planted the gourd seed outside the window of her room. However, although the seed sprouted and gourds grew and became ripe, Mun did not come back.

One day, Chach’ongbi was looking outside through the window of the attic. Servants from other houses were collecting dead branches in their carts pulled by a horse or a cow, and decorating the forehead of a cow with azaleas
and the back of the head with rhododendrons. As the scene was pleasant and interesting, she went outside and found that Chŏngsunam was turning his pants inside out and crushing thick, fine lice with his fingernails.

‘Chŏngsunam, why do you hunt lice in your pants instead of getting on with your work? Other servants are collecting dead branches in the mountains as usual. Don’t they look great?’ Chach’ŏngbi scolded him.

Fig. 23 The Toryŏng God who is called Aegidongja or T’aeju. This god is drawn with a female in the picture, but ordinarily only this god is drawn. Date unknown.
‘Young lady, give me nine horses, nine oxen, carts, an ax and a pair of pants. Then I, too, will go tomorrow morning’, said Chǝngsunam.

She instructed a maidservant to prepare nine horses and nine oxen for him. Next morning, after he had breakfast, Chǝngsunam drove the horses and oxen deep into the forest. As he felt tired in his legs, he tied the horses and oxen up to a branch stretching from the east to the west and fell asleep. When he woke up, the sun was setting in the west and the horses and oxen were dying under the heat of the sun.

Thinking, ‘I have no option,’ Chǝngsunam piled up dead branches like a mountain, kindled the heap, made a cut into the skin of the oxen and horses using the ax, and removed the skin with his fingernails. Then he roasted the meat and ate it all.

Chǝngsunam, bearing the eighteen skins of the horses and oxen and the ax on his shoulder, came out of the deep forest and saw a duck sitting on a pond. ‘My lady may be pleased with the pretty duck. I will catch it to appease her and to get some food.’ Chǝngsunam took the ax from his shoulder and threw it with all his strength, but the duck flew away and the ax sank deep into the pond. He put down the skins from his shoulder, took off his short pants, and jumped into the pond. He searched the bottom of the pond, but could not find the ax. Even worse, a thief, who was watching in secret, ran away with the horse and ox skins and the short pants. Not knowing what happened, Chǝngsunam got out of the pond and looked for his possessions.

However, he found neither the skins nor the short pants. He covered the lower part of his body with branches and leaves. He could not walk through the street for fear of people’s ridicule nor through the alleyway for fear of Chach’onɡbi. Thus, he sneaked behind the terrace and sat putting the cover of a jar upon his head. When the maidservant came to get some soy sauce, she was surprised, seeing the jar cover moving up and down whenever Chǝngsunam was breathing in and out, and screamed, ‘Ooh! Miss, a ghost has broken into our terrace.’

‘Are you out of mind? What are you talking about?’ Chach’onɡbi reproached her.

When she opened the rear door and looked over the terrace, the cover of a jar was moving up and down. Uttering an incantation to drive out demons, Chach’onɡbi said, ‘Are you a ghost or a man? If you are a ghost, be off to heaven, or expose yourself before me.’

‘How can this be a ghost? This is Chǝngsunam.’ Chǝngsunam presented himself, completely naked from head to foot.

‘Ugh! You filthy scum! How dreadful of you!’ Chach’onɡbi reproved him.

‘Dear lady, don’t say that. When I climbed up into a deep mountain, Mun the King of Heaven was playing and tapping drums with celestial maidens and servants at a place where the lawn was extensive and autumn foliage was beautiful. While I was absorbed in watching the scene, the nine horses and the nine oxen disappeared. Also when I was coming down from the mountain, I saw a duck on a pond. I threw the ax to catch it, but the duck flew away and
the ax sank. While I was searching for the ax, a thief ran away with my short pants. This is how I became like this,' Chŏngsunam explained his actions.

‘What great news! Did you really see Mun? When did he say he would come again?’ asked Chach’ŏngbi.

‘He said that he would come the day after tomorrow at around four or five o’clock,’ said Chŏngsunam.

‘Then can I go and see him?’ asked Chach’ŏngbi.

‘If you go, he will be greatly pleased’, said Chŏngsunam.

‘I don’t care about nine horses. I don’t care about nine oxen’, said Chach’ŏngbi.

She also made a pair of short pants and dressed Chŏngsunam with them, saying, ‘Chŏngsunam, what should we prepare for lunch?’

‘Lady, get five cups of buckwheat flour and five handfuls of salt for your lunch, and five buckets of buckwheat dregs with a little salt for mine’, said Chŏngsunam.

‘Let’s do so. Feed the horse with fodder for the trip the day after tomorrow’, said Chach’ŏngbi.

‘This horse, that horse! Help yourself with this fodder. Ride the lady to the deep mountain so that I may hug her slender waist.’ Chŏngsunam said to himself.

Chach’ŏngbi heard what he said, and asked him, ‘You, what did you say?’

‘Nothing! I just said, ‘This horse, that horse! Help yourself with this fodder. Ride the lady to the deep mountain and let’s see that she meets Mun, he hugs her slender waist, and they talk all kinds of happy stories’, Chŏngsunam cooked up an excuse.

Hearing this, Chach’ŏngbi just laughed.

The day after tomorrow, Chach’ŏngbi prepared lunch as instructed by Chŏngsunam and put it on the back of Chŏngsunam. Then, she dressed herself up and had the horse stand ready. Chŏngsunam prepared the horse, but put a shell under the saddle.

‘Lady, the horse is ready’, said Chŏngsunam.

As Chach’ŏngbi tried to get on the horse, the horse jumped up violently.

‘Why does this horse run so wild?’ asked Chach’ŏngbi.

‘Lady, I think the horse may get angry today’, said Chŏngsunam.

‘Can’t you soothe its anger?’ asked Chach’ŏngbi.

‘Arrange nine buckets of rice, nine buckets of soup, nine buckets of wine, and a pig’s head, and offer the sacrifices’, said Chŏngsunam.

As these foods were prepared hastily, Chŏngsunam arranged them on the horse block and held a sacrificial rite. Then he poured wine into the left ear of the horse without being noticed by Chach’ŏngbi. Because it had wine in its ear, the horse shook its head.

‘Look at the horse. It is shaking the head, saying that it has had its fill. Lady, this food is allowed to nobody but the horse driver,’ said Chŏngsunam.

‘Then you may have all of it’, said Chach’ŏngbi.

Chŏngsunam ate up every scrap of the offerings.
‘Lady, take up the lunch. I will ride the horse and tame it for a while’, said Chŏngsunam.
‘I see’, said Chach’ŏngbi.
Chŏngsunam secretly removed the shell, and mounted the horse.
Chach’ŏngbi walked on the road, but in less than a few miles she got blisters on her feet and her skirt was torn by briers. When she went up the mountain with all these troubles, Chŏngsunam was snoring in the shade of a tree, with the horse tied to a branch.
‘You bastard! Have you ridden the horse up here and fallen asleep alone?’ Chach’ŏngbi rebuked him.
‘Lady, don’t put it like that. I was waiting for you, fearing lest the horse should get angry again’, said Chŏngsunam.
‘Chŏngsunam, I am so hungry that I cannot walk any more. Let’s have lunch here,’ said Chach’ŏngbi.
‘If you wish’, said Chŏngsunam.
Chŏngsunam put Chach’ŏngbi’s lunch before her, and he, with his own lunch, tried to avoid her eyes.
‘You rascal! Why are you trying to eat by yourself?’ said Chach’ŏngbi.
‘Lady, you need to learn more. I am your servant and you are my master, but if someone who doesn’t know us sees us, he may regard us as brother and sister or husband and wife’, said Chŏngsunam.
‘It sounds reasonable. Then you eat somewhere else,’ said Chach’ŏngbi.
As Chŏngsunam disappeared down to the foot of the mountain, Chach’ŏngbi cut off a piece of buckwheat cake, but it was too salty to eat. She called Chŏngsunam.
‘Bring your lunch to me. Let me try it’, said Chach’ŏngbi.
‘Oh, dear lady! What are you saying? What is left by the master is for the servant, and what is left by the servant is for the dog’, said Chŏngsunam.
‘Then, take mine and have it as well’, said Chach’ŏngbi.
Chŏngsunam took Chach’ŏngbi’s lunch, mixed it with his and ate it all up.
Because Chach’ŏngbi had eaten salty food, her throat became drier and drier, ‘Chŏngsunam, I am desperate for water. Find some water.’
‘Go this way and that way, then you will see water’, said Chŏngsunam.
As Chach’ŏngbi went as instructed by Chŏngsunam, indeed there was water. Out of thirst, she rushed into the water, and scooped up water with her hands to drink.
‘Lady, don’t drink the water. The maidservants of Mun the King of Heaven washed their hands and feet in it’, said Chŏngsunam.
‘Is there water elsewhere?’ asked Chach’ŏngbi.
‘Yes, there is,’ said Chŏngsunam.
Indeed, the place indicated by Chŏngsunam was overflowing with water.
‘Lady, don’t drink the water. A young man was drowned in the water. If you want to drink the water, you should take off your clothes completely and show your hips to the water,’ said Chŏngsunam.
“Then, how can I drink the water? Don’t you know another spring?’ asked Chach’ongbi.
‘There is no water anymore. Do as I show you’, said Chongsunam. Then Chongsunam took off his upper and lower clothes completely, and gulped the water, lying with his face down like a cow.
‘I have no option but to drink. You wait here until I drink water over there and come back’, said Chach’ongbi.
As Chach’ongbi stripped herself completely and tried to drink water on the edge with her hips exposed, Chongsunam grabbed Chach’ongbi’s skirt and swung it around over his head. Doing this, he said, ‘Lady, don’t just drink but look into the water. Doesn’t the reflection look great? It is the reflection of Mun who is playing with his maidservants.’
Only at that time, Chach’ongbi realized that she was deceived by Chongsunam and said to herself, ‘My goodness! I have been fooled by the fellow. If things go wrong, he may kill me. I may have to humour him with a trick’, and asked him, ‘Chongsunam, why have you done this to me? Tell me your wish.’
‘Lady, let’s do this. Let me touch your silky hands’, said Chongsunam.
‘Chongsunam. It is better to put on a wristlet at home than touching my hands’, said Chach’ongbi.
‘Let’s do this. Let me kiss your lips’, said Chongsunam.
‘It is sweeter to lick the honey port in my room than kissing my lips,’ said Chach’ongbi.
Chongsunam jumped up and began to get angry.
‘Chongsunam, don’t get angry like that. Now the sun is setting in the west. Why don’t you make a hut with stones so that we can stay the night?’ said Chach’ongbi.
Highly delighted, Chongsunam rushed like a swarm of bees and built a hut immediately. But the hut had too many holes.
‘Chongsunam, the hut seems unusable because of cold wind coming through the holes. I will light a candle inside, then you go outside and block the holes with grass through which the light is seen’, said Chach’ongbi.
‘Yes, I will do that’, said Chongsunam.
Chongsunam cut grass and blocked the holes through which the candle light was seen. But if Chongsunam blocked ten, Chach’ongbi opened five of them, and if Chongsunam blocked five, Chach’ongbi opened two. In this way, while Chongsunam was busy blocking the holes through the night, the rooster crowed and the day began to break.
Chongsunam jumped up and got angry. However, Chach’ongbi appeased Chongsunam.
‘Chongsunam, don’t get so angry. Why don’t you bring down the saddle and spread it, and lay your head on my knee. I will search for lice in your head’, said Chach’ongbi.
Hearing this, Chongsunam removed the saddle and spread it on the ground, and he lay down with his head on Chach’ongbi’s knee. Chach’ongbi
looked into Chŏngsunam’s hair, and it was like a dog’s rump that had sat on white sand. She saved thick lice as commanders and fine ones as soldiers, and scarcely hunted medium ones. Chŏngsunam, who had not slept last night, fell asleep.

‘If I let this guy live, I will be killed by him. I will kill him first.’ Thinking this, Chach’ŏngbi made a skewer with a vine and pierced Chŏngsunam from the left ear to the right one. Then Chŏngsunam bled and died. At that time, a cuckoo flew away from his right ear and an owl from his left ear.

After killing Chŏngsunam, Chach’ŏngbi put the saddle on the horse and galloped towards her house.

‘You animal! If you also want to save your life, find a place where people live’, cried Chach’ŏngbi.

She whipped the horse once, then twice, and entered a village at the foot of the mountain. There were three wizards with snow-white hair playing chess.

‘Young lady over there! Pass under the wind. You are unclean’, yelled the wizards.

‘Dear wizards, what are you talking about? Why do you make fun of a woman?’ asked Chach’ŏngbi.

‘Then why is the smell of blood rising up from you?’ asked the wizards.

‘It is because a quail was trampled down by my horse, and the smell of blood is from the quail’, said Chach’ŏngbi.

‘Don’t you know your sin? Look in front of your bridle. A young man with bushy hair is standing and bleeding with a vine skewer piercing his head from the left ear to the right one’, said the wizards.

Hearing this, Chach’ŏngbi got down from the horse.

‘For mercy’s sake, save my life, please. Because my servant conducted himself so wickedly, I killed him on the way’, said Chach’ŏngbi.

‘You will be killed by his ghost at around four or five o’clock today’, said the wizards.

Chach’ŏngbi begged with joined hands, ‘Please, help me.’

‘All right, we will show you how to save your life. If you ride along the road, there will be a well with three fountains. Wash your hair with water from the lowest fountain, wash your body with water from the middle one, and cook rice with water from the highest one and offer it to the Great Bear, then utter an incantation that expels ghosts and the ghost will fall apart,’ said the wizards.

Chach’ŏngbi shook off the ghost as the wizards said and, returning home, she asked her parents, ‘Who is more valuable between a servant and your child?’

‘How can a servant be more valuable than my child?’ replied the parents.

‘Mum and dad! Because Chŏngsunam’s conduct was so wicked, I took him to a mountain and killed him there’, Chach’ŏngbi confessed her guilt.

‘You’re a fine one! Did you kill a servant who can grind three sacks of soybeans a day? For you, it’s the end of all if you marry, but for us, the servant can work for us until we die’, the parents rebuked her.
‘Mum and dad! I will do whatever I can’, Chach’ongbi appealed to her parents.
‘All right! Do as you said. Let’s see what you can do’, said the parents.
After she was scolded harshly by her parents, Chach’ongbi went out to a large field with a large plow and an ox, plowed the field and sowed millet seeds.
‘Mum and dad! Today I sowed millet seeds’, said Chach’ongbi.
‘What have you done? You are an idiot. Millet seeds should not be sowed in such bad weather. Now, go and gather up all the seeds’, the parents rebuked her.
Chach’ongbi went out to the large field and gathered up three sacks of millet seeds.
‘Mum and dad! I have gathered up three sacks of millet seeds’, said Chach’ongbi.
But when they counted the seeds, one was missing.
‘Find the missing millet seed’, said the parents.
Scolded again, Chach’ongbi went out with a switch on her shoulder to find the missing millet seed. After having walked for a while, she saw an ant that was rolling a millet seed over.
‘You ant! Will you trouble me too? Give the millet seed back to me. I came to find the seed’, said Chach’ongbi.
‘No, I will store this seed for the winter’, said the ant.
Chach’ongbi swished the switch down on the back of the ant, and then its back was broken.
From that time on, the back of the ant became as thin as it is today.
Only after being beaten with the switch, did the ant gave up the seed.
Chach’ongbi brought the seed to her parents.
‘Mum and dad! Now I have collected up all the three sacks of millet seeds’, said Chach’ongbi.
‘You are weird. How could you sow millet seeds and gather them again? Bring the servant back to life and leave the house’, said the parents.
Thus Chach’ongbi returned to her room, and changed her clothes for a man’s clothes. She left her house, riding on the horse and shedding tears like a shower, and arrived at the village down the hill. There were three children fighting over an owl.
‘What are you fighting for?’ asked Chach’ongbi.
‘We are fighting because I caught the owl first, but that boy is insisting that he caught it first’, said the children.
‘Why don’t you give me the owl? Then I will give you three coins, one for each’, suggested Chach’ongbi.
‘We agree’, said the children.
Taking the owl with her, Chach’ongbi went to the Söch’on flower garden in the village where Hwangsaegongan was living. She threw the owl into the garden and showed her name tag.
‘Where are you from, young man?’ asked Hwangsaegongan.
‘When I was passing by the Söch’on flower garden, I saw an owl flying over
the garden. So I shot an arrow and the owl fell into the Sŏch’ŏn flower garden. I came to get the owl and my arrow back.’

‘Welcome to my home! Every night, an owl sits on the horse block of my house and cries, causing unpleasant incidents and destroying the Sŏch’ŏn flower garden. If you hunt the owl, I will give my daughter to you’, said Hwangsaegongan.

‘I will do that’, Chach’ŏngbi.

When she put the horse in the stable, she plucked out a horsehair and bound its tongue. When the servants brought forage in a wooden crib, the horse just shook its head and stamped the ground because its tongue was bound. Chach’ŏngbi came out, tapped the horse and said, ‘Dear horse, if you are at some place away from home, you should follow the rule of the place. You had rice porridge in a silver container at home, but eat the food served here.’

Then she cut the horsehair binding its tongue and the horse ate the wheat forage hurriedly. Seeing this, the host and servants at the house admired Chach’ŏngbi, saying, ‘He must be from a noble family,’

As midnight arrived, Chach’ŏngbi secretly dressed herself up, lay down on the horse block and called the soul of Chŏngsunam, ‘Chŏngsunam!
Chŏngsunam! Chŏngsunam who is reincarnated in the body of an owl! If you have a soul, why don’t you sit on my breast, which you died for?’

After a while, an owl flew in from the sky and landed on Chach’ŏngbi’s breast. Chach’ŏngbi held its two legs and stabbed it with an arrow, and put it below the horse block. She also hid a long sword under the floor, and entered her room and went to bed.

As the day broke, Hwangsaegongan shouted, ‘Drive out the guest in that room.’

Chach’ŏngbi rose from the bed and said, ‘What’s up?’

‘The owl cried again last night. Why didn’t you shoot the owl?’ said Hwangsaegongan.

‘I did. Because I was tired, I just shot an arrow through the window, lying on the bed. Why don’t you check if the owl fell off under the horse block?’ said Chach’ŏngbi.

As Hwangsaegongan examined the area under the horse block, he found an owl pierced by an arrow.

‘He is fantastic!’ Hwangsaegongan praised her.

Thus, Chach’ŏngbi became Hwangsaegongan’s third son-in-law.

One hundred days had passed since Chach’ŏngbi became Hwangsaegongan’s third son-in-law, and the third daughter complained to her father and mother, ‘Mum and dad! Why did you admit such an arrogant man as my husband? He does not sleep with me even now after a hundred days of marriage.’

‘What’s wrong with him?’ asked her parents.

‘I don’t know’, replied the third daughter.

So Hwangsaegongan called Chach’ŏngbi and asked, ‘How can such a thing happen? It is because I will take the civil service examination in Seoul the day after tomorrow and, for that, I have to keep my body clean’, replied Chach’ŏngbi.

‘Well, all right’, said Hwangsaegongan.

After two days, Chach’ŏngbi pressed her wife to show her the Sŏch’on flower garden, so they entered the garden.

‘This flower is for the revival of flesh, and that flower is for the revival of blood. This flower is to raise a dead person’, explained the wife.

Chach’ŏngbi picked the flowers and put them into her pocket. Departing from the wife’s family, she left the house riding on the horse as if she was going to Seoul to take the civil service examination.

‘You horse! If you want to save your life, let’s go to the place where Chŏngsunam died’, said Chach’ŏngbi.

As she whipped the horse but once, the horse entered the deep forest and went to the place where Chŏngsunam had died. The spot was covered with grass. She cut grass, put the flower for the revival of life on Chŏngsunam, and swished Chŏngsunam with a switch three times. Then Chŏngsunam sprang to his feet, scratching his head, saying, ‘What a sweet sleep!’
Chach’ôngbi took Chŏngsunam with her and showed him to her parents, ‘I have revived your servant who is more valuable than your child.’
‘You are a fine a girl, killing then raising that person. If we keep such a girl in the house, our family will surely be ruined. Don’t stay here any more. Leave immediately’, yelled her parents.

Shedding tears like a shower, Chach’ôngbi said goodbye to her parents forever. She packed her clothes and left her house without knowing where she was going.

After a while, the sun set in the west and darkness came, but she could not find any place to stay the night. When she was crying on the roadside, suddenly the sound of a loom could be heard. Chach’ôngbi looked for the source of the sound. It was Lady Jumo in the land of Jumo who was weaving silk.
‘I am a girl passing by. It is already very late and dark. Can I stay the night in your house?’
‘How can a pretty girl like you walk on her own at night? Come in and wait. I will serve you some warm cooked rice’, said Lady Jumo.
While Lady Jumo was preparing a meal in the kitchen, Chach’ôngbi wove silk on the loom. Her work was finer than the lady’s.
‘How can I let go a talented girl like you. I am childless, so why don’t you become my adopted daughter?’ Lady Jumo praised her.
‘I agree’, said Chach’ôngbi.

One day, Chach’ôngbi asked Lady Jumo, ‘Mum, what is this silk for?’
‘This is for the wedding of Munwangso, the son of the King of Heaven who marries the daughter of King Sŏsu’, said Lady Jumo.

Chach’ôngbi shed tears and embroidered; ‘Poor Chach’ôngbi who offered herself.’
‘Bring this silk tomorrow at around four or five o’clock, and if someone asks who wove the silk, answer that it is Chach’ôngbi, please.’ Chach’ôngbi asked to her.
Lady Jumo climbed up the rope to the Palace of Heaven and presented the silk to Mun. Mun examined the silk three times and asked, ‘Who has woven this silk?’
‘It is Chach’ôngbi’, said Lady Jumo.
‘How has Chach’ôngbi woven the silk for you?’ asked Mun.
‘She lost favour with her parents’ and was dismissed from her house, so I admitted her as my adopted daughter’, said Lady Jumo.
‘Then please tell her that I will meet her tomorrow at around four or five o’clock,’ said Mun.

Lady Jumo came down the rope. The next morning early she slaughtered a large pig to prepare the lunch table. Chach’ôngbi, who was sitting at the loom, saw a dark shadow moving outside the window.
‘Is there anyone out there?’ asked Chach’ôngbi.
‘This is Mun, the son of the King of Heaven. Open the door’, said Mun.
‘Put your finger in through the hole of the window. Then I can see if you are Mun’, said Chach’öngbi.

Mun put his finger in. Out of delight and gladness, Chach’öngbi pricked Mun’s finger with a needle.

‘The human world is not a place where one should wander around. It is full of uncleanness’, complained Mun.

Uttering these words, Mun turned away and went up to heaven. Soon, Lady Jumo prepared the lunch table and brought it into the room where Chach’öngbi was.

‘You must be mad! Why have you put two spoons on the table?’ asked Chach’öngbi.

‘Didn’t Munwangsong, the son of the King of Heaven come some minutes ago?’ said Lady Jumo.

‘Yes, he appeared outside the window. Out of my love, I said, ‘Put your fingers in so that I can see who you are.’ As he put his fingers in, I pricked it with a needle and purple blood shot out. Then Mun said, ‘I saw my blood. This place is unclean’ and went back to heaven’, said Chach’öngbi.

‘Now I know why you lost your parents’ favour. You have lost my favour as well. Get out of here’, yelled Lady Jumo.

Since she was driven out by her parents as well as by her foster mother. Chach’öngbi’s situation got worse. Again she packed her clothes and left the house. A new moon was just rising from the hill in the east.

‘The moon is fine, but a great laurel tree is stuck on it,’ singing a song, she felt more sorrowful. Happily, it was the birthday of the Buddha. Chach’öngbi decided to be a bigumi, a woman monk, to be forgiven of her sins in the previous life and to pray for rejoining Mun. She shaved her hair with a knife, put on a peaked hat and a robe, held a 108-bead rosary and a wood block, carried a bag, and went from village to village to obtain offerings. One day, she met the maidservants of the King of Heaven who were crying sorrowfully.

‘Why are you crying here?’ asked Chach’öngbi.

‘We are the maidservants of the King of Heaven. Mun wanted to taste the water of the stream, in which he had bathed with Chach’öngbi while he was staying in the human world and learned from Master Gōmu, but we cannot find where the stream is, so we are crying sorrowfully’, said the maidservants.

‘That’s a pity. I am Chach’öngbi. If I draw water from the stream where we bathed, will you take me with you to the Palace of Heaven?’ asked Chach’öngbi.

‘Yes, we will,’ said the maidservants.

Chach’öngbi drew water from the stream where they had bathed and climbed up to heaven with the maidservants of the King of Heaven. They showed Chach’öngbi Mun’s house and disappeared. Chach’öngbi wandered around Mun’s house and, when the full moon rose from the east, she sang a song on the branch of a nettle tree standing on the street in front of Mun’s house; ‘The moon is fine but a great laurel tree is stuck on it. Are you prettier than the face of Mun, the son of the King of Heaven?’
Hearing the song, Mun went outside the gate. As he expected, it was none other than Chach’ôngbi. They put together the two pieces of the empress tree comb and the two pieces matched perfectly.

For fear of his parents, Mun secretly admitted Chach’ôngbi into his room, and hid her behind the folding screen during the daytime and talked with her about all kinds of happy stories at night.

A maidservant thought, ‘This is strange. In the past, if the table was brought in, only the top of the rice had barely gone, but these days the rice bowl is emptied to the bottom. If water for washing was brought in it was returned as it was, but these days it becomes dirty. This is really strange.’ So one day she made a hole through the door and peeped into the room. Mun sat down with a monk with shaved head and was talking of all kinds of happy stories.

Chach’ôngbi also noticed it and asked, ‘Sir Mun, would you tell your parents what I asked last night, please?’

‘Yes, I would,’ said Mun.

As requested by Chach’ôngbi, Mun went to his parents and asked, ‘Are new clothes warmer than old ones?’

‘New clothes look better to others, but are not warmer than old ones,’ replied his parents.

‘Is new soy sauce sweeter than old sauce?’ asked Mun again.

‘Old soy sauce is sweeter’, replied his parents.

‘Do you like a new person or an old person?’ asked Mun last.

‘A newly married woman moves swiftly like a bat, but she is not better than a trained one’, replied his parents.

‘Then, I will not marry the daughter of King Sŏsu’, said Mun.

‘You wretch! What are you talking about? The woman who is to be our daughter-in-law must be able to come and go on the blade of a sword hung over a fifty-foot deep pit with burning charcoal in it’, said his parents.

Servants were called and ordered to dig a fifty-foot deep pit. The pit was filled with burning charcoal and a sword with a sharp blade was hung over the pit. If Chach’ôngbi tried to stand on the blade, Mun held her and if Mun tried to stand on the blade, Chach’ôngbi held him. So the two sat down and wailed together loudly, ‘Chach’ôngbi, even if you die today, you will be the ghost of Mun’s family. So don’t be sorry about that at all.’

Shedding tears, Chach’ôngbi took off her socks and stood on the sharp blade. She made one step forward and then two steps backwards. When she made ten steps backward, her one foot was on the ground and the other on the blade and the heel was cut slightly. Back on the ground, Chach’ôngbi wiped the cut quickly with her underskirt and, as a result, the underskirt became dirty.

Then Mun’s parents ran to Chach’ôngbi and said, ‘What a great girl! You are more than enough to be my daughter-in-law. By the way, how did your skirt become dirty?’

‘Mother and father, I will also prepare a voucher’, said Chach’ôngbi.

From that time on, a woman aged over fifteen has her period once a month.
Mun went to the daughter of King Sŏsu to break the engagement. The daughter of King Sŏsu got angry and lay down with the door locked. When the door of the room where the daughter of King Sŏsu lay down was opened after one hundred days, the daughter of King Sŏsu had become a bird. The bird of headache came out of the head of the bird, the bird of slanting eye from the eyes, and the bird of bad odour from the mouth, and the bird of complaining from the mouth.

From that time on, even if a husband and a wife have been enjoying a good relationship, if these birds get in between them, they are divorced. In addition, when the bride receives a table at the wedding, she removes some food from the top and puts it under the table before holding the spoon.

When Chach’ŏngbi married Mun and lived a happy life, suddenly she remembered that she had become Hwangsaegongan’s son-in-law before. Thus, Chach’ŏngbi said to Mun, ‘Sir, once I married the third daughter of Hwangsaegongan who had a Sŏch’ŏn flower garden at the village down the hill. Could you go instead of me? If they ask you why your face does not look the same as before, tell them that anxiety about the civil service examination has made the face what it is today. If they still doubt, say that you put a long sword below the floor. Then they will admit you. Stay there fifteen days, and then come to me and stay with me another fifteen days.’

‘Yes, I will do so’, said Mun.

However, Mun forgot that he should return after fifteen days. Chach’ŏngbi sent a letter in the front wing of a bird. Seized with fear after receiving the letter, Mun put on leggings instead of a cap and put the topcoat over his shoulder instead of putting it on properly, and ran to Chach’ŏngbi. At that time, Chach’ŏngbi was about to comb her hair but, as the husband was approaching the house, she gathered the tangled hair and tied it up with straws to meet Mun.

‘Sir, both of us dressed very quickly. So our dress is not tidy,’ said Chach’ŏngbi.

From that time on, it has been the custom that when a parent passes away, male mourners put on a hemp hood and put their topcoats over their shoulders and female mourners let the hair down and bind it with straw.

One day, there was a rumour that, coveting the beauty of Chach’ŏngbi, three thousand learned men were going to kill Mun by poisoning his alcohol and then kidnap Chach’ŏngbi. Chach’ŏngbi made Mun pour the alcohol on cotton inside his shirt, and said, ‘Sir, three thousand learned men are going to kill you and kidnap me. Thus, if today three thousand learned men invite you to a feast and urge you to drink wine, pretend to drink wine but pour it below your chin.’

As she spoke, three thousand learned men organized a feast and invited Mun to the occasion. As they urged Mun to drink wine, he pretended to drink it but poured it below his chin and, as a result, only the cotton became wet. Mun didn’t drink the poisoned alcohol, but the three thousand learned men thought that he would die on the way and let him go. Mun rode his horse
to his home safely. At that time, an old lady with one eye stopped Mun, saying, ‘Dear Mun, drink a cup of this wine and give alms for the wine. I will spend it to prepare the evening meal.’

Having pity on her, Mun threw a coin to her from his seat on the horse and drank the wine. In fact, the wine was poison. Mun fell down from the horse and died on the spot.

Knowing this, Chach’öngbi carried Mun on her back and laid him on the bed, and caught cicadas and hung them on each nail on the wall with string. During the daytime on the following day, the three thousand learned men rushed in like a swarm of bees to kidnap Chach’öngbi.

‘You came to kidnap me, but if you can eat my husband’s food, I will go by myself,’ said Chach’öngbi.

‘We will try,’ said the three thousand learned men.

Chach’öngbi brought dough soup in a wooden bowl to one of the learned men. He tried to chew the dough, but he could not because the dough was iron.

‘Can you bring my husband’s cushion and sit on it?’ said Chach’öngbi.

However, as none of them could take down the iron cushion from the shelf, they whispered, ‘Mun must be such a strong commander.’

One learned man tried to listen inside the room where Mun was laid. Hearing the sound of cicadas, he believed it was a revived Mun’s snoring. He screamed out of fear, and all of the three thousand learned men ran away in total panic.

Then, Chach’öngbi entered Hwangsaegongan’s Söch’ön Flower Garden, picked the flower of revival, and brought Mun back to life.

At that time, the emperor of the great nation was at war with foreign invaders, but the situation was very unfavourable, so he requested relief from the King of Heaven and promised to give ‘a piece of land and a piece of water’ to one who suppressed the rebellion. Hearing this, the King of Heaven volunteered to command the army. He picked the flower of destruction at Hwangsaegongan’s Söch’ön flower garden and entered the kingdom of the emperor. As the rebellion took place, ten thousand soldiers were fighting against thirty thousand with swords and bows. As Chach’öngbi scattered the flower of destruction in all directions, the ten thousand and thirty thousand soldiers fell down like thick flax plants broken down by the wind and old dried up flax plants.

As Chach’öngbi suppressed the rebels, the emperor granted her a piece of land and a piece of water. However, Chach’öngbi asked the emperor to grant five kinds of grain. Accepting Chach’öngbi’s request, the emperor granted the five kinds of grain. Thus, Chach’öngbi came down to the human world with Mun on the fifteenth of July.

From that time on, the fifteenth of July became baekjung – the Buddhist counterpart of All Souls’ day observed on the fifteenth of July by the lunar calendar.
As they came down to the human world, Chōngsunam, who was walking like a dog that had bred puppies, saw Chach'ŏngbi.

‘Young lady, what has happened to you? Your parents passed away to the Nether World and I became like this, not knowing where to go. I cannot bear hunger. Would you give me some food for lunch?’ said Chōngsunam.

‘Then look at the field over there. Nine servants were plowing it with nine oxen. Go there and get lunch’, said Chach’ŏngbi.

Chōngsunam went there and asked to share their lunch, but the nine servants responded angrily, ‘We don’t have food for you.’

Chōngsunam reported this to Chach’ŏngbi who gave acute diseases to the nine servants, and brought horseflies to the nine oxen, twelve types of ominous phenomena to the plows, and bad years to the field.

‘Go to that field where two old women are cultivating with a hoe. Get some of their lunch’, said Chach’ŏngbi.

Chōngsunam went to the field and asked to share their lunch. The old women shared their lunch with him. Chach’ŏngbi blessed the two old women with a harvest of a heavy crop to be carried by carts, although they were cultivating with a hoe.

When Chach’ŏngbi was preparing the seeds of the five kinds of grain, one of the five did not have seeds. It was buckwheat that was designed to grow together with other autumn plants, although its season was delayed in order to get the seed from King of Heaven.

In this way, Mun and Chach’ŏngbi became the god and goddess of agriculture who prepare the five kinds of grain, and Chōngsunam became the god of stock-farming who provides herd boys to stock farms.

Fig. 25 Herdboys, T’aehui’s costume for winter on Cheju Island.
Fig. 26 Ch’ilsong (the Gods of the Seven Stars): The Ch’ilsong belief is that people pray for their longevity, desired accomplishments, safe growth of children and peace and safety of their family. The origin of the Ch’ilsong belief can be traced to prehistoric times and can be found in various forms in Korean religions: Taoism, Buddhism and shamanism. It is a very familiar belief along with the belief in guardian spirits of mountains and deeply rooted ancestral beliefs. It normally appears as a master or the Merlyn (as a male), but female Ch’ilsong gods can be found sometimes. Generally, the Ch’ilsong gods appear dressed in the formal uniform of a bureaucrat, holding a sceptre, and carrying stars on their heads. Courtesy of Kahoe Museum. Date unknown.
Once upon a time, Changsŏlryong from the county of Chang and Songsŏlryong from the county of Song were married. Although they accumulated a great deal of wealth, they lived in sadness because they did not have any sons or daughters as they reached their fifties. One day, they heard that the Buddha of Sangju Temple was highly responsive to fertility prayers. So they sent ninety thousand sheets of silk, one thousand bales of high quality white rice, one thousand bales of medium quality white rice and one thousand bales of low quality white rice to the Sangju Temple for the Surukjae, a
rite for calling the birthing goddess to assist conception. Following this offering for the Surukjae, they finally gave birth to a daughter.

When their daughter was seven years old, her father was called to heaven and her mother was called to the underworld to assume positions in government. Although the couple wanted to bring their daughter with them, they were unable to do so. So, they confined her in a room with forty-eight windows and told the maid Nūjindōkjōng, ‘Provide food and clothes through this hole so that our daughter can stay alive until we return, then we will set you free.’ After these brief instructions, they left for their governing positions.

Maid Nūjindōkjōng provided food and clothes through the hole for six days. However, when she brought dinner on the seventh day, she could not see the daughter through the hole. The maid searched for the daughter all over the place for three days and nights, but no trace of her could be found. Although Maid Nūjindōkjōng seemed doomed by her masters, there was no way to escape. When all hope vanished, she wrote letters to her masters. The letters said that they should hurry home, since their daughter was missing.

After the daughter left through a hole in one of the forty-eight windows, she wandered into a field, and lost her way back home. Frightened, she sat down on the bank of a river and cried out for fourteen days and nights. She was almost dying with starvation when she saw three monks coming from the East, and called out, ‘Monk, please help me.’

But the first monk passed her by without a second glance.
Again she called, ‘Monk, please help me.’
But the second monk passed her by without a second glance.
‘Monk, please help me’, the daughter called.
The third monk approached and asked her, ‘Who are you?’
‘I am a daughter of His Excellency Changŏlryong from the county of Chang’, replied the daughter.

‘Ha ha, you are the daughter of the couple who prayed to our temple for offspring’, said the third monk.

The third monk wrapped her tightly with his long-sleeved Buddhist robe and continued his journey to the county of Chang. Meanwhile, the Changŏlryong couple was searching for their daughter after resigning their government positions. However, they were unable to find any trace of her. They lived every day in deep sorrow and sighs. The monk hid the daughter under the big stone placed before the front gate at the farthest gate in His Excellency Changŏlryong’s residence and entered the house.

‘Excuse me, may I come in? I am a monk’, said the third monk.
‘I don’t care if you are a monk or a monkey. My daughter who we prayed for at your temple, and was born has vanished without a trace. Are you able to read my fortune and predict where my daughter might be?’ asked Changŏlryong.

The third monk started to tell his fortune, and said, ‘My lord, your daughter could be in a place where she can hear your voice or may be in a place where she can only hear your voice if you shout loudly. Why don’t you
dig under the big stone placed before the front gate?’ replied the third monk. The sarcastic and ridiculous answer from the monk provoked His Excellency Changsŏlryong’s rage.

‘This monk must have been responsible for our misfortune’, said His Excellency Changsŏlryong.

Sensing His Excellency Changsŏlryong’s intention to kill him, the monk jumped for one thousand miles and ran for another ten thousand miles. As a last attempt to find his daughter, His Excellency Changsŏlryong dug beneath the big stone placed before the front gate and found his daughter tightly wrapped in a long-sleeved robe. When he unwrapped the long-sleeved robe to free her, he noticed that his daughter’s face had dark spots. She seemed to have gained some weight, and her tummy bulged out.

‘How unspeakable! How dishonourable my unmarried girl has become pregnant! It cannot happen to a high-class family!’ lamented His Excellency Changsŏlryong. Although His Excellency Changsŏlryong thought about killing his beloved daughter to keep his family’s dignity, he could not bring himself to do so. So, he put his daughter into a cast iron box, locked it from outside and threw the box in the East Sea.

Swept by the tide, the cast iron box drifted to Cheju Island. On arriving on Cheju Island, the cast iron box tried to come ashore in the port of Sanji, but the force of Sebyŏndowŏnsu, the Ch’ilmŏri Shrine God, prevented this. It attempted to come ashore in Hwabuk, but the force of the Kari Shrine God prevented this. Finally, it turned towards Dünmulsŏnan, and headed towards the West Sea, and sailed to Ssŏkŭngae near Hamdŏk, settling at P’aengp’ungyŏ below Sŏmo Hill.

Seven divers lived at thirteen households in Shinhŭng, Hamdŏk. One morning, equipped with buoys, nets and spears, the seven divers headed towards Ssŏkŭngae in P’aengp’ungyŏ under Sŏmo Hill. They found a cast iron box on the beach. All seven divers ran for the box, claimed it for themselves, and got tangled together, grabbing each other’s hair to gain possession of the box.

At this time, the elder Song was walking towards P’aengp’ungyŏ under Sŏmo Hill with rockfish fishing equipment, a fishing pole, and a small bamboo basket. He heard women (the seven divers) noisily bragging as he walked towards the beach. The elder Song wondered if they might have some anchovies so he hurried down to Ssŏkŭngae and saw the seven divers there fighting.

‘Hey! Why are you fighting so fiercely?’ scolded the elder Song.

‘Elder Song, listen to me. I am the one who found the cast iron box, but those bitches are claiming that they found it first. So, I am fighting for my right’, appealed one of the divers.

‘Don’t be so foolish. Why don’t you share equally whatever you find inside the box? After you divide it by seven, will you give me the empty box so that I can use it as a tobacco box?’ said the elder Song.

‘That sounds fair, we will follow your advice’, said the seven divers.
When the elder Song lifted up the cast iron box and threw it on the ground three times, it opened by itself. Everyone looked inside it and found a mother snake, that Changsöolyong’s daughter was transformed into, and her seven baby snakes in the box. Their tongues were darting in and out, their eyes were keen, and their bodies were colourful. In fact, they were seven snakes. ‘How ugly and dirty!’ the elder Song said. He grabbed them with his fishing poll and threw the snakes to the East and the West with help from the seven divers. Since that day, the elder Song and the seven divers have suffered from belching and eye infections.

The seven divers and Song felt awkward and decided to go to a female shaman in Kamulgae to hear their fortunes. The shaman told them that they were cursed due to their cold reception of gods from a foreign country. She told them that they needed to pray for two shamanist rites, Chönsaenamkut and Ch’ilsongsaenamkut. The seven divers and elder Song hired a shaman to perform the rites. Miraculously, the seven divers and the elder Song not only recovered from their illnesses, they also made enormous fortunes for themselves. So, the seven divers and elder Song made the Ch’ilsong Shrine in front of Sōmo Hill to worship the snakes. Everyone in Hamdōk followed them and the whole village became rich.

Afterwards, the mother snake and seven baby snakes, Ch’ilsong, considered moving on to other places. They went for a journey to the capital. The mother snake carried her seven snakes and walked on the long journey. She used alleys or narrow trails during the daytime, but used wide roads at night. She passed through many different places: Kūmsōng Hill of Hamdōk, Manse Hill of Choch’ön, Yölyömun Street of Sinch’ён, Pyöldosalsonkōri of Hawbuk, Baeritnae and many others. Finally, when she arrived in Kaünimaru, she could not think of anything because she was out of breath. Since then, people have said that they would lose their intention for a law suit by the time they neared Kaünimaru inside the capital because they are short of breath.

After catching her breath at Kaünimaru, she continued her journey to Karak’utmōri and saw a stream running through a hole. The seven babies passed through the hole, entered the capital and arrived at a village. They lay down at the far side door of Songdaejang’s residence. Songdaejang’s wife went out to draw water from the Kūmsanmul and found the seven snakes lying on the ground. She wondered what had happened, but could not see anyone. So she went to Kūmsanmul and removed her skirt to draw some water. But when she returned from Kūmsanmul with water, she found the seven snakes lying on her skirt. She was certain that these babies were protecting gods from her ancestors, so she decided to bring them to her home and placed them in the barn. After this, the Songdaejang family became enormously rich. Since then, people have called it Ch’ilson village because Ch’ilson was first seated at the Songdaejang’s residence.

One day, as the seven babies lay at Baeburuün Hill, a government officer passed by and saw them. He cursed and spat on them three times. After that day, the government officer suffered from mouth and eye infections, and
many strange things happened around him. He felt awkward and called in a female shaman to tell his fortune. The shaman told him that he was cursed because of his cold reception of the gods from a foreign country. She told him that he needed to pray for Ch'ŏnsaenamkut and Ch'ilsongaenamkut. So, when he prayed for the rites, his illnesses disappeared and the strange events stopped happening around him.

When they felt full after gorging from the rites, the mother snake said to her seven babies, ‘Now you need to select places where you want to go because we cannot depend on this village for food any longer.’ So she asked, ‘My first daughter, where do you plan to go?’

‘Mother, I will take Ch’usu Pond, and I will become an outdoor Ch'ilson Goddess protecting it’, replied the first daughter.

‘My second daughter, how about you?’ the mother asked.

‘I will take the administrative and judicial branches, and I will become an outdoor Ch'ilson Goddess protecting these places’, replied the second daughter.

‘My third daughter, how about you?’ the mother asked.

‘I will take the prisons in this country, and I will become an outdoor Ch'ilson Goddess protecting the prisons’, replied the third daughter.

‘My fourth daughter, how about you?’ the mother asked.

‘I will take all orchards in the east and west, and I will become an outdoor Ch'ilson Goddess protecting the orchards’, replied the fourth daughter.

‘My fifth daughter, how about you?’ the mother asked.

‘I will take barns in the east and west, and I will become an outdoor Ch'ilson Goddess protecting the barns’, replied the fifth daughter.

‘My sixth daughter, how about you?’ the mother asked.

‘I will take Kwangjo Pond, and I will become an outdoor Ch'ilson Goddess protecting it’, replied the sixth daughter.

‘My seventh daughter, how about you?’ the mother asked.

‘I will stay under the blue or black chujo7 under the tangerine tree, beneath the blue and black roof tiles, in the back of the house. Then I will become an outdoor Ch'ilson Goddess protecting these places. And mother, your feelings must weigh heavily upon you from giving birth to seven daughters, so I will give you tangerines to calm down your pent-up feelings if I receive any as offerings from people in September or October. The tangerine dessert will give free vent to your heavy feelings’, replied the seventh daughter.

‘Poor child, you are deeply devoted to your parents’, the mother said.

The seventh daughter asked her mother, ‘Mother, where do you plan to go now?’

‘I will stay in the granary where there is a big jar, a small jar, a black jar, a yellow jar, a big rice bin and a small rice bin. In that place, I will become an indoor Ch'ilson Goddess who protects all kinds of grains. In this manner I will harvest different grains so that they can be eaten freely’, replied the mother.
In this way, their mother went to the barn and became an indoor Ch’ilsŏng Goddess who protected all harvested grains, and her seven babies became the outdoor Ch’ilsŏng Goddesses for protecting the places where they were seated.

### Notes

1. Ch’ilsŏng: it means ‘Snake Goddess’.
2. Surukjae: there is a shamanist rite that a shaman calls in a goddess who blesses women with babies, and prays that women will conceive on Cheju Island. However, in this myth, it shows that the people of Cheju Island practised a mixture of Buddhism and their traditional shamanism. In Buddhist ceremony, it is called the ‘Suryukjae’, and it is performed to comfort stray spirits over land and water by offering them food.
3. This stone is called Nodudol and is used as something to stand on when people mount or dismount a horse.
4. Diving was a woman’s job on Cheju Island.
5. Chŏnsaenamkut: a ritual for a terminally ill patient hoping for a cure.
6. Ch’ilsŏngsaenamkut: a ritual for recovery from illness if the patient was killed by a snake. The purpose for this ritual was to get well from the illness by resurrecting the dead snake.
7. Chujŏri: it is a cover or a lid made of straw thatch. ‘Chilsŏngnul’ is a small shrine for an outdoor Ch’ilsŏng Goddess at the perimeter of the house. It is made of two roof tiles covered by chujŏri. People believed that the outdoor Ch’ilsŏng Goddess resided inside the shrine.
Fig. 28 The Three Chesŏk Gods. Courtesy of Kaho Museum. Date unknown.
CHAPTER 9

Tanggūm-aegi and the Three Chesŏk Gods

How did the Three Chesŏk become gods? Why do many people worship the gods? Where were the Three Chesŏk’s roots? Listen and I will tell you.

Once upon a time, in a peaceful and prosperous country, there was a king by the name of Wang Pusŏl, who was known as King Chŏngban. It was through the favour of the gods that he had become king, and there was but one thing that he lacked, an heir.

One evening, the king and his wife were standing outside their gate looking out over the western mountain where the sun had sunk behind the hills, when the moon rose in the east. The king spoke with a heavy heart, ‘As we were born into this human world, who will care for our property and perform the ancestral rites for us, if we have no heir to succeed us?’

His wife, being a woman, felt this sadness even more keenly and called to the king, saying, ‘Through the favour of the gods you became a king, ruling over India, and we lack nothing. Yet you are distressed because we have no heir?’

‘Did you just now realize that? We are not fated to have an heir, so what can we do?’ said the king.

‘I have not just realized this, but perhaps it is because our devotion is insufficient. Maybe that is why we cannot have an heir. Let us pray at a famous mountain and river and then try to beget a child’, said his wife.

‘If having an heir depended only on how devoutly one prayed, would there be anyone in the world without descendants or anyone who wasn’t rich?’ said the king.

‘Being devout is not something that everyone can do. Making that kind of effort is more difficult than bearing an heir. If one is utterly devoted in one’s efforts, there is nothing in the world that one cannot do. As devotion moves heaven, is there anything that wouldn’t go better for you if you were extremely devout?’ said his wife.

The king could think of nothing to say in response, so he agreed to his wife’s plan.

After obtaining the king’s consent and purifying their house, his wife ascended a famous mountain and built a high altar out of yellow soil. After washing her hair and bathing, she burned incense on the altar. And after offering the burning of three pieces of prayer paper she knelt down, clasped her hands together, and prayed, ‘I pray to you, I pray to you, wise gods, god of the mountain and god of the earth.’
Thus she prayed in the king's name, rubbing her hands together.

'Please answer my prayer. I am none other than Wang Pusol's wife. Through the favour of the gods my husband became king of India and we lack for almost nothing. But as we do not have even a single heir, I pray to you to bless us with a child.'

She began praying thus with her whole heart.

One day passed, then another, and before she knew it she had prayed for a hundred days. She returned home and lay down in the bedroom.

At midnight she had a dream. In her dream, a child appeared and said, 'Honoured lady, do not be frightened. I was originally a transcendent. But because of my many offences in heaven I was banished to the famous mountain. As I had no other place to go, the mountain god and the earth god sent me to your house. Now we have been fated to become mother and son.'

Suddenly, the baby was in her arms and, startled, she awoke from the dream.

She called the king at once and told him about her dream. Joyfully, he gave her his interpretation, 'Ah! Now there will be prosperity in our house! A flower will bloom – an heir, born to us!'

It was the eighth month of the kyehae2 year, and from that time on the king's wife started to show signs of pregnancy. With great care she looked after herself, and on the seventh day of the fourth month of the kapcha3 year her labour pains began. She lay down, and at the hour of the horse4 on the eighth day she gave birth to a baby boy.

The child's face was like jade and he had a stalwart appearance. They named him Sakyamuni, and treated him with great care. They were afraid to blow on him lest he fly away. They were afraid to touch him too roughly lest he be crushed. 'My darling child! My beautiful and beloved child!' they would say, and time flew by as they raised their cherished son. Sakyamuni grew up in perfect health. Around the time he was one year old, he began to learn how to walk, and his tottering steps were really something to see.

The kapcha and ’ilch’uk5 years passed, and he continued to grow in perfect health through the pyo6 year, when he began to learn how to talk. His baby talk was astonishing to hear. Sakyamuni's parents could not have been more delighted, and they passed many happy hours together.

The pyo6 year passed, and in the chôngmyo7 year Sakyamuni turned four and was able to speak about anything. His intelligence was limitless, and when his parents looked at the son they had so tenderly raised, their joy was boundless.

The pyo6 and muchin8 years passed, and in the kyőngo9 year he began to study. He began with the Thousand-Character Text and learned the Four Books and Three Classics10 as well as books by scholars of the hundred schools, all before he was ten years old. On top of all this, his writing was unmatched in the world.

When Sakyamuni reached the age of ten, however, his father fell ill and spent much time in his sick-bed. Although he was only ten, Sakyamuni's filial
devotion was so great that he searched throughout the country for medicine, which he brought back intending to cure his father's illness. Unfortunately, even these efforts were not enough, and his father passed away. Sakyamuni went to the famous mountain and buried his father. Alone, he said, 'God, you are heartless! God of the mountain, you are pitiless! You allowed me to be born into this mortal world and to be raised tenderly by kind hands. But now, barely ten years old and having been separated from my father, how can I go on living?' Grieving, he returned home.

Time passed and in the kapsul\textsuperscript{11} year Sakyamuni turned eleven. At this time his mother unexpectedly fell ill and was confined to her bed. In the same way he had done for his father, Sakyamuni travelled the entire country looking for medicines to cure his mother's illness and returned home with them. But again, his efforts was not enough. And in the end, his mother departed from this world.

'God, you are heartless! God of the mountain, you are pitiless! You made me lose both my parents at this young age. What should I do now?' he shouted. But his shouting was in vain. There was nothing else he could do, so he buried his mother on the famous mountain. Thinking about the road that lay ahead of him, he felt as though there were no hope.

After the death of the king and his wife, murmurs began to be heard among the king's subjects, 'Since the country is in mourning and only a young prince remains, now let's see if we can rise in the official ranks.'

After this sort of talk reached the ears of Sakyamuni, who was now twelve years old, he hid the great seal of state that his parents had used and he took refuge on the famous mountain. Having gone deep into the heart of the mountain, he thought long in solitude, but remained at a loss what to do, 'At the young age of twelve I am alone. As I have lost my mother and father and have been driven away, hiding deep in this mountain, how am I to carry on with my life?'

A year passed and spring arrived. It was now the pyŏngcha\textsuperscript{12} year and Sakyamuni was thirteen years old. From this time on he began praying to the gods. Making an altar out of yellow earth and kneeling down with his hands clasped together, he prayed earnestly, 'I pray to you, I pray to you, wise heavenly god, god of the mountain, god of the earth. I was born into the human world and until the age of ten lived richly, raised by good parents. At the age of ten I was parted from my father. At the age of eleven I was separated from my mother. At the age of twelve I was driven away from my home and came to this famous mountain. Now, I cannot seem to discern the path I am to take. If I am to find the road ahead, how am I to proceed?'

Every day Sakyamini prayed.

One day, a violent gale arose and a single bead dropped down in front of him.

'Did you fall from heaven? Did you rise from the earth? Did you fly in on the gale? Might you be a prayer bead that has come to show me the path ahead?' he asked, picking it up.
Sakyamuni soon after chose a good patch of earth, planted the prayer bead, and waited for it to sprout and grow. Time passed, and a sprout appeared from the prayer bead. When Sakyamuni saw this he felt joy, as if he was meeting his parents once again.

‘All right. If you have come to show me the path ahead, grow quickly and let’s try to make a lot of prayer-bead seeds’, he said to himself.

Time went by and before he knew it the tree had grown tall and blossomed and was beginning to produce fruit. It was spring of the chŏngch’uks’ year. Looking at the prayer-bead tree, Sakyamuni saw that there were five branches extending outwards. On the branch extending to the east, the prayer-bead fruit always blessed people with enough to eat. On the branch extending to the south, the prayer-bead fruit gave parents long life, husbands and wives good relations, and children prosperity. On the branch extending to the west, the prayer-bead fruit gave people wealth and long lives. On the branch extending to the north, the prayer-bead fruit gave people happiness and prosperity at home and good fortune when away from home. And on the branch that grew from the centre, the prayer-bead fruit blessed people with wealth, status and fame.

Around the time that these prayer beads ripened, Sakyamuni chose a good day and began to pick the beads. He picked all of them and found that they amounted to three toe and three hop.

‘How marvellous! How joyous! Having planted one bead, this much fruit was produced! Is it because of my utter devotion that this has come about? Or has this happened because the god of heaven and the god of the mountain looked into my circumstances to help me on my path ahead?’ he said to himself.

Sakyamuni chose a good day and strung all the beads together, one by one, put them all in a jade dish and raised them up in his hands. He went to the famous mountain, looked up at the empty sky, and said, ‘God, god of the mountain, and god of the earth, you have helped me. But this is my only devotion. If I intend to take these things and go search for my path, what must I do next?’

At that, a violent gale arose, a mist like a folding screen was spread open and a rainbow extended before him like a bridge. Sakyamuni, without knowing what was going on, was ascending into heaven. Having risen to heaven and entered, he was tremendously frightened. He looked around, here and there, and eventually stumbled upon the King of Heaven.

‘It’s not yet your time to come to Heaven. Why have you come?’ the King said, looking at Sakyamuni.

‘It’s not that I have died. I was born into the mortal world, and until the age of ten was allowed to live richly, together with my parents. However, when I was ten I was separated from my father, and when I was eleven I lost my mother. And because it was my lot to be driven away from my home by the people, I went deep into the mountain. I thought carefully. But as I could see no way to proceed, deep in the mountain I began to pray with great devotion.'
A single prayer bead came down to me, and I chose a good patch of earth and planted it, and it became a prayer-bead tree. I picked three toe and three hop of prayer beads from it and made an offering of them. And now, as I have come looking for help finding the path ahead, please instruct me how I can do so,’ said Sakyamuni.

‘I had no idea you were so devout! Since you are so sincere, descend once again to humanity and further cultivate your path,’ said the King of Heaven and took out some prayer beads, and hung them around Sakyamuni’s neck. With this, he also gave Sakyamuni a peaked monk’s hat, a conical bamboo rain hat, a six-ringed staff, and a bell with a clapper.

Sakyamuni accepted the things the King of Heaven had given to him and descended again to the famous mountain. For a moment he was unable to distinguish between what was a dream and what was real. He soon came to his senses, but although reality once again became clear to him, he remembered where his new objects had come from. He removed the prayer beads hanging around his neck and counted all 108 of them.

‘108 prayer beads! As I was given these 108 prayer beads, it must be an order for me to construct a temple!’ Sakyamuni said to himself.

It was spring of the mūin year, and Sakyamuni was fifteen. At this point, in order to build the temple he went down among the neighbouring houses, getting offerings of money from the wealthy and offers of labour from the poor. In this way, a temple was built, 108 kan in size: as many partitions as the number of prayer beads. When the temple was complete, Sakyamuni named it Golden Buddha Hermitage.

‘As the 108-kan temple was built and 108 prayer beads were hung around my neck, the number of monks should also be 108’, he thought to himself. ‘But how do I make this happen?’

Time passed. People began to say that Golden Buddha Hermitage was a good place to study, and the children of wealthy households came to the temple to study and become monks. People with no other place to go came to the temple and became monks. People with a short life span came to the temple to pray for long life and became monks. In this way, the number of assembled monks, including Sakyamuni, finally reached 108.

‘How wonderful! Everything has taken place as I wished. That this temple was built up from nothing – and that this many monks have gathered here – is truly marvellous’, Sakyamuni thought to himself.

To the monks, he made this request, ‘All of you, as much as humanly possible and to the utmost extent of your abilities, worship the Buddha, Maitreya and the god that resides in this temple. If you do so, your hopes will be attained. So I implore you to exhaust what strength you have, not by occupying yourself with useless thoughts, but by uniting in one mind.’

From this time on, Sakyamuni began practising the art of transforming himself into whatever he wished. In the kimyo year, he was sixteen years old. With his six-ringed staff in hand, he would roll his body on the ground and could become a tiger, a rock deep in the heart of the mountain, or a mote of
dust that vanished without a trace in a raging wind. He could also appear to be an old man of 180 years. After he had learned all of these things, he gathered the monks together.

‘Having mastered the art of transforming myself, I am going to descend among the people to observe their minds and hearts. All of you take care to worship the Buddha of this temple to the best of your abilities’, he told them.

At this time Sakyamuni was sixteen years old and had been cultivating the path for six years. Using the art of transformation he disguised himself by taking on the appearance of 180-year-old man, wearing an outer garment made from blue hemp, and carrying a purple rucksack over his shoulder. With his peaked hood covering his head and over this his bamboo hat worn forward, and carrying his walking staff, he proceeded to depart from Golden Buddha Hermitage and descended among the people.

Having descended into the human world and observed the state of their minds and hearts, Sakyamuni encountered various sorts of people. He blessed people who had performed good deeds, and he punished those who had performed bad deeds. To those who were wealthy but had no children, he took some of their fortune and gave them a child. To those who had many children but no fortune, he took away some children and gave fortune. Encountering evil-natured people who had both wealth and children, he deprived them entirely of both their fortune and their children and forced them into a life of hardship. To those who had neither wealth nor children but had good hearts, he gave both children and wealth. As for those who had neither wealth nor children and had in addition evil hearts, these he beheaded and sent to the King of Heaven for ever. While performing such deeds, Sakyamuni roamed far and wide throughout the country.

Now at this time there was a minister in Chosôn with nine sons. As he was the minister, he wanted for nothing, but it troubled him that he had not even a single daughter. Strangely, whenever his wife had her fortune told or her features examined, it was always foretold that they would have a monk as a son-in-law. ‘What’s all this? We have no daughter, but we’ll have a son-in-law?’ she would say, and they would disregard the findings. When they saw others who had daughters and sons-in-law, they were always envious.

One day the wife thought, ‘Alas, we’ve reached the end of our resources. It appears we are fated to have a daughter. But since our devotion is insufficient, this destiny cannot be realized.’

She called his husband and spoke with him. ‘Through god’s favour, you are the minister of this country and we have nine sons. We do not have even a single daughter, don’t you feel something is missing?’

‘You hardly need to mention this. You knew before, so why do you ask this now?’ said he.

‘I’m not talking about what we know and what we don’t know. It seems that perhaps we cannot have a daughter because we are lacking in devotion. Therefore, let us pray for a hundred days at the famed mountains and large rivers and try to have a daughter’, said she.
That won’t work. If having a child depended on one’s devotion, would there be anyone in the world without children? he responded.

‘It’s not like that. Not everyone can make that much effort. If we are truly devout, certainly we can have a daughter. Is it not said that in ancient times sages bore children because they prayed at mountains and rivers? If we pray with sincerity, is there any reason why this would not happen for us as well?’ said she.

The minister could not argue with her reasoning so he assented to her plan.

After receiving the minister’s consent, the wife purified their house, ascended a famous mountain and made a tall altar out of yellow earth. She bathed and purified herself, burnt incense and burned three pieces of prayer paper as an offering. Rubbing her hands together, she prayed earnestly, ‘I pray to you, I pray to you, wise god, god of mountains, god of earth! I pray to you, please, bless us with a daughter. Through your favour my husband became the minister of Choson. But although we have nine sons, it troubles us no end that we have no daughter. Please, I pray, bless us with a daughter.’

She performed these prayers devoutly and after a hundred days returned to the house. Lying down in bed, she fell asleep and at midnight had a dream in which a female transcendent appeared, ‘Honoured wife, please do not wake up startled from this dream. I am none other than a heavenly transcendent, but as I committed many offences in heaven I was sent down to the famous mountain. While I was wandering about with nowhere to go, the god of the mountain and the god of the earth told me to go to your house.’

After the transcendent had spoken, she saw that she had a female child in her arms. At this she started and woke from her dream.

The next morning she called to her husband to tell him about her dream of the previous night and learned that he had had a similar dream. For some time they sat together interpreting the dream.

‘Aha! Now something good will happen. A flower will bloom in this house – a daughter, will be born to us!’ said the couple.

It was the first lunar month of the chŏngmyo year, and from that time the queen showed signs of being pregnant. She took good care of herself, keeping herself clean and selecting only auspicious places to sit. One month passed, then another and, before they knew it, it was the tenth month. She had been pregnant for ten months, and on the sixteenth day she felt labour pains and lay down in bed. Soon after, she gave birth to a daughter. Looking at her, the couple saw that she appeared to be the transcendent that had descended from heaven. On the same day and at the same hour in both the Kim and Ch’oe family households, their domestic servants, a daughter was born.

Wishing to name his daughter, the minister took out his dictionary and searched through it for good characters, but he could not find one that was suitable. He thought this over for quite some time.

‘Well, then, perhaps I should go ahead and name her. As it is right and proper that a daughter has been born to us, one character that I’ll select for her name will be the character ‘tang’ meaning ‘proper’. Furthermore, for a
Fig. 29 The guardian spirit of a mountain (male). Date unknown.
Fig. 30 The guardian spirit of a mountain (female). Date unknown.
long time we had hoped for a daughter, and as she has finally come to us now, I will also choose the character ‘kube’ for ‘now’. And as her parents will treat her with the same love and affection whether she is one year old or ten years old, I’ll choose the word for a baby, ‘aegi’, making her full name Tanggüm-aegi. Having thus named her, he said, ‘As a daughter was born to the Kim household on the same day and at the same hour, she will serve Tanggüm-aegi. Why don’t I name her Kümdanch’un? And as a daughter was born to the Ch’oe household on the same day and at the same hour, she too will serve Tanggüm-aegi. Why don’t I name her as well? Oktanch’un would be good.’

So, the minister’s daughter was called Tanggüm-aegi, the daughter born to the Kim household was called Kümdanch’un, and the daughter born to the Ch’oe household was called Oktanch’un. Tanggüm-aegi’s father and mother would pick her up and look at her many times a day, saying, ‘Our darling, beloved child, so pretty and cute. Finally, our prayers have been answered. Finally, our unsatisfied desire has been realized!’

They raised her with love and care, and Tanggüm-aegi grew up quickly in perfect health. Her father and mother found great harmony and happiness in raising their daughter, and time flew by without their even knowing it.

In this manner time passed, the sinmi and imsin years passed, and in the kyeyu year Tanggüm-aegi was seven years old. After her mother and father consulted one another, they brought a teacher into the house to instruct their daughter. Beginning with Thousand Character Text, she read Chinese Printer, Book of Songs, Book of Documents, Analects, Mencius, I Ching and others, reading the classics and the books of one hundred schools of thought all before she was ten years old.

Tanggüm-aegi, Kümdanch’un and Oktanch’un were ten years old before they knew it. Now Tanggüm-aegi had learned a great deal and to some extent appeared mature. Because she understood the difference between superiors and inferiors and lived according to the Three Bonds and Five Relations, she always behaved herself and was considerate in front of adults, keeping her thoughts and tongue carefully in check. Realizing this, her mother and father conferred with one another and decided to build a separate hall in their backyard.

In the chongch’uk year Tanggüm-aegi turned eleven, and she, Kümdanch’un and Oktanch’un began to play among themselves in the separate hall. Tanggüm-aegi’s father would open the door to the hall several times a day, look in and ask, ‘Is my daughter Tanggüm-aegi safe and sound today?’

In the muin year, Tanggüm-aegi was twelve years of age. As she grew older, she gradually became more lovely, her figure as beautiful as a rising half moon, as nimble as a swallow, and as fresh and healthy as a cleanly washed cabbage stem. There was no one who saw her that was not envious.

But as the muin year passed and the kinyo year arrived, trouble arose in their household. Tanggüm-aegi was now thirteen years old, and this was the first trouble that had occurred in their house since she had been born.

‘The minister and his nine sons are hatching a plot and intend to move
against you. What do you intend to do about this?’ a villainous retainer told the king.

The king listened to what he said and responded, ‘Well, if that’s the case, we cannot tolerate it. Have them exiled to a distant land’, he commanded.

After Tanggūm-aegi’s family received tidings of this order from the king, her father sat them down together and discussed the matter with them, ‘What earthly crime could I have committed to have brought this to pass? What error of mine caused this order to be given?’

They could not understand why the king had commanded such a thing. But those who had come with the order pressured them, telling them it was time to leave, so there was nothing they could do but depart with them.

At the gate of their house Tanggūm-aegi’s father looked at his daughter, Tanggūm-aegi, who was seeing him off and said, ‘Tanggūm-aegi, my daughter. Please, by all means be well. Grow up well. If I live to return, I will meet you again and we will enjoy more good times. And if I do not live to return, but die, I will try to see you again as I pass down that road to Yellow Springs. Please be well. Grow up well.’

Having said this, Tanggūm-aegi’s father and his nine sons departed. With every step he took, he wept and heaved with sighs. When Tanggūm-aegi heard her father’s words, she fainted to the floor. Kūmdanch’un and Oktanch’un attended to their mistress and lay her down in the annex in the back yard. After a good sometime Tanggūm-aegi recovered from her faint and grieved until dark about her family’s misfortunes, and said, ‘Seeing that I can’t hear my father’s voice, it is not a dream, but real. Why does my family have this misfortune?’ And she spent her time day by day, sighing of grief.

Time passed and one day Tanggūm-aegi’s mother came into the annex in the backyard and said, ‘Before you were born, I offered prayers for a hundred days at the mountain and river so that you could be born. If one is utterly devout, nothing is impossible. Now I cannot just sit and wait for your father and brothers, so I have decided to go and pray for a hundred days for your father and each of your brothers for three years. You three look after the house as best you can.’

Having said this, Tanggūm-aegi’s mother prepared all that she needed to offer prayers for three years as well as food for herself, and ascended the famous mountain. Tanggūm-aegi was all the more saddened and said to herself, ‘I was separated from my father, and now I am parted from my mother as well. Why did these things happen?’

Meanwhile, her sisters-in-law, as they were now without a head of the household, thought impatiently to themselves, ‘We should go and stay with our parents.’ And one by one, they each departed for their natal homes. Thus, a family of some eighty people, living in a large house of about eight kan, all departed, leaving only Tanggūm-aegi, Kūmdanch’un and Oktanch’un. Tanggūm-aegi was at a loss as to what to do, so she locked all the doors and spent all her time inside the house. She was reminded of her parents several times a day.
‘I wish I could fall ill and die! But if my parents returned and found me dead, their grief would be terrible. I cannot do that, then,’ she said, and pulled herself together. ‘I must instead forget all about wishing to see my parents.’

‘If I rub down my ink stick and write Chinese characters’, she thought, ‘I may forget all about wanting to see my parents.’ And so she wrote characters. But because of the tears in her eyes, the characters were written poorly and in the end she saw that she had written, ‘separation from my father.’ ‘This can’t possibly work’, she thought.

‘Maybe I’ll forget them if I embroider’, she thought. And so she brought out her embroidery frame and began to embroider the wings of a crane. But again tears came to her eyes and rather than the wings of a crane, she had instead embroidered, ‘separation from my parents.’

‘I cannot forget them by doing this either!’ she said, and gave up. Wrapped in sorrow, Tanggūm-aegi, together with Kūmdanch’un and Oktanch’un, passed time in the annex in the backyard.

Now at this time Sakyamuni, who had left the Golden Buddha Hermitage in India, had examined the hearts and minds of all the people there and was headed to Chosŏn. Upon arriving, he took a look around and found that although it was a small country, it was a good country. He toured all of Chosŏn – the eight provinces, the rivers and the mountains – and arriving at one particular place he found that some writing had been affixed there. He looked at it, and it read:

The moon and snow are white on heaven and earth,
While deep in the Mountain, the night is deep; a traveller feels deep grief.

Sakyamuni thought the passage was well written, and it seemed to be in a feminine hand.

‘For a woman’s writing, this is excellent. Among the women here there must be one who is cultured. I should try and find her’, said Sakyamuni.

He looked far and wide for the home of this woman and found it in the capital. When he arrived there he looked up at the main gate and found that here too a piece of writing had been affixed:

Myriad blessings come when you open the door;
When the earth sleeps, yellow gold will appear.24

These phrases were extremely well expressed, yet they too were written in a feminine hand. ‘It is clear that the cultured woman lives within’, said Sakyamuni.

He examined the gate closely and found that it had been fastened securely with a massive lock. ‘Look here, had I first seen that the gate was locked, I would not have decided to enter. My eyes were drawn instead to the writing’, he mused. ‘As this gate is locked, how can I open it without a key? Yet it is said that a man’s word is as good as a bond,’25 and having made up my mind I
cannot retreat because of a locked gate. From the age of twelve to the age of seventeen, for six years, I cultivated myself and became well versed in the path. Do I still not know how to unlock a gate? If it can’t be opened through my spells, then I’ll try to open it again through the powers of the Buddha of our temple’, said Sakyamuni.

With that he began to recite a spell to open the gate. After chanting the spell for some time, he stepped back from the gate, raised his staff above his head, and struck downward. A tremendous wind arose and the massive lock opened.

At that moment Tanggüm-aegi, who was in the backyard annex, had finally forgotten about wanting to see her parents when suddenly she heard the sound of a thunderbolt.

Fig. 31 The great female shaman U Okju’s staff with six rings. 20c.
‘Gosh! What’s this noise? Kûmdanch’un, go see and come back’, said Tanggûm-aegi.

Kûmdanch’un opened the door to the annex, took a close look around, and returned. ‘There is no sign of anything’, she reported.

‘What do you mean, there’s nothing? If that’s the case, then goblins must know it’s just us three remaining in this big house, so they’ve gathered together to make mischief. I’ll go and drive them away’, she said, and began to recite a spell to drive goblins away.

At this point, Sakyamuni was outside, having opened the outer gate. ‘Aha! I thought so. There was no reason it couldn’t be opened’, said Sakyamuni.

Stepping inside and carefully looking about, he found another gate. This one was fastened, too, with a large, heavy lock.

‘Having just opened that gate, can I not also open this slightly weaker lock?’ said Sakyamuni.

Intending to open the door, he again began to recite a spell. Having recited the spell for some time, he raised his staff over his head and struck downward. The door, locked with a massive lock, opened with a clatter.

At the same time, Tanggûm-aegi, in the back annex, said, ‘Hey! Look here! It’s that noise again! This time, Oktanch’un, you go and look and see what it is.’ So Oktanch’un opened the annex door, went out, and carefully looked around before returning.

‘I can’t see anything’, she reported.

‘If that’s the case, then what is causing that noise? In all probability ghosts have gathered together to do mischief in this house of eighty kan where only the three of us remain. Such trifling matters pose no problem for me – I will drive them out’, said Tanggûm-aegi. And with that, she began to recite the text of a spell to drive away the ghosts.

At this time Sakyamuni, who was outside, opened the door and said, ‘Aha! I knew it. There’s no reason it couldn’t be opened. If you just make up your mind, you can do anything.’ In high spirits, he stepped through the door, only to find another, this one also locked.

‘I am incredibly slow-witted. I must be an idiot for thinking this palace would have one or two gates. It’s clear that this house has twelve gates. Now that I’ve opened two, ten remain. Being a man, I have a strong heart – how can I open them one by one? If I have to open them one at a time, several months could pass and I still wouldn’t have opened them all. Instead, I shall open them all with a single spell. If they open, then I will have been fortunate. If they do not, then I shall let it be. I’ll try it this way once’, said Sakyamuni.

Focusing his mind, again he recited a spell. After he chanted it twenty-one times, he stepped back a little from the gate, raised his staff above his head, and with all of his strength struck downward. A colossal wind arose, and all ten remaining doors opened. Again Sakyamuni peered inside. The far end of the floor of the main hall could be seen in the distance.

Slowly, he walked inside, muttering to himself, ‘Aha! Just as I thought.
There’s no reason they couldn’t be opened. But were they all opened by my spell? Or were they opened by the supernatural powers of the Buddha of my temple? If so, then he has gone too far. Why would he open the gates of someone’s house for me?’

In high spirits he entered and stood before the final gate. Setting his staff on end, he held his wooden bell in his left hand and struck it with the clapper in his right hand, requesting an offering.

At this time, Tànggǔm-aegi, who was still in the backyard annex, said, ‘Damn it! Look, this is the third time we have heard noise. Something must be going on. Apparently, you two didn’t look around closely enough. Kùmdanch’un, you stand in front of me. Oktanch’un, you stand behind me. The three of us will go out together and have a look around.’

Tànggǔm-aegi opened the annex door and very carefully looked towards the final gate. ‘Oh my!’ she exclaimed, and she ran back inside. ‘There is a proverb which says ‘the servants’ eyes are not as good as even the nobility’s corn.’You two, don’t you have eyes in your head? Obviously there’s something there. How could you have said there was no sign of anything?’

‘Just a little while ago, nothing was there. Now we too can see’, replied Kùmdanch’un and Oktanch’un.

‘Well, whatever the case, I can’t tell whether what is over there is a person, a ghost or an animal. Go quickly, find out, and return’, ordered Tànggǔm-aegi.

Kùmdanch’un, overcoming her fear with some difficulty, stepped outside, and said, ‘If you are a person, then speak. If you are a beast or a ghost, then be gone at once.’

At this, Sakyamuni said, ‘How can you address me like that? I can divine from your appearance that you are clearly Kùmdanch’un. Your house is not in the wilderness – why would an animal come here? Your house is not a public cemetery – why would a ghost come here? As this is a house that people live in, I, who have politely come calling, am naturally a person.’

‘If you are a person, then why have you come calling?’ asked Kùmdanch’un.

‘I am a monk who has come from the Golden Buddha Hermitage in India. The Buddha of our temple, when seated, looks out over 3,000 ri.26 When standing, he looks out over 90,000 ri, and his compassion reaches out to give relief to all people. He came to me in a dream and told me there was much worry in your household because the master of the house and his nine sons had been exiled to a faraway land. But if I went there and received a donation of three toe27 and three hop of rice, he said, offered with complete devotion, the man and his nine sons would quickly be released and come home. So I have hurried down this long road. Now you must offer me three toe and three hop of rice.’

Kùmdanch’un went back to the annex and conveyed what she had heard to Tànggǔm-aegi, ‘It’s obviously a person. Strangely, he knows the circumstances of our household in great detail. He said that if we donate three toe and three hop of rice, the master of our house and his nine sons will be
released from their exile in the foreign land. He said we should make the donation quickly. What should we do?'

Tanggum-aegi’s ears perked up at the possibility of doing something for her parents and ordered Kûmdanch’un, ‘If this is the case, take three toe and three hop from our rice bin near the back door, and make the donation.’

Kûmdanch’un accordingly scooped up three toe and three hop of that rice, went out, and presented it to the monk.

‘The Buddha of our temple will not accept rice that you’ve been eating. I cannot accept this rice’, said Sakyamuni.

‘Apart from the rice that we’ve been eating, there’s nothing else in the house. What would you have us do?’ said Kûmdanch’un.

‘You cannot deceive me as you would a ghost. Why would you tell me there is no rice besides that which you’ve been eating? In the storehouse there is rice set aside for longevity prayers. Do you pour rice that you’ve been eating into those jars?’ said Sakyamuni.

‘The storehouse doors are locked. How do you suggest that we open them and get at the rice?’ said Kûmdanch’un.

‘I have just opened these twelve gates. I can probably open the storehouse doors. If your mistress Tanggum-aegi goes and stands before the doors, they should open of their own accord’, said Sakyamuni.

Kûmdanch’un reported this back to Tanggum-aegi, who listened and then went to stand in front of the storehouse doors. But although she waited for some time, the doors did not open. At this, Kûmdanch’un was again sent to find out what was going on.

‘You said the storehouse doors would open. What’s going on?’ Kûmdanch’un said to Sakyamuni.

‘For the doors to open, one must make a sincere effort. It wouldn’t make sense if it was as simple as just standing there. If those doors are to open, you must wash your hair and bathe. And after your hands and feet are clean, you must change into new clothes and set water drawn from the well early in the morning in front of the storehouse doors. Then you must pray’, said Sakyamuni.

Kûmdanch’un reported this back to Tanggum-aegi, who then washed her hair and bathed. After washing her hands and feet she changed into new clothes, set the well water down in front of the doors, and prayed. The storehouse doors opened, and she went in and opened the jar of rice set aside for her father. Clearing away the cobwebs, she scooped out a generous single toe and single hop of rice. She then opened her older brother’s jar of rice and, clearing away the cobwebs, scooped out a heaping single toe and single hop of rice. Opening her own jar of rice, she scooped out one toe and one hop, giving her a total of three toe and three hop. But when she brought this rice out and turned around to close the storehouse doors, she found they were already shut and locked. Thinking this was extremely strange, she said, ‘Kûmdanch’un! Quickly! Take this and make the donation.’

Kûmdanch’un took the rice, went out, and offered it to the monk.
'This won’t do. This won’t do at all. The Buddha of our temple will under no circumstances have anything to do with anything that smells fishy, so I cannot take this donation of rice from you. When your parents conceived you, they had eaten a great deal of food that smelled of fish, so you received a fish-smelling impurity. Thus, I cannot take this rice from you’, said Sakyamuni.

There being nothing else she could do, Kûmdanch’un informed Tanggûm-aegi of this new development. So Tanggûm-aegi ordered that Oktanch’un take the rice and go out to offer it to the monk. But again Sakyamuni said he would not receive it.

‘Judging by your appearance, it is clear that you are Oktanch’un. The Buddha of our temple will have nothing to do with that which smells scorched, so I cannot take this donation of rice from you. When your parents conceived you, they had eaten many things that smelled scorched and so you received a scorched-smelling impurity. Therefore I cannot take this rice from you’, said Sakyamuni.

‘You told Kûmdanch’un that you wouldn’t receive the rice from her either, who will you receive the rice from?’ asked Oktanch’un.

‘You two are human beings. Isn’t Tanggûm-aegi human too?’ said Sakyamuni.

‘I or Kûmdanch’un can offer the rice to you. But why do you suggest that our mistress Tanggûm-aegi make this donation? Leave at once!’ said Oktanch’un.

‘If I don’t receive this rice and take it away with me, there will be absolutely no hope of the master of this house returning. In addition, misfortune will come to this house three days after I leave. But it’s up to you whether or not you give me that rice,’ said Sakyamuni.

There was nothing Oktanch’un could do but inform Tanggûm-aegi of what the monk had said. Tanggûm-aegi listened, and said, ‘There is no other way, then. Kûmdanch’un, you stand in front of me, and Oktanch’un, you stand behind me. Perhaps if I go and try to talk to him, he’ll allow you two to offer him the rice.’

Together with Kûmdanch’un and Oktanch’un she opened the annex door and went out, her long silk skirt dragging behind her. She was sure that she’d heard her servants call this man a human being and she’d come out expecting to see just that, but Sakyamuni’s appearance was dreadful. The monk looked to be 180 years old.

‘I don’t know from whence you’ve come. But as you said you came on our behalf, you have my sincere thanks. This rice is rice that I am offering you. Please, accept it with no misgivings and bless us with your favour.’ Tanggûm-aegi said, stepping out in front of Sakyamuni.

When Tanggûm-aegi had finished speaking, Kûmdanch’un approached the monk, intending to place the rice in his rucksack. At this, Sakyamuni flew into a rage and said to Kûmdanch’un, ‘Do you really like doing things for other people so much? If you really like doing things for others, why don’t you go to the bathroom for others, or take someone else’s place in hell!’
Tanggūm-aegi, who had been standing there watching all this, said, ‘Fine, then. If you’d really prefer that I put the rice in your bag, then I will.’ She took the rice from Kūmdanch’un and poured it into the monk’s rucksack. But not a single grain remained in the bag – all of it spilled out onto the ground.

‘What kind of foolish monk are you! When you go begging for alms, you should bring a good bag. How much rice do you expect to be able to put into a bag with holes in it?’ Tanggūm-aegi snapped.

‘I am not foolish. If I could bring an undamaged bag with me when I go begging for alms, would there be any reason for me to remain a monk? Even though I am a monk, if my situation were better would there be any reason for me to avoid other houses and come to those with locked doors?’ said Sakyamuni.

At this, Tanggūm-aegi snatched the bag away from him and took it to her own room. There she took a piece of cloth from her own skirt and in the blink of an eye patched up the bag and brought it back out. And she got Kūmdanch’un and Oktanch’un to bring a winnowing basket and broom.

‘The Buddha of our temple will under no circumstances accept even one grain of rice that has been touched by a winnowing basket or broom’, said Sakyamuni.

‘Is there a grain of rice in the world that hasn’t been touched by a broom or a winnow?’ asked Tanggūm-aegi.

‘That may well be. As the saying goes, whatever one does if you see one doing it, it is filthy, if you don’t see one doing it, it is clean. You could do anything you wanted to the rice if I wasn’t here. But since I am indeed here to watch, I cannot accept it’, said Sakyamuni.

‘If that’s the case, we’ll sweep up this rice and eat it. If you’ll kindly open the storehouse doors again, we will scoop out some more rice and make an offering of it.’

‘Then how can I remain devout with this rice?’ asked Tanggūm-aegi.

‘If you wish to pick up this rice and maintain your sincerity, go to the hill behind your house and break off twenty-one kwangdae bush clover twigs of good quality. If you make chopsticks from these and use them to pick up the rice and put it in my bag, you will be able to do both’, said Sakyamuni.

‘Are these the ways of monks? Is this how a monk behaves? Just having a noble woman from another’s family come outside the gate of her house is rude enough. But now you are telling me I have to go out to the hill behind our house? I don’t know what a crooked mudang bush clover is – let alone a good kwangdae bush clover!’ said Tanggūm-aegi.

‘It’s up to you. If you want to do it, then go ahead. If you don’t, then don’t. After receiving this rice I would make every effort to reunite you with your parents. But if I do not receive this rice, you will be eternally separated from them – and, furthermore, misfortune will come to your house just three days after I leave’, said Sakyamuni.

At the mention of her parents, Tanggūm-aegi’s eyes grew dark and her heart grew heavy, so she had no time to spare and there was nothing else to be
done. She said to herself, ‘I have no choice. I have to go out to the back hill to comply with the monk’s demands.’

When Tanggūm-aegi stepped outside the twelve gates and looked around, her eyes opened wide. ‘I had heard that the land of Chosŏn was small, but to my eyes it seems endless!’ With that, she climbed the hill behind their house.

It was October, and the mountain chrysanthemums of late autumn were in full bloom. Tanggūm-aegi picked off the chrysanthemum leaves and nibbled on them. Then she plucked the flowers themselves and fixed them in her hair, and bemoaned her ill fate.

‘There is no difference between your lot and mine’, she said to the flowers. ‘If my parents had had me when they were young, I would already have grown up into a beautiful woman, been married and would be living a happy life. Because they had me late, when they were already fifty years of age, we both suffer hardships. You forsook warm weather and bloomed in cold weather, shivering and shaking each morning and evening. Our circumstances are one and the same. Our fates are joined to make sixteen. In the prime of our lives, why are we expecting these hardships? Where was Prognosticator Chegalgongmyŏng? I wish I would have been told my fate by him.’

Tanggūm-aegi grumbled at her lot, going to and fro, selecting only twigs of bush clover and plucking them. Then she returned to the house, tossing Sakyamuni the bush clover, and said, ‘I don’t know which of these are good kwangdae bush clover or bad mudang bush clover.’

‘You came back with only good kwangdae bush clover. Clever Tanggūm-aegi!’ said Sakyamuni.

Soon after Tanggūm-aegi called to Kūmdanch’un and Oktanch’un, telling them to pick up the rice and put it in the bag. But Sakyamuni said, ‘That won’t do. If they help us, our devotion will be mixed with their uncleanness.’

Thus Tanggūm-aegi – as there was nothing else she could do – sat down and began putting the rice in the monk’s rucksack. Sakyamuni picked up one grain of rice and put it into the bag, and then broke his bush clover twigs in two.

‘Look here, monk! Why are you breaking the bush clover like that, twigs which I plucked and brought back here with such effort? If we are to pick up all of this rice and put it in your bag, it won’t do us any good to have to go and get more loads of bush clover’, said Tanggūm-aegi.

‘Clever Tanggūm-aegi, why do you say that? When you set your father’s dinner table, do you put unwashed tableware on the table?’ said Sakyamuni.

Thus Tanggūm-aegi – as there was nothing else she could do – picked up the rice in this manner and put it in the bag. But when she had snapped all the bush clover twigs in two, she saw that there wasn’t a single grain of rice in the rucksack.

‘Look here, monk! Earlier this bag had no bottom, so it couldn’t hold any rice. But clearly I have mended it, so why won’t it hold anything now?’ said Tanggūm-aegi.
'Don’t blame me. I don’t know what happened. If we are not devout enough, the bag won’t be filled, what can be done about it?' said Sakyamuni.

'Well, then, how can the rice be put in the bag?' asked Tànggùm-aegi.

'If you go and get the plate and chopsticks your father used, and use his chopsticks to pick up the rice, put it on the plate and pour it into the bag, then it will be possible to fill the bag with rice', replied Sakyamuni.

'Who are you to order plates and chopsticks out of other people’s houses?' asked Tànggùm-aegi.

'Your father and brothers have left your house, and we don’t know whether
they’re dead or alive. So is it right to think only of manners?’ replied Sakyamuni.

Tanggum-aegi considered this and thought it plausible. With no other option she ordered Kumdanch’un to bring out the plate and chopsticks. Then she picked up the rice with the chopsticks, put it on the plate and poured it into the rucksack, which only then began to fill up.

By the time Tanggum-aegi finished picking up all the rice and putting it in the bag, and was just beginning to get up, a violent gale suddenly arose, so the monk’s tattered robe went flying and landed on her shoulders, while her skirt went flying and landed on the monk’s shoulders.

‘You dim-witted monk! Don’t you know the difference between men and women?’ Tanggum-aegi scolded the monk.

‘I know the difference between men and women. And I also know that a woman should follow her husband. But you could have dodged my tattered robe’, said Sakyamuni.

‘It is a plausible excuse, but the sun has already set, the moon is rising and night approaches. So please go at once’, said Tanggum-aegi.

‘Clever! How do you know that when the sun sets, the moon will rise, and that when the moon rises, it will become night? At any rate, our customs are different. In my country, if you have been out in the fields and the sun is setting and evening is coming on, you return to the house and stay there for the night. But it seems that the custom here is to stay in the house and then go out into the fields when it gets dark. If you let me stay at your gate for a bit and pass the night here, I will depart tomorrow’, said Sakyamuni.

Tanggum-aegi was so annoyed by this that she told him he could stay at the gate. She then went into the house.

After a while, Sakyamuni called to her, ‘Excuse me! I’m sorry to trouble you, Tanggum-aegi. But I cannot possibly sleep here.’

‘Why can’t you sleep there?’ asked Tanggum-aegi.

‘I tried to pass the night there, but it’s so noisy I can’t sleep. If you’d let me stay for a bit in your courtyard, I could pass the night there and leave in the morning’, replied Sakyamuni.

Thinking that the front gate and the courtyard were one and the same, she allowed him to stay in the courtyard. But before long Sakyamuni called out to her again. ‘Excuse me, I’m sorry to trouble you, Tanggum-aegi. I tried to spend the night out here. But because I’m afraid of the god of thunder, I really won’t be able to stay here.’

‘In that case, where will you spend the night?’ asked Tanggum-aegi.

‘If you would allow me stay on the floor of your great hall, I would rest the night there comfortably and then depart’, replied Sakyamuni.

Thinking this would be the same as letting him sleep in the courtyard, Tanggum-aegi agreed. At this, Sakyamuni looked closely at the floor and again called out to Tanggum-aegi, saying, ‘I’m sorry. Here as well, I cannot possibly stay the night.’

‘Why can’t you spend the night in that place?’ asked Tanggum-aegi.
‘I intended to sit the night out here. But I’m afraid of the House God. I really won’t be able to spend the night here’, replied Sakyamuni.

‘Our house is large. It has about eighty kan. If a place for a thin body such as yours cannot be found, then our house is no better than a small thatched roof cottage. And if that’s the case, then you’ll have to go elsewhere and look for a place to sleep’, said Tanggūm-aegi.

‘There is one place where I would be able to sleep, but I don’t know if you’d let me’, said Sakyamuni.

Tanggūm-aegi, feeling annoyed and harassed, told him to just hurry up and tell her the place he would be able to sleep. If it was a place she approved of, then she would let him. And if it was a place she couldn’t approve of, then she wouldn’t.

‘If you’d allow me to sleep in your annex, I would stay the night and then leave’, said Sakyamuni.

Upon hearing his words, Tanggūm-aegi thundered, ‘How can you suggest that two people who are not married or related by blood sleep in the same room? Go quickly! Leave at once!’

‘Isn’t your annex one and a half kan large? If we put up a folding screen, you three can sleep on the side that’s one kan in size and I can sleep on the other side only one-half kan in size. Wouldn’t that be all right?’ said Sakyamuni.

Tanggūm-aegi thought about this and found it plausible. So with no choice in the matter she assented and told Kūmdanch’un and Oktanch’un to set up a screen in the annex. After the screen was set up, she told the monk to come in. Only then did he remove his shoes, come in and sit down. The interior of the room was truly a sight to behold. On the north wall a pair of blue cranes had been painted and on the south wall a pair of red cranes had been painted.

Now Kūmdanch’un and Oktanch’un began to prepare dinner. For Tanggūm-aegi, they prepared a small dining table with a silver tray, silver plates and bowls, and a silver spoon and chopsticks.

‘Also give that monk dinner’, Tanggūm-aegi said, so they prepared the monk’s dinner. Thinking about the trouble he had caused them earlier that day, they made him a terrible dinner and placed it on a small, worn-out table. When Sakyamuni saw the table placed before him, he pushed the screen aside and, seeing Tanggūm-aegi’s dinner table, said, ‘Curses! I guess I’m just not blessed enough – I’ve missed out on a good dinner.’

Tanggūm-aegi looked up in surprise and saw the difference in the tables. She could hardly believe her eyes. Seeing this, she called to Kūmdanch’un and Oktanch’un and scolded them, ‘Why do you discriminate between human beings? Why do you show a person terrible hospitality because you look down on him? Did I wait upon that monk all day because I am inferior to you? This won’t do at all.’

Tanggūm-aegi took away the monk’s table and ordered her servants to prepare his dinner again. Without any choice in the matter, Kūmdanch’un and Oktanch’un again prepared the monk’s dinner. Only then did Sakyamuni

The table was then cleared away, and he lay down just as he was and went right to sleep. Tanggüm-aegi, on account of having been to the mountain behind the house and back, and having worked hard all day long, was exhausted and she too lay down just as she was and slept.

During the third watch (11 p.m. to 1 a.m.), Tanggüm-aegi had a dream. In that dream, a blue dragon and a yellow dragon fought over a magic pearl and ascended to heaven. Upon waking, she found Kūmdanch’un and Oktanch’un still awake. Getting up, she asked them, ‘What time is it?’

‘It’s the third watch’, replied they.

‘It’s quite late, you should go to sleep’, said Tanggüm-aegi.

With Kūmdanch’un lying in front of her and Oktanch’un lying behind her, she turned up the lamp above her head and went to sleep.

Time passed, and before dawn Tanggüm-aegi had another dream. A transcendent came down from heaven and gave her three pearls. She took them and looked at them, and because they were so beautiful she took them, put one in her mouth, one in the fastening of her coat and one in the waistband of her skirt. Then she awoke. Taking a look around her, she found the light had been extinguished, so she once again lit the lamp.

With the lamp lit she could see that the blanket with which she had covered herself was gone. And for some reason she was now covered with the blue robe the monk had been wearing. Pushing the screen aside and looking at the monk, she saw him sleeping, her own blanket spread out over him. Abruptly, Tanggüm-aegi grabbed the blanket and jerked it away from the monk.

‘Are such manners typical of you damned monks? Is this how all monks behave?’ cried Tanggüm-aegi.

Sakyamuni, startled out of his wits, sat up and said, ‘What mortal crime did I commit to be awakened so rudely?’

‘Well, monk! Why did you take my blanket and sleep under that?’ cried Tanggüm-aegi.

‘I merely liked the colour of your blanket and came to covet it. So I spread it out, covered myself with it, and slept. But why did you take my dirty robe and sleep under that?’ said Sakyamuni.

‘It was certainly not because I coveted your robe, perhaps it was an act of god’, said Tanggüm-aegi. Then Sakyamuni also said the same thing.

At this, Tanggüm-aegi said, ‘Leave at once.’

Hearing this, Sakyamuni spoke, ‘Since you have spoken thus, I will go. But as there is bound to be an occasion when you will need to come looking for me, do not forget my name and where I live. I am a monk who lives in the Golden Buddha Hermitage in India. My name is Sakyamuni. I was born in the kapcha year, on the eighth day of the fourth month, at the hour of the horse. When something happens, remember my name and come looking for me.’

‘There will be absolutely no point at which I would seek you out. Leave at once’, said Tanggüm-aegi.
‘I will go, but I believe you had a dream around midnight, if you tell me that
dream I will interpret it and then go’, said Sakyamuni.

‘Whether or not honourable maidens of other people’s houses have dreams
is none of your business. So do not worry about it. Just leave’, said Tanggūm-
aegi.

‘Considering that you are a woman, it must be difficult to talk about your
dream in front of a man. Shall I tell you the dream as well as interpret it?
 Didn’t Tanggūm-aegi dream, around the third watch, that a blue dragon and
a yellow dragon competed over a magic pearl and then ascended into
heaven?’ asked Sakyamuni.

Tanggūm-aegi listened and thought, ‘That monk can detect other people’s
dreams quite well.’ So she asked the monk, ‘Fine, then, what sort of dream is
it?’

‘The blue dragon represents your destiny, and the yellow dragon represents
mine’, said Sakyamuni.

‘Well, if the blue dragon represents my fate and the yellow dragon yours,
what is the meaning of them being joined together when they ascended to
heaven?’ asked Tanggūm-aegi.

‘I live in India, and you live in Choso
(n. If we sleep in one room with a
screen between us, what does it mean when we squabble over a blanket? I
believe that is enough of an explanation’, replied Sakyamuni.

‘If that is the case, what did I dream just before dawn?’ asked Tanggūm-
aegi.

‘As for the dream that Tanggūm-aegi dreamed at the fifth watch (3 a.m. to
5 a.m.), wasn’t it that a transcendent came down and gave you three pearls?
As they were very beautiful didn’t you take them into your hands, putting
them in your mouth, in the fastening of your coat and in the waist of your
skirt? Then you awoke, didn’t you?’ said Sakyamuni.

‘What sort of dream is this?’ asked Tanggūm-aegi.

‘This dream means that you will give birth to triplets’, replied Sakyamuni.

At this, Tanggūm-aegi flew into a rage and struck him with her pillow, and
shouted, ‘Is this the way accursed monks conduct themselves? Go quickly!
Leave at once! What do you mean by saying that a noble maiden from
another’s house will give birth to triplets? Go at once!’

Since she was pressing him to go, Sakyamuni said, ‘I will go. But as a situation
will arise in which you will come looking for me seven years after I leave,
don’t forget my dwelling place or my name. I live in the Golden Buddha
Hermitage, in India. My surname is Wang, given name is Sakyamuni, and I
was born on the eighth day of the fourth month of the kapcha year, at the
hour of the horse. When something happens, don’t forget. Come looking for
me.’

‘There will be no reason for me to try and find you. Leave now’, said
Tanggūm-aegi.

Sakyamuni then gathered up his shoes and put them on, and suddenly
vanished without a trace. After the monk had disappeared, Tanggūm-aegi
Fig. 33 Tanggum-aegi and Sakyamuni (Lee Chiyôn. 27 × 41 cm. Mixed materials on canvas. 2004).
realized that while she had felt strong and confident when he had been present, now that he had vanished, everything that had happened seemed frightening. So she awakened Kūmdanch’un and Oktanch’un and said to them, ‘That monk said he would go and he did – he vanished completely. He must be hiding somewhere in this eighty-kan house. Who knows what kind of mischief he’ll get into? Let’s turn up the lamp and find him.’

They searched for him here and there, but couldn’t find where he had gone. They went out to the gates and looked there, but they were locked as before.

‘It looks like that monk has flown up to heaven’, Tanggūm-aegi mused. She didn’t get a wink of sleep that night.

The next morning it was the sixteenth day of the tenth month – Tanggūm-aegi’s birthday. Kūmdanch’un and Oktanch’un prepared her birthday dinner, but as Tanggūm-aegi had stayed up all night distraught, thinking about what the monk had said, she couldn’t eat and the table was cleared untouched.

The tenth month passed, and by the eleventh month Tanggūm-aegi’s feeling of vexation did not abate in the least. Accordingly, she grew weak and lost her appetite.

‘Kūmdanch’un, Oktanch’un, why is this happening? My body is gradually weakening. I’ve lost my taste for food and I’m unable to eat. I must have fallen ill’, said Tanggūm-aegi.

The eleventh month passed, and by the twelfth month Tanggūm-aegi had completely lost her appetite and now could eat nothing at all.

‘Kūmdanch’un, Oktanch’un, why does this rice smell raw? What is that rotten smell coming from the clear water? It is the middle of winter, but could you possibly find some unripe jujubes? If there are no wild grapes or taraes,30 could you at least dig up the roots? Boil them and prepare them as you would medicine. I want to eat them’, said Tanggūm-aegi.

In this manner the twelfth month passed, the New Year came around, and it was the first month. Tanggūm-aegi grew all the more weak and finally ended up bedridden. As it was springtime, she could hear the sounds of children playing outside. Thinking about this made her circumstances seem all the more bleak. Time passed, and the second month arrived. The snow that had piled up melted, and at the murmuring sound of the brook her thoughts grew all the more desolate. Time continued to pass sorrowfully, and the third month arrived. Thinking about her situation, she could not express her sorrow. On the third day of the month the swallows, who had migrated to the southland, returned again and sang their chirping song. The leaves came out and all mountains became green. Flowers opened and all mountains became red. And the orioles’ crying sound reached her ears from the mountains everywhere. Then she grew even more melancholy. ‘When will my parents come back to me?’, she sighed. If they come back after I am gone, they will be much more sorrowful and weep loudly.’

By and by, the fourth month arrived. On the third day of the fourth month,
Tanggūm-aegi’s mother, whom she had missed even in her dreams, completed her three years of prayer and returned home. Moreover, Tanggūm-aegi’s father and brothers were all released on that day, as well, and came home. From the front gate Tanggūm-aegi’s father looked for her.

‘Tanggūm-aegi, my daughter. My beautiful, dear daughter, come quickly! Your father has now returned. How much suffering has there been during these three years? Come quickly’, Tanggūm-aegi’s father said, entering through the gate.

But there was no sign of his daughter. Tanggūm-aegi, lying in the annex, was unable to get up. Her father, sensing that something was amiss, opened the door of the annex and came in. Seeing Tanggūm-aegi’s emaciated body lying in the room, tears trickling down her face and unable to speak, her father was thunderstruck.

‘What has happened? What has happened to you? It must be from desire to see me again that you fell ill. That’s why you lie that way. Rest assured, I have returned and we will cure your illness’, Tanggūm-aegi’s father said, intending to ease her mind.

Tanggūm-aegi’s father immediately made inquiries all around, calling in a specialist to take her pulse, an acupuncturist and an apothecary. After looking for her pulse, the specialist said, ‘I can’t make heads nor tails of this pulse’, and departed. Upon being asked, the acupuncturist tried to apply acupuncture for quite some time, but said, ‘Acupuncture cannot be applied’ and left. Her father called anyone he thought could help in the house and consulted them, but all said that they didn’t know what could be done.

Her anxiety and restlessness knowing no bounds, Tanggūm-aegi’s mother prepared a thousand nyang and went looking for a fortune-teller. As this was the time when Master Kwak Pak lived, and she went to him to have a fortune told.

‘My daughter took ill on the fifteenth day of the tenth month last year and we have tried medicines to no effect. I have come for no other reason than to
have a divination performed so that we might know in full the reason this illness has come about. Please tell me quickly’, said Tanggūm-aegi’s mother.

Master Kwak Pak brought out his divination table, placed the thousand nyang on it, lifted the case containing the bamboo fortune slips, and sat for some time, working out the fortune, but then said, ‘I cannot tell this fortune.’

At this, Tanggūm-aegi’s mother implored Kwak Pak to tell her daughter’s fortune, ‘If you can’t, who can? Just tell me what the fortune has told you.’

‘Please forgive me. I don’t know whether I will be able to tell this fortune well or not. But I will tell you what I can. Nothing else comes to me, except the fact that last year on the fifteenth day of the tenth month, a monk from India slept at your house for a night and then left’, said Master Kwak Pak.

Tanggūm-aegi’s mother was speechless and sat with her back to Kwak Pak, and said to herself, ‘Fortune cannot lie. Before the birth of my daughter, our fortune was told. And when we looked at the results of the horoscope, it showed we would have a monk as a son-in-law. Is this fortune coming true?’

Fig. 35 Kwak Pak and his wife. He was a historical person in ancient China and a good astronomical observer.
Tanggûm-aegi’s mother returned home and told her husband what had transpired.

Tanggûm-aegi’s father called in Kömdanch’un and Oktanch’un, bound them to a wooden chair for interrogation, and began to lash them with a whip. In the end they could not bear the whipping and confessed, telling him the whole story, ‘We didn’t do anything wrong. All that happened was this. Last year, on the fifteenth day of the tenth month, a monk came, slept here and departed.’

Having confirmed what the fortune-teller had said, Tanggûm-aegi’s father resolved to put his beautiful and beloved daughter to death. His wife stopped him, however, saying, ‘Even wild animals don’t kill their own offspring. How is it that as a human being you intend to kill your own child? Don’t do that. Instead, let’s dig a cave in the hill out back and put her in there. If she doesn’t starve to death, she’ll freeze to death in the bitter cold of winter.’

Tanggûm-aegi’s father thought about this. As he found it reasonable, he restrained his anger. Then he ordered a cave dug in the mountain behind their house. When it was completed, he again ordered Tanggûm-aegi inside. Her mother, however, secretly brought Tanggûm-aegi food without telling the rest of the household. She also sold thread to buy her clothes, dressing her warmly to preserve her against the cold.

While this was going on three months slipped by almost unnoticed, and it came to be the seventh month. On the fourteenth day of the month, torrential rain began in the morning and continued for the whole day. Tanggûm-aegi’s mother, alone in the house, stamped her feet in frustration. Lamenting she said, ‘God, you are heartless! Mountain spirit, you are pitiless! You know that my daughter is now in the cave. What will become of her with this much rain pouring down if the cave fills with water?’

Tanggûm-aegi was that very day giving birth. Two heavenly transcendentals came down and received the first child, bathing him in water from a jade bottle, fastening a blue belt around him and laying him down. With the second child, they bathed him, put a yellow belt on him and laid him down. Shortly after, a third child was born, and that child too they bathed, fastened a white belt around him and laid him down. Then they spoke: ‘The child wearing the blue belt is the eldest, the child wearing the yellow belt is your second child, and the child wearing the white belt is your third child. Kindly raise these children well, and after seven years go and pay a visit to their father. The father of the three children lives in the Golden Buddha Hermitage in India. His surname is Wang, and his given name is Sakyamuni, the Thus Come One. He was born in the kapja year, and his birth date is the eighth day of the fourth month, at the hour of the horse – please don’t forget, and seek him out.’ With that, they flew up high into heaven and were gone. Only then did the rain cease.

When the rain stopped, Tanggûm-aegi’s mother came out and not even having waited to prepare anything to eat ran up the hill behind their house. Everywhere water was flowing down the hill. But when she reached the
entrance to the cave, she found that not a blade of grass had got wet – each blade was clean and neatly arranged. Looking into the cave, she saw there were four people. At this, she felt relief and ran back down the path to prepare something to feed her daughter, and said to herself, ‘Aha! I thought so. There was no reason for the gods not to help her. The god of heaven, the god of the mountain and the god of the earth have looked after her. I didn’t know that the rain poured down to conceal your body, my worry was unnecessary.’

After that Tanggūm-aegi’s mother went on with her work to feed her daughter and the three grandchildren. While taking care of them like this, she knew that the cave was cool in the summer and warm in the winter, so they are able to stay alive.

Time passed and the three children were already six years old.

One day, the three children went out to play with the other children in the neighbourhood, and when they returned, they said, ‘Mother, today we heard something strange.’

‘What did you hear?’ asked Tanggūm-aegi.

‘Someone looked at us and called us, ‘Nameless, fatherless bastards.’ Is our family like that? What is our last name? Where is our father?’ said the three children.

Tanggum-aegi thought for a moment. And because she couldn’t hold out on them any longer, what she told them was half true and half false, ‘We are not without a family name, nor are you without a father. Your last name is Wang. Your father lives in the Golden Buddha Hermitage in India.’

‘If that’s the case, then why doesn’t he live with us?’ asked the three children.

‘It’s not like that. Your father came here to live, but he fell into my father’s bad graces and was turned away. As he was going he told me that he’d take me with him. But because I was pregnant with you and couldn’t go, he made this cave for us here. Then he told me to come looking for him after you were born and were old enough to walk there, and he departed’, replied Tanggum-aegi.

‘Then our grandfather on mother’s side is still alive? Which house is our grandfather’s house?’ asked the three children.

‘He is alive now. His house is that one over there’, replied Tanggum-aegi.

‘Then we will go find him and meet him, and then return’, the three children said with one voice. ‘Goodbye for the time being, mother.’

The three children set off down the cave together to pay a visit to their grandfather and meet him for the first time. When they arrived at Tanggum-aegi’s father’s house, they stood side by side and bowed to him, ‘Grandfather, it is a pleasure to meet you for the first time. Have you been well?’

Having thought Tanggum-aegi was dead all this time, her father was bewildered to have three children suddenly appear calling him grandfather.

‘It seems you have come to the wrong house. As I have no daughter and no grandsons; tell me the house you are looking for and I’ll help you find it’, said Tanggum-aegi’s father.

‘No, we have definitely come to the right house’, said the three children.
‘What do you mean insisting that you’ve come to the right house? I have neither a daughter nor grandsons’, said Tanggum-aegi’s father.

When they heard him say this, they said, ‘What are you talking about? Are you saying you don’t have a daughter named Tannggūm-aegi?’

Tanggūm-aegi’s father was speechless. Up to this point, he had been completely unaware that Tanggūm-aegi had given birth and raised children.

‘You’ve gone too far. You’ve gone too far. How could you leave someone alone in a cave for years?’ said the three children.

There was nothing Tanggum-aegi’s father could say.

The three children said to their grandfather again, ‘We heard that our mother’s maidservants Kūmdanch’un and Oktanch’un are here. Please call them in.’

Tanggūm-aegi’s father couldn’t answer them and then called to Kūmdanch’un and Oktanch’un.

‘I thought that your mistress had died, but it seems that even now she lives. Quickly follow these children and attend to your mistress’, ordered Tanggum-aegi’s father.

With glad hearts Kūmdanch’un and Oktanch’un received the order and left, following the children. When the three children arrived at the cave and said to their mother, ‘We have found our grandfather, introduced ourselves, and returned. He has been well. We have brought Kūmdanch’un and Oktanch’un with us.’

So, Kūmdanch’un and Oktanch’un were reunited with Tanggūm-aegi once again. And they joyfully lived and passed time together.

Time went by, and the three children turned seven. Now they urged their mother to take them to visit their father. ‘Now that we can travel ten thousand ri just as well as a thousand ri, let us go at once and pay a visit to our father and try our hand at living a rich life.’

‘Let’s pay a visit to India, then’, Tanggūm-aegi agreed.

With the three children in the lead and Kūmdanch’un and Oktanch’un bringing up the rear they departed.

On their way, they came to River Tagangsu – so wide that there was no possibility of crossing it. As they were walking up and down the riverbank, looking for a way across, a monk appeared and asked, ‘Why are you trying to go across this river to somewhere?’

‘We are going to visit the Golden Buddha Hermitage in India’, Tanggūm-aegi addressed the monk

‘On what business?’ asked the monk.

‘We are going to visit one with the surname Wang, given name is Sakyamuni, the Thus Come One, who was born in the kapcha year and whose date of birth is the eighth day of the fourth month’, replied Tanggūm-aegi.

The monk listened to this and said, ‘Ah, that person is the master who resides in our temple. As it is him you are going to see, I will help you cross this river.’

He stripped some willow leaves that extended to the east, made them into a
boat, and urged them to quickly climb aboard. They boarded the boat, and after they had crossed he told them to quickly disembark. As they stepped onto the bank, the monk and the boat both disappeared without a trace, leaving only a few willow leaves drifting away on the river. Tanggūm-aegi was amazed, wondered, and said, ‘Did we just come across that river on willow leaves? The miracle this monk performed seems great indeed! In any case, as he was a person from that temple, let us go quickly and perhaps we will see him again.’

Having crossed over into India to seek out the Golden Buddha Hermitage, they found that the temple was large and bustling with many monks. So Tanggūm-aegi asked a passing monk, ‘We seek one whose surname is Wang, whose given name is Sakyamuni, the Thus Come One, who was born in the kapacha year and whose date of birth is the eighth day of the fourth month at the hour of the horse.’

‘He is in that room there’, replied the passing monk.

As soon as the monk told them, they opened the door to the room but saw only a single, very young monk. Returning to the monk she had asked, Tanggūm-aegi said, ‘That doesn’t seem to be the right person.’

‘That is not the person you seek?’ said the monk.

‘Right. We are looking for someone whose surname is Wang, whose given name is Sakyamuni, the Thus Come One, born in the kapcha year on the eighth day of the fourth month’, Tanggūm-aegi said to the monk again.

‘Right. That monk is clearly the person you are looking for – why do you say it isn’t?’ asked the monk.

‘Wait a minute. When I saw him, he was an old monk, who looked to be about 180 years old. The person in there is quite young, is he not?’ replied Tanggūm-aegi.

The monk answered with a deep laugh, ‘It seems you were fooled. Because our master learned the method of transforming himself, he can change into all sorts of things. That is him, do not worry.’

Tanggūm-aegi tried to calculate Sakyamuni’s age again. He was three years older than her. Pleased by this, she opened the door and went into room. Sakyamuni was sleeping. She went over and sat down in front of him.

‘Great master. Please wake up. Tanggūm-aegi, from Chosŏn, has come here looking for you. So please wake up’, said Tanggūm-aegi.

At this, Sakyamuni, the Thus Come One, who had been sleeping like a log, rolled over drowsily and spoke, ‘This dream is very strange. Tanggūm-aegi from Chosŏn appeared in the dream. What is this?’

‘This isn’t dream, it is real life. I have come here looking for you, so please wake up’, said Tanggūm-aegi.

At this, Sakyamuni, the Thus Come one, jumped to his feet with his eyes tightly closed and cried, ‘Something disastrous has happened! I saw her in my dream, and heard her voice when I woke. She must have died, become a ghost and come looking for me, seeking to do me harm! Get out of the way! I must drive the ghost away!’
And Sakyamuni chanted a spell.

Tanggūm-aegi tears flowing from her eyes, saying, ‘That is too much. I have suffered and suffered. I am clearly alive and have come here looking for you. Can you honestly not know me? The children were born and we suffered hardships for seven years. If you understood that, you wouldn’t treat me like this.’

The children, who were outside, heard this and opened the door and came in. Side by side, they bowed before Sakyamuni, the Thus Come one, saying, ‘Father, we are pleased to meet you. Have you been well?’

Only then did Sakyamuni, the Thus Come One, open his eyes as he embraced the three children. Then he took Tanggūm-aegi’s hand and said, ‘For seven years you suffered many hardships, and it is entirely my fault. Please, forgive me. Your suffering has been my fault. Forgive me. As children, how did you manage to come here looking for me? Also, who among you is the eldest, who is the second child, and who is the third?’

‘The one wearing the blue belt is the oldest child, the one wearing the yellow belt is the second, and the one wearing the white belt is the third’, said Tanggūm-aegi.

‘Well, then, what are your names?’ asked Sakyamuni.

At this, Tanggūm-aegi responded, ‘I intended for us to name them together, after I had met and consulted with you, my husband. So as yet they have not been named.’

‘In that case, you can tell me the story of your hardships later, but first let us name them. First, let’s name the eldest son. How about Ch’ŏnsan (Green Mountain) because he is wearing the blue belt?’ asked Sakyamuni.

‘Mountains are green in the third and fourth months. But are they green in the ninth and tenth months? Because this name is changeable, it won’t do’, replied Tanggūm-aegi.

‘In that case, what would be the right name?’ asked Sakyamuni.

Tanggūm-aegi thought for a while, and then spoke, ‘As he is the eldest child, it would be good if we combined the character ‘hyŏng’ for elder with the character for Buddha, ‘pul’, and called him ‘Hyŏngbul’.’

‘That name is well made. You are indeed a cultured woman. If you could name them so well, why did you not do so before? Anyway, since the second one is wearing a yellow belt, how about calling him Hwangsan (Yellow Mountain)?’ asked Sakyamuni.

‘We can’t use that name’, replied Tanggūm-aegi.

‘Well, then, what name would be right?’ asked Sakyamuni.

Tanggūm-aegi mulled this over for a while and then spoke, ‘Mountains are yellow in the ninth and tenth months. But are they yellow in the eleventh and twelfth months? Since that name is changeable, it won’t do. As this is the second child, let’s name him ‘Chaebul’, combining the character for ‘second’, ‘chae’, with the character for Buddha, ‘pul’.’

‘Ah, that name is well made. You are indeed a cultured woman. But does this mean I can’t even name one of the children? I will try to name the third
child. Even if the name is a little off, let’s use it. Let’s call this child Paeksan (White Mountain) because he wearing the white belt’, said Sakyamuni.

‘I say! Do great masters only learn the character for ‘mountain’? Why do you keep using that one?’ said Tanggūm-aegi.

‘We can’t use this name either?’ asked Sakyamuni.

Tanggūm-aegi pondered for a while and then spoke, ‘In the last two months of the year the mountains are white. But are they white in the fifth and sixth months? Because it is changeable, we can’t use it. As this is the third child, let’s put the character for “three”, “sam”, together with the character for Buddha, “pul”, and call him “Sambul”.

‘You are truly a cultured woman. That name is very well made’, said Sakyamuni.

Tanggūm-aegi, having thus made all of the names, said, ‘If we leave their names as they are – Hyŏngbul, Chaebul and Sambul – a saying, three
Buddhas have to agree with one another, will be made and their names won’t have to change during their lives. Let’s leave them as they are.’

Having thus been named, time passed and the children grew up quickly. Sakyamuni, the Thus Come One, originally a transcendent, was born as a human to cultivate the path and thus suffered many hardships. Tanggûm-aegi, originally a heavenly transcendent, was born as a human to cultivate the path and free herself of her offences. It had been decided that Sakyamuni’s life would be seventy-three years long, and Tanggûm-aegi’s life was fixed at seventy years. Sakyamuni, the Thus Come One, had cultivated the path and again became a transcendent, and Tanggûm-aegi had cultivated the path and again became a heavenly transcendent. In this way they became a male transcendent and a female transcendent, and as Sakyamuni, the Thus Come One, embraced Tanggûm-aegi they ascended. Breaking through the middle of a dense fog, they used a rainbow as a bridge and ascended to heaven.

Hyo-ôngbul, Chaebul and Sambul learned the Buddhist scriptures and Buddha’s path in the Golden Buddha Hermitage in India. After this they crossed back into the land of Chosôn, and when they reached the Mount Kûmgang in Kangwôn Province they established Yujôm Temple and cultivated Buddhism there. Hyôôngbul, Chaebul and Sambul each lived to be eighty years of age. All too soon they had all turned eighty and one day, at a certain hour, they breathed their last. But because they had been unable to fully transmit the Buddhist scriptures and Buddha’s path to their followers before they died, there was no one to watch over the temple.

From this time on, every year in that country there was a year of famine, and the kings died so frequently that it could not be endured. Someone once said, ‘Long, long ago, Tanggûm-aegi, who lived in the country of Chosôn, gave birth to three sons – Hyôôngbul, Chaebul, and Sambul – who went to India and brought back the Buddhist scriptures and teachings to Chosôn. But because they died without being able to pass on these scriptures and teachings, terrible events have come to pass. If we seek out Yujôm Temple and revive the teaching of the Buddhist scriptures and teachings, the country will again have peace and prosperity.’

Hearing this, from that day forward, people began to promote the Buddhist scriptures and teachings, and the way of Buddhism came to thrive. When people heard that fortune would turn in their favour if they followed the teachings of Hyôôngbul, Chaebul and Sambul, and whatever they wished would come true, they thought, ‘We don’t have to go to the temple. It will work if we enshrine the Three Buddhist Cheso Gods.’ From that time forward, Hyôôngbul, Chaebul and Sambul have been called the Three Buddhist Cheso Gods.

* According to Sô Taesôk’s explanation in his book, the three brothers became also Buddhist saints on Mount Kûmgang, Manjusri on Mount T’aebaek, kolmaegi (the Village God), and Tanggûm-aegi became also the Life Goddess who blessed people with babies and gave properties or provi-
sions to people. The Life Goddess also helped with pregnancy and birth. These functions of the Life Goddess were all actions of creation. So, one could call Tanggûm-aegi a creation goddess.

The Original Title: Cheso’kbon’’uri (Origin Myth of the Three Chesôk Gods)

Fig. 37 The Three Chesôk Gods and their mother (Lee Chiyôn. 37.9 × 45.5 cm. Mixed materials on canvas board. 2004).
NOTES

1 Prayer paper: prayers offered to a god by burning paper, the ashes of which ascend into the sky. If the paper burns well and ascends high into the sky, it is commonly understood that the god will be pleased and the prayers will be answered.

2 Kyehae: the sixtieth year of the sexagenary cycle. Kyehae belongs to the pig-year of the twelve animal-year of the zodiac. The sexagenary cycle is made up of a rotation system of combinations of the ten calendar signs and the twelve animals of the zodiac. Ten calendar signs are Kap, Ul, Pyong, Chong, Mu, Ki, Kyong, Sin, Im and Kye, and the twelve animals of the zodiac are Cha (mouse), Ch’uk (cow), In (tiger), Myo (rabbit), Chin (dragon), Sa (snake), O (horse), Mi (sheep), Sin (monkey), Yu (chicken), Sul (dog) and Hae (pig). The sequence of the sexagenary cycle is as follows; Kapcha, Ulch’uk, Pyongin, Chongmyo, Muchin, Kisa, Kyongso, Simmi, Imsin, Kyeyu, Kapsul, Ulhae, Pyongcha, Chongch’uk, Muin, Kimyo, Kyongchin, Sinsa, Imo, Kyemi, Kapsin, Ulyu, Pyongsul, Chonghae, Mucha, Kich’uk, Kyongin, Sinmyo, Imsin, Kyesa, Kapo, Ulmi, Pyongsin, Chonggyu, Musul, Kihae, Kyongcha, Sinch’uk, Imin, Kyemyo, Kaphin, Ulsa, Pyongo, Chongmi, Musing, Kiyu, Kyongsul, Sinhae, Imcha, Kyech’uk, Kaping, Ulmyo, Pyongchon, Chongsa, Muo, Kimi, Kyongsin, Sinyu, Insul and Kyehae. If this year (2006) were Kapcha (the mouse-year), the next year would be Ulch’uk (the cow-year), …, the sixtieth year (2065) would be Kyehae (the pig-year). When one sexagenary cycle is finished, the new sexagenary cycle would start as Kapcha (2066), Ulch’uk (2067), …, Kyehae (2125).

3 Kapcha: the first year of the sexagenary cycle. Kapcha belongs to the mouse-year of the twelve animal-year of the zodiac.

4 The hour of the horse: 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. It is according to the twelve hour cycle; the hour of the mouse (11 p.m. to 1 a.m.), the hour of the cow (1 a.m. to 3 a.m.), the hour of the tiger (3 a.m. to 5 a.m.), the hour of the rabbit (5 a.m. to 7 a.m.), the hour of the dragon (7 a.m. to 9 a.m.), the hour of the snake (9 a.m. to 11 a.m.), the hour of the horse (11 a.m. to 1 p.m.), the hour of the sheep (1 p.m. to 3 p.m.), the hour of the monkey (3 p.m. to 5 p.m.), the hour of the chicken (5 p.m. to 7 p.m.), the hour of the dog (7 p.m. to 9 p.m.), the hour of the pig (9 p.m. to 11 p.m.).

5 Ulch’uk: the second year of the sexagenary cycle. Ulch’uk belongs to the cow-year of the twelve animal-year of the zodiac.

6 Pyongin: the third year of the sexagenary cycle. Pyongin belongs to the tiger-year of the twelve animal-year of the zodiac.

7 Chongmyo: the fourth year of the sexagenary cycle. Chongmyo belongs to the rabbit-year of the twelve animal-year of the zodiac.

8 Muchin: the fifth year of the sexagenary cycle. Muchin belongs to the dragon-year of the twelve animal-year of the zodiac.

9 Kyongso: the seventh year of the sexagenary cycle. Kyongso belongs to the horse-year of the twelve animal-year of the zodiac.

10 Four Books and Three Classics: the Four Books are Analects, Great Learning, Doctrine of the Mean and Mencius. The Three Classics are Book of Songs, Book of Documents and I Ching.

11 Kapsul: the eleventh year of the sexagenary cycle. Kapsul belongs to the dog-year of the twelve animal-year of the zodiac.

12 Pyongcha: the thirteenth year of the sexagenary cycle. Pyongja belongs to the mouse-year of the twelve animal-year of the zodiac.

13 Chongch’uk: the fourteenth year of the sexagenary cycle. Chongch’uk belongs to the cow-year of the twelve animal-year of the zodiac.
14 Toe: equivalent to 0.477 US gallons.
15 Hop: a unit of measure equivalent 1/10 toe.
16 Muin: the fifteenth year of the sexagenary cycle. Muin belongs to the tiger-year of the twelve animal-year of the zodiac.
17 Kan: the unit to measure area; one kan is six and one-third square meters.
18 Kimyo: the sixteenth year of the sexagenary cycle. Kimyo belongs to the rabbit-year of the twelve animal-year of the zodiac.
19 Chosón: One of old Korea’s names, about 14–19c.
20 Sinmi: the eighth year of the sexagenary cycle. Sinmi belongs to the sheep-year of the twelve animal-year of the zodiac.
21 Imsin: the ninth year of the sexagenary cycle. Imsin belongs to the monkey-year of the twelve animal-year of the zodiac.
22 Kyeyu: the tenth year of the sexagenary cycle. Kyeyu belongs to the chicken-year of the twelve animal-year of the zodiac.
23 Three Bonds and Five Relations: the Three bonds are between ruler and minister, father and son, and husband and wife. The Five Relations comprise the Three Bonds plus the relations between old and young and friend and friend.
24 Myriad blessings/gold will appear. These two expressions were written to be posted on the pillars of the house on the first day of spring.
25 A man’s word is as good as a bond. This phrase literally has the following meaning, a reliable man’s word is as weighty as a thousand pieces of gold.
26 Ri: a unit of distance measure equivalent to 0.4 km.
27 Toe: a unit of measure equivalent to 0.477 US gallons.
28 Our fates are expecting these hardships?: This is a play on words in Korean. The word for ‘fate’ (P’alja) is a homonym for the word for ‘eight’ (P’al) in Korean language. If the two ‘fates’ are joined, you would get sixteen. This age is considered to be the prime age of one’s young life.
29 A small, worn-out table: literally ‘a dog-leg table’. It is a small, square, roughly-made table.
30 Tarae: a fruit of the Actinidia arguta (hardy kiwi fruit).
31 Nyang: a unit for money in old Korea.
32 Kwak Pak (276–324): Kwak Pak was a naturalist, alchemist and diviner versed in I Ching in ancient China. Also he was commentator of the Classic of Mountains and Seas.
33 Yujo Temple: this is in Kansǒng country in Kwangwŏn Province. It is one of the thirty-one main temples.
34 This myth was translated by consulting an existing translation; Seo Dae Seok. Myths of Korea (Somerset: Jimoondang International, 2000). In the process of my work, I corrected some errors and omissions that were found in the existing translation.
MYTHS ABOUT
THE MESSENGERS OF THE UNDERWORLD
Once upon a time, a boy named ‘Samani’ lived in the country of Chunyŏn. Because his mother died when he was three and his father died when he was five, he was only able to barely support himself by begging for food door-to-door. Although he had a difficult young life, he was of good character – mild and diligent. When he turned fifteen, the elders in the village donated money for his marriage.

Samani’s wife was good at needlework. She earned her wages from her sewing and with this supported her family.

It was a cloudy day when it seemed ready to rain at any moment. Samani’s wife cut her hair with silver scissors and told her husband, ‘Sweetheart, take this hair and sell it at the market for three *nyangs*¹ then buy some rice for the children.’

‘Certainly’, said Samani.

So, Samani went out to the market and sold it for three *nyangs*. However, he was unable to decide what to buy. ‘Should I buy rice or beans?’ As he struggled with his thoughts, he noticed many people gathered in one place. Samani said to himself, ‘What is going on?’

Samani tried to identify the object everyone was looking at, but it was something that he had not seen before.

‘What is this?’ asked Samani.

‘It is a matchlock rifle. With this, worrying about providing food for the table will be a thing of the past’, said the merchant.

‘How much is it?’ asked Samani.

‘It costs only three *nyangs*’, said the merchant.

Samani bought the rifle for three *nyangs* and returned home. Samani’s wife was waiting for him so that she could cook rice for her hungry kids. Instead, all she saw in her husband’s hands was a stick, not a rice pouch.

Samani’s wife said with a sigh of grief, ‘That’s not rice, you idiot of a husband!’

‘Don’t be silly! A merchant told me that this rifle would bring us food in many ways’, Samani boasted.

After that day, Samani wandered all over the place, from the deep mountains of Nojubong Mount to the high and low hills of Maeatin Hill. Although he searched far for deer to hunt, he always came home empty-handed.

‘You are a horrible husband! Where are the deer you promised? How are you going to feed your hungry children?’ Samani’s wife mourned.
‘Don’t worry; we will have fur and meat soon’, Samani boasted. However, Samani always came back empty-handed. One day, when Samani was walking in the field, something kept his left foot from moving forward. After failing three times to walk forward, Samani looked at the object buried in the grass. ‘What keeps holding me back?’ Samani hit the grass three times with a stick and heard a screeching sound from the grass. Samani said to himself, ‘What on earth is making this weird sound?’

Samani looked and found a hundred-year-old skull in the grass. ‘What an ugly and dirty skull!’ said Samani.

Samani was going to ignore it and carry on, but somehow his left foot got caught by the skull once again. Samani said to himself, ‘What’s going on? It must be my fate to take this skull.’

Samani brought the hundred-year-old skull to his house and hid it inside a big urn in the barn. He dedicated the skull as an ancestral shrine and worshipped at it for all family matters.

When Samani was nearly thirty years old, the King of the Underworld ordered three messengers to bring Samani to him. When the three messengers from the underworld appeared on earth, the hundred-year-old skull turned into a wise old man and appeared in Samani’s dream.

The wise old man said, ‘Foolish Samani! How can you be sleeping? The King of the Underworld has sent three deputies to capture you on your thirtieth birthday. You must wake up now and ask for mercy. As soon as the day breaks, ask your wife to prepare three official uniforms, three belts, three shoes, a big jar full of the best quality white rice, two and forty thousand and three sacrificial bulls to offer to the King of the Underworld, and make your wife hire a shaman to erect a totem pole for the King of the Underworld outside your house and perform a rite for the King of the Underworld. And in the evening, at the Y intersection where you and I first met, you must prepare a candlelight dinner on the table made of nutmeg by a folding screen. Write down your name on a white piece of paper and glue it under the table. Then, hide yourself one hundred steps away and lie with your face down. Do not answer to your name until you hear it the third time. You will understand later why I am asking you to do these things.’

Samani woke from his dream quite stunned, and said to himself, ‘I must hurry to execute the instructions from the dream.’

Samani got up and did as the wise old man said. As the day darkened, Samani went back to the Y intersection, where he first encountered the one hundred-year-old skull. He prepared an extensive dinner on a table made of nutmeg and surrounded it with a folding screen. He put boiled rice offered to a deceased spirit, a cooked radish, a hoof-shaped rice cake, an egg appetizer, blue sweet rice wine and various types of fruit cakes and biscuits preserved in honey on the table. Finally, he wrote his name on a white piece of paper, attached it under the table, and then lay with his face down and waited one hundred steps away.
Fig. 38  Obang Sinjang, the Gods of the five directions (east, west, south, north and centre). Date unknown.
The King of the Underworld’s three messengers came to earth between six o’clock in the evening to ten o’clock at night and headed for the country of Chunyŏn.

Messenger Ch’ŏnhwang said to the other messengers, ‘Suddenly, I feel hungry.’
‘So do we’, the others replied.

After Messenger Inhwang smelled something nice, he asked, ‘Do I smell burning incense in the middle of nowhere?’
‘So do we’, the others agreed.

The three messengers carefully looked around.

‘Although I see no trace of man, I can see candlelight in the middle of nowhere. Why don’t we go over there?’ Messenger Inhwang asked.

As they approached the candlelight, they saw the lavish dinner on the nutmeg table surrounded by the folding screen. Since they were very hungry, they drank the blue sweet rice wine accompanied by the egg appetizer until they were no longer hungry.

‘I feel like I can even climb over mountains and leap over rocks’, said Messenger Inhwang.

However, Messenger Ch’ŏnhwang looked under the table and saw a white paper glued underneath it. The word ‘Samani’ was written on the paper. Messenger Ch’ŏnhwang said with a worried look, ‘Oh, dear! Messenger Chihwang, Messenger Inhwang, we have made a big mistake!’

‘What’s wrong?’ said the others.

‘Look at this! Someone wrote Samani on this white paper’, said Messenger Ch’ŏnhwang.

They compared it with the name on the red coloured paper that they carried. They were the same.

‘We must have eaten Samani’s food’, the three messengers said together.
‘We are going to choke because we ate someone else’s food for free. What should we do now?’ asked Messenger Inhwang.

‘Why don’t we each call out to Samani?’ asked Chihwang.
‘Let’s do that’, the others agreed.

So Messenger Ch’ŏnhwang first called out for Samani, but no one answered. Then Messenger Chihwang called for Samani, but again no answer was heard.

Finally, Messenger Inhwang called Samani and there was an answer from one hundred steps away, where a man stood and showed his face. It was Samani.

The three messengers started to discuss their mistakes.

‘We know we cannot simply eat someone else’s food because we choose to. What can we do now? Because we ate his dinner, we cannot bring him to the underworld with us. So, I suggest that we visit Samani’s house and decide what we are going to do about him later’, said Messenger Inhwang.
‘We agree, let’s go to Samani’s house’, the others said.

When the three messengers arrived at Samani’s house, they saw that there
was the totem pole for the King of the Underworld posted outside of his house, and that a shaman was performing the rite for the King of the Underworld. Samani's wife was praying to protect Samani from the King of the Underworld's curse by offering three official uniforms, three belts, three hats, and a big jar of the best quality white rice, and forty thousand and three sacrificial bulls to the three messengers as well as casting a mercy spell for her husband.

'How can we capture him and bring him to the King of the Underworld after seeing his courteous attitude for the deceased?' asked Messenger Inhwang.

Messenger Ch’ŏnhwang had a good idea, and said, 'I have an idea. Let’s go back to the underworld and inspect the book of life in the boy-judge’s room to find out what to do.'

While the King of the Underworld and the boy-judge went to earth for the rite for them, the three messengers sneaked into the judge’s room and searched for Samani in the book of life. They found that thirty years was the length of Samani’s life as written in the book.

Messenger Ch’ŏnhwang suggested, ‘Why don’t we edit the book?’

‘But we don’t have any idea how to fix it’, the others replied.

After some thought and discussion, the three messengers decided to change it. They dissolved one thousand ink sticks on ten thousand ink stones, and dipped a calligraphy brush in the ink. Then they struck a single line diagonally on the top of the character ten (十) to make it the character one thousand (千).

‘This should be good enough for him’, said Messenger Ch’ŏnhwang.

Satisfied with their results, the three messengers sneaked out from the boy-judge’s room.

Later, the King of the Underworld and the judge questioned the three messengers, ‘Is there any reason that you have not brought Samani before me?’

‘The King of the Underworld, My Lord. You should ask that question to the boy-judge. We cannot take Samani because it is not his time yet. Samani’s life should be three thousand years, not thirty’, said the three messengers.

‘What are you saying?’ the boy-judge scolded them with a dubious look, then opened the book of life and said, ‘I thought that Samani’s life was thirty years. However, now I see one more line in the book, therefore Samani’s life should be three thousand years.’

‘Oh, that must have been the mistake’, said the King of the Underworld.

In the end, Samani of the country of Chunyŏn lived three thousand years because he protected himself from the three messengers of the Underworld.

The Original Title: Samanibonp’uri (Origin Myth of Samani)
NOTES

1 Nyang: a unit of money in old Korea.

2 The best quality white rice: a literal translation would be ‘upper white rice, middle white rice and lower white rice’. It should be translated as either ‘a big jar full of white rice of three different kinds’ or ‘a big jar full of the best quality white rice’. I chose the latter’s meaning because the best quality white rice is offered to a god in a shamanist rite.

3 This red coloured paper is called Chǒkp’æji. It is used during a funeral because red coloured is used to distinguish the living from the dead.
CHAPTER 11

Sama Changja and His Scapegoat Horse

Long ago, there lived two men, Sama Changja and Uma Changja. Uma Changja was so poor that what he gathered in the morning, he ate the same morning, and what he gathered at night, he ate the same night. Nonetheless, he begged in the morning to give offerings to his ancestors. He was a dutiful son, kept on good terms with his siblings and lived harmoniously with his relatives. He was considerate of his neighbours, and everyone praised him.

Sama Changja, on the other hand, was wealthy but failed in his filial duties, lived inharmoniously with his siblings and failed to earn the respect of his neighbours. Furthermore, he was a mean-spirited man with a vulgar mouth. Sama Changja also committed many sins: he let rice plants rot; he left rice grains to crumble to dust; he left coins to rust and clothes to become covered in mildew. When he loaned grain, he gave in small measures and received payment in large measures. He even charged interest when lending money to his in-laws. He once let his horse loose inside a pottery store. In a silk shop, he sprayed a water gun. He pinched crying babies. He pushed a child squatting to relieve himself. He kicked a pregnant dog. He neglected to feed his horse and then lied about it. When a beggar came, he scattered cold rice clumps here and there. When a Buddhist master came to receive alms, he tossed awns to him during the barley season and empty rice heads during the rice harvest. He drove stakes into pumpkins. He violated married women. He kissed and fondled the breasts of women carrying water jugs at dawn.

Sama Changja’s ancestors were starving, so one day they went to the King of the Underworld to plead their case, and said, ‘We’ve come to appeal to you because although Sama Changja’s house is rich, he gives no devotion to his ancestors. We are left hungry, thirsty and naked.’

‘What is it that you want?’ the King of the Underworld asked.

‘Since we are hungry, give us food; since we are naked, give us clothes; since we are poor, give us money’, implored the ancestors.

The King of the Underworld sent a Buddhist monk to call in the messengers; Haewonmaeki, Kangim of the Underworld and Lee T’aekch’un of this world. The King of the Underworld said to the three messengers, ‘What one hears while seated is not always what one sees while standing. Go and see for yourselves.’

First, the king sent a Buddhist monk. Wearing his monk’s robes and peaked hat, with a long string of prayer beads around his neck and a short one on his
wrist, and holding a wooden cane and knocking his wooden bell with a clapper, the monk stepped into Sama Changja’s house on the third day of the New Year.

‘I have heard that a rich man named Sama Changja lives here and I have come to collect alms for the restoration of a run-down temple’, said the monk.

At the word alms, Sama Changja abruptly threw open his window and demanded, ‘What sort of wretch begs for alms on the third day of the new year? Even seeing a monk in a dream brings bad luck. What kind of creature dares to come to my front gate?’

‘I am a monk. My temple is falling down, so I have come to ask for alms for its restoration’, said the monk.

Sama Changja called his servant and ordered, ‘Grab that monk, flog his behind and slap his cheeks. Then, even though fertilizer is precious, put some manure in his bowl.’

‘If manure is too precious to give away, then by all means keep it for yourself’, the monk replied, and he overturned the contents of his bowl.

Seeing this, Sama Changja’s daughter-in-law rushed out and pleaded, ‘Father, we may not be able to give generously to the monk, but is this any way to treat him? If we give liberally, it will still only be one mal. If we give meagrely, it will be merely five toe. Why must you act this way?’

She went into the next room and brought out a roll of silk and three mal and three toe of rice.

‘Great Master, please understand that my father-in-law was not always like this. Only recently has he had a change of heart. This donation may be humble, but please use the three mal of rice to make ceremonial vessels to give alms to the Buddha. Use the three toe of rice to buy candles and paper and pray to the Buddha for my father-in-law’s good fortune and health. Please use this roll of silk to make robes for yourself’, she said to the monk.

‘I had thought there were no kind people in Sama Changja’s home, but I see otherwise. Considering Sama Changja’s many sins, I would turn this entire house into a swamp and take Sama Changja with me, but his good and virtuous daughter-in-law is here. Perhaps you would leave with me?’ asked the monk.

‘If you are a monk, you should be content with paying your respects to the Buddha and be satisfied with what you receive in alms. What is the meaning of trying to take me? How can I serve two husbands? Don’t even utter such nonsense. Go back and pray for my father-in-law’s good fortune’, replied Sama Changja’s daughter-in-law.

The monk returned to the King of the Underworld and reported, ‘What one hears while seated and what one sees while standing are one and the same.’

‘If that is so, then on the first full moon of the first month of the New Year, give Sama Changja a premonitory dream’, the King of the Underworld ordered.
On the full moon of the first month, Sama Changja said, ‘May I have a dream today that will bring a year’s good harvest.’

That night, his pillow embroidered with mandarin ducks raised high and his candles burning, Sama Changja fell asleep. Half-asleep, he dreamed that the ginkgo tree on the hill behind his house had been chopped into three pieces and was lying before his bedroom door. He awoke with a start and found that he had been dreaming. Falling back asleep, he had another dream. In this dream a crow from the realm of heaven was cawing on its flight towards the realm of earth, and a crow from the realm of earth cawed as it flew towards the realm of heaven.

Waking, Sama Changja called in his son from the next room, his youngest daughter who was loitering in the courtyard, and his wife from the back room and asked them to interpret his dream.

‘The dream signifies that father will obtain a government position’, replied the son.

‘It means father will pass the secondary grade civil service examinations’, replied the younger daughter.

‘The dream indicates that you will be served a great feast’, replied the wife.

‘You certainly do interpret dreams well’, responded Sama Changja.

Just then his daughter-in-law ran in, and she said, ‘Father, I will interpret your dream. It is nonsense that you would obtain a government position you failed to obtain in your youth. It is equally absurd that you would pass the secondary grade civil service examinations when you were not a diligent student, or that you would be served a great feast when you have not earned the respect of your neighbours. The first piece of the ginkgo tree means to make an altar, the second means to make a coffin and the last means to build a funeral bier. In the thirty years since I married into this house, never have I seen you give even one drop of water to a dog or one clump of rice to a beggar.

When I was growing up in my maternal home, every New Year we gave all sorts of offerings – including those offered on the road and those offered to the mountains – performed exorcism rituals to ward off evil, and conducted sacrificial rites to our ancestors. When we had visitors, we offered them food, money and clothes; when beggars came, we served them warm rice. When someone came to borrow soy sauce, we didn’t water it down with dirty water; when people came to borrow rice, we didn’t mix in white sand or white rice bits; and when they came to borrow bean paste, we didn’t pack it with dirt. When they came to borrow kimch’i, we didn’t give kimch’i without first discarding the withered outer leaves. You, however, have done all these things. Your sins are great. For whom are you hoarding your treasures? Even if you gave half to the spirits and the other half to your descendents, you’d still have plenty to eat and drink with some leftover. I beseech you, release yourself from all the sins you’ve committed.’

Hearing this, Sama Changja retorted in outrage, ‘What an impertinent wench! Since you are someone else’s child, even your dream interpretations are vicious. Throw her out at once.’
Before the daughter-in-law could be chased back to her parent’s home, she hid in a room for three days to see what events might unfold. Soon enough, within those three days, Sama Changja was struck with illness. His entire body was aching and sore, and he was at a complete loss for what to do. ‘What is happening to me? How could it be that I am about to die?’ he moaned.

He called someone to bring back his daughter-in-law. ‘This time, entertain the spirits and serve them a feast. First, go to So Kangjo (l to have your fortune told’, she advised him.

Sama Changja took three toe of rice and went to So Kangjo (l. When he saw Sama Changja, So Kangjo (l cried in disbelief, ‘What is going on here? I’ve lived here for 170 years and have never had a glimpse of Sama Changja’s money or rice.’ ‘Just concentrate on reading my fortune’, replied Sama Changja.

So Kangjo (l laid down a grass mat and took out a lacquered table to read his fortune, and he said, ‘Look here, Changja, sir, disaster has come to your household. The spirits of your house, your house-site, and your ancestors are all stirring. Your kitchen utensils are broken into three pieces. The horsehair hat that you wear has been stripped off, and your clothes are scattered and burning. The three-kan (6 thatched roof cottage of your household has moved to another. I see a flag on your rooftop and a spring dug in the middle of your courtyard.’ ‘This is all true’, said Sama Changja.

‘I see a ginkgo tree from the hill behind your house, broken into three pieces, lying in your courtyard’, said So Kangjo (l. ‘That too is true’, agreed Sama Changja.

‘Return home at once and empty your storeroom to feed your hungry neighbours. Prepare a feast and three hundred nyang (7 of money and take them both to a fine pavilion in the mountains with pure water. Call a female shaman and professional singers, and for three days and nights, conduct hoengsumaki, an exorcism rite to rid yourself of evil spirits. If the messengers of the Underworld appear and ask, “whose food is this?” say it is food gathered from the villagers. After the messengers finish the food, try and supplicate them. Then you might be saved’, said So Kangjo (l.

Upon hearing these words, Sama Changja rushed home and emptied his storeroom to feed his hungry neighbours. But they shunned him saying, ‘If we accept food from Sama Changja’s house, we’ll be beggars for three generations.’

At this time, Sama Changja’s daughter-in-law climbed onto the pile of grain and said, ‘Dear elders and friends, I have done no wrong to my neighbours. Please, accept the grain from me.’

Hearing this, the villagers took the grain. They prepared food and, with the three hundred nyang, went to a pavilion with pure water and beautiful mountain scenery. There, for three days and nights, they performed a shamanic rite.
Fig. 39 One of the Taegam. These gods dwell in houses, house-sites, trees and stones.
Meanwhile, the three messengers were coming from the Underworld: Haewŏnmaeki of the Underworld carrying a hammer, Lee T’aekch’un of this world holding a metal rope and Master Kangim of the Underworld holding a hammer.

‘I am so hungry I can go no further than this corner of the road’, one of the messengers said. And then another replied, ‘If Sama Changja would give us a bowl of rice and a vessel of water at a time like this, we would forgive all his sins.’

‘You imbecile! What one utters at night, the mice will hear. And what one utters in the daytime, the birds will hear.’ Do not speak nonsense! Let us hurry along’, the other messengers scorned him.

Suddenly, clamorous sounds of a shamanic ritual and the smell of food filled the air. Since the messengers were hungry and thirsty, they asked, ‘Whose food is this?’

Sama Changja, who had prostrated himself before them, stood up and said, ‘This food has been prepared by the villagers.’

Upon hearing these words, the three messengers ate the delicacies abundantly set before them. Then Sama Changja came out again and said, ‘I beseech you, this food has been prepared by Sama Changja.’

‘What nonsense is this! We ate because we thought it was food gathered by the villagers. Had we known it was Sama Changja’s food, we would not have eaten. Now that we have already partaken, what is to be done? In this village is there anyone who was born on the same day and at the same time as Sama Changja?’ replied the three messengers.

‘Yes, there is a person called Uma Changja’, replied someone.

The three messengers went to Uma Changja’s house to arrest him. Arriving before his door, they called, ‘Uma Changja!’

But the spirit of the earth obstructed them. They called a second time only to be scorned by the spirit of the gate. Even the house dog barked and refused them entry. The three messengers had no choice but to return to Sama Changja’s house.

Sama Changja’s daughter-in-law, who was awaiting them, inquired, ‘Honourable messengers, what happened at Uma Changja’s house?’

‘Do not mention it! The spirit of the earth and the spirit of the gate scorned us, and the house dog barked and blocked us so we could not enter and had to return in vain’, replied the three messengers.

‘I suspected as much. Uma Changja is a virtuous man who pays respect to his ancestors, to the spirits of the earth and to the spirits of the house. How could you have entered? How about taking something else from our house instead of my father-in-law?’ Sama Changja’s daughter-in-law asked.

‘Something in his stead would be fine’, they said.

‘Why not take my father-in-law’s white horse? When you reach the Underworld, say “Sama Changja has committed so many sins that he turned into a horse, and we are late because we had to drag the horse back”’, the daughter-in-law suggested.
The daughter-in-law went to the stables and said to the horse, ‘Horse, even though you are a dumb animal, listen to my words. My father-in-law must be allowed to live. Since you are my father-in-law’s horse, you go on his behalf.’

The daughter-in-law went into the room and brought out her father-in-law’s horsehair hat and headband, overcoat, pants, and jacket and put them on the horse. Then the three messengers departed, leading the white horse back to the Underworld.

Judge Ch’oe, the Archivist of the Underworld, scorned the three messengers, ‘Why are you returning so late?’

‘Sama Changja has committed so many sins that he turned into a horse. We are late because we had to lead the horse back’, replied the three messengers.

The King of the Underworld, upon hearing this, ordered, ‘On his neck, put on a big pillory; on his forelegs, fasten fetters; on his hind legs, put on shackles; on his head, place an iron headpiece and put him to death!’

The messengers of the Underworld tried to shackle the horse to kill him, but the horse, rather than passively accepting his fate, spoke, ‘Wretched Sama Changja! What sins have I committed to deserve such suffering? When you wanted to travel even ten ri, I carried you on my back. And when you went five ri, I carried you so that your feet didn’t get even a speck of dirt on them. Yet I am forced to take up your sins and be tormented. Come at once and save me.’

Day and night, the horse sobbed sorrowfully.

At this time Sama Changja was having disturbing dreams, so he went to So Kangjöl to have his fortune told. So Kangjöl said, ‘Your sinless horse has gone to die in your place, so imagine his resentment. If you observe the purifying rituals for the horse for five days, it will be reborn as a human. And thus the enemy may become the benefactor.’

Sama Changja returned and for five days observed the purifying rituals for the horse. On the first night of the shamanic rites, the iron helmet fell from the horse’s head; on the second day, the big pillory dropped from his neck; on the third day, the gold-threaded net fell off his body; and after the fourth, the fetters from his forelegs were released. On the fifth day, the shackles from his hind legs fell off, and the horse was reborn as a human.10

The Original Title: Changjap’uri (The Myth of Changja)
The Source: Im Sökjae, Chulp’o Muak (The Shamanist Music of Chulp’o), Munhwajae Kwanliguk, 1970.

Notes

1 Changja: one who is wealthy or one advanced in age.
2 Mal: equivalent to 4.765 US gallons.
3 Toe: equivalent to 0.477 US gallons.
Kimch’i: a spicy pickled or fermented mixture containing cabbage, onions and sometimes fish, variously seasoned, as with garlic, horseradish, red peppers and ginger.

Someone else’s child: the daughter-in-law is not his blood relative, so Sama Changja tells her this.

Kan: the unit to measure area; one kan is six and one-third square metres.

Nyang: an old Korean monetary unit.

What one utters ... the birds will hear. It is a Korean proverb that means ‘be careful in your speech’.

Ri: a unit of distance equivalent to 0.4 km.

This myth was translated by consulting an existing translation; Seo Dae Seok. *Myths of Korea* (Somerset: Jimoondang International, 2000). In the process of my work, I corrected some errors and omissions that were found in the existing translation.
CHAPTER 12

Kangim Went down to the Underworld to Capture the King of Hades

Once upon a time, there was King Pōmu in the Kingdom of Tonggyŏng. He lived in a palatial mansion with jingling wind-bells hanging from the eaves, having a lot of land and servants. He had one son after another and later came to have seven sons.

Born under a lucky star, the four elder brothers married with good wives and established their own families. However, the younger three were born under an unlucky star, so were destined to die at fifteen.

At that time, the chief priest of the Kwanŭm Temple opened a copy of the I ching, and found that his life would stop at eighty. Then he called the trainee monk, ‘I will die the day after tomorrow at around four or five o’clock. If I die, burn my body with a thousand bundles of wood and enshrine the remains in the golden sanctum. Go down to the Kingdom of Tonggyŏng. There you will find the seven sons of King Pōmu. The four elder brothers were born under a lucky star, but the three younger brothers were born under an unlucky star, so their life span is limited to fifteen years. Bring the three brothers to our temple and let them work here. Then their life will be lengthened and their fortune will increase. You will become the chief priest of this temple and have the three brothers as trainee monks to serve the sanctum.’

‘Yes, I will do as you say’, replied the trainee monk.

Indeed, the priest died the day after tomorrow at around four or five o’clock. Thus, the trainee monk burned his body with a thousand bundles of wood and enshrined the remains in the golden sanctum.

Tired and exhausted on that day, he fell asleep and could not wake up until late in the next morning. In a dream a priest who was going down to the Underworld appeared to the trainee monk.

‘Sonny! Why do you keep sleeping? Wake up! Be quick! The rooster is crowing loudly. Hurry up to the Kingdom of Tonggyŏng.’

When the trainee monk got up in haste, the rooster was crowing and the day was dawning.

The trainee monk dressed himself up tidily, and offered the morning mass by beating the wood block in the sanctum. He put on a robe and a peaked hat, and held a 108-bead rosary and the wood block. Carrying a bag over his shoulder to receive offerings, he walked down slowly towards the Kingdom of Tonggyŏng.
While passing an intersection near the Kingdom of Tonggyöng, he saw King Põму’s three sons playing chess under a nettle tree. Stopping there the trainee monk said, ‘Children, you three brothers are now playing chess but, as I read your fortune, you may lose your life at fifteen.’

After saying that, the trainee monk vanished to the northeast. Hearing this, the three brothers stopped playing chess and hurried to their parents. ‘Dad! Mom! Why did you make us three born short of life and fortune?’ asked the three brothers.

‘What are you talking about?’ said the parents.

‘While we three were playing chess, a monk passing on the street said to us, “As I read the fortune of you three brothers, you may lose your life at fifteen,” and vanished to the northeast’, said the three brothers.

King Põму ordered his servants, ‘Go out to the street and see if there is a monk from a temple.’

Even before the king finished his order, the trainee monk came under the horse block of King Põму’s house and paid his respects, ‘How are you?’

‘Which temple are you from?’ asked King Põму.

‘I am a trainee monk at Kwanûm Temple’, replied the monk.

‘What made you come here?’ asked King Põму.

‘I came down to give long life to children who may die early, to bless unlucky children, and to obtain offerings’, replied the monk.

‘Come closer and receive the rice offering!’ ordered King Põму.

‘Hold it high and gently pour it down. Even dropping one grain may bring an end to life and luck’, said the monk.

As the monk received the offering and was about to leave the place, King Põму said, ‘You monk, do you take the rice for nothing? Do you have the I Ching? Why don’t you tell the fortune of my seven sons?’ asked King Põму.

‘Yes, I will do it’, said the monk.

‘The four elder brothers were born under a lucky star, so they will have a happy marriage, but the three younger brothers were born under an unlucky star, so they will die early at fifteen’, predicted the monk.

‘Then, you just know that their lives and fortune will run out, but you don’t know how to continue them, do you?’ asked King Põму.

‘Yes, I know. Let the three sons dress up like monks, come to my temple and offer service there for three years, then their lives and fortune will continue’, said the monk.

‘Don’t be absurd! How can the sons of the royal family be monks?’ shouted King Põму.

Pondering further over what the monk said, however, King Põму said, ‘How can I stand against death? Let’s save their lives and fortunes first.’

The king shaved the three brothers’ hair and dressed them in Buddhist robes. The robes looked well on them. King Põму presented them with nine rolls of silk as well as a silver vessel and a brass vessel. The three brothers kept shedding a shower of tears.
‘Dad! Mum! What a misfortune! What day on earth did you give birth to us?’ cried the three brothers.

Parting from their parents and brothers, the three went up to Kwanŭm Temple, following the trainee monk.

From the day of arrival, they greeted Buddha and held Buddhist masses day-by-day and month-by-month, and soon a year had passed. As the end of three years was approaching, the three went out of the temple to enjoy the colours of the autumn foliage. But all of a sudden, they began to wail out of irresistible yearning for their parents and brothers. The eldest of the three said, ‘Poor brothers, what’s the use of crying like this. Let’s go back to the temple and ask the chief priest if we may visit our parents.’

‘That’s a good idea’, agreed the other brothers.

As the three brothers told what they were thinking to the chief priest, he replied, ‘Poor boys! You may go. However, you must be careful when passing the Kwayang area. If not, your three years’ service in the temple will be in vain.’

‘We will bear this in mind’, said the three brothers.

The chief priest handed out the silk, the silver vessel and the brass vessel that the three brothers had brought in. Taking them up on their shoulders, the three brothers went down towards the Kingdom of Tonggyŏng.

On the way, they entered the Kwayang area and suddenly felt hungry. Because of hunger, if they made a step forward, they had to retreat two steps. As they could not move forward at all, the three sat on the roadside and wailed bitterly. Then the youngest said, ‘Why don’t we give somebody what we carry on our shoulders for a bowl of cold rice? That tile-roofed house looks a rich man’s house. How about going there and getting some rice in water?’

The eldest first stepped into the gate of Kwayangsaeng’s house and said, ‘Hello!’ Hearing this, Kwayangsaeng’s wife, who was on the bed with her arm laid on her forehead, rose quickly and shouted, ‘How rude this disgusting monk is! Don’t you know that this is a noble man’s house? Hold him by the ear, roll him up in a straw mat and give a sound beating.’

The eldest brother was driven away in humiliation. The same thing happened to the second. Finally, the youngest entered.

‘Wow, what’s going on? What’s happening? Three monks in a day!’ shouted Kwayansaeng’s wife.

‘Don’t be so mean. Originally we were not monks. Our father is King Pŏmu in the Kingdom of Tonggyŏng. Hearing that our lives were destined to be short, he put us at Kwanŭm Temple to gain longer and luckier lives. Now we are going home and, out of hunger on the way, we stopped by your house to get some cold rice’, said the youngest.

Kwayangsaeng’s wife entered the kitchen, and prepared three spoonfuls of rice in water in a gourd, which was a dog’s rice bowl, and brought it to the brothers. In front of the door of the kitchen, the three brothers shared the rice. Then their eyes opened and their senses were recovered. They felt strong enough to go over a mountain and cross a river.

Then the eldest brother said to the younger, ‘If we eat somebody else’s food
for nothing, the food will get stuck in our throats. How about cutting nine feet of silk for her?"

‘We agree’, assented the other brothers.

The three brothers cut nine feet of silk and brought it to Kwayangsaeng’s wife. Then she went inside without saying a word, put a hood on and came out, and said in a nice voice, ‘What gentle and good-hearted young men you are! Come in, please. You may stay in the living room. Relax here today and leave tomorrow.’

As the three brothers were very tired and their legs ached, they went into the living room. Then Kwayangsaeng’s wife served them with choice wine and a pork side dish.

‘Have a cup of this wine. A cup gives you one thousand years’ life, two cups ten thousand years and three cups ninety thousand years’, said Kwayangsaeng’s wife.

Believing their lives and fortunes would be extended, each of them drank three cups. As they drank on an empty stomach, they soon became dazed and began to doze. Then Kwayangsaeng’s wife brought three-year-old sesame oil from storage, boiled it down on a bronze brazier, and poured it into the three brothers’ left ears. The three brothers died immediately, even without calling their mother and father.

‘Goodness! I’ve never seen such valuables!’ Kwayangsaeng’s wife opened the box and drew out the silk, the silver vessel and the brass vessel. As it turned dark, Kwayangsaeng carried two of the brothers over his shoulders and Kwayangsaeng’s wife carried one, and they threw the dead bodies of King Pŏmu’s sons into the Yŏnhwa Pond of the Chuch’ŏn River.

Days went by until the seventh day. Kwayangsaeng’s wife went to the Yŏnhwa Pond of the Chuch’ŏn River with laundry in a bamboo basket to look around. Suddenly, three colourful flowers floated on the water. The closest flower was smiling brightly, the next one was crying sadly and the last one became angry like adzuki-bean porridge.

‘Flowers over there! If you are for me, come to me quickly.’ She drew the flowers near her using the wooden laundry paddle. The three colourful flowers came in front of Kwayangsaeng’s wife. She picked the flowers, brought them home in her laundry basket, and hung one on the front gate, another on the rear gate and the other on a column. The flower hung on the front gate pulled Kwayangsaeng’s front and back hair whenever he came in and out of the court, and the flower hung on the rear gate pulled the front and back hair of Kwayangsaeng’s wife whenever she came in and out of the terrace, and the flower hung on the column pulled Kwayangsaeng’s front and rear hair whenever he was served a meal.

‘These flowers are pretty but behave badly’, said the Kwayangsaeng’s wife. And then Kwayangsaeng’s wife rubbed the flowers in her hands and put them into the fire of the bronze brazier. The flowers burned out in an instant.

After a short while, old lady Magu who lived in the house behind came to borrow some coal embers.
“Turn over the ashes in the bronze brazier in the living room. See if there is live charcoal,” said the Kwayangsaeng’s wife.

When Magu turned up the bronze brazier, there was no fire but three colourful beads were there.

‘Look! There is no fire, but there are three colourful beads!’ shouted the old lady.

‘Oh, they are mine.’ Kwayangsaeng’s wife snatched the beads at once.

As Magu went home, Kwayangsaeng’s wife, seeing that the beads were so pretty, put them in her mouth and played with them, and she accidentally swallowed the beads.

After three months, Kwayangsaeng’s wife experienced the first signs of pregnancy. Then one day in the tenth month, Kwayangsaeng’s wife became distressed and rolled over from corner to corner in the room.

Kwayangsaeng asked Magu for help. Magu rubbed the waist of Kwayangsaeng’s wife and found that the heads of the babies had already turned around and the womb opened.

‘Let’s try’, said Magu.

As Kwayangsaeng’s wife bore down once, the first son came out, who was followed by the second son and then the third one. In a single day, three sons were born. Out of her great joy, she screamed, ‘How could this happen?’ and reported the birth of the three sons to the town office, expecting to receive a good reward. However, they said that having three babies at once was not a good omen and just gave her three bags of chaff a month.

When Kwayangsaeng’s three sons became seven, they were sent to Samch’ón School. Learning from the teacher, the three brothers grew in knowledge day-by-day. When they became fifteen, they went up to take the civil service examination, and only the three brothers passed the examination. They put on a blue cap or a black cap decorated with flowers symbolizing a royal emissary, and came home escorted by many subordinates. After greeting the chief magistrate of the town, they left for their house.

In the morning, Kwayangsaeng’s wife, who was wrapped in hemp clothes (worn in mourning), was looking over the courtyard of the town office in the north and that the banners of the royal emissary fluttering.

‘Wow! Whose child has passed the civil service examination? May he die or his neck will break into three pieces before me!’ cursed Kwayangsaeng’s wife.

Just before she finished the curse, a young boy with unkempt hair rushed into the house, and gave the news about her sons.

‘Hurray! Hurray! How can I calm down when my boys are honoured? Why don’t we offer a sacrifice in front of the gate and hold a party for seven days?’ cried Kwayangsaeng’s wife.

The couple told the three brothers to sit facing towards the gate and bow three times. The first and second sons raised their heads but the third did not.

‘What’s up?’ They ran to them and lifted the first son’s head. His pupil turned to the Underworld. When the second son’s head was lifted, he foamed
at the mouth and his nostrils became dark. As the third’s head was bent back, his fingernails and toenails were bleeding.

The three brothers were born, passed the examination and died on the same day and hour. Mr and Mrs Kwayangsaeng lamented over their misfortune and temporarily buried their dead bodies in the field in front of their house. They brought mourning paper to the town office in the morning, afternoon and evening every day for one hundred days. Finally, the mourning paper filled nine and a half boxes. While the chief magistrate was worrying about how to dispose of the mourning paper, Kwayangsaeng’s wife came to the court of the town office and hurled curses at him, ‘You, son of a bitch! Get away with you. If a new chief magistrate comes, then I will appeal with the mourning paper for my dead sons.’

Hearing this by chance, the chief magistrate’s wife said to her husband, ‘Sir, how could you do nothing with all these insults? Why don’t you do something just for the mourning paper?’

‘What can I do with the mourning paper?’ said the chief magistrate.

‘Sir, think again. Who is in charge of this kind of thing in the office?’ asked the chief magistrate’s wife.

‘I have a smart and bright official named Kangim, who came under me at fifteen and had eighteen wives’, replied the chief magistrate.

‘Then from tomorrow morning, summon your ten officials to the court of the town office for seven days. Some day, at least one of them will be late. Arrest the official and ask him whether he wants to capture the King of the Underworld or to give up his life in this world. He will answer: capture the King of the Underworld’, said the chief magistrate’s wife.

Thinking that his wife’s idea sounded reasonable, the chief magistrate began to summon his ten officials to the court of the town office. The next morning, the ten officials appeared on time. It was the same on the second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth days.

On the seventh day, however, only Kangim was absent. The previous night, he slept with his eighteenth concubine living outside of the southern gate and forgot the call in the morning. The chief magistrate hurriedly called Pakp’ado and instructed him to announce Kangim’s absence. Pakp’ado ran up to the top of the hill and shouted, ‘Kangim is not here’ three times.

Hearing Pakp’ado’s shouts, Kangim opened his eyes and realized that it was already daylight outside the window.

Kangim hurried to the court of the town office.

‘Set a grass cutter on the front field, and a rack on the rear field,’ ordered the chief magistrate.

The executioner was called and danced a sword dance. Kangim had a pillory put around his neck. Crying sorrowfully, Kangim asked the chief magistrate, ‘Chief magistrate! Chief magistrate! Isn’t there any way to save my life?’

‘If you want to save your life, go to the Underworld and capture the King of Hades. Or give up your life in this world,’ said the chief magistrate.
Terrified by the fear of death, Kangim pledged to go to the Underworld and capture the King of Hades. The pillory around his neck was removed and he was given a pass to the Underworld written in black ink on white paper.

Leaving the court of the town office, Kangim shed tears like a flood for his ill fate. He went up the hill outside the southern gate and, sitting there, was absorbed in deep thought, ‘Is this punishment for what I did to my first wife who I have never seen since the wedding? I will visit her house.’

When he entered the house of his first wife, she was pounding barley in a mortar. She saw Kangim coming through the alley, and shouted, ‘You heartless and merciless individual! What brings you here?’

Without a word, Kangim entered the living room, locked the door, lay on the bed and covered himself with the blanket. Recalling her old love, Kangim’s first wife prepared a meal and tried to enter the room where Kangim was lying down, but the door was locked.

‘Open the door! Open the door! Are you offended by what I said? Ignore it as a narrow-mind woman’s grumbling. Open the door!’ shouted the first wife.

But he did not open the door. She removed the door by force and entered the room, and found Kangim with his face bathed in tears.

‘What’s up? Tell me about why you are crying like that,’ asked the first wife.

‘I had to appear in the court of the town office for seven days, but I missed it on the last day. Then the chief magistrate threatened me, asking whether I wanted to go to the Underworld and capture the King of Hades or to give up in this world. In perplexity, I answered to go to the Underworld and capture the King of Hades’, said Kangim.

‘Oh, poor husband. Are you worrying just because of such a thing? I’ll do that. Don’t worry and enjoy your meal’, comforted the first wife.

Kangim smiled and took the food. Kangim’s first wife ran to the storage area and got some fine rice, soaked it in water and pounded it in the mortar. As the powder swelled, she took a rice steamer and laid the rice powder onto it. The first layer was for the god of the gate, the second for the god of Chowang, the goddess of the kitchen and the third for Kangim on his way to the Underworld. She dressed herself in her best dress, offered a sacrifice to the goddess of the kitchen and prayed, ‘Please, guide Kangim on the way to the Underworld.’

She prayed day and night and, in the evening of the seventh day, she fell asleep with her head lying on her lap out of tiredness, and the god of Chowang appeared to her in a dream, saying, ‘Woman! Why are you sleeping? Raise your head quickly and go outside. The rooster is crowing lowly. Kangim’s travel to the Underworld is late. Hurry up and send Kangim to the Underworld.’

Kangim’s first wife lifted her head up and recalled the dream. She rushed into the room where Kangim lay, saying, ‘Wake up. You must set out on your journey to the Underworld.’

Hearing this, Kangim began to wail loudly, ‘What are you talking about? How and which way can I go to the Underworld?’
‘Don’t worry. Get up and wash your face with water in the silver wash-bowl’, replied the first wife.

The first wife took out an Underworld costume from a box and handed it over to Kangim who had finished washing, and said, ‘Put on this costume and hurry to the Underworld.’

As Kangim was dressed in the Underworld costume, he looked like none other than an Underworld man.

‘Did the chief magistrate give you a pass to the Underworld?’ asked the first wife.

‘Yes, he did’, replied Kangim.

‘Let me see it’, the first wife demanded.

The pass that Kangim showed was a white paper written in black ink. Seeing this, she ran to the chief magistrate like a flash, and screamed, ‘Chief magistrate! How can a pass to the Underworld look like this when he goes there to capture the King of Hades? A mourning paper for a living person is white paper written in black ink, but a pass to the Underworld must not be. Write white letters on red paper.’

‘You’re right. I made a mistake’, said the chief magistrate. He wrote white letters on red paper. From that time on, people prepared mourning paper in this way for the dead.

As the first wife returned home, Kangim said, ‘When did you prepare the costume?’

‘I knew early what would happen, and made it’, replied the first wife.

From that time on, people made their Underworld costume while they were living.
Kangim’s wife bound a belt with a silk money bag around his waist and said, ‘If you have an emergency before reaching the entrance of the Underworld, shake the silk money bag three times with your hand, then you will know what you should do.’

Then, secretly, she put a pack of twenty-four needles without eyes deep inside the costume.

As Kangim said goodbye to his parents, his father wept bitterly, saying,
‘Poor son! What do you want me to make a bridge with on the way to the Underworld?’ Out of his compassion for his son, he took his headband off and made a bridge with it.

The mother also asked, ‘Poor son! What do you want me to make a bridge with on the way to the Underworld?’ Out of her compassion for her son, she took her slip and made a bridge with it.

The first wife also asked, ‘Poor husband! What do you want me to make a bridge with on the way to the Underworld?’ She made a bridge with her socks, with her garters and with her shoes. From that time on, people believed that the birth of ten children is useless as far as the relationship between a husband and wife is concerned. It was good when Kangim put on the shoes or socks and went to the Underworld, but once he returned home and took them off, it was the same as in the past before putting them on. This is now the rule for a husband and wife.

As Kangim’s wife sent Kangim off on the hill outside the southern gate and came home, her upper garment became loose because at the moment she longed for a new lover. Shedding tears, she deplored her behaviour saying, ‘As I parted from my love, my upper garment came loose. Let me tighten it.’ From that day on, Kangim’s first wife remained a truthful person.
When Kangim went up the hill outside the southern gate, he could not work out which was the way to the Underworld, so he sat down and cried sorrowfully. Suddenly, he saw an old lady in an apron holding a bent cane passing by.

‘Why does a woman go ahead of a man on the road? It is unpleasant even to see a woman doing this in a dream. Why is she hanging around me? I will follow her and tell her to move out of the way’, Kangim scolded her.

He followed the old lady with his fist clenched. Then the lady also clenched her fist and moved forwards quickly. After a short while, the lady got tired and sat down on the roadside and sighed deeply.

Kangim said to himself, ‘The old woman must not be a living person.’ So he approached her and bowed down to speak to her.

‘Why do you, a young man, bow down to an old woman like me?’ asked the old lady.

‘Please, don’t put it like that. I also have old parents at home’, replied Kangim.

‘Where are you going?’ asked the old lady.

‘I am on the way to the Underworld to capture the King of Hades’, replied Kangim.

‘It’s a long way. Why don’t we share our lunch together?’ asked the old lady.

‘All right. Let’s do that’, agreed Kangim.

The old lady put out her lunch and so did Kangim. Kangim broke a piece of his cake and, eating it, he said, ‘Dear lady, why are our lunches the same in style and taste?’

The old lady became angry and said, ‘You fool! Don’t you know me? What you are doing is so disgusting, but I came to guide you to the Underworld because your wife’s sincere heart is so beautiful. Kangim, I am the goddess of the kitchen of your wife’s house. Look. Go this way and you will find a crossroads with seventy-eight branches. Sit down there and wait, then an old man will appear near you. If you bow down as you did to me, he will guide you.’

‘Thank you very much’, said Kangim. He dropped his head as an expression of his thanks, but the woman vanished completely out of sight.

Kangim walked on the road as instructed by the lady, and came to the crossroads. But he did not to know which way he should enter. When he was wailing aloud, an old man appeared in front of Kangim. He stood up quickly and bowed down to him.

‘Why do you, a young man, bow down to an old man like me?’ asked the old man.

‘Please, don’t say that. I also have old parents at home’, replied Kangim.

‘Where are you going?’ asked the old man.

‘I am on the way to the Underworld to capture the King of Hades’, replied Kangim.

‘It’s a long way. Why don’t we share our lunch together?’ asked the old man.

‘All right. Let’s do it’, agreed Kangim.
The old man set out his lunch and so did Kangim. Kangim broke a piece of his cake and, eating it, he said, ‘Sir, why are our lunches the same in style and taste?’ The old man became angry and said, ‘You fool! Don’t you know me? What you are doing is so disgusting, but I came to guide you to the Underworld because your wife’s sincere heart is so beautiful. I am the god of the front gate at your wife’s house.’

From that time on, if people pray to the god of the front gate and the goddess of the kitchen for any misfortune in their house, their misfortune vanishes.

‘Look. There are seventy-eight branch roads. You must learn all of them to know the way to the Underworld. Count the roads one-by-one’, said the old man. After counting the seventy-eight branch roads, he said, ‘Kangim, go through the rugged road covered with the thorny bush of mountain berries, then you will see a man who is repairing the road to the Underworld. Out of hunger, he will doze in a sunny place. Take some of the cake that you are carrying on your waist and put it in front him. Because he is hungry, he will eat it in three bites. Then you will know the way.’

‘I will do as you said’, said Kangim. He dropped his head as an expression of his thanks, but the old man vanished completely out of sight. As Kangim pushed his way through the bush, he saw a man – Kilnajang, a messenger of the Underworld – who was dozing off helplessly on the roadside. Kangim took some cake and put it in front of his eyes. Out of hunger the man ate it in three bites. He felt strong enough to go over a mountain and cross a river.

‘Who are you?’ asked the man.

‘I am Kangim, an official under Chief Magistrate Kim Ch’i’, replied Kangim.

‘Where are you going?’ asked the man.

‘I am on the way to the Underworld to capture the King of Hades’, replied Kangim.

‘Oh dear, do you mean what you say? How can you go to the Underworld? Walk until your dark hair turns white and see if you get there. It is impossible’, said the man.

‘Then just guide me to the way to the Underworld’, asked Kangim.

The man thought that if he ate other’s food for nothing, the food would get stuck in his throat, and said, ‘Try to follow my instructions to go to the Underworld. Have you put on a linen jacket?’

‘Yes, I have’, replied Kangim.

‘If I shake your jacket and call your soul, go to the Yŏnch’u Gate of the Underworld with the soul. The day after tomorrow at around four or five o’clock, the King of Hades will go to receive a sacrifice offered for the only daughter of Maljaejangja’s house, who lies sick. Stand by Yŏnch’u Gate and, if the fifth palanquin, which is for the King of Hades, arrives, try to capture the King of Hades. But in order to go to the Yŏnch’u Gate of the Underworld, you should pass Haenggi Pond. On the edge of the pond are people who died before their destined years of life, crying sorrowfully between the Underworld
and this world. If you arrive at the pond, they will grab at your clothes and beg, ‘Please, take me with you!’ Then, crush your cake on your hip and spread the pieces to the east and west. Then the dead people will disperse in order to eat the pieces. By the way, do you have the pass to the Underworld?’ asked the man.

‘Oh, dear me, I forgot it’, replied Kangim.

‘No! What a man? Without the pass, you cannot come back from the Underworld once you enter it’, said the man.

‘That’s serious!’ Kangim sighed. Then, suddenly, he remembered what his wife said at the farewell, ‘If you meet an emergency before reaching the entrance to the Underworld, shake the silk money bag three times with your hand, then you will know what you should do.’ Thinking that it was an emergency, he shook the money bag three times, then Tongsimgyŏl, Pulsap and Unsap rolled down.

‘They are the pass to the Underworld’, said the man. From that time on, if a person dies, he/she is made to embrace Tongsimgyŏl, Pulsap and Unsap.

The man removed Kangim’s jacket and called his soul saying, ‘Kangim, Kangim, listen to me.’ Then, in no time, Kangim’s soul arrived at Haenggi Pond.

As Kangim arrived at Haenggi Pond, people sitting on the edge of Haenggi Pond caught his clothes and begged him to take them with him. Kangim smashed the cake and spread the pieces to the east and west. Then people, who were hungry, let go their hold to pick up the pieces of cake. Kangim closed his eyes and jumped into the pond. In an instant, he stood before the Yŏnch’u Gate of the Underworld.

When Kangim lay down under the column of the Yŏnch’u Gate, as the man said, the King of Hades was going out with his subjects. The first palanquin passed by and so did the second, the third and the fourth. Then the fifth palanquin stopped and a yell was heard.

‘Who dares to lie down there?’ the King of Hades shouted in a voice of thunder.

![Fig. 44 (left)](Pulsap, a funeral flag. When the hearse is leaving home, two Pulsaps and two Unsans are set on the front and rear of the bier.)

![Fig. 45 (right)](Unsap, a funeral flag.)
‘I am Kangim who came from the world to capture the King of the Underworld’, replied Kangim.

‘Are you going to capture me?’ the King of Hades sneered at Kangim.

Then Kangim opened his eyes wide, thundered at him and threw some of the king’s followers to the ground once, then twice. Seeing this, all the king’s servants ran away. Kangim grasped the pole of the palanquin, shook it and opened the door of the palanquin. The King of Hades sat inside, trembling with his hands closed. In a twinkling, Kangim bound the King of Hades.

From that time on, when a person dies, Emissary Kangim stands in front of him and the dead man is bound with a rope and sent to the Underworld.

‘Kangim! Calm down. Why don’t you go to Maljaechangja’s house and get treated with a sacrifice before going to the human world?’ the King of Hades begged Kangim to free him.

‘That sounds good’, agreed Kangim.

When they went to Maljaechangja’s house, the shaman said, ‘May all gods come down to heal the sick!’; but did not ask Kangim to come. In a fit of anger at the shaman, he tried to bind and kill her, but the clever shaman said, ‘A living emissary is also an emissary. Our human Emissary Kangim seems to come down with the King of the Underworld. Please Emissary Kangim come down together!’ Then the dying shaman revived.

**Fig. 46** The Bamboo Flag for the Lord of Hades. It is believed that the Lord of Hades comes down the Bamboo Flag during shamanist rites.
Kangim drank one or two cups of wine and fell asleep. When he woke up, the King of Hades had already vanished. Weeping sorrowfully, Kangim wandered around the street. The goddess of the kitchen told him, clapping his hands, 'Kangim! The King of Hades revived in the body of a bird and is sitting on the top of a tall bamboo. Cut the tall bamboo with a large saw, then you will know what you should do.'

As Kangim rushed to cut the tall bamboo, the King of Hades held Kangim's wrist and said, 'I cannot deceive Kangim's eye. You go to the human world first. I will come down to the court of the town office the day after tomorrow at around four or five o'clock.'

'Then, as witness, stamp your seal', said Kangim.

The King of Hades wrote 'the Underworld' on Kangim's jacket.

'The King of Hades, I came here as I wanted, but I cannot go back as I want. Guide me through the Underworld, please', asked Kangim.

The King of Hades gave him a white puppy and put three pieces of white cake over his shoulder, and said, 'Lure the white puppy with the cake. If you follow the puppy, you will discover what you should do.'

Kangim lured the puppy with the cake under his arm and followed it, then he came closer to Haenggi Pond. As the white puppy rushed to him and bit him on the front of his neck, Kangim fell into Haenggi Pond. He opened his eyes as if a man wakes up from his dream, and found himself in this world.

From that time on, if a person dies, a lump of cake is put under his arm. In addition, as the white puppy bit Kangim on the front of his neck, a man's larynx juts out while a woman's does not.

When Kangim came to this world, he could not work out where he was. He turned his eye to the north and found a light. He walked towards the light and it was his first wife's house.

The first wife was soothing sundry gods in the alleyway, 'Poor man! If you are alive come home as soon as possible, and if you are dead enjoy the offerings at the memorial service for you.'

Then she locked the door from the inside. Entering the house, Kangim said, 'I am a traveller passing by. May I stay the night at your house?'

'You cannot stay here tonight', replied the first wife.

'Do you have any serious objection?' asked Kangim.

'My husband is Kangim, and today is the first memorial service day after three years' mourning', replied the first wife.

'I am Kangim', said Kangim.

'It is impossible for my husband to come back alive. If you are Mr Kim at the house behind, come again tomorrow morning. I will give you food from the memorial service if you don’t mind', the first wife rejected him.

'Damn it! I am Kangim', shouted Kangim.

'Then, put your costume through the hole in the door. I have a way of confirming it', replied the first wife.

Kangim put his costume through the hole, and the needles without eyes that the wife had put into the costume broke.
‘This must be my poor husband’, said the first wife. The first wife opened
the door and received Kangim into the room, holding his hands.
‘What are you doing?’ asked Kangim.
‘I am holding the first memorial service after three years’ mourning’,
replied the first wife.
‘I stayed in the Underworld only three days, but three years have passed in
this world.’
From that time on, a day in the Underworld is counted as a year in this
world.
The first memorial service after three years’ mourning was turned into a
great banquet. After drinking a cup of wine, Kangim asked his family, ‘Father,
what came to your mind when I was not with you?’
‘After you disappeared, I felt pain in my joints’, replied his father.
‘If my poor father passes away, I will think about my father with a cane
made of a tall bamboo with six joints. And I will repay my debts to my father
for three years, wearing a mourning dress’, said Kangim.
‘Mother, what came to your mind when I was not with you?’ asked
Kangim.
‘After my poor baby disappeared, I had difficulty in hearing. I walked along
the alleyway, recalling you so often’, replied his mother.
‘If my mother passes away, I will make a cane with an empress tree growing
towards the east and think about my mother. And I will repay my debts to my
mother for three years, wearing a mourning dress’, said Kangim.
‘Dear brothers, what came to your minds when I was not with you?’ asked
Kangim.
‘After you disappeared, we thought about you for twenty months and after
that forgot you little by little’, replied the brothers.
From that time on, the relations between brothers are like a wind blowing
over their dress; so, for the death of a brother, people wear mourning dress
only for twelve months.
‘Dear close and distant relatives, what came to your minds when I was not with you?’ asked
Kangim.
‘After you disappeared, we thought about you only on some big occasions’,
replied the close and distant relatives.
From that time on, if a relative dies, his relatives make cake and assist in the
running of his house.
‘My dear seventeen concubines, what came to your minds when I was not with you?’ asked Kangim.
‘When we walked along the streets, our eyes were captivated by any fellow
with a thick neck’, replied the seventeen concubines.
‘These girls are all useless’, said Kangim.
Thus, Kangim sent them away in four directions, and asked the first wife,
‘Dear woman, what came to your mind when I was not with you?’
‘People encouraged me to remarry after the memorial service at the
fifteenth day, but I continued alone for twelve months, remembering our first
love. I thought to remarry after twelve months, but I continued for another
twelve months, remembering our first love. I thought to remarry after twenty-
four months, but you came back alive when I had performed the first
memorial services after three years' mourning.'

From that time on, the rules for chaste women were established.
That night, Kangim lay with his wife. Kim who lived in the house at the
rear, whom the first wife was considering marrying after the first memorial
services after three years' mourning, came the next morning and found that
Kangim had come back. So he ran to the chief magistrate, and reported,
'Kangim said that he would go to the Underworld and capture the King of
Hades, but he has been hiding behind the folding screen and, at night, he
comes out and lives with his wife.'

Hearing this, the chief magistrate ordered swift Pakp'ado to arrest Kangim.
Pakp'ado seized Kangim and brought him to court at the town office. The
chief magistrate said to him, 'Where is the King of Hades?'

'Look at my back. What does it say? The King of Hades will come the day
day after tomorrow at around four or five o'clock', replied Kangim.

Indeed, a seal was stamped on Kangim's back, the evidence of the
Underworld. The chief magistrate ordered Kangim to be put in prison until
the King of Hades came.

When the time mentioned by Kangim came, a cloud appeared and a
rainbow stood up on the court of the town office. Frightened by the scene,
Chief Magistrate Kim Ch'i could not remember how to get out of the
building and hid himself instead behind a column. The King of Hades looked
for Kangim around the court of the town office, but he was not there. He
found Kangim sitting in jail, so released him and asked, 'Where is the chief
magistrate?'

'I don't know', replied Kangim.

'Who built this house?' asked the King of Hades.

'It was Kang T'aegong', replied Kangim.

'Call Kang T'aegong', ordered the King of Hades.

Kang T'aegong was summoned.

'How many columns did you erect for this house? If there is any column
that you did not make, cut it down with a saw', ordered the King of Hades.

Kang T’aegong found a column that he did not make, and cut through it
with a large saw. Then violet blood gushed out and the chief magistrate
revealed himself, shivering with his hands clenched. The King of Hades
shouted, 'Why did you call me?'

The chief magistrate could not reply, but trembled with his hands closed.
Kangim replied for the chief magistrate, 'King of Hades! Why are you yelling
so dreadfully? You are the King of the Underworld, but he is also a king in this
world. Why cannot this world’s king make a request of the Underworld's
king?'

'Kangim is very bright and smart. You, king of this world! Why did you call
me?' asked the King of Hades.
‘Let me tell you. I invited you the King of Hades to dispose of the mourning paper for the three brothers of Kwayangsaeng living in the land of Kwayang. They were born, passed the civil service examination and died on the same day and hour’, replied the chief magistrate.

‘I already knew that when I was in the Underworld, and I came for that. Bring Mr and Mrs Kwayangsaeng to the court of the town office’, ordered the King of Hades.

When the couple was summoned, the King of Hades asked, ‘Where did you bury your sons?’

‘We buried them in the field in front of our house’, replied the couple.

‘Without anybody’s help, you two must dig up the field with your hands’, ordered the King of Hades.

The couple dug up the ground where the three brothers were buried, but there was nothing there but a seven-star plate.

‘Where are your three sons?’ the King of Hades sneered at the couple and struck the pond of the Chuch’eo (n River three times with a golden fan, then the pond dried out and dust swirled around. There were the bones of King Pŏmu’s dead sons. The King of Hades piled up the bones one-by-one and struck them three times with the golden fan. Then King Pŏmu’s three sons came back to life, each saying, ‘Ouch! I have slept until late because it is spring.’

The three brothers rose from the ground quickly and the King of Hades called Kwayangsaeng and his wife, asking ‘Are they your three sons?’

‘Indeed, they look the same as our three sons’, replied the couple.

King Pŏmu’s three sons threw themselves upon the couple, almost killing them with a bow and a sword. Stopping them, the King of Hades said, ‘I will avenge you on them. You hurry to your father and mother.’

The hands and legs of Kwayangsaeng and his wife were bound to cows, and cow boys drove the cows to the east and the west. Their bodies were torn into nine pieces. The remains were thrown into a mill, powdered and blown in the wind. The couple who had been thirsty for other’s blood in their life were reborn in the body of a gnat and a mosquito that suck up people’s blood.

‘Chief Magistrate Kim Ch’i, lend me Kangim for a while. I will put him to work in the Underworld and then return him to you’, said the King of Hades.

‘That’s unacceptable’, replied the chief magistrate.

‘Then why don’t you separate his body and soul?’ asked the King of Hades.

‘All right, go ahead’, agreed the chief magistrate.

‘Do you want the body or the soul?’ asked the King of Hades.

The foolish Chief Magistrate Kim Ch’i wanted the body. Then the King of Hades removed Kangim’s soul and left for the Underworld. Kangim stood vacantly in the court of the town office.

The Chief Magistrate Kim Ch’i, who was drinking wine, called Kangim, ‘Kangim, come over here and tell me about the Underworld.’

But Kangim didn’t say a word. Chief Magistrate Kim Ch’i became very angry with him.
‘Look at that fellow. After capturing the King of Hades, he has become so arrogant, he won’t answer me.’

He gave Kangim a push, but he was already dead and foaming at the mouth.

Knowing this, Kangim’s wife ran into the court of the town office and, appealing, she rushed at the chief magistrate and scratched him until he fell down, so he also died.

From that time on, if a man kills another, he is executed.

Kangim’s wife could not console herself even with washing the dead body, singing mourning songs with forty-eight bier carriers, and passing fifteen days, one year and three years after burial. Thus, she made it a rule to have memorial services once or twice a year.

Kangim, who went down to the Underworld, was sent to the human world and was ordered by the King of Hades to put up a red paper notice on which was written, ‘For human life, women are destined to die at seventy and men at eighty. If the destined life ends, come to the Underworld.’ On his way to the human world, Kangim became tired and sat down at the side of the road, when a cawing crow appeared, saying, ‘Sir, attach the red paper notice to my front wing. I will put it up in the human world.’

He gave the paper to the crow, and then the crow attached it to its front wing and flew away towards the human world. It saw a person who was butchering a horse in the field. The crow approached the site to get a piece of horse meat, and the horse butcher threw a horseshoe taken from the horse. Thinking that the horseshoe was thrown to it, the crow flew up, flapping its front wing. Then the red paper fell to a white snake in a hollow of a wall, and the snake swallowed up the paper.

From that time on, a snake never dies and if it dies nine times, it revives ten times.

The crow saw a kite sitting beside him, and asked, ‘Give me back the red paper! Caw!’

‘I’ve never seen it’, replied the kite.

From that time on, the kite became the enemy of the crow, and they fight each other.

Having lost the red paper, the crow came to the human world and made the following announcement.

‘The old go where the young should go. The young go where the old should go. Children go where parents should go. Ancestors go where descendents should go. Descendants go where ancestors should go.’

Because it had been announced like this, people came to die in no particular order.

In addition, the cawing of a crow is an evil omen. A morning crow is for the death of a child, a daylight crow is for the death of a young person, an afternoon crow is for the death of an old man, a crow cawing on the rooftop is for the death of a merchant, a crow cawing on the middle of the roof is for the death of a middle-class man, a crow cawing on the bottom of the roof is for
the death of a servant, a crow cawing annoyingly is for a fight, a crow cawing towards the east is for the visit of a guest to a house without food, a crow cawing towards the west is for the outbreak of a rumour, an early evening crow is for fire, and a night crow is for the outbreak of treason and murder.

As a result, the Underworld was filled with people of all ages from old to young. Judge Ch’oe said to Kangim, ‘I told you to come in order, but why did all these young and old come together?’

As Kangim was questioned, he also caught the crow and questioned it. As the crow confessed, Kangim tied the crow up to a rack and beat its lower part with a club. From that time on, the crow walks with a stagger as if walking on a plowed field.

One day, the King of Hades gave an order to Kangim, ‘I sent an emissary to catch Tong Pangsak, but if a young emissary goes he becomes an adult and if an adult one goes he becomes a child. What’s happening? If you go to the place where he is and capture Tong Pangsak, I will give you one month’s leave.’

‘Sir, I will do that’, replied Kangim.

After plotting how to catch Tong Pangsak, Kangim went down to a human village and washed black charcoal at a stream. Then Tong Pangsak, who was crossing the stream, asked, ‘Why are you washing charcoal?’

‘I am washing the black charcoal, hearing that it turns into white charcoal after one hundred days’ washing and the white charcoal is effective for one hundred kinds of diseases’, replied Kangim.

Fig. 47 Tong Pangsak on the run. He is a legendary man in ancient China who is said to have lived for one hundred and eighty million years because he stole a peach from Heaven and ate it.
‘What a foolish guy! I’ve lived for three thousand years, but never heard such an absurdity.’

Kangim smiled brightly and bound him with red iron wire from his waist. Tong Pangsak deplored, ‘No emissary has succeeded in catching me, but at the end of three thousand years’ life, I am captured by Kangim. Let’s go to the Underworld. Hurry up.’

In this way, Kangim captured Tong Pangsak and offered him to the King of Hades. The king said, ‘Kangim is smart and bright, so I appoint you as an emissary to capture humans.’

From that time on, Kangim became an emissary who captures humans.

The Original Title: Ch’asabonp’uri (Origin Myth of the Messenger of the Underworld)
MYTHS ABOUT SHAMANS
CHAPTER 13

Paridegi, Goddess Who Guides Dead Souls to the Underworld

Once upon a time, there was King Ogu who ruled the Kingdom of Pulla. He was a benign ruler, but had not married yet.

The royal family and subjects urged him to select a woman as the queen. The king announced a decree that allowed the selection. As a consequence, Lady Kildae became the queen.

‘I want to know the fortune of this kingdom. Do you know any skilled fortune-teller?’ King Ogu asked a court lady.

‘I heard that Dr Taji at Palace Ch’ónha, Dr Moran at Palace Chesŏk and Dr Chuyŏk at Palace Myŏngdo are skilful’, said Lady Kildae.

‘Go to Palace Ch’ónha and have the fortune-teller tell the fortune of this country’, ordered King Ogu.

Fig. 48 The parade of a state wedding of a king and queen. The painting shows King Yongjo (1724–76) bringing a queen from a detached palace to his palace. (from Yongjo Chŏngsunhu Karyedogam Ùigwe). Courtesy of Kujanggak, Seoul National University.
Receiving the order, the court lady packed pearls and gold coins and visited Dr Taji at Palace Ch’önha.

Dr Taji at Palace Ch’önha scattered white rice on a gem tray and began to read the fortune. ‘Then he told what he had read to the court lady, ‘The king is seventeen and the queen sixteen this year. This year is not good for holding a wedding, but the following year is a lucky year for a wedding. If they marry this year, they will have seven princesses and if they do so next year, they will see three princes.’

The court lady reported what she heard from the fortune-teller. The king laughed at the court lady’s report and said, ‘Though skilful, how can he know these things? I cannot wait even a day, when a day is like ten days of others.’

King Ogu ordered the Minister of Culture to choose the days. Thus, the fifth of May was chosen to send silk from the bridegroom’s house to the bride’s before the wedding, and the seventh of July to hold the wedding ceremony. At last, it was the day of the wedding ceremony. It was also the day when Altair joined Vega.¹

Several months had passed like flowing water, and Lady Kildae felt strange symptoms in her body. She felt her thin bones melting down and thick bones bending. She could neither cook rice nor drink water because of disgusting smells.

¹ Fig. 50 The Altair and the Vega (from mural paintings of Tökhûngri of Koguryô). Fourth to fifth century.
As Lady Kildae told this to King Ogu, the king asked, ‘What was your dream?’

‘I embraced the moon, and held a green branch of a peach tree with peach blossoms in my right hand’, said Lady Kildae.

The king ordered the court lady to visit the fortune-teller. Again packing pearls and gold coins, the court lady visited Dr Taji at Palace Ch’ónha. Dr Taji said, ‘It is certain that the queen has become pregnant. However, because they married in the unlucky year, they will see a princess.’

The court lady reported what she heard, but the king just laughed at that, saying, ‘Though skilful, how can he know these things?

Again seven months had passed. Physicians stood by at night, and nursing court ladies were appointed. The queen was attended through day and night. As the time of delivery came, she gave birth to a baby and it was a girl as the fortune-teller had said. It was reported to the king.

‘As she has a princess today, she will have a prince in the future. Raise the baby preciously’, ordered the king.

As three months had passed since the birth of the princess, the baby was named Taridang and given another name, Princess Ch’ôngdae. When she became five, she was moved to the outer palace.

As time passed, Lady Kildae became pregnant again.

‘Seven stars fell into my breast, and I held a green branch of a peach tree with peach blossoms in my right hand’, said Lady Kildae.

The king again asked the fortune-teller to interpret the dream, and heard that the baby would also be a girl.

At the time of delivery, the queen gave birth to a baby and it was a princess.

‘As she has a princess today, she will have a prince in the future’, said the king.

The king named the baby Pyôlidang and gave another name Princess Hongdae. He continued to wait for a prince, but all the babies that followed were girls and, as a result, the king came to have six princesses.

Now King Ogu was fifty years old, a hopeless age. He had nothing to envy and was richer than the richest in the world, but could not do anything concerning his children. He fell into a deep depression, worrying about who would inherit the Royal Seal and offer sacrifices to the ancestors.

One day, Lady Kildae, who was also experiencing deep anxiety, went out through the twelve gates, watered flowers and walked along the garden. Suddenly, she heard a voice asking for an offering outside the gate. Surprised by the sound, Lady Kildae thought, ‘This gate is not accessible even to crows and magpies. How can I hear the voice of a monk asking for an offering? I may give whatever he wants, rice or money, but passing through the twelve gates, he must not be an ordinary monk.’ Assuming so, she sent men to the monk, saying, ‘This monk asks for an offering. Go inside and get a bag of white rice.’

Her maids went inside and brought cleaned rice. The monk received the rice and put it in his bag, and said, ‘I feel you are troubled by a child problem.'
Go to noted mountains and great rivers and pray, and then you will see a prince.' After this word, he vanished completely like the wind.

Frightened by this, Lady Kildae said to herself, ‘This must be a high priest’ and from that time on she stretched an exorcistical rope, cleansed of dirt, drew pure water and prayed with her hands pressed together. She prepared all kinds of food as well as an incense burner and a pair of candlesticks, and climbed up to a shrine for the god of the mountain on a noted mountain and prayed there for one hundred days. Even after coming back home, she never rested even a second, but continued to pray to the god of house, Sŏngju, the god of land, the goddess of kitchen, Chowang, and the god of ancestor.

Probably because of her earnest prayer, she dreamed a dream in the middle of the night of the eighteenth of April. Heaven was covered with clouds and fog, and seven cloud legs and seven rainbow legs appeared from the heavens. Then a celestial maiden came down through the clouds from heaven, riding on a crane. The celestial maiden landed on earth, toddled uncertainly with flowery branches of a cinnamon tree, and bowed down twice to Lady Kildae.

‘I am a daughter of Sŏwangmo in heaven. One day, in a brief outing, I met a man and talked with him a little under a cinnamon tree. As punishment for this sin against the King of Heaven, I was driven to the human world. While I was wandering on earth, many gods advised me to go to you and here I am. Have mercy on me, please.’ Saying this, the celestial maiden threw herself onto the breast of Lady Kildae. Surprised, Lady Kildae woke up. It had been a dream.

Assuming that the dream was of good fortune, Lady Kildae hurriedly wrote about the dream to King Ogu. Reading Lady Kildae’s letter, King Ogu sent her a message that he would go to Lady Kildae’s palace the next day.

Lady Kildae was very pleased with King Ogu’s reply and waited for the coming of the next day. As he promised, King Ogu visited the palace where Lady Kildae was staying. At midnight, King Ogu and Lady Kildae slept together and their bed was joined by the gods of sun, moon, stars, land, etc. in heaven.

**Fig. 51** Sŏwangmo who is carved on a stone coffin. She is the goddess of Taoism who has a tiger’s teeth and a leopard’s tail and lives on Mount Konryun. This was excavated in Sitian Province. Han dynasty, China.
Indeed, at around one o’clock at night, the queen felt the sign of pregnancy and began to have morning sickness. She wanted to eat all kinds of food, but could not eat rice due to a fish-like smell, nor drink water due to a soil-like smell. What she could eat was only sour wild peaches. In the seventh month,
Fig. 53 The Earth of Goddess who is worshipped in Taoism (from Daojiaoshenxianhuaji. China). Date unknown.
Lady Kildae’s abdomen swelled and her back was depressed. She had all kinds of pre-natal care, avoiding the sides of doors and corners when sitting, eating food carefully, speaking in a low voice, keeping herself from noisy places, abstaining from killing animals or stepping on insects, seeing enemies or doing evil or unclean things.

In this way, ten months passed. One day, she felt a great pain as the baby was about to come out. Although many waiting women were rubbing her abdomen and massaging her arms and legs, it was extremely laborious for Lady Kildae, who was already old. Because of the pain, Lady Kildae felt faint and her surrounding became colourful with red, white, yellow and blue clouds. In the pond of the inner palace where Lady Kildae was dwelling stood a seven-coloured rainbow.

However, when she delivered the baby, it was again a princess. As Lady Kildae fainted after the childbirth, her attendants rushed to her and massaged her arms and legs. After a while, Lady Kildae regained her consciousness, and said, ‘Tell me. Is the baby a boy or a girl?’

They dared not to tell her that it was a princess. So they kept silent with their heads bent.

‘Why don’t you answer my question?’ Lady Kildae asked them again.

‘It is again a princess’, they said with low-toned voices.

Lady Kildae was astonished, ‘How can this happen? I have done all I can do for this baby, but still it is a girl. Is this true?’

Lady Kildae could not believe it. She drew the baby to her side and uncovered the wrapper. It was surely a daughter.

‘If you were a son, both you and I would have been good. What should I say to King Ogu. If the king and I die, who will take up the Royal Seal and serve a bowl of rice and a cup of water to the ancestors?’ Looking at the seventh princess, Lady Kildae wailed aloud.

King Ogu asked court ladies, ‘What is the sound of a woman’s crying in the depth of the palace?’

‘It is fearful for us to say this. Lady Kildae is crying after giving birth to the seventh princess.’ said the court ladies.

King Ogu deplored, pounding on the desk with his hand, saying, ‘Ladies, you are brazen-faced. How dare you face me? What sins did I commit in my previous life, heaven giving me only seven daughters? Who will take up the Royal Ancestors’ Shrine and the State? Who will rule over the government? Who will rule over the people?’

King Ogu issued a decree, ‘Throw away the baby in the back garden.’

Lady Kildae said to King Ogu, ‘The State may not be concerned about its sons and daughters, but how could you throw away your baby? Why don’t you give her to a subject so that he may raise her as an adopted daughter?’

‘The law of the state does not allow it’, said King Ogu.

With no option, Lady Kildae dressed the girl in a coat and skirt, wrote down her date and time of birth on the breast-tie, and put her in the garden on the hill behind the palace. As the queen turned away from the baby, a
violent gale raged, although the place was surrounded by mountains and water was still, and a black magpie flew to the baby. It laid one of its wings under the baby and covered her with the other.

After that, on a warm spring day, King Ogu and Lady Kildae were strolling around the flowery rear garden with the Head of the Military Art Office. When they saw the east side, they found auspicious lights in the air and a black magpie was crowing loudly.

‘Because auspicious lights are in the air, it is a sign of a national happy event. Why is the black magpie over there making such a noise?’ asked King Ogu.

‘Because you commanded that the baby born this time be thrown away, we did so in the rear garden as you ordered. From that time on, the baby’s crying sound will be heard from afar’, said a court lady.

‘Bring the baby to me’, ordered King Ogu.

As the baby was brought before the king, her ears were filled with large ants, her mouth with golden ants and her eyes with fine ants.

Lady Kildae said with tears in her eyes, ‘Even if the State is not concerned about its sons and daughters, how can you dump your daughter in such a cruel way?’

King Ogu issued another decree, ‘Tomorrow morning, I will send men to the King of the Four Oceans. Call the box carrier and make an exquisite jade chest.’

When Lady Kildae put the baby in the jade chest, she squeezed milk from her breast into a jade bottle, had the baby hold the bottle in her mouth, and wrote down the date and time of birth on the breast-tie. Then she said, ‘Are you going to put your own flesh and blood under the water? Why don’t you give her to a childless subject as an adopted daughter? If you have to do this, give her a name.’

‘I abandoned her. Because I abandoned her, call her Paridegi.’

The subject who received the order locked the jade chest, and carved ‘the Seventh Princess’ in gold and brought it outside the palace. The black magpie guided the way by pecking at the road, and trees and plants bowed down to show the way. Going over a number of mountain passes and crossing many rivers, at last they arrived at the Magpie Rapid and dumped the seventh princess. Then thunder and lightning shook the land. All of a sudden, a golden turtle appeared and, taking the jade chest on its back, disappeared to the East Sea. The place was called T’aeyangsŏch’ŏn. In this place as well, the black magpie took care of the seventh princess, laying one of its wings under the baby and covered her with the other. The place was covered with a thick fog at night, and with clouds and mist during the daytime.

At that time, Sakyamuni was travelling around the four seas with his disciples and coming to earth to bless people with babies. Hearing the sound of the black magpie, he said to one of his disciples, ‘Why does the black magpie make such a noise? Is there anything over there? Seeing auspicious lights in the air, if there is a person, surely the person may know heaven, if there is an
animal, surely the animal may know heaven, and if there is a ghost, surely the ghost may know heaven. Go over there and have a look.’

‘With my untrained eyes, nothing is seen’, said the one of his disciples. Sakyamuni looked over T’aeyangsoch’on and found a girl in a jade chest. Saying that a boy might become his disciple, but a girl was useless, he had the chest moved behind a hollow hazel tree.

At that time, old Mr and Mrs Pirigongdok were coming with caps on their heads, carrying bags on their backs and singing. Sakyamuni asked, ‘Are you humans or ghosts?’

‘We are neither ghosts nor animals. We are old Mr and Mrs Pirigongdok, the god and goddess of this mountain.’

‘Do you know what merits are?’ asked Sakyamuni.

‘The first merits are making a bridge to cross over deep water, dressing a naked person, feeding a hungry person, watering a thirsty person and nursing an abandoned baby’, replied old Mr and Mrs Pirigongdok.

‘Then why don’t you take this baby with you and raise her?’ asked Sakyamuni.

‘We stay in the field in spring, summer and autumn, and in a cave in winter’, said old Mr and Mrs Pirigongdok.

‘If you take this baby with you and raise her, you will be given food to eat, clothes to wear and a house to dwell in.’ On this final word, Sakyamuni vanished in a second.

While old Mr and Mrs Pirigongdok were thinking, ‘This must be the magic of Sakyamuni’, a baby’s cry was heard from the willow into which orioles were flying. They approached the origin of the sound. There was a jade chest with a golden turtle lock. As they uttered an incantation, the jade chest opened without the key. Inside the chest was a baby, and her eyes were filled with red ants and her waist wound up with earthworms and snakes. As they washed the baby with flowing water and turned away, they found a house, which had not been there before.

The baby grew up to eight or nine years old. Although she did not learn anything, there was nothing unknown to her. One day the girl asked, ‘All flying birds and crawling insects have their fathers and mothers, but where is my mother? Where is my father?’

‘Your grandpa is your father and your grandma is your mother’, said old Mr and Mrs Pirigongdok.

‘Don’t tell a lie. How can old people like you give birth to a child like me?’ said the girl.

The old couple, who were childless, were thinking to live relying on the child, but now the child was looking for her mother and father.

‘Heaven is your father and earth is your mother’, said old Mr and Mrs Pirigongdok.

‘All things between heaven and earth are from heaven and earth, but how can a person be from them? Please, tell me the truth’, said the girl.

‘If a person is bereaved of his father, he cuts a tall bamboo in Chóllado and
makes a cane with it by cutting both ends. He mourns for his father for three years. So the tall bamboo tree in Chŏllado is your father and the empress tree on the hill behind the village is your mother', said old Mr and Mrs Pirigongdŏk.

‘Because the tall bamboo tree in Chŏllado is too far, I cannot go there. Instead, I will pay my respects to the empress tree on the hill behind’, said the girl.

As time passed, the girl became fifteen.

One day, the sun and the moon looked like they had fallen into a washbowl. It was a sign showing in advance that the king and the queen, the parents of the seventh princess, would be seriously ill.

The king issued a decree, ‘Go to Dr Taji at Palace Ch’ŏnha and have him do fortune-telling.’

After reading the fortune, Dr Taji said, ‘You will see later. The west sea is for the sunset and the east sea is for the moon rising. The king and the queen will die at the same time on the same day. You should find the place where the seventh princess is staying.’

The subject told what he heard from the fortune-teller.

‘We might find her if we had abandoned her on the ground. But who can find one who was abandoned in the sea?’ King Ogu regretted.

The king and the queen dreamed a dream at the same time on the same day. In the dream, six boys dressed in blue flew into the king’s residence and cried together.

‘Are you humans or ghosts? This place is not allowed even to flying birds. How could you come in?’ King Ogu shouted them.

‘We are neither humans nor ghosts. We are blue-dressed boys from heaven. We came by the order of the King of Heaven to move the nameplate of the king into the Hell of P’ungt’o’, said the six boys.

‘Why do you do this? Is there a subject who complains? Or is there a person who complains among the people?’ asked King Ogu.

‘It is not. Because of your sin of throwing away a baby who knows heaven, you and the queen will die at the same time on the same day?’ said the six boys.

‘Then how can I restore my youth?’ asked King Ogu.

‘Find the abandoned baby and drink the medicine water kept by Wizard Musang, and your life will be saved’, said the six boys.

The king woke from the dream. Waiting until the day dawned, he summoned his subjects and announced that if any of the subjects found the baby and brought her back, he would be given a thousand pieces of gold and half of the kingdom. However, no one volunteered.

‘If anyone goes and gets just the medicine water, I will grant a thousand pieces of gold’, King Ogu announced.

‘If the baby was abandoned on the ground, there may be one who will try, but who can find a baby dumped into the middle of water?’ said all subjects.

In the meantime, a subject said, ‘My family has been on the government
payroll for generations. As a servant of the king, how can I remain still? Even if I die on the way, I will find it and offer it to you.’

‘What will you carry with you?’ said King Ogu.

‘Would you give me letters written by the king and the queen and the six princesses and the baby’s remains?’ said the subject.

With these things, the subject left the palace, but he did not know where to go.

At that time, the black magpie guided him by bowing his head towards the village of Sŏch’ŏn, and trees and plants also guided him by bowing down. Crossing many rivers and going over mountain passes, he entered the village of Sŏch’ŏn. Old Mr and Mrs Pirigongdŏk said to him, ‘Are you a man or a ghost? How could you get into this place that even flying birds and crawling insects cannot access?’

‘I came to find a baby by the State’s order’, said the subject.

Then the seventh princess Paridegi came out and said, ‘If it is the State’s child, why was it thrown away as soon as it was born? Did it have a lot of sins?’

‘I have brought a jacket that the baby was wearing’, said the subject.

‘How can I recognize the jacket?’ said Paridegi.

‘I have one on which the date and time of birth is written’, said the subject.

‘How can I recognize the date and time of birth?’ said Paridegi.

‘I have brought letters by the king, the queen and the six princesses’, said the subject.

‘How can I recognize the letters? Bring me blood’, said Paridegi.

As blood from the thumbs of the king and the queen was put in a gold tray and blood from the baby’s third finger were mixed, the blood rose up like a cloud.

Only then, the baby said that she would go. The subject said, ‘Do I prepare a bead palanquin or a silk one?’

‘Where is a bead palanquin or a silk one for my body that was abandoned as soon as it was born? I will walk’, said Paridegi.

Paridegi followed the subject and stood outside the gate of the palace. Then the king and the queen issued an order, ‘Let the seventh princess in.’

When the seventh princess entered, the king and the queen held her wrists and said, shedding tears, ‘Did we throw you away out of hatred? No, it was in a fit of anger. How have you survived hot and cold weather, hunger and yearning for your parents?’

‘I have lived on the grace of grandpa and grandma Pirigongdŏk.’

Since then, time passed mercilessly like flowing water, and the diseases of the king and the queen got worse.

‘Isn’t there anyone who will preserve the State by getting the medicine water kept by Wizard Musang?’ asked King Ogu.

‘The medicine is not in this world. Who can get it?’ said all subjects.

The king called the six princesses and asked them if they would go, but none of them answered yes.

Lastly the king called the seventh princess and asked, ‘Will you go?’
‘I have not been dependent on the State’s grace, but for the grace that I stayed in the mother’s womb for ten months, I will go’, said the seventh princess.

‘Do you want a bead palanquin or a silk one?’ asked King Ogu.

‘I will walk’, said the seventh princess.

Paridegi put on a man’s clothes, held a stick made of iron, received the signature of the king and the queen, and tied it onto her pants, and said, ‘My dear six sisters! Even if father and mother die at the same time on the same day, please keep them. Wait until I come back.’

After saying goodbye to her parents and the six sisters, she stepped out of the gate of the palace and went a thousand miles at a leap on the stick two thousand miles at another leap on the stick, and three thousand miles at another leap on the stick.

It was a good spring season in March. Apricot and peach blossoms were in full bloom, flagrant flowers and grass blew in the wind, and yellow orioles flew into willow branches. The sun was setting over the mountains in the west and the moon was rising from the east. When she looked afar, Sakyamuni was preaching to his disciples on a golden rock.

The seventh princess approached and bowed nine times. Sakyamuni asked, ‘Are you a human or a spirit? How could you come into this place that even flying birds and crawling insects cannot access?’

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**Fig. 54 Saljaebi Flowers.** Saljaebi means to revive a dead person. These flowers are made of paper, and shamans put them on their heads and dance with them in their hands when a shamanist rite is performed. Shamans believe that Paridegi brought a dead person to life with the flowers.
'I am the king’s son. I’ve lost my way. Would you guide me by your grace?’ said Paridegi.

‘I heard that the king has seven princesses, but never heard he has a prince. When you were abandoned at T’aeyangsŏch’on, I saved your life. By the way, you have come the three thousand miles through plain fields, but how can you travel another three thousand miles through rugged lands?’ asked Sayamuni.

‘I will go as long as I am alive’, said Paridegi.

‘I will give you a silk flower. Bring it with you’, said Sayamuni.

Taking the silk flower, she set out on her journey, and arrived at a sky-high iron castle surrounded by thorny bushes. Remembering what Buddha had
said, the seventh princess shook the silk flower. Then, suddenly, she was moved to the place where Wizard Musang stayed. He was as tall as the sky, his face was as large as a tray, his eyes were as large as a lamp-oil container, his nose was like a bottle, his hand was as large as the lid of a kettle, and his leg was tens of inches long.

Frightened by his horrible and ghastly appearance, the seventh princess retreated and bowed down three times. Then Wizard Musang said, ‘Are you a human or a spirit? How could you come into this place that even flying birds and crawling insects cannot access? And where are you from?’

‘I am the king’s prince and came here to serve my parents’, said Paridegi.

Fig. 56 Princess Pari. She holds a flower in her hand that can revive a dead person. Date unknown.
‘Then do you have money for water? Do you have money for wood?’ asked Wiazrd Musang.

‘I forgot’, said Paridegi.

‘Then, draw water for three years, build fires for three years and cut wood for three years for me’, said Wizard Musang.

Thus, she lived there three years for each, for a total of nine years. Wizard Musang said to her, ‘Your front looks like a woman and your back looks like a king. So you are my well-matched partner. Would you marry me and give birth to seven sons for me?’

‘If I can serve my parents by doing so, I will do so’, said Paridegi.

They married using the heaven and earth as a pavilion, wisteria as a pillow, grass as a mattress, a cloud as a sunshade and the morning star as candlelight. After giving birth to seven sons, the seventh princess said, ‘Love between a husband and a wife is important, but I cannot put off serving my parents any more. I had a dream, in which a silver vessel looked broken and a silver spoon looked bent. It is certain that the king and the queen died at the same time on the same day.’

‘This is the medical water that you have drawn. Bring it in a gold jar. The tree that you have cut revives flesh and bones. Take it with you. On the way, see the sight of the open sea’, said Wizard Musang.

‘I don’t have time to see the sight of water’, said the seventh princess.

‘On the way, see the sight of flowers on the hill behind’, said Wizard Musang.

‘I don’t have time to see the sight of flowers. You had lived alone before, and now how will the eight men live without the wife and the mother?’ said the seventh princess.

‘Why don’t you take the seven children?’ asked Wizard Musang.

‘If it is good for my parents, I will do so’, said the seventh princess.

She had her elder sons walk and carried the youngest on her back. When she was about to leave, Wizard Musang said, ‘May I follow you?’

‘People say, “A wife should follow the husband.” If it is good for my parents, you may do so’, the seventh princess agreed him.

Therefore, one body had left, but nine bodies were going back. On the way, boats were sailing in a row at the Magpie Rapids.

‘Where is the boat going?’ asked the seventh princess.

‘The boat is sailing for heaven, carrying those devoted to their parents, loyal to the king, friendly to brothers, and peaceful with relatives’, replied Wizard Musang.

When they arrived at another place, a boat without a bottom was approaching.

‘What is the boat over there?’ asked the seventh princess.

‘The boat is sailing to hell, carrying those disobedient to their parents, rebellious to the king, unfriendly to brothers, lending in a small measure but repaid in a large measure, giving inedible rice to beggars and accusing others falsely’, replied Wizard Musang.
‘Why can’t I see people on the boat over there?’ asked the seventh princess.
‘The boat is for ghosts who were childless in their previous life’, replied Wizard Musang.

While they were watching boats sailing across the Magpie Rapids, they arrived at the Kingdom of Pulla. When they arrived, the extensive square inside the city was crowded with people.

Fig. 57 A big bier in the state funeral of King Chǒngjo (1776–1800) (from Chǒngjogukjangdogamūigwe). Courtesy of Kyujaggak, Seoul National University.
‘Boys, why are there such a large number of people in the square?’ asked the seventh princess.

‘Everybody except babies in the womb knows that a funeral is being held since the king and the queen died at the same time on the same day. Who are you? Are you a human or a spirit? The seventh princess went a thousand miles away to get medicinal water, but there has been no word from her whether she died or not’, said the boys.

Frightened with the news, the seventh princess and Wizard Musang hid the seven babies under a bush in the forest, and looked over the scene. It was certainly the funeral of the king and the queen. She let down her hair and ran to the people, saying, ‘Put the bier away.’

She removed the lid of the coffin, shook the four corners, and undid the seven knots made outside. She put the breath reviver into their nostrils, the bone reviver into their bones, and the flesh reviver into their flesh, and dropped the medicinal water into their mouths. Then the king and the queen lived again, saying, ‘Have I slept a deep sleep? Have I come out to see the sight of the sea or to see the sight of flowers on the hill behind?’

‘Neither for the sight of water nor for the sight of flowers, as you died at the same time on the same day, have we been having a funeral. Then, the seventh princess brought medicinal water and saved your life’, said a subject.

As the king and the queen returned to the palace, the subjects, three thousand court ladies and all people in the kingdom cheered together. One by one, they asked questions, saying, ‘Lady, tell us the news, what is happening?’

On the way, the seventh princess and Wizard Musang hid in the woods, but they were met by a woman in a green robe. She said, ‘If you are to make the king and the queen live again, you must first remove the false bed and then put the bier away.’

The seventh princess told the king and the queen, ‘We must live again after this. We cannot die any longer.’ The king and the queen were relieved and were now able to live again.

Fig. 58 A female shaman who is drawn on a rock (from rock paintings in Pangudae). Ulju, North Kyongsang Province. Date unknown.
one, the subjects paid their respects to the king and the queen. The king said to the subjects, 'Why does the seventh princess not greet me?'

'The seventh princess committed a sin. She married Wizard Musang and had seven sons from him', said the subjects.

As the king ordered the seventh princess to be let in, the seventh princess paid her respects to the king.

'It is not your sin. It is my sin. Do you want a half of my kingdom? Or any treasure in the city?' said the king.

'The kingdom is not a kingdom for me, and a treasure is not a treasure for me. I haven't enjoyed high living under my parents, so I want to be the ancestor goddess of shamans', said the seventh princess.

As a result, the seventh princess became the ancestor goddess of shamans who guided the dead to the Nether World.

Next, the king ordered that Wizard Musang be let in, but he could not come in because his hat was caught in the southern gate. They had to pull down the sides of the gate to let him in. When he stood on the open court in front of the T’ongmyöng Hall, he was amazingly tall.

'Measure the height of the seventh princess and Wizard Musang using a wooden rule', ordered the king.

'The height of Wizard Musang is thirty-three feet, and that of the princess twenty-eight feet', said the subjects.

'Then you are a well-matched couple. Let Wizard Musang beat the drum thirty-three times and the seventh princess twenty-eight times', said the king.

The king granted them something to eat and wear forever. Wizard Musang

Fig. 59 A goddess who is drawn on a rock (from rock paintings on Mount Helan, Mongol). Date unknown.
was treated to food removed from a memorial service held by relatives as a sign of mourning when the bier was carried out. Sakyamuni received all ritual food offered as people prayed for repose of their ancestors’ souls. Old Mrs Pirigongdŏk received linens hung on the thorny gates as shamanic rites for the deceased were performed, and old Mr Pirigongdŏk received all ritual food offered as people weeded their ancestor’s graves. And the seven sons received money offered to a Buddhist temple.

The Original Title: Parigongju (Princess Pari)
NOTES

1 By the legend, two love-stars meet at the seventh of July.
2 ‘Pari’ is the stem of ‘Parita’ that means ‘abandon’ in old Korean, but ‘Pŏrita’ in modern Korean.

Fig. 61 Chakdudaesin. This god is worshipped in the shamanist rite for a shaman-applicant which is considered as an entry process for an apprentice to be recognized as a true shaman. To demonstrate oneself as a true gifted shaman, one must dance on sharp blades while either chanting Mukyŏng (shaman’s spell book) or playing with sacred swords. Only shamans can perform this act. It is not possible for the general public to dance on the top of blades. We can see in this painting that the straw cutter blades are put on the top of rice-cake steamers and a shaman dressed in a general’s uniform is holding sacred swords in his hands, but the style of the costume is not common.

Courtesy of Kahoe Museum. Unknown age.
A man named Ch’ŏnhamunjang and a woman named Chihamunjang lived in the country of Imjöngguk. Although the couple anxiously wanted their own child, their efforts always fell short.

One day, a monk who lived at Mount Hwanggŭm in the land of Todan came to the couple and asked for an offering for the temple.

‘Most monks can read the I Ching to predict the future. Why don’t you tell us our future?’ asked the couple.

At this, the monk grasped the couple’s divination sign and read their fortune from the I Ching.

‘You will not have any children in your lifetime. However, this may change if you provide one hundred days of offerings for our temple’, said the monk.

Shortly after one hundred days of offerings, the couple dreamed about having a drink with cooked greens. Ch’ŏnhamunjang called the dream interpreter because they were certain that the dream foretold a conception.

‘You will have a girl, since the food that you ate in your dream was female’, said the dream interpreter.

As predicted by the monk and the dream interpreter, Chihamunjang became pregnant and gave birth to a baby girl as beautiful as the celestial nymphs who lived in the mystic palace on the moon.

‘My Lord, what would you call this baby girl?’ asked Chihamunjang.

‘Maid Nŭjindŏkjŏng, why don’t you go out to the front yard and look at the mountain? Can you tell me the season and how it looks?’ ordered Ch’ŏnhamunjang.

‘It’s the fall season and I see autumn colours all over the mountain’, said the maid.

‘Then, she shall be named Nogadan’ungjajimyŏng’, said Ch’ŏnhamunjang.

It was thus that the baby girl was named Nogadan’ungjajimyŏng.

When Nogadan’ungjajimyŏng turned fifteen, a deputy from the Heavens delivered a letter to Ch’ŏnhamunjang from the King of Heaven. In the letter, the King of Heaven offered him the chance to lead an official life in Heaven. Although Ch’ŏnhamunjang and his wife were happy to accept the offer, they were concerned about their daughter’s safety.

After much thought, the Ch’ŏnhamunjang couple built a house with
seventy-eight rooms that each had two doors. They decided to confine their daughter to her room and instructed Maid Nŭjinđokjong, ‘We will set you free if you take good care of her until we return after finishing our official service. Provide food and clothes through the window.’

Although Maid Nŭjinđokjong promised to do as instructed, Ch’ŏnhamunjang and his wife did not trust the maid’s words. After the couple locked all seventy-eight rooms, imprinted the father’s fingerprint on locks locked by the father and the mother’s fingerprint on locks locked by the mother, they journeyed to Heaven to lead an official life. Maid Nŭjinđokjong raised the girl as instructed and provided food and clothing through a hole.

There were three thousand scholars at Mount Hwanggūm in the land of Todan and they enjoyed the moonscape of bright moon light on clear nights. ‘That moon is lovely, but not as lovely as Lady Nogadan’ungjajimyŏng!’ As the head monk heard the deep sorrowful sounds from his pupils, he proposed a challenge, ‘I will give three thousand nyang to anyone who can get an offering from her.’ But no one accepted the challenge, since all knew that the girl was locked in a very secure place.

At this time Saint Chuja came forward and said, ‘If you will keep your word, I shall go.’ The head monk promised Saint Chuja he would honour the challenge, so Saint Chuja went directly to the county of Imjŏngguk and headed for the Ch’ŏnhamunjang’s residence.

‘I have come to save this girl from dying prematurely. You must provide an offering to the Buddha for her long life’, said Saint Chuja.
After Maid Nūjindŏkjong heard the surprise news from the Saint, she put rice in a big brass jar and gave it to him. However, he insisted that he would only accept an offering from Nogadan’ungjajimyŏng, refusing donations from the maid.

‘The lady cannot come out now because she is confined in a secure room with seventy-eight locks imprinted with her parents’ fingerprints’, said the maid.

Saint Chuja assured her that he could open the door, so Nogadan’ungjajimyŏng decided to let him. Saint Chuja waved his handbell three times and the ground shook violently and the door swung open by itself.

Soon after, Nogadan’ungjajimyŏng came out from the room to give an offering to the Saint, wearing a scarf to hide her face. The Saint bit one part of the knapsack and grabbed the other part of his knapsack in one hand to put in the rice offering.

Noticing the monk’s odd posture, Nogadan’ungjajimyŏng asked the Saint, ‘Why do you use your teeth instead of your other hand?’

‘Oh, that! My other hand is in the Heavenly Palace counting the Dansuyukgap and the Ohhaengp’algwae’, said the Saint.

‘Poor Saint’, said Nogadan’ungjajimyŏng as he was emptying out the offering. The Saint pulled his hand out of his pocket and rubbed her forehead three times on the right side and three times on the left. She was shocked by his unexpected behaviour and scolded him for his rudeness.

‘My Lady, please don’t find fault in my acts. In one hundred days, it will come time for you to look for me. When that time comes, come to Mount Hwanggŭm with these items.’ Saint Chuja cut a part from the headgear and the robe that he was wearing, gave them to Nogadan’ungjajimyŏng, and left the house in hurry.

Nogadan’ungjajimyŏng went back to her room and locked the door again. However, after three months, strange symptoms started to appear. She lost her appetite, became pale, and her stomach started bulging out. Her symptoms got worse day after day. Finally, Maid Nūjindŏkjong sent a letter to her parents in the Heavens to return home at once due to their daughter’s critical condition.

‘We shouldn’t worry about our career in the Heavens. We should return home quickly to see our precious child before it’s too late’, Chihamunjang said Ch’ŏnhamunjang.

Ch’ŏnhamunjang and his wife resigned from their positions and returned home. As soon as they arrived at the main hall, they called in their daughter. Nogadan’ungjajimyŏng came out wrapped in a white blanket and greeted her parents. However, she could barely support herself.

‘What happened to your health?’ asked Ch’ŏnhamunjang.

‘Maybe I got sick because I missed you so much. Maybe I got sick because I was unable to see the sun and the moon’, said Nogadan’ungjajimyŏng.

‘It is sad. Why not go to your mother for comfort?’ said Ch’ŏnhamunjang.

As she approached her mother, her mother noticed the physical changes in
her daughter. Her mother asked her to come closer, opened her dress, saw the darkened nipples and fully developed seventy-eight lacteal glands, and said, ‘For heaven’s sake, this is unthinkable for a high-class family. A wind blew into the vulva.’ Since then, people have said, ‘a wind blew into the vulva’, when an unmarried girl becomes pregnant.

Ch’ŏnhamunjang was furious to hear that his daughter was pregnant. He decided to bring in a straw cutter to execute his daughter. However, Maid Nūjinđŏkjŏng begged him to spare the lady’s life, and requested him to punish her instead. After pondering, he spoke, ‘Although both of you deserve to die, I will spare your pitiful lives. However, I am very ashamed for what you’ve done. Since I have saved your lives today, leave my house at once. Go far away where no one from our family will see you.’

Nogadanp’ungajimyŏng and the maid Nūjinđŏkjŏng packed their belongings while crying. As they were about to leave the house for their unknown journey, Ch’ŏnhamunjang and his wife gave their daughter a black cow and a golden folding fan. They told her that the black cow was for carrying possessions and the golden folding fan was for opening roadblocks.

And so, three females left on a journey; the black cow, maid Nūjinđŏkjŏng and Nogadanp’ungajimyŏng. The first thing that they encountered was a strange looking bridge. The bridge appeared to be full of sharp blades pointing upward.

‘Maid Nūjinđŏkjŏng, who made the bridge look full of upward pointing sharp blades?’ asked Nogadanp’ungajimyŏng.

‘My lady, it was your parents’ hearts that turned the bridge into sharp blades when they were about to execute us’, replied the maid.

After they crossed the sharp bladed bridge, they come across the sorrowful heart bridge.

‘Maid Nūjinđŏkjŏng, who made the bridge look like a sorrowful heart?’ Nogadanp’ungajimyŏng asked.

‘My lady, it was your parents’ feelings that turned the bridge into a sorrowful heart when they decided to expel us’, replied the maid.

After they crossed the sorrowful heart bridge, this time they met the betrayed heart bridge.

‘Maid Nūjinđŏkjŏng, who made the bridge look like a betrayed heart?’ Nogadanp’ungajimyŏng asked.

‘My lady, it was your heart that turned the bridge into a betrayed heart when you betrayed your parents’, replied the maid.

After they went over the betrayed heart bridge, they came to a righteous heart bridge.

‘Can you tell me the story of this bridge?’ Nogadanp’ungajimyŏng asked.

‘My lady, your parents’ hearts turned the bridge into a righteous heart bridge because they acted with a righteous heart when they gave you a golden fan before expelling you’, said the maid.

After they crossed the righteous heart bridge, they saw a stream flowing uphill.
‘Why does this stream run backward? Shouldn’t water be flowing from higher ground to lower ground?’ Nogadanp’ungajimyǒng asked.

‘Offspring are meant to depart before their parents, not the other way around. But you have acted against the law of nature. My lady, why don’t we climb over the mountain to feel a cooling breeze? I will braid your hair’, replied the maid.

After they climbed to the high peak of the hill, maid Nǔjǐndǒkjǒng braided the lady’s hair at the mountain summit. She loosened three braids and made them into six braids. Then she rolled and tied them up in the Kǒnji style. The Kǒnji Hill in Daejǒng gets its name from this story.

The two of them then descended Kǒnji Hill and continued their journey. They passed over Chosim Bridge in Daejǒng village, and eventually arrived at the Blue Sea. Nogadanp’ungajimyǒng laid down her golden folding fan and made a bridge so that they could go across the sea. After they crossed from the Blue Sea, however, they saw the Black Sea blocking their way. This time, Nogadanp’ungajimyǒng was unable to make a bridge because she had already used her golden folding fan. She and her maid wept out loud, but after a while they fell fast asleep.

Time passed after they fell asleep. A white puppy wet its tail and wagged it at Nogadanp’ungajimyǒng’s face. Nogadanp’ungajimyǒng awoke from her sleep and saw the white puppy. The white puppy said, ‘My lady, don’t you remember me? You loved me dearly when we were together in the county of Imjǒnk. When I died from my illness, you laid me to rest by the West Sea. After that I became the Turtle Messenger of the Dragon King’s Palace. I don’t mind carrying your black cow on my back. I can swim thousands of miles.’ With help from the white puppy, Nogadanp’ungajimyǒng was able to go across the Black Sea.

They passed many places and eventually arrived at a far away temple. Maid Nǔjǐndǒkjǒng said, ‘Lady, look at the temple entrance. There are a partially cut monk’s headgear and robe hanging on the entrance.’ Nogadanp’ungajimyǒng was very happy to see them. She ran into the temple and showed her pieces. Saint Chuja compared them with his headgear and robe and saw they were a perfect match. However, Saint Chuja coldly responded, ‘You must come from the mortal world looking for me. If you have come here to see me, peel off two jars full of sweet rice grains with your fingernails and offer them to the Buddha. I will see you after that.’

Nogadanp’ungajimyǒng was stunned to receive such an impossible task to do and wept as she peeled off sweet rice grains. However, peeling off sweet rice grains with one’s hands was not an easy task. Nogadanp’ungajimyǒng was quickly exhausted and fell asleep. She woke to loud chirping noises and was surprised to see Chǒnwang Birds eating the sweet rice grains. ‘Oh, what merciless birds!’ She waved and chased off the birds. However, when the birds fanned their wings as they flew away, she saw that all of the grains were peeled and separated from their shells. She was happy to see the result and she offered them to the Buddha.
Saint Chuja was pleased by this and said, ‘You must have come from the mortal world looking for me. Monks do not live like normal married couples. Therefore, I will lay out a winding road so you can live in Puldo Land.’

While Nogadanp’ungajimyŏng was living in Puldo Land, she delivered her first son, Ch’ogongi, from her shin on the eighth day of September. She bore the second son, Igongi, from her left armpit on the eighteenth day of September. Finally, she bore the third son, Shamgongi, from her breast.

Because of poverty, the three brothers were not able to go school until they turned eight years of age. One day, they decided to go into the Samch’ŏn village school where three thousand scholars were studying, and asked the scholars to teach them how to write. As payment, they suggested to the teacher that the first son could deliver inkstone water for the three thousand scholars, the second son could empty the ashtrays and clean up the teacher’s room, and the last son could heat the teacher’s room. When their duties were completed, they gathered around the furnace and flattened out the ashes with their hands to study the Thousand-Character Text. The three thousand scholars nicknamed them the ‘Three Chaetbugi Brothers’ because they saw three brothers learning words by flattening ashes.

The three thousand scholars were about to go to Seoul for the civil service examination when the three brothers were fifteen years old. Despite their mother’s objection that they did not have proper attire or money, the three brothers wanted to go to the examination site if only as porters for the three thousand scholars. However, the three thousand scholars envied the three brothers’ talents. Naturally, they wanted to leave the three brothers behind. So they said, ‘We must leave the Chaetbugi brothers behind us at all cost. If we take them with us, we will certainly fail the examination. Let us make a trap to leave them behind.’

The three thousand scholars hatched a plan and spoke to the Chaetbugi brothers, ‘It seems that you three do not even have travelling expenses. If you pick three thousand pears from the pear tree inside Bae Chwasu’s house, each of us will have one and give you three thousand nyangs. Why don’t you pick three thousand pears?’ Accepting the offer of the three thousand scholars, the three brothers attempted to climb up the pear tree, but found it was too high to climb. The three thousand scholars built a human ladder by standing on each other’s shoulders to help the three brothers climb the tree. While the three brothers were busy picking pears, the three thousand scholars fled to Seoul in a hurry. So, the three brothers found themselves stuck in a pear tree. They started to cry in the pear tree because they could no longer climb up or down from the tree with three thousand pears inside their trouser legs.

In the meantime, Bae Chwasu dreamed that a blue dragon, a brown dragon and a white dragon were caught in his pear tree. He awakened and went straight to the pear tree where he saw the three young men.

‘Get down from the tree, now! Untie your ankle bands and drop all the pears on the ground and get down!’ Bae Chwasu yelled.
‘This may be our demise. We may be parted from our poor mother never to see her again’, the three brothers said to themselves and fearfully climbed down from the pear tree.

Bae Chwasu brought the three brothers to his house and asked their reason for climbing his pear tree. After hearing the story from the three brothers, he knew that these young men could pass the examination. He offered them a well-prepared dinner and gave ten nyangs to each for travel expenses to the examination.

The Chaetbugi brothers went to Seoul and tried to buy paper, a pen and an inkstone. However, they found they could buy none. They tried to enter the examination site, but they found that all the gates were locked. Once the three thousand scholars heard that the three brothers had come down from the pear tree, they bought out all the paper, all the pens and all the inkstones from the merchants, and bribed the gatekeepers to block the three brothers from entering the examination site.

Fig. 63 An answer sheet for the liberal arts exam for the civil service examination in the fourth year of the King Ch’oljong period (1853). Shown in ‘次上 ch’asang, means the second’ on the right is the score written by the test director.

Courtesy of Ch’ŏnbuk University Museum.
However, the three brothers’ landlady Grandma Baekju heard this story and felt pity for three brothers. She generously gave them paper, pens and inkstones. Having all the necessary equipment for the examination, Ch’ogongi wrote Ch’önjihonhap,7 Igongi wrote Ch’önjigaebýok8 and Samgongi wrote Samgyônggaemun.9 They ran to the examination site, attached their answer sheets to small stones, and threw them in front of the examination director from outside. After checking that the head-director had picked up their answer sheets, they waited for their results in a warm sunny place. The head messenger rushed to the three brothers soon after and said, ‘The director is calling for you. You should hurry inside.’

The three brothers were happy to get inside the examination site and found out that Ch’ogongi won first place all around, Igongi won first place in literature and Samgongi won district first place. The director congratulated the three brothers and gave them silk hats, official uniforms, a Blue Plaque, a Red Plaque and horses granted by the king. After properly attiring themselves, the three brothers returned to Grandma Baekju’s house with pride.

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**Fig. 64** A Red Plaque that proved the national test on literature had been passed. This certificate showed that Chang Yuk, a Sŏnggyungwan student, passed the national test on literature in the nineteenth year of King Chŏngjong period (1524). Courtesy of Chŏnbuk University Museum.
The three thousand scholars were mad when they heard the news and planned to harm three brothers. They went to the director and contested the result, ‘Why did you let the monk’s sons pass the examination but let all three thousand scholars fail?’

‘How do you know those three brothers are offspring of a monk?’ asked the director.

‘Why don’t you serve them with a Toim Table? Monks do not drink wine or eat meat. That should be enough to identify their lineage’, said the three thousand scholars.

The director provided the Toim Table and the three brothers did not eat as expected. Confirming that the three brothers were the children of a monk, the director revoked the test results because monks were considered low-class people.

‘The three Chaetbugi brothers failed on the examination!’ ordered the director.

Fig. 65 A Red Plaque that proved the national test on military art had been passed. This certificate showed that Cho Sŏgyŏng, a military officer during the King Sejong and King Sejo periods, passed the national test on military art. Courtesy of a private collection.
Then the director added an archery test in order to favour the three thousand scholars in the examination and said, ‘If you can hit the Yŏnch’u Gate with your arrow, you will qualify as the winner of the examination.’

The three thousand scholars tried their best, but no one could hit the target. Now, it was the three brothers’ turn. Ch’ogongi’s arrow hit the Yŏnch’u Gate so hard that it shook violently, Igongi’s arrow hit it so hard that it opened the gate, Samgongi’s arrow hit it so hard that the Yŏnch’u Gate fell down.

‘These are heavenly gifted people. I redeclare them winners of the examination. Give Ch’ogongi a Blue Sunshade, Igongi a Black Sunshade and Samgongi a White Sunshade. Also give them a decorative flower, official clerks and servants, dancers, and acrobatic tumblers.’

The three thousand scholars plotted again to harm the three brothers. They came before the brothers and lured away the maid Nu’njindo. They intimated that they would set her free if she helped with their scheme. Then they tied Nokadan’ungajimyŏng’s neck with a silk string and put her deep within a palace. Maid Nu’njindo let down her hair, tied her head with straws as if she was in a period of mourning, and started moaning.

As the three brothers’ were marching into town with their entourage, maid Nu’njindo came forward and said, ‘My lords, what kind of happiness would winning the examination bring you if your mother were already dead and temporarily buried?’ When the three brothers heard of their mother’s death, they let all the clerks and servants, dancers and acrobatic tumblers return to their organizations. Because they thought that first place in the civil service examination was useless after their mother’s death, they took off their gaiters, put on hempen hoods, headed for their mother’s burial site and moaned. However, they found an empty grave there.

Now the three brothers fully realized the three thousand scholars’ wicked plot. They went to their grandfather Ch’ŏnhamunjang and sought advice before heading out to search for their mother. Their grandfather greeted them, spreading out a mat on which to sit. Today, people customarily spread a mat called Shinjari when greeting a shaman in honour of this story.

‘Can you help us to find our mother’s whereabouts?’ asked the three brothers.

‘Why don’t you go to Todan Land in Mount Hwanggŭm and ask Saint Chuja? He should be able to answer your question for he is your father’, said the grandfather.

The three brothers went quickly to Todan Land in Mount Hwanggŭm and met their father, Saint Chuja who said, ‘If you want to meet your mother, you should abandon your secular lives.’

‘We will follow your orders’, said the three brothers.

Saint Chuja asked the triplets again, ‘Oh, my poor babies, what was the first thing you saw on the way here?’

‘We saw the heaven’, said the three brothers.

‘What was the second thing that you guys saw?’ asked Saint Chuja.
**Fig. 66** Naknamhŏnbangbang-do. A part of Hwasŏngnŭnghaengdo (a picture of the Hwasŏng Temporary Palace). It describes a scene for announcing and awarding winners of the national test at Naknamhŏn in the Hwasŏng Temporary Palace when Chŏngjo visited Hwasŏng with his queen, Hyekyŏnggung Hong, in 1795. Five literature winners and fifty-six military art winners were standing in a row with Ŭsahwa (a decorated flower) on their hats. A Red Plaque, Ŭsahwa, wine and appetizers were on the table below the stone stairs. King Chŏngjo’s figure is not found in this picture because painters deliberately did not depict figures for a king or a prince during the Chosŏn dynasty. Courtesy of Hoam Art Museum.
‘We saw the earth’, said said the three brothers.
‘What was the third thing that you guys saw?’ asked Saint Chuja.
‘We saw the gate in the alley’, said the three brothers.
Saint Chuja inscribed a word ‘Ch’ŏnjimun’ on a round piece of brass and made a shaman’s tool for them. Then he asked questions to the triplets again, ‘My first son, what did you like the most after you went through the civil service examination?’
‘I liked the Toim Table’, said Ch’ogongi. ‘First son, you will receive the Ch’ogamjae table spread with ritual food’, said Saint Chuja.
‘My second son, what did you like the most after you went through the civil service examination?’ asked Saint Chuja.
‘I liked a one-horse palanquin, a two-horse palanquin, and official clerks and servants’, said Igongi. ‘Second son, you will receive the Ch’osinmaji table spread with ritual food’, said Saint Chuja.
‘My youngest son, what did you like the most after you went through the civil service examination?’ asked Saint Chuja.
‘I liked the blue military uniform made of silk, hat strings decorated with amber and the official uniform’, said Samgongi. ‘Youngest son, you will receive the Siwangmaji table spread with ritual food’, said Saint Chuja.
Their father taught them many ritual practices and asked them to be shamans instead of government officials. He assured them that they would be much happier being shamans than living in luxury as bureaucrats.
Finally, Saint Chuja gave them a clue to find their mother; ‘Your mother is imprisoned deep in the Samch’ŏnjesŏk Palace. If you continuously beat an hourglass-shaped drum made of naturally died horse’s skin, you should be able to meet your mother.’
In order to make the hourglass-shaped drum, the three brothers needed help from Nosamae Nŏ-Toryŏng in Puldo Land. The three brothers went to Puldo Land to become god-brothers with Nŏ-Toryŏng. By ceremonially going inside through first the left leg and then the right leg of Nŏ-Toryŏng’s mother’s underwear, they were symbolically bonded as if they had been born from the same mother’s womb. Now, the newly-linked four brothers cut down an empress tree in the deep forest, made an hourglass-shaped drum with horse’s skin and entered into the Shamch’ŏnjesŏk Palace.
‘Poor mother, please come out if you are imprisoned in the deep palace’, the four brothers prayed.
They continuously beat the drum for fourteen days and nights. Then officials in the Shamch’ŏnjesŏk Palace finally investigated the noise and as a result, Nogadan’ungajimyŏng, the mother of the three brothers, was released. The three brothers built a mansion for their mother, and devoted themselves to her. They selected Nosamae Nŏ-Toryŏng to keep the musical instruments, including the drum. Eventually, Nŏ-Toryŏng became the god of all musical instruments used by shamans.
Then the three brothers invited a blacksmith from the east sea and asked him to make a few tools. He made a handbell with white-sand moulding, and
then he made tools used for fortune-telling. Finally, he made a seventy-five foot long sword.\textsuperscript{20} He did this because while a five-foot sword is sufficient for killing low-class people enemies, and a thirty-five foot sword is sufficient for killing middle-class people enemies, a seventy-five foot sword is required for killing high-class enemies.\textsuperscript{21} The three brothers took bloody vengeance. With a slash of their sword, they swept off the heads of the three thousand scholars. Then they went to the underworld and became the Three Kings there.\textsuperscript{22}
Around the same time period, Saint Yukgwan saw Minister Yu’s daughter by chance as he passed by the lower village. When he saw her, he felt that the girl should abandon the secular life and gave her six *p’uns*. She played with the coins for a while, but decided to hide them under the big stone placed in front of the entrance because she was afraid of a scolding from her parents. After this, the girl was deathly ill at ages seven, seventeen, twenty-seven, fifty-seven and sixty-seven. In the year she would turn seventy-seven, she thought hard about the reason for her illness. Finally, she thought about the coins that she hid under the big stone and repossessed them. All of sudden, not only did she recover her health, but also gained the ability of foresight.

One day, Minister Yu’s daughter was staying at her house. Suddenly, she felt that Chabu Changja’s only daughter was dying. So she headed into his house. When she arrived at the house, people had already tied the daughter
with seven knots and were grieving over her death. Minister Yu’s daughter asked, ‘Will you let me feel her pulse?’

‘What good is it, checking the pulse of a dead person?’ said Chabu Changja.

‘I still insist,’ said Minister Yu’s daughter.

After Minister Yu’s daughter checked the pulse of the Chabu Changja’s only daughter, she said to Chabu Changja, ‘Your daughter is cursed by the Three Kings. If you let me perform a life-reviving ritual, I may be able to save her life.’

‘Can you revitalize my daughter?’ asked Chabu Changja.

Minister Yu’s daughter had no clue how to perform a life-reviving ritual because she had never before performed any rituals. Chabu Changja pushed her to answer quickly, so Minister Yu’s daughter had to answer under pressure and said, ‘Let’s wait and see after the ritual.’ This is the reason that today’s shamans do not guarantee the outcome of a ritual, because Minister Yu’s daughter did not promise that Chabu Changja’s daughter’s life would be restored after the life-reviving ritual. If Minister Yu’s daughter had guaranteed the outcome, then today’s shamans would know all the secrets of heaven and earth.

When Minister Yu’s daughter burned the prayer paper, a small visible vital sign appeared on Chabu Changja’s daughter’s face.

‘She will be completely restored to health if you allow me to perform the shamanistic rite for the dead for fourteen days,’ said Minister Yu’s daughter.

Because Minister Yu’s daughter did not have proper ritual instruments, she prayed for the Three Kings to grant her ritual instruments to successfully perform the shamanistic rite. So the Three Kings gave her musical instruments, an hourglass-shaped drum, and a gong and other ritual tools like a handbell and a sword from Nōsamae Nō-Toryōng. Minister Yu’s daughter was the first person to perform a formal ritual with these instruments. This is the story of the first shaman and the first ritual practice that is handed down even today.

The Original Title: Ch’ogongbon’uri (Origin Myth of Ch’ogong, the Ancestor Gods of Shamen)
The Source: Hyŏn Yongjuin, Chejudo Musok Charyo Sajo (Encyclopedia of Shamen’s Materials on Cheju Island), Seoul: Singu Munhwasa, 1980

NOTES

1 Mount Hwanggūm: ‘hwanggūm’ literally means gold.
2 ‘Tansu’ means one hand and ‘Yukgap’ means a combination of sixty cycles. That is, ‘Tansuyukgap’ is telling people’s fortunes by using one hand. ‘Ohaengp’algwae’ means eight prophecy signs with respect to the five universal elements.
3 Könji style: braided hair.
Chosim Bridge: ‘chosim’ means ‘careful’.
Chwasu: the chief of the self-governing body, Hwangch’ông, in the Chosŏn dynasty of Korea.
Nyang: an old Korean monetary unit.
Chŏnjihonhap: 天地混合. It means a mixed state between heaven and earth.
Chŏnjigaebyŏk: 天地開闢. It means the beginning of the world, the creation of Heaven and Earth.
Shamgyŏnggaemun: 三更開門. It means opening one of eight gates at 11 p.m. to 1 a.m.
Toim Table: a name for greeting dinners for newly-appointed authorities arriving in their rural districts. It is used instead to test the three Chaetbugi brothers in this story.
Yŏnch’u Gate: it was located at the Kyŏngbok Palace in Chosŏn Dynasty of Korea.
This flower, Ŭsahwa, was placed on a hat granted by a king
Generally a successful candidate for the civil service examination gave a feast for his teacher, relatives and superiors for three days. At this time, clowns who could dance well and Saryŏng who could walk the tightrope well were required.
This phrase means they should become shamans.
This shaman’s tool, Chŏnmun, is used for fortune-telling. It is one of Sanp’an that has two elements; the Chŏnmun and the Sangjan. The word Ch’ŏnjijoilwŏl (heaven, earth, sun and moon, that is, 天地日月) is inscribed in the surface of the Sangjan.
Ch’ogamjae: the first one of all shamanistic rites on Cheju Island. In this rite, a shaman prays for eighteen thousand gods to come to the very place where he is performing.
Ch’osinmaji: it follows Ch’ogamjae. This rite is performed for gods missing by mistake in the Ch’ogamjae.
Siwangmaji: it is performed for inviting the Siwangs, the ten kings of the underworld. This rite has two reasons for performance; one is to pray for the Siwangs to help a patient recover from illness, the other is for the Siwangs to convey a dead person safely to the underworld.
This sword is called Sink’al. Literally it means a god-sword that is one element of Sammyŏngdu. The Shammyŏngdu consists of a handbell, a Sangjan and a Sink’al.
This class of people was called Yangban in the Chosŏn dynasty of Korea.
The Three Kings are called the Sam (three) Siwang. Only the three sons of Nogadanp’ungajimyŏng are called the Sam Siwang among ten Siwangs in the underworld. In this context, this phrase seems to describe the origin of the shaman’s god.
P’un: a Korean penny used in old times.
This big stone is called Nodutdol. It is used to assist in mounting and dismounting a horse.
This rite is called Chŏnsaenamkut.
CHAPTER 15

If You Are a Great Shaman, Do You Possess the Gift of Miracles?

Once upon a time, Lee, magistrate, arrived at his new post on Cheju Island. He then destroyed five hundred shrines and five hundred temples.

There was a last shrine where the last daughter of the King of Heaven who settled under the tree which had lived for ten thousand years was worshipped. She was exiled from Heaven and was living there helping people. Lastly, Magistrate Lee tried to destroy this shrine.

‘Call the shaman who is worshipping at this shrine’, ordered Magistrate Lee.

A great shaman called Ko Manho had been worshipping at the shrine at that time. He was so virtuous that he knew everything about what happened in the world of the dead when he closed his eyes, and what happened in this

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Fig. 70 The document of the official announcement showing Lee Hyōngsang’s assignment as the magistrate on Cheju Island in 1702. After he arrived on Cheju Island, he burned 129 shamanist shrines and oppressed Buddhism under the good name of getting rid of all superstitions, and exhorted Confucianism, a state religion in those days.
world when he opened his eyes. Therefore, Magistrate Lee called the great shaman Ko.

When the great shaman was prone in front of the office, the governor asked, ‘Are you great shaman Ko?’

‘Yes’, said the great shaman.

‘If you are the great shaman, do miracles occur in your shrine?’ asked Magistrate Lee.

‘Yes, miracles do occur in my shrine’, said the great shaman.

‘Then, show me a miracle’, ordered Magistrate Lee.

‘Yes, I will show you a miracle’, replied the great shaman.

After the great shaman had made a promise to Magistrate Lee, he reflected on the promise on his way to his home. ‘Is he going to kill me with this request?’ The great shaman was filled with worries and anxieties.

After sending the great shaman Ko back, Magistrate Lee called a monk and asked the same questions, ‘Do miracles occur in your temple?’

‘Yes, there are the miracles of the Buddha’, replied the monk.

‘Then, show me a miracle of the Buddha’, ordered Magistrate Lee.

‘Yes, I will do what you ordered’, said the monk.

Eventually, on a certain date, Magistrate Lee laid down a statue of the Buddha and ordered the monk to pray to the Buddha to make the statue stand up. However, the monk failed to show a miracle.

When Magistrate Lee was about to order the great shaman Ko to do something else, he spotted the flags stuck on the roof of the great shaman’s shrine, and asked, ‘Can you make the flags stuck on the roof of your shrine walk to this place?’

‘Yes, I can. However, before I do that, I’d like to say a word’, said the great shaman.

‘What is it?’ asked Magistrate Lee.

‘I cannot pray alone for that. Please give me seven more days to prepare with devotion’, said the great shaman.

‘I see’, said Magistrate Lee.

After returning home, the great shaman prayed to the goddess who he had been worshipping in his shrine for six days. And on the seventh day, he called several shamans to help him at the yard of the government office, and prayed for his goddess with music and song.

A few hours passed in a shamanic ceremony. Even though the flags did not walk to the yard of the office, Heaven and Earth were shaken as in an earthquake. And suddenly, all the leaves and the branches of the ten-thousand-year-tree were shaken as if they were in a roaring wind, and made the sound of a whirlwind. All the flags began to fall down from between Heaven and Earth.

Magistrate Lee clapped his hands and said, ‘I destroyed and burnt five hundred shrines and temples, but there is no doubt that miracles do occur at this shrine.’ Magistrate Lee left Cheju Island without destroying the shrine.

As a result, the shrine has been preserved to this day.
DO YOU POSSESS THE GIFT OF MIRACLES?

The Original Title: Ko Taejangbon'uri (Origin Myth of Ko Taejang)
MYTHS ABOUT DISEASE
Fig. 71 Hogu Pyŏlsŏng and two servants: Koreans called smallpox Sonnim, Sonnimmama, Pyŏlsang, Pyŏlsangae or Pyŏlsangmama. They also called it Hogu (meaning ‘houses and inhabitants’) because they believed that every household would have some patients if one patient were found in a village. Koreans believed that smallpox came from Kangnam, China, and also called it Hokwi (meaning ‘north barbarian ghosts’). Once a smallpox epidemic was triggered in a village, the village people sincerely prepared for a shamanistic rite to calm down the Sonnim Gods, hoping for an early retreat. Date unknown.
In ancient times, it was believed that every child had three fathers: the birth father, Samsinjewang and Sonnim. No matter how well formed and beautiful was the child produced by Samsinjewang, a bad encounter with Sonnim could leave a young one pockmarked, hare-lipped or lame.

The Sonnim Gods of the country of the great king in the southland belonged to this frightful and capricious group. In the country of the great king in the southland, people ate barnyard millet, rotten greens and maggots on skewers. Meanwhile, in our land, high-quality rice steamed with cherry-sized red beans, vegetable marinades of bracken, ton plants, egg plant, squash and freshly-slaughtered beef, and drank the best wines of sweet rice, flowers, chrysanthemums, grapes and other fruits. Hearing that ours was a region of exceptional people, good rice and flourishing culture, the Sonnim Gods decided to venture out to survey our land.

At first, all fifty-three Sonnim set out. But when they realized that their homeland would be left empty, all but three turned back. At the vanguard was the honoured Sakyamuni Sonnim with his small peaked straw hat, monk’s robe, and 108-bead necklace and a matching bracelet, looking like a Buddhist monk chanting a prayer. Following him on a horse was the learned Musin Sonnim, in formal cap and gown, carrying a black book and a big writing brush with which he marked his victim. The children destined to survive smallpox were dotted with black, the ones to suffer greatly were indicated in red, and the ones not to survive were given special marks. Kaksi Sonnim was the last of the three. She had a lovely face and was handsomely robed with flower patterned leather slippers and rode an ornamented palanquin.

Escorted by Military Sonnim, the three Sonnim arrived at Apnok River, where they faced the dilemma of how to cross to the other side without a boat. A boat made of mud would not work, since it would dissolve in the water. A wooden vessel would not do, since its bottom would rot. A boat of metal would not suffice, since there might be magnets to pull the boat down. Setting on a stone vessel, the three Sonnim started their crossing – only to have to abort it when the boat capsized in heavy winds and waves.

They now had no choice but to ask a nearby boatman for help, 'Boatman! We are none other than the Sonnim Gods of the state of the great king in the southland. We have heard of the exceptional people, food and culture of this land and have come to see them for ourselves. But since our boat has
capsized, we have had to turn back. Will you lend us one of your vessels in exchange for excellent silver, rich fields and rolls of silk?

The boatman replied, ‘Sonnim, there were once many vessels in our land. But all were destroyed during the Japanese invasion of 1592, leaving us but one. This boat is now used to deliver produce to the government and cannot be lent to you.’

The three Sonnim pleaded one last time but to no avail – until the boatman caught a glimpse of Kaksi. He was instantly smitten and asked, ‘Sonnim, I do not care much for riches, but I will lend you the boat if you grant me one night with this Kaksi.’

At the boatman’s audacity, Kaksi became outraged and marched straight back along the road from which they had come.

Time passed quickly and nine years later even the face of the once beautiful Kaksi began to lose its allure.

One day, Kaksi thought, ‘I cannot accept that we aborted our trip because of one boatman. This is intolerable.’

With the other two Sonnim, she then returned to the river, cut the boatman’s throat with a silver knife, and threw his body into the water. The three Sonnim dragged out the boatman’s seven sons and proceeded to destroy them one by one with smallpox.

After the sixth son was killed, the boatman’s widow began to offer prayers to the vengeful gods, with water drawn carefully from a well at daybreak, in hope of mollifying their wrath. ‘Sonnim, Sonnim, the famed gods of the state of the great king in the southland. If you consider the misdeeds of my late husband, indeed it is fitting that you take not only the lives of my son, but my own as well. Even a bed of sand turns out some grains, even a cheap rubber slipper has its match. How can you leave a woman without a son to continue the family line? ‘Take pity on my decaying body and spare the life of my youngest son, I beg of you!’

‘My rage cannot be appeased with the deaths of all your sons. But I will spare the youngest for your sake. In exchange, however, he will be left crippled in a dozen different ways. Is this what you prefer?’ Kaksi replied.

‘I beg of you, do not cripple him! Leave him unmarked!’ the widow implored Kaksi.

‘I cannot. If you do not agree, I will kill him as planned!’ Kaksi refused her.

‘No! I do not care if he is severely marred, just spare his life!’ the widow entreated Kaksi again.

Kaksi did not kill the boatman’s youngest son, but left him a useless hunchback with cataract-covered eyes and a grotesquely misshapen mouth.

The three Sonnim left that place and, with silver axes flung over their backs, headed to the back hills to fashion a boat. With a vessel of bamboo, they started across the river, but the boat was unable to withstand the heavy currents and shattered into pieces. The three shipwrecked Sonnim Gods swam to the nearest shore and began wandering the countryside. When they
got hungry during the day, they would visit homes with smoke coming out of their chimneys. At night, they targeted the houses that were lit.

One day, the three Sonnim saw a house that was especially brightly lit. It belonged to Kim Changja, a rich man from Hanyang, who was so wealthy he owned twelve houses. It was Kim Changja’s manservant who answered the three Sonnim’s knock, ‘Who goes there?’

‘We are passing travellers who have lost our way and are seeking a place to rest for the night?’

The manservant rushed to tell his master, ‘There are unexpected visitors at the door seeking refuge for the night. Shall I let them in?’

Kim Changja was a selfish man, with no desire to help those in need. He thought to himself, ‘If we let such visitors into our house, who can predict what misfortune may befall us?’

Kim Changja admonished his manservant, ‘Why should we allow perfect strangers into the house? They could be roaming bandits, beggars or thieves. Turn them away. Tell them there are so many bedbugs and fleas in the house that we cannot host them properly!’

The three Sonnim, with their supernatural senses, discerned the situation and left the house in distaste. They continued their wanderings and this time came upon a humble home owned by a poor old miller woman, Nogo. She had been the wet nurse for Ch’ŏlhyŏn – the only son for three generations of Kim Changja and the apple of the family’s eye – until the boy turned fifteen.

‘Is anyone there?’ the three Sonnim called out.

Hearing someone at her door, Nogo became alarmed, ‘This must be the shoe peddler come to collect for the straw sandals.’ She called out, ‘Shoe peddler! I get my wages the day after tomorrow from the Kim house. Can you return then to claim what is owed you?’

‘Old woman! We are Sonnim Gods of the state of the great king in the southland. We have come to behold the famous people, delicacies and culture of this land, but have lost our way and seek refuge for the night.’

Nogo, who had been mending stockings under a kerosene lamp, immediately dropped everything and rushed out in her bare feet, ‘Forgive a foolish old woman her ignorance. Come in!’ She then went inside and began vigorously cleaning the room with an old broom. Although the room was flea-infested and clogged with dust, the three Sonnim were warmed by her kind heart and stepped into her room.

‘Old woman, might we bother you for something with which to numb our hunger?’ asked the three Sonnim.

In sympathy, Nogo ran to her kitchen and opened the rice jar – and discovered that not a single grain of rice remained within. She thought, ‘What can I do? If I had known these Sonim Gods were coming, I would have prepared something for them even if I had to steal. It cannot be helped. I have no choice but to borrow some food from Master Kim Changja.’

Despite her old age and dimming eyes, Nogo scrambled along to the Kim
Fig. 72 Pyölsang (Sonnim). Date unknown.
Fig. 73 A male and female Pyōlsang (Sonnim), and their four servants. Date unknown.
Changja’s house, ‘Master Kim Changja, I will work twelve months a year to repay you if you’ll lend me one *mal* of rice.’

Annoyed, Kim Changja said, ‘You silly old woman! How can you come begging for grain at this hour? Cease your foolishness and return home.’

Kim Changja’s wife – who had been listening nearby with fear in her eyes lest her stingy husband might see – quickly beckoned for the old woman to follow her to the rear storage pantry for a *mal* of broken grains and mice droppings normally used as chicken feed.

Nogo thought, ‘Even if this is poor in quality, how hungry the three Sonnim will be if they don’t accept it.’ And she thanked Mistress Kim Changja, returned to her shack, and carefully milled the rice for her guests in a large pot of water. In a chipped bowl she served something that resembled neither warm rice water nor crushed rice gruel. Bringing in soy sauce, she said, ‘Sonnim, how hungry you must be! There isn’t much, but please eat your fill.’

The three Sonnim looked at the unrecognizable watery mass. Nonetheless, so great was their hunger that they each drank a bowl and instantly felt energized.

‘Old woman, how can we repay your kindness? Do you have any grandchildren?’ asked the three Sonnim.

‘I had a daughter who was married, but she died in childbirth. Neither my son-in-law nor I could care for the child, so we were forced to give her away to a family who lives on the other side of the mountain’, replied Nogo.

‘Then go and find your granddaughter. We will give her a mild case of smallpox and help her recover quickly’, said the three Sonnim.

‘Sonnim, leave my granddaughter alone. Let Ch’olhyön, the only son of the Kim Changja family, whom I nursed for fifteen years, have the smallpox with a fast recovery. He is fifteen and has not yet had smallpox.’

The Sonnim were moved by her unselfishness and said, ‘Your heart is pure. Go see if Kim Changja will agree to this.’

The next day, Nogo went to the Kim Changja’ house and said, ‘Master Kim Changja, the famed Sonnim Gods of the state of the great king of the southland are at my house. What do you think of letting Young Master Ch’olhyön have smallpox now so he can recover without much suffering?’

‘You frivolous old woman! How do you know what kind of Sonnim they are? Go quickly and cease this foolishness!’ Kim Changja scolded her.

Discouraged, Nogo made her way back to her hut. But the three Sonnim already knew all that had occurred and awaited her return.

‘Old woman, why don’t you go fetch your granddaughter instead?’ asked the three Sonnim.

Nogo brought her granddaughter, who was only three years old. The gods, not wishing to pain the old woman, had Kaksi go inside and give the child the mildest case of smallpox possible.

Nogo hoped the three Sonnim would make the child pretty and live long. With gratitude, she was troubled by her inability to send them off prop-
erly and fretted all night because she had no money for a ritual. The three Sonnim comforted her, ‘Old woman, don’t worry. We will give you the money for the ritual.’ So she was able to purchase food and prepare the great ritual. She carefully hung ropes across the door to guard against evil spirits and summoned a shaman to perform the farewell rites.

At this time Kim Changja, with cap and gown and a long pipe in his mouth, wondering why Nogo had not appeared for work for over ten days, made his way to her house. He passed by the banks of the rice paddy and finally arrived in the vicinity of the house where he heard the sounds of gong and drum. He realized that the clanging was from her home and climbed the gate to see the cause of the ruckus. He saw all manner of sacrificial foods laid out in a send-off ritual for the Sonnim Gods.

‘That despicable old woman, she should be worrying about repaying me for the rice I loaned her. Where did she find the money to prepare such a ritual? Even our own Ch’ölhyön who’s already fifteen years old has not had

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Fig. 74 A scene of Paesong Kut (A Shamanistic Rite for Sending the Sonnim Gods off): This ritual is performed on the thirteenth day after a patient is infected with the measles. This ritual must be performed in the patient’s residence. The family members invite a shaman to prepare for the rite prior to the ritual day (one or two days before the ritual day). The Sonnim Gods should be sent away with a horse made from mugwort and the coachman should be male. This painting by Kim Jungün is dated in the late nineteenth century. [From Kisanpungsokdochöp (‘Paintings of Old Customs in Korea’ by Genre Painter Kim).]
such a send-off ritual as this’, Kim Changja muttered aloud, ‘how can she summon any wandering Sonnim from the streets and cause such a ruckus?’

When Nogo saw Master Kim Changja’s reaction, she warned him, ‘Master Kim Changja, do not say such insolent words in front of these Sonnim from the southland? Please show some respect. I will pay what I owe you back the day after tomorrow.’

The three Sonnim, outraged at the exchange between Kim Changja and Nogo, retorted, ‘That insolent fool! He dares to call us “miserable visitors”!’

And they warned Nogo not to associate with such a man. No longer able to contain her bitterness and resentment, she began to foam at the mouth and fell down in a swoon. When Kim Changja saw this, he became very frightened and ran for his life.

When Kim Changja had reached his house, he told his wife, ‘Wife! Quickly! Hide our son away in a remote Buddhist temple in the mountains. Then hang red peppers in every corner of the house and street and burn them so that the smallpox cannot enter our house.’

It was said that the fumes from burning hot peppers kept the smallpox out. Without fully understanding the situation, Mistress Kim Changja brought peppers and burned them. She then went to her son and said, ‘Ch’ölyöön! Quickly! Gather your books, go to Yujö Temple to study, and don’t return until I come to fetch you.’

Ch’ölyöön was faithful to his parents, so silently he left for the temple.

The three Sonnim are by nature frightful and unpredictable. But when they reached Kim Changja’s house and encountered the pepper fumes, they were unable to enter and discussed their next course of action. They decided to call out Ch’ölyöön, who was taking refuge in the mountain temple. Kaksi transformed herself into Mistress Kim Changja and went to Ch’ölyöön who was hiding away in Yujö Temple.

‘Ch’ölyöön, let us return home since the three Sonnim have left’, said Kaksi.

The three Sonnim marched back to the Kim Changja’s house with Ch’ölyöön. As he entered through the front gate the three Sonnim whipped the boy three times on the lower shins and placed five sets of silver needles in each of his joints. The clueless boy, entered the house, and collapsed in the middle of the courtyard, writhing in pain, ‘Mother, I am dying! Father, I am dying! Help me!’

When the rich man Kim Changja and his wife peered outside, they saw their only son rolling around in pain. Kim Changja called out, ‘Ch’ölyöön, why have you returned home at this late hour? Come inside quickly.’

The three Sonnim regarded the boy wailing in excruciating pain and decided to curse him with a serious case of the smallpox. In just three days, seeing the red abscesses all over her son’s face, Mistress Kim Changja ran to her husband, and said, ‘Husband, our dear Ch’ölyöön must have eaten something rotten during his stay at the temple. He has a rash all over his body.’
Fig. 75 Pyŏlsangaegi (Sonnim). Date unknown.
Kim Changja replied, ‘Wife, you worry too much. If you dress the boy in black and sweep his body with smoke, he will surely recover.’

Mistress Kim Changja did as her husband instructed. But applying heat to his body, occupied as it was by the three Sonnim, made the abscesses harden into huge boils. Alarmed, she ran to her husband, saying, ‘Now there are red boils all over Ch’ŏlhyŏn’s body.’

Kim Changja comforted her, ‘Wife, you worry too much. If we fetch the acupuncturist who lives across the mountains and have him pierce the boils with cross-cuts, they will bleed pus and heal in no time.’

Mistress Kim Changja did as her husband instructed and fetched the acupuncturist. But the treatment was to no avail and neither blood nor pus came out of the boils. Instead, Ch’ŏlhyŏn’s skin took on a ghastly pale sheen.

Ch’ŏlhyŏn continued to moan, ‘Mother, I am dying! Father, I am dying!’

The three Sonnim decided to add to the boy’s suffering by pricking his joints with additional sets of silver and metal needles. Ch’ŏlhyŏn began to scream louder, writhing and wailing at the pain in his stomach and legs. Mistress Kim Changja concluded, ‘It is clear. The visitor gods have settled in our son. It would be wise to entreat them for mercy. Husband, Ch’ŏlhyŏn is our only son! How can we stand by and let him suffer?’

When Ch’ŏlhyŏn began emitting painful croaking sounds from his throat, burning like a ball of fire, and breaking out in hives all over his body, Kim Changja became increasingly alarmed. To supplicate the three Sonnim for his son’s recovery, he purified himself, dressed in ceremonial attire, and prepared sacrifices with water carefully drawn from a well at dawn. He entreated the three Sonnim, ‘I was an only son and have been spoiled since my youth. Since I am so rich, I have had little to fear. But Sonnim, the Sonnim Gods of the state of the great king in the southland, if you spare our Ch’ŏlhyŏn, I will empty out my storage larders and receive you with rice cakes, wine and a slaughtered calf. Spare our Ch’ŏlhyŏn!’

As Kim Changja begged the three Sonnim, they were touched by the sight of such a proud man on his knees and decided to leave the body of the boy. Ch’ŏlhyŏn’s boils healed with scabs and even the painful croaking of his throat disappeared.

Ch’ŏlhyŏn bolted up from the ground and dusted himself off, saying, ‘Mother, won’t you give me something to eat?’

At her son’s recovery, Mistress Kim Changja embraced the boy and cried tears of joy, ‘My dear son!’ To her husband she said, ‘Our son has recovered from the smallpox thanks to the three Sonnim. I will empty out our storage rooms and prepare a feast of rice cakes, wine and a young calf in their honour.’

‘Rice cakes, wine and a young calf? Woman, have you lost your senses? Tomorrow morning after we have eaten our meal, lay out some leftover rice in a bowl and place it on some straw in the courtyard. They can eat the rice or carry it away with them for all I care’, replied Kim Changja, disregarding his earlier promise.
Fig. 76 Pyölsang (Sonnim). Date unknown.
The three Sonnim, who were listening, were greatly angered by Kim Changja’s insolence, ‘A miser such as Kim Changja doesn’t deserve a son. Let us kill Ch’ŏlhyŏn and obliterate Kim Changja’s family line.’

Once again they took possession of Ch’ŏlhyŏn’s body and stuck him with all kinds of silver and metal needles so that the boy was rolling around in excruciating pain. Ch’ŏlhyŏn cried out, ‘Father, please do something! If I die, what will you do with all this wealth?’

Before the three Sonnim carried the boy away, they told Ch’ŏlhyŏn to utter his final words, ‘My poor mother married unwisely and has suffered greatly. Now she is losing her only son. Father, it is because of your greed that you are losing me, your only heir. One day you will surely regret what you have done! Woe is me! Because of my greedy father, I am being carried off by the three Sonnim Gods! Father, Mother! Forgive this unfilial son for dying before you!’

Streams of tears fell from Ch’ŏlhyŏn’s eyes as the three Sonnim choked the final breath from the boy’s throat.

Mistress Kim Changja, seeing her dead son began to beat her chest in grief, wailing, ‘My son, my only son! Let me follow you to your grave. What do I have to live for now that I have lost you? I married a terrible man who never gave me a moment’s happiness. Now how can I bear the pain of losing you who I have so lovingly reared for the last fifteen years? How can you think of dying and leaving me, your mother? Stop! Stop! You cannot go!’

But no amount of lamenting would revive her son, for Ch’ŏlhyŏn was no longer of this world.

When Ch’ŏlhyŏn was with the three Sonnim, they asked him, ‘Ch’ŏlhyŏn, tell us. When you are reborn on earth, which family do you wish to be born into?’

He replied, ‘If I had died before the age of ten, it might be possible for me to be reborn into another family. But having died past the age of fifteen, how can I ask to be placed in another family? My only wish is to travel with you as your servant boy.’

‘Although you were unfortunate enough to be born to bad parents, we can see how pure your heart is. We will allow you to be our servant boy.’ Thus the three Sonnim agreed to the boy’s request.

Going from house to house, the four finally arrived at the home of Minister Lee of Hanyang, a father of three sons, whom they had warned in a dream of their coming visit. The minister had had a dream about an old man approaching on a horse. When he woke up, he told his wife, ‘I have a premonition that we are to be visited by the three Sonnim. Please make the necessary preparations.’

The three Sonnim were given a proper ceremony, and promptly left the house after Lee’s sons recovered from the smallpox.

The three Sonnim then passed by the house of Nogo, who now possessed all the riches previously owned by Kim Changja, while Kim Changja and his wife were now living in Nogo’s decrepit hut. The old woman’s new house – where she now lived in harmony with her son-in-law, who had been a servant,
Fig. 77 Mrs Hugu (Sonnim). Date unknown.
and her granddaughter—was splendid. It had a tiled roof and bell chimes
dangling from all four corners.

When the three Sonnim were leaving the old woman’s house, Ch’ŏlhyŏn
entreated his masters, ‘Sonnim, before we return to the state of the great king
in the southland, I would like to look upon the faces of my parents one last
time.’

Instead of the structure they used to own, huge as a whale’s back, his
parents now lived in a tiny hovel with only a straw mat for a floor. Kim
Changja, who had suffered a massive stroke, had lost his wealth and barely
eked out a living by selling handwoven straw sandals. Ch’ŏlhyŏn’s mother
had to resort to begging in front of people’s homes holding an empty gourd
and bemoaning her existence, ‘Woe is me! Woe is me! How can my fate have
turned so black?’

Whenever she saw a boy of her son’s age, she would wail, ‘Children, you are
here, but where has my Ch’ŏlhyŏn gone?’

As she roamed the village, carrying only her gourd dipper, the neighbours
snickered unsympathetically, ‘When she was rich, she was a heartless miser.

![Fig. 78 The Sonnim Gods.](image)
Now she has the gall to ask our help.' With scorn the townspeople turned around and shut their doors in her face.

Bitterly Mistress Kim Changja would cry out, ‘Ch’ölhyŏn, come carry your mother away with you! Without you to comfort me, this cruel world is unbearable. I spend my days begging from door to door, tripping on stones or people’s feet. My life is not worth living. Won’t you carry me away with you, my son?’

When Ch’ölhyŏn beheld his poor mother, he began to weep in grief, ‘Mother, my poor mother. What could have happened to all your great wealth that you are now reduced to such a pathetic state?’

When the three Sonnim saw Ch’ölhyŏn’s broken heart, they took pity on the boy and decided to allow Kim to recover his wealth. Kim reformed his selfish nature, took a second wife and had another son to continue his family line.

Next the three Sonnim came upon the house of Minister Ch’oe of Hanyang, whose five children became ill with the smallpox. Alarmed, Minister Ch’oe summoned a shaman and emptied his larders to make offerings to the three Sonnim. For the next three years, the three Sonnim went to all the children in the countryside with the gift of smallpox. The three Sonnim delivered good health and long life along with luck and prosperity.7

The Original Title: Sonnim Kōri (Shamanist Rite for All Sonnim Gods)

Notes

1 Kaksi: it means a bride or a newly-married woman, but in this myth ‘Kaksi’ is used as a goddess’ name.
2 Samsinjewang: the Life God.
3 Sonnim: ‘Sonnim’ literally means a ‘visitor’ in Korean. In this myth, Sonnim refers to a god/goddess who gives smallpox to children under sixteen.
4 Changja: one who is wealthy or one advanced in age.
5 Hanyang: a capital city of the Chosŏn dynasty. The present Seoul.
7 This myth was translated by consulting an existing translation; Seo Dae Seok. Myths of Korea (Somerset: Jimoondang International, 2000). In the process of my work, I corrected some errors and omissions that were found in the existing translation.
Fig. 79 Pulsa Grandmother. A deified dead shaman’s spirit. This spirit is known to bring prosperity to a family or a shaman.
CHAPTER 17

A Benefit for All Sick Children

Once upon a time, Scholar Sukyŏng and a girl named Aengyŏn lived in a village. Scholar Sukyŏng was fifteen years old and Aengyŏn was fourteen. Since Sukyŏng’s parents wanted to marry their son to Aengyŏn, they arranged a matchmaker to get the opinion of the bride-to-be. Although the first and second attempts came up empty-handed, on the third visit Sukyŏng’s parents reluctantly said they would agree to a marriage proposal. Finally, Sukyŏng’s parents approved the marriage when the flowers of Sukyŏng family’s house leaned down towards Aengyŏn’s house and flowers of Aengyŏn family’s house leaned down towards Sukyŏng’s house.

Scholar Sukyŏng went to a fortune-teller at the lower village to get a marriage horoscope before the marriage. The fortune-teller analysed the marriage horoscope and saw that the marriage horoscopes for the groom Sukyŏng and the bride Aengyŏn were as follows: Kapchaúlch’uk read ‘steel under the ocean’, Pyŏnginč’hŏngmyo read ‘fire in a furnace’, Muchinkisa read ‘tree in a deep forest’, Kyŏngosinmi read ‘dirt on a road’, Imsinkyeyu read ‘steel for the tip of a sword’, Kapsinlyu read ‘water in a fountain’, Muinkimyo read ‘dirt for a fortress foundation’, Kyŏngchinsinsa read ‘lead for solder’, and Imokyemi read ‘a weeping tree.’ This was an excellent marriage horoscope.

Using this, the fortune-teller chose a wedding day for Sukyŏng. The courtship should be the third day of March, the marriage ceremony should be the eighth day of April in the year of kapin, and the departure to the groom’s household should be the fifteenth day of June. Both parents invested deeply in providing the necessary articles for Sukyŏng and Aengyŏn’s marriage. It suffices to say that their marriage articles even included a tiger’s eyebrow. With the courtship getting closer, Sukyŏng wrote a gift letter and sent some sealed packages. It said, ‘This courtship was prepared with imported silk from China; Wŏlgwang (moonlight) Silk which was woven at night and Ilgwang (sunlight) Silk which was woven during the daytime. Among the eight packages, five packages are for the bride and the rest are gifts for her family.’

Three years passed after they married, but they still had no offspring.

Now, forty years had crept upon Sukyŏng and Aengyŏn unawares, but they still had no offspring.

One fine day, Sukyŏng went to a mountain in front of his house for a picnic with his servant. While enjoying the azalea and impatiens blossoms all around
him, he also saw chirping swallows returning to the woods. Curious, he followed their path and noticed the swallows feeding worms to their chicks in a three-year-old nest. All of a sudden, Sukyŏng felt miserable for himself. When he returned home, he was so depressed that he lost his appetite and went straight to bed.

‘Honey, why are you crying after going out to see the flower blossoms?’ asked Aengyŏn.

‘How come we can’t have children like all the other creatures in the world? I dreamed of hearing the sounds of our children. I even envy a bird its chicks’, replied Sukyŏng.

Then Aengyŏn said, ‘Honey, why don’t you ask a fortune-teller? I know that there was a very famous fortune-teller in the province of Kyŏngsang when I married you.’

So Sukyŏng put some gold nuggets in a small bag and went to the fortune-teller to ask about his fortune.

‘You need to be a man of virtue and offer devotions, then you may have children. First, offer your prayers at the Kŭmsang Temple in Mount Ane for one hundred days. Then, you must do the following tasks in one day. Together, you must irrigate the lower field if there is water in the upper field. However, you must irrigate the upper field if there is water in the lower field. Then you must plant rice grains in the field, grow them, harvest them and hull them. You must hull three mal and three tŏe of white rice. Then bring five kŭn of yellow candles, five kŭn of white candles, five kŭn of big candles, five kŭn of yellow paper, five kŭn of white paper and five kŭn of large paper to the Kŭmsang Temple on Mount Anae to pray for the Inwang Buddha, the Kŭmgang Buddha and the Life Grandmother Goddess. Pray for conception for three months and ten days to those gods’, said the fortune-teller.

After Sukyŏng and Aengyŏn offered a Buddhist mass in Kŭmsang Temple for one hundred days, they returned to their home. They prepared their bed with silk bedding and Mandarin duck pillows, surrounded by a portrait folding screen and a still-life folding screen. Sukyŏng and Aengyŏn went to bed and their two bodies became one, like blue and yellow dragons tangled together. After this, Aengyŏn began showing signs of pregnancy. At this point, Aengyŏn was forty years old. She had a strong appetite after three months; she smelled uncooked rice from cooked rice, she smelled powder from rice cakes and she smelled yeast from soybean paste. After ten months, she gave birth to a baby boy. It was a very handsome boy with a face that shone like the sun and the moon.

But three and seven days after his birth, the boy did not open his eyes at all. Sukyŏng and Aengyŏn realized that their son was blind and said, ‘Oh, merciless nature! Merciless saint! What could possibly bring happiness to our lives since we have a blind son, what can he do for us?’ They named the baby Kŏbuki and hired a nanny to take care of him.

The couple went to bed together again when their son was three years old and again the wife became pregnant. Again, she had a strong appetite and
again she smelled all kinds of foods just as before; she smelled uncooked rice
from cooked rice, she smelled powder from cake and she smelled yeast from
soybean paste. So, Sukyŏng went everywhere searching for new foods to
satisfy her appetite. He even brought back wild pears that could only be
found in a hidden forest deep in the mountains. However, nothing could stop
the progress of time. Her face showed deep wrinkles like a spider web. After
ten months, she gave birth to a baby. Again, it was a handsome looking boy.
Because of their previous bad experience, they looked first at the boy’s eyes.
This time, they saw two eyes glowing like shining stars. However, they found
out that the boy had a humpback and a crippled leg as they tried to give him a
bath when he was three days old. The couple was shocked and depressed.
They called the nanny to take care of him and named him Namsaengi.8

The couple soon died from anxiety leaving their wealth behind. It was only
a matter of time before Kŏbuki and Namsaengi grew poor because they could
not do anything. Their last attempt was to beg for food outside, but all they
got was a cold reception. People told them they did not have the heart to
support two cripples. Expelled by people, they cried aloud outside the
entrance gate. Namsaengi said, ‘Why don’t we ask for a blessing from the
Inwang Buddha, the Kuŏngang Buddha and the Life Grandmother Goddess
at the Kuŏmsang Temple on Mount Anae since they were the cause of our
birth?’

‘I don’t know how to get there, I am blind’, said Kŏbuki.

‘Well, I can’t walk because I am crippled. I have an idea. Why don’t you
carry me on your back? I will hold your cane and knock on the ground so that
you can hear the sound. You can simply follow the sound’, said Namsaengi.

So, the two brothers journeyed to the Kuŏmsang Temple on Mount Anae.
They encountered a three-way-crossroads with a rainbow in the sky. The road
to east looked blue, the road to south looked red and the road to west looked
white.

When they arrived at the temple’s entrance, they saw a lotus flowering
marsh with gold nuggets shaped like pot lids floating on the water.

‘Brother, I see gold nuggets that look like pot lids, floating on the marsh.
Let’s gather up a few’, said Namsaengi.

‘It’s impossible for us. Let’s ignore them and proceed to the temple’, said
Kŏbuki.

When they entered the temple, a handyman9 quickly informed the chief
monk. Thereupon the chief monk ordered him, ‘Hurry and greet them in the
southside guest room. They were born after their parents had built a tower
with gold nuggets at our temple. Teach them to read and provide them
cooked rice three times a day.’

Seeing extra loads of difficult labour, however, the handyman beat up the
two brothers out of sight of the chief monk.

‘We saw gold nuggets on the marsh at the entrance. Why don’t you take
them instead of beating us?’ said the two brothers. Three thousand monks ran
outside to get the gold from the marsh. However, the gold nuggets quickly
Fig. 80 Buddha. Date unknown.
turned into a golden snake with one end attached to heaven and the other end attached to earth. The monks felt cheated and got angry. They came back furious and beat the two brothers even more severely.

The two brothers went out with disbelief. However, there were certainly golden nuggets. As they gathered up the gold nuggets and offered them to the Buddha, the whole temple started to dance. When they coated the temple and the Buddha with golden nuggets, the Buddha marvellously opened his mouth, 'Kōbuki. I lay my blessing on your sight.' Upon the Buddha's blessing, Kōbuki was able to see. Also, Namsaengi's back and legs straightened so that he could walk as well.

They lived very well in Chosŏn until they were eighty-one years old. When they died, they became the Honsu Gods of the underworld and have been worshipped since then by shamans. And people started to believe that the Honsu gods would help them if they prayed to the gods that their sick children might be cured with a shamanist rite performed by a shaman.

The Original Title: Sukyŏngrang-Aengyŏnrangsinga (Shamanist Song of Sukyŏngrang and Aengyŏnrang)
The Source: Son Chint’ae, Chosŏn SingaYup’yŏn (Extant Shamanist Songs of Korea), Tokyo: Hyangt’ŏ Munhwasa, 1930.

NOTES

1 This paragraph requires an understanding of the rotation system of ten calendar signs (Kap , Ŭl , Pyŏng, Chŏng, Mu, Ki, Kyŏng, Sin, Im and Kye) with the twelve animals of the zodiac (mouse: Cha, cow: Ch’uk, tiger: In, rabbit: Myo, dragon: Chin, snake: Sa, horse: O, sheep: Mi, monkey: Sin, chicken: Yu, dog: Sul, and pig: Hae). Therefore, the ‘Kapchaulch’uk’ is a sequence of two combinations for ‘Kap-mouse and Eul-cow’, and the ‘Pyŏnginchŏngmyo’ is a sequence of another combination for ‘Pyŏng-tiger and Chŏng-rabbit,’ and vice versa.

2 It is called napch’e in Korean. It is one ceremonial procedure where the groom’s family formally proposes to the bride’s family.

3 Kapin: the fifty-first year of the sexagenary cycle. Kapin belongs to the tiger-year of the twelve animal-year of the zodiac.

4 Mal: a unit of volume, equivalent to 5.12 US bushels, 47.6 US gallons.

5 Toe: a unit of volume, equivalent to 111 in³ or (4 3/4 in).

6 Kûn: a unit of weight, Equivalent to 1.323 lb.

7 Kōbuki: it means ‘tortoise’.

8 Namsaengi: it means ‘spotted turtle’.

9 Pulmokhani: a person responsible for cooking and other chores in the temple.

10 Chosŏn: one old Korea’s names, about 14–19c.

11 People in the district of Hamhŭng (now one of North Korea’s areas) request a shaman to perform Honsu Kut – a shamanistic rite for Honsu gods – for quick recovery for their children from illnesses.
MYTHS ABOUT
GOOD FORTUNE

($)
CHAPTER 18

Kamūnjang-agi, the Goddess of Good Fortune

Along time ago, Kangiyongsŏng lived in Upper Sangsil and Hongunsoch’ŏn lived in Lower Sangsil.

One year, a severe famine struck the land. Kangiyongsŏng went to Lower Sangsil because he heard that Lower Sangsil had a good harvest, and Hongunsoch’ŏn went to Upper Sangsil because she heard that Upper Sangsil had a good harvest. So Kangiyongsŏng and Hongunsoch’ŏn were both forced onto the streets to beg for food. While fending for themselves in this fashion, they met each other and were married.

Kangiyongsŏng and Hongunsoch’ŏn managed to get along by working for daily wages. While they lived like this, Hongunsoch’ŏn became pregnant with their first child. After ten months, she gave birth to a baby girl. But they did not have relatives either by blood or by law. They were without food and could not afford clothes, so the village folk took pity on the child and fed the baby water with powder in a silver bowl. The baby was named ‘Ŭnjang-agi.’

When Ŭnjang-agi was two or three years old, a second baby girl was born to Kangiyongsŏng and Hongunsoch’ŏn. The village folk also gathered round for the second baby and fed her water with powder in a brass bowl. The second baby was named ‘Notjang-agi’. Following the second baby, a third baby girl was born. The village folk showed their indifference to the third baby girl by feeding her water with powder in a wooden bowl. The third baby was named ‘Kamu njang-agi’. After the birth of their third daughter, the couple came into wealth.

The years slipped by and Kamūnjang-agi turned fifteen years old. One day when it was raining slightly, to pass the tedious hours the couple called their daughters together and asked them, ‘Eldest daughter, to whom do you owe your life?’

‘First to the heavenly god, second to the earth god, third to you, my parents’. replied Ŭnjang-agi.

‘That was laudable, eldest daughter. Go to your room.’ said the couple and asked Notjang-agi, ‘Middle daughter, to whom do you owe your life?’

‘First to the heavenly god, second to the earth god, third to you, my parents’, replied Notjang-agi.

‘That was laudable, middle daughter. Go to your room,’ said the couple and taking pride in such a show of filial loyalty, the couple praised their elder daughters. But when the couple addressed the same question to their youngest child, she answered, ‘First to the heavenly god, second to the earth
god, third to you, my parents, and fourth, to the vertical line that extends from the navel to the genitals.’

‘Where did we get a disobedient daughter like you? Be off with you!’ scolded the parents.

After Kamunjang-agi packed some old clothing and food for herself onto a black cow, she left her parents’ house because something she said had annoyed her parents.

‘Father, mother, please live comfortably’, said the youngest daughter as she departed from the house. When Kamunjang-agi was in the alleyway outside the house, her mother was heartbroken with parental affection and called her first daughter and said, ‘Go after her. Tell her to eat some cold rice with water and return.’

The first daughter came out, saw the third daughter standing by the nodutdol, and said, ‘Make haste! Run for your life! They are coming out to attack you!’

‘Pitiful elder sister, you will be reborn a blue centipede as soon as you step down from the nodutdol’, cursed Kamunjang-agi, and the elder sister changed into a blue centipede.

When the first daughter did not return, the mother called the second daughter and repeated her command, ‘Go out the door. Tell Kamunjang-agi to eat some cold rice with water and return.’

The second daughter came out, saw the third daughter standing by the compost, and said, ‘Our parents are coming out to attack you! Make haste and run for your life!’

‘Pitiful middle sister, you will be reborn a yongdal mushroom as soon as you come down from the compost’, cursed Kamunjang-agi, and the middle sister changed into a yongdal mushroom.

When both the eldest and the middle daughter didn’t return, the couple ran out to see what the problem was. They were caught on the threshold, fell straight ahead, hurt their eyes, and became blind persons. After that the couple just squandered their fortune in idleness because they could not work anymore, and at last they became beggars.

Kamunjang-agi passed over a mountain peak and climbed onto the mountain with her black cow loaded with parcels of clothes and other essentials. While she was going on her way, the sun set and the moon rose. So she searched about for a place to stop and found a very humble straw-thatched hut with a straw-mat door that had a millet stalk pillar for a hinge.

In the hut lived a grey-haired old man and woman. Kamunjang-agi tied the black cow to a nodutdol and asked the couple for a night’s lodging, ‘I am a passerby crossing the mountain. The sun is setting and it is getting dark, but I have no place to stay. Would you please let me stay here for the night?’

‘Sorry, we have no room for passers-by because my three sons each have their own room’, replied the old woman.

‘If you have no room for me, will you let me to stay in your kitchen for the night?’ pleaded Kamunjang-agi.
‘You may do as you please’, replied the old woman. Kamūnjang-agi was spending the night in the kitchen when a loud sound reached her ears from outside. She asked, ‘What kind of sound was this?’ ‘That is the sound of my eldest son returning from digging hemp bulbs’, replied the old woman.

After a while, the elder son entered his room and showered words of anger and spite upon his parents, saying, ‘I work hard to provide my parents with hemp bulbs, but they allow a wench who just now passed over the peak to stay here for free.’

A moment later, another loud sound reached her ears from outside. Again she asked, ‘What is this sound?’ ‘That is the sound of my second son returning from digging hemp bulbs’, replied the old woman.

The second son entered his room and criticized his parents, saying, ‘While I provide my parents with hemp bulbs I had dug by myself, they waste them on a slut who just passed over the peak. As yet, we have no cows of our own tied in our garden. Dark clouds are hanging over our house.’

A moment later, another loud sound reached her ears. Once again she asked, ‘What could this sound be?’ ‘That is the sound of my youngest son returning from digging hemp bulbs’, replied the old woman.

As the youngest son stepped into the garden, he grinned with a smile, saying, ‘Oh! a dark cow and a girl came unexpectedly to our house together. Maybe they are a gift from Heaven.’

Thereafter, Kamūnjang-agi watched the behavior of the three brothers’ as they began steaming the hemp bulbs they had dug for dinner.

After the elder son steamed his hemp bulbs, he took the fleshy trunk for himself and gave the neck to his parents. The second son took the fleshy trunk for himself and gave the tail to his parents. In contrast to both his brothers, the third son gave the fleshy trunk to his parents, and ate the neck and the tail. Watching their behaviour, Kamūnjang-agi thought to herself that the third son must have a benevolent heart. So she borrowed the old woman’s kettle and cleaned some glutinous rice she had loaded on the black cow and boiled the rice to serve to the old couple. She set the boiled rice before the old man and woman, saying, ‘What kind of master of the house doesn’t perform the rite for his Gate God, and what passer-by wouldn’t show gratitude to their host?’

But the old man and woman did not eat the boiled rice, saying, ‘Our ancestors have not eaten this yet.’

Kamūnjang-agi brought the boiled rice to the eldest son. He said, ‘Our ancestors have not eaten this yet. Also I could not eat it in the shape of a bug.’ So she brought the boiled rice to the second son, but he also said, ‘I could not eat it in the shape of a bug.’ At this, they got as angry at her as boiling red-bean porridge. When she brought the boiled rice to the third son, he ate it with gusto and they introduced themselves.
The eldest and second son watched through a tear in a paper screen and felt envious of the youngest son and asked him for a bit of the boiled rice, ‘Younger brother, let us have a spoonful of that rice.’

‘When Kamŭnjang-agi brought the boiled rice to you, you refused her. After this, why do you now want to eat it?’ replied the youngest son, and then he dipped his spoon into the hottest part of the rice and put it on his brothers’ palms. They blew on the hot rice to cool it, and ate it hungrily.

As even rolling stones on the road get to know each other, Kamŭnjang-agi and the youngest son made a verbal promise to each other like they were butterflies seeking flowers, and they were married. That night she slept in the youngest son’s room.

The next day Kamŭnjang-agi said to the youngest son, ‘Let us go to the place you dig for hemp bulbs.’

So, Kamŭnjang-agi and the youngest son set out there together. She saw that the place where the elder son had dug was filled with something yellowish, and she held it in her hand to examine it, but it was nothing but dung. The place where the second son had dug was filled with centipedes,
snakes and all sorts of insects. The place where the youngest son had dug was filled with small stones that the youngest son had thought were gravel and thrown away. Kamūnjang-agi picked them up and saw that they were gold and silver. So she loaded them all on the black cow and returned home with the youngest son. She sold them at a market and used the money to buy many things including cows, horses, fields and brass tableware. This was how she became rich.

One day Kamūnjang-agi said to her husband, ‘While we live in affluence, my parents are probably still roaming the streets as beggars. I will hold a feast for beggars and look for them among the guests.’

Over a period of a hundred days, she held a feast for beggars every day and a great number of beggars flocked in from all quarters. She gave money to those who wanted it, boiled rice for those who wanted it and gave water to people who wanted it.

On the hundredth day, two blind elderly beggars leaning on sticks came to her house. When the youngest daughter examined them closely, she knew with absolute certainty that they were her parents. She said to her maidservants, ‘If the beggars sit at the upper end of the table, stop your work giving boiled rice to the beggars at the lower end of the table. If the beggars sit at the lower end of the table, stop your work giving boiled rice to beggars at the upper end of the table. If the beggars sit in the middle of the table, stop your work giving the boiled rice to beggars at the upper and lower ends of the table.’

However, the beggars did not receive any food. They just heard a clattering sound when the maidservants put bowls on the table. So while they were sitting at the upper or lower ends for nothing, all the other beggars left after eating their fill. Kamūnjang-agi said to the chief manservant and the chief maidservant, ‘Don’t let those beggars leave. After all the other beggars depart, ask them to come into the inner room.’ As she commanded, the servants brought the beggars into the inner room after all the other beggars went home. The beggars gorged themselves on food as soon as the servants set the meal before them.

A little later Kamūnjang-agi came into the inner room, said, ‘Tell me any old tales you know, please.’

‘We do not know any’, replied the beggars.

‘Well, perhaps you have heard or read a saying somewhere’, said Kamūnjang-agi.

‘We have neither heard nor seen anything’, replied the beggars.

‘Well then, tell me about your lives until now’, said Kamūnjang-agi.

‘We can talk about that’, replied the beggars, and the beggars talked all about becoming blind after they expelled Kamūnjang-agi. Kamūnjang-agi filled a wine cup until it overflowed, and said, ‘Please, drink this wine. This wine is over ten thousand years old. O pitiful father and mother! I am your third daughter, Kamūnjang-agi.’

At this the beggars exclaimed in utter shock, ‘What welcome words reach
Fig. 82 A scene of male and female blind fortune-tellers. Date unknown.
our ears.' The shock of this caused them to open their eyes and see the world again.

* This myth also has a different ending that is found in Ak'amatsu Chijo and Ak’iba Tak’ashi’s book as follows: Kamünjang-agì told them everything that had transpired since she had last seen them, ‘My sisters Injang-agì and Notjang-agì were punished for their wicked hearts. My eldest sister was reincarnated as a centipede and my second sister as a yongdal mushroom. It was because of me that you were able to enjoy wealth for a while, for I came into this world of humans in order to take charge of chōnsaeng.’

The parents asked, ‘What is chōnsaeng?’

Kamünjang-agì answered, ‘The fact is … we buy and sell, we do carpentry, we farm, we drink wine, we smoke tobacco, we gamble, we eat. Indeed, every aspect of human life is chōnsaeng.’

The Original Title: Samgongbonp'uri (Origin Myth of Samgong)

Fig. 83 A scene of Kamünjang-agì who invites her blind parents to a feast. (Lee Chiyŏn. 53 × 40.9 cm. Mixed materials on canvas. 2004.)
NOTES

1 Upper Sangsil: it refers to Kangiyŏngsŏng’s god-name or his birthplace.
2 Lower Sangsil: it refers to Hongunsoch’ŏn’s goddess-name or her birthplace.
3 Nodutdol: A large stone placed before the front gate. It was used as something to stand on when people mounted or dismounted a horse.
4 This ending part was translated by consulting an existing translation; Seo Dae Seok. *Myths of Korea* (Somerset: Jimoondang International, 2000). In the process of my work, I corrected some errors and omissions that were found in the existing translation.
CHAPTER 19

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 Onūli1 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’,2 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 Wŏnch’ŏngang, “Take the left road until you see Yŏnhwa 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 Wŏnch’ŏngang, 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.’

Onu-li promised him she would find the answers. As day broke, she started her journey to Yŏnhwa Pond. As she approached Yŏnhwa Pond, she saw the lotus tree within. She politely approached the lotus and said, ‘Lotus, can you give me directions to Wŏnch’ŏngang?’

‘Why do you want to go to Wŏnch’ŏngang?’ asked the lotus.

‘My name is Onu-li and people tell me that Wŏnch’ŏngang is my homeland. I wish to return to that country’, said Onu-li.

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

‘What mysterious status?’ asked Onu-li.

‘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 Onu-li.

Onu-li 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 Wŏnch’ŏngang.’

Onu-li 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 Wŏnch’ŏngang?’

‘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 Onu-li.

‘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 Meili1 if you go straight ahead. Ask her for directions to Wŏnch’ŏngang.’

Onu-li followed the snake’s directions and met Meili. Meili was reading a book at Byŏlch’ŭng Arbor in the same manner as Ch’ŏngŭidongja. Onu-li greeted her and asked for directions to her homeland, Wŏnch’ŏngang, ‘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 Onu-li followed the girl’s directions, the weeping maids came into sight. Onu-li approached and asked them why they were crying. ‘We used to be
maids for the King of Heaven. Drawing water from a jar is our punishment for our mistakes in heaven. We cannot return to heaven until the jar has been emptied. However, we cannot draw any water from the jar because there is a big hole in the dipping scoop. That is why we are crying.

After groaning out their sad story, they asked Onüli for help, 'I am only a foolish mortal. How can a mortal solve a difficult riddle that heavenly maids do not know the answer to?'

Although Onüli's first thought was to excuse herself from helping, she felt pity on the maids and changed her mind. Onüli cut some straw, bundled it together and plugged the hole with the straw bundle. Then she melted some pine resin, pasted it onto the bundle, and waited until it hardened. Then she sincerely prayed to the King of Heaven to be merciful to the maids for their mistakes. After the prayer, she put the scoop into the water jar and the water within dried up instantly. The heavenly maids were delighted and expressed their sincere appreciation. They offered to guide her to Wönch’öngang by accompanying Onüli until she reached her destination. So, Onüli and the heavenly maids journeyed together until they arrived at a big temple. When they reached Wönch’öngang, the heavenly maids wished Onüli good fortune before they parted.

Onüli approached the gatekeeper and asked him to open the gate, 'Who are you and why do you ask me to open the gate?'

'I am Onüli from the mundane world', said Onüli.

'What brings you here?' asked the gatekeeper.

'I come here because this is my homeland', said Onüli.

But the gatekeeper refused to open the gate and told her to go back. Poor Onüli collapsed and cried out loud, 'How can you be so inconsiderate? I have come from far away. I climbed up the mountains and went across the river, just to see my parents. How can you so cruelly refuse me entrance? My parents live within, and I am here in front of the gate to meet them. Now I know the gods in Wönch’öngang have no hearts. Mother, Father! Haven’t you seen me crying alone in the empty field? Haven’t you seen me travel over the mountains and across the river to see you? Haven’t you seen me crying in front of my homeland? How can I return all the favours I received on my way here? You merciless gatekeeper, you cold-hearted gods! My dear loving mother and father, please help me!'

Because Onüli was crying so endlessly, the emotionless gatekeeper, as cold as stone, felt sympathy and started to cry. He left the gate and headed to Onüli's parents' castle.

'It is my duty to keep the gate closed to strangers. A girl named Onüli is weeping loudly because I did not let her in. What should I do?' asked the gatekeeper.

'We already knew this. Let her in', Onüli's parents ordered him.

The gatekeeper hurried back and relayed the message to Onüli. Onüli was delighted to hear the good news and directly went to her parents.

Onüli's father asked Onüli why she had come. Onüli told him everything
about how she lived, including growing inside the crane’s wing. Her parents were very happy to hear the story and acknowledged her as their daughter.

‘The King of Heaven called us to protect Wŏnch’ŏngang when we gave birth to you. It was too important an order to refuse. That is why we are here. However, we have always watched over you and protected you. Therefore, please don’t feel so bad about it.

After greeting her, Onūli’s parents showed her around the castle. Surrounded by the Great Wall, Wŏnch’ŏngang was a beautiful heavenly world with all four seasons happening concurrently.

After spending several days happily with her parents, Onūli told them that she wanted to return to her place.

‘I have achieved all my wishes. However, I must go back and return the favours I received on my way here’, said Onūli.

She told them about the requests from all of the creatures during her journey. Her parents meditated for a while then solved each of the riddles for Onūli.

‘If Changsangi and Meili marry, they will live happily ever after. If the lotus picks the flower from the top branch and gives it to the first person it meets, all its branches will blossom. Because the big snake is so greedy that it keeps three marbles in its mouth, it cannot turn into a dragon. Therefore, it cannot ascend to heaven. It should be content with one magic gem. If the big snake gives two magic gems to the first person it meets, it will turn into a dragon and ascend to heaven. The first time you meet the big snake, you will become a goddess if you have a magic gem and a lotus flower.’

Onūli listened to her parents’ advice and bid them good-bye.

Onūli met Meili and told her what she had heard from her parents. But Meili was concerned, as she did not know Changsangi’s whereabouts.

‘Do not worry, I can guide you there’, Onūli said.

So, Onūli and Meili travelled together. Soon after, they saw the big snake and Onūli told the snake why it could not ascend to heaven. The big snake was happy to solve the riddle. When the big snake released the two magic gems to Onūli, it immediately was transformed into a dragon and ascended to heaven. Onūli and Meili continued their journey, met the lotus tree, and told the lotus why it could blossom on only one branch. After hearing the answer from Onūli, the lotus tree cut off the flower from the top branch and gave it to her. As soon as it gave the flower to Onūli, every branch of the lotus tree blossomed beautifully. At last, they went to Changsangi and introduced him to Meili. Onūli told Changsangi what she had heard in Wŏnch’ŏngang. Therefore, Meili and Changsangi married and lived happily ever after.

After Onūli returned all the favours, she went back to Mrs Paek and expressed her appreciation by giving her one magic gem from the big snake. Onūli ascended to heaven after accomplishing all her work and became a goddess. The King of Heaven ordered her to go back to earth to publish the Wŏnch’ŏngang story with a wood printing plate. So, Onūli returned to earth,
and now travels around to every temple in the world, and continues to publish the story of Wŏnchŏngang.

Fig. 84 The Dragon God. Date unknown.

The Original Title: Wŏnch'ŏngangbon'uri (Origin Myth of Wŏnch'ŏngang)
The Source: Ak'amatsu Chijo & Ak'iba Tak'ashi, Chosŏn Musokui Yongu, Sang (Studies in Korean Shamanism, First Half), Osak'a: Okhosŏjŏm, 1937.

Notes

1 Onŭli: ‘onŭl’ means ‘today’, ‘-i’ means ‘person’.
2 Wonch’ŏngang: it is referred to as a country initially, but becomes a Buddhist script name by the end.
Fig. 85 Onu-li and the Sonnim Gods (Lee Chiyŏn. 53 × 40.9 cm. Mixed materials on Korean paper. 2004)
MYTHS ABOUT
LOVE AND FAMILY

∞
Bride Ch’ŏngjong and Her Sacrificial Death for Love

Ch’ŏngjong’s father was the Fire God, and her mother was the Earth Goddess.

One day, Ch’ŏngjong arranged to marry a groom from a high-class family. The groom was Scholar Torang. The proud groom arrived at the bride’s residence with abundant marriage gifts and many servants. When he entered the bride’s house, he felt that something hit the back of his head. Although he was able to finish the wedding ceremony, he was too sick to attend the wedding reception dinner. He lay down in the room and did not move at all.

The bride and her family members thought that the groom was arrogant because they attempted to make friendly conversation with him, but the groom did not respond at all. After many hours passed, the groom asked the bride to hold his hands and whispered to her, ‘I felt that something hit the back of my head when I was entering the front gate. Since that time, I can barely maintain my consciousness.’

The bride immediately went to her parents and told them what had happened to the groom. The parents of the bride were shocked. So they called a great shaman to ask the groom’s fortune. ‘The groom had unrighteous three-coloured silk fabrics among his marriage gifts. You must burn all of the marriage gifts for him to be get well’, said the shaman. The groom gained some strength back after the gifts were burned, but he did not regain full consciousness. As night came, the groom asked his servant to bring his horse. He wanted to go back to his home. The bride and her family members cried out as the groom departed.

The groom said to the bride before leaving, ‘If a person with a short haircut comes from the hill at noon tomorrow, then consider that I have died.’ Then he gave the bride a Saltch’ŏkmili1 as a keepsake. The bride cried out loud fitting her ring on the groom’s finger.

After the groom left, the bride kept their honeymoon bedding untouched and prayed for her husband’s safety in front of holy water until the night of the next day. Noon passed, but no one appeared on the hill. A person with a short haircut ran into the front door at night, however, and called for the bride. The bride stopped her prayer and greeted the messenger, ‘How is my husband’s health?’ The messenger asked for the holy water,
burned the obituary paper and announced the death of the groom. As the messenger was chanting for the obituary, all family members cried out loud.

The bride let down her long hair and went to her father-in-law’s house. The bride only drank water and cried out loud for three days and nights in her new residence. The groom’s body was buried on the third day after his death. The bride cried day and night and her loud mourning sound reached to the
King of Heaven.² ‘I have not heard such a sorrowful crying sound before. Investigate it’, said the emperor.

The King of Heaven ordered a god living on Mount Hwangkūm to find out where the crying was coming from. The god travelled everywhere until his clothes were worn out. Finally he arrived at a hill in Kyŏngsang Province. There were two huts on the top of the hill and a hut down the hill. He found a woman with long dishevelled hair crying sorrowfully. The god transformed
himself into a monk and begged for an offering. The woman, Ch’ŏngjŏng dashed out of the hut to greet the monk. She bowed down to the ground and told to the monk, ‘I will contribute as much as you want. Please let me see my husband one more time.’

Fig. 88 Bride Ch’ŏngjŏng (Lee Chiyŏn. 40.9 × 27.3 cm. Mixed materials on canvas. 2004.)
'I am just a humble monk begging for food. What you ask is beyond my ability', said the monk. However, the bride bowed down three times and asked for mercy. Moved by her devotion, the monk gave her a hollowed-out gourd with a hole in the top and told her, 'If you wish to meet him, do as follows. Draw holy water with this gourd, go to the mountain, spread out the wedding day bedding and wear your wedding dress. Then, pray alone for three days.'

The monk vanished as he gave his instructions to the woman, Ch’ŏngjŏng. She followed the monk’s instructions and prayed for three days. Just as promised by the monk, her husband showed up on the third day. She was very happy to see him and wanted to hold hands with him. However, her husband was mad at her and scolded her, 'I am not a mortal anymore. You should not call me.' Then he disappeared. She started to cry out loud and called the monk. Suddenly, the monk appeared in front of her. She immediately bowed down to the monk and begged to see her husband again.

‘If you wish to meet him, you must pull out your hairs one-by-one and make a very long string with three thousand knots. Go to Kŭmsang Temple on Mount Anne. Hold one end at the sanctuary and the other in the sky. Punch a hole in the palm of each hand and put the string into the hole. Three thousand young girls will swing the string up and down, but you must not scream. Then you will meet your husband.’ She followed the monk’s instructions. Although her palms were bleeding heavily, she did not express any pain. Just as the monk promised, her husband showed up again.

She was about to hug her husband, but her husband disappeared again. She fell on the ground and called the monk again. The monk told her, ‘If you are eager to meet your husband, you must extract sesame oil for five measures, perllia oil for five measures and castor oil for five measures. Then dip your hands in the oil, take them out, and wait until the oil is dried up. Repeat the procedure until you have used up all of the oil. Then, set fire to your ten fingers and make your wish at the front of the temple sanctuary.’ She followed the monk’s instructions again. She did not feel any pain even though her ten fingers were burning. She made her wish at the front of the temple sanctuary. Then, the Lord of Hades mistakenly took it as a fire in Kŭmsang Temple and ordered Scholar Torang to extinguish the fire. The couple was able to meet once again. As Scholar Torang appeared, she attempted to hold him. However, her husband vanished again.

Again, she called the monk and begged him again to meet her husband. The monk told to her, ‘This time, you must pave the road to Kŭmsang Temple on Mount Anne without any tools. You will meet him again after you pave the road from here to the top of the hill.’ She immediately started to pave the road with her poor fingers. She pulled weeds, took out stones, and levelled the ground. About the time she reached the top of the hill, she fainted due to the accumulated strain.

After a long time passed, when she was able to regain her conscious, she was surprised to see her surroundings. She was lying down in deep forest...
alone because she did not look elsewhere or did not feel fear at all until now. She had only one thing on her mind, to meet her husband. She decided to continue her work and started to take out stones, pull weeds and level the ground again. Quite a long time had passed since she started to work again. She glanced down the hill casually and saw a boy coming up the hill. He was also paving the road. As he was getting closer and closer, she was certain that the boy was Scholar Torang.

She thought of herself, ‘I will pretend not to know him this time and when he comes close, I will hold him tight so that he cannot run away from me.’ Then the husband was surprised and asked her, ‘Men and women are classified differently. Who are you?’ Having said so, he looked closely and realized that the woman in front of him was his wife whom he saw on the wedding day.

‘Perhaps heaven was touched by your deep devotion. The Lord of Hades allowed me to pave the road for this hill, and told me that I could be reincarnated as a human again when I finished the pavement by the grace of Buddha. Now I am almost finished with paving the road and we can live together from now on’, said the husband. They held hands together and came down from the mountain toward their home. As they headed for their home, they encountered a very unstable bridge.

The husband told his wife, ‘This is a very weak bridge. Why don’t you go across first? I will follow you.’ Although they declined in favour of each other, the bride was the first one to cross the bridge. When the bride looked behind after crossing the bridge, black clouds and strong wind formed from the north and swept across the bridge and lifted the husband from the bridge to the water. She cried out as she fainted. The husband screamed as he waved his hand out of the water, ‘If you want to live with me, go back home and do as I say. Find a three-foot, three-inch long silk string. Hang one end on the juniper tree that my fifth generation grandfather planted. Put the other end on your neck and hang yourself. We can only live together in the underworld after life. I had to die because of my grandfather’s crime before me. He accumulated his wealth by killing innocent peasants.’ Finally, she learned the way of committing suicide. She cheerfully went back to her house and hanged herself as her husband instructed. She requested at the entrance of the underworld, ‘I am Bride Ch’ŏngjong. Hurry up and allow me to meet Scholar Torang, my husband.’

At that moment, the Lord of Hades found a letter from Kuumsang Temple’s Buddha. The letter contained the following words, ‘Do not assign any work to Bride Ch’ŏngjong, but let her stay in the best place. She is the most sincere person in heaven and earth combined.’ At that time, Scholar Torang was teaching drawing at a village school in the underworld. Ch’ŏngjong opened the door and ran inside. The husband was excited to meet his wife. They lived happily ever after in the underworld.

Later, they were reincarnated in the living world and became worshipped as gods. Since then, when the general public asks a shaman to perform Mangmuk Kut the shaman dedicates two offering tables at both ends – right
and left – for Scholar Torang and Bride Ch’ôngjông. In addition, when offerings are made in the temple, Buddhist monks prepare the first offering for the Buddha, and the next offerings for Scholar Torang and Bride Ch’ôngjông.

The Original Title: Torangsonbae Ch’ôngjônggaksi Nore (Shamanist Song of Scholar Torang and Bride Ch’ôngjông)
The Source: Son Chint’ae, Chosŏn Singa Yup’ŏn (Extent of Shamanist Songs of Korea), Tokyo: Hyangt’o Munhwasa, 1930.

NOTES

1 Saltchŏkmili: a man’s accessory made from bamboo or a horn for hiding sideburns inside the hat.
2 The King of Heaven: in this myth, it refers to the heavenly god’s name, Okhwangsangje, in Taoism.
3 Mangmuk Kut: a shamanistic rite performed in Hamkyŏng Province to comfort departed spirits.
CHAPTER 21

Hallakkungi, the Flower Warden God in the Sŏch’ŏn Flower Garden

Once upon a time there lived two men, Kim Chinguk and Wŏn Chinguk. Kim Chinguk was poor and Wŏn Chinguk was rich, but both shared a common plight: they were childless.

One day, they met a monk from Tŏnggyeumsa Temple, who had come to collect offerings. The monk who already knew their anxieties instructed them that if they would make an offering of a hundred kŭn of gold at his temple, a child would be born to each of them.

Since Kim Chinguk and Wŏn Chinguk were close friends, they decided to go together to give their offerings. Although Kim Chinguk was poor and could not afford to make a gold offering, he brought the best quality rice carefully washed in morning dew. Kim Chinguk bore a son, named Wŏngang, while Wŏn Chinguk had a daughter, named Wŏngangami. On this day they decided their children should get married to each other, and fifteen years later, the two children were wed.

When Wŏngangami was pregnant and big with child, there came a letter from the King of Heaven with these instructions: ‘Classics licentiate Kim Chinguk is in charge of the Flower Warden in Sŏch’ŏn.’

When the time came for Wŏngang to take up his responsibility as the Flower Warden in Sŏch’ŏn, his wife, who was Wŏn Chinguk’s daughter, said, ‘Even crows have their mates and animals their partners. How then can you go and leave me here alone?’

Wŏngang agreed to travel with her to the Sŏch’ŏn Flower Garden, escorted by the messenger of the King of Heaven. The road was arduous and seemingly without end and soon Wŏngang’s wife was suffering from severe pains in her foot. Finally, they could no longer continue, but decided to pass the night in the mountains. In the morning, the travellers woke to the sounds of roosters and dogs and asked a passer-by, ‘Where are these rooster and dog sounds coming from?’

‘It’s the house of Kim Changja’, replied the passer-by. And the passer-by directed them to the house of Kim Changja.

Wŏngangami addressed her husband, ‘I am too weary to continue on to the Sŏch’ŏn Flower Garden or even to return home. Please sell me as a slave to the household of Kim Changja.’

‘How can you ask such a thing of me?’ replied Wŏngang.
But rather than watch his wife perish on the hazardous journey, he decided to do as she asked. He went to talk with Kim Changja, who then consulted his three daughters. The first and second daughters were against the purchase, but because his third daughter was for it, Kim Changja drew up a slave document.

Wonganami was sent to the kitchen, while Wongang was called into the male quarters to negotiate the terms. Wongang said, ‘I am not familiar with the customs of this place, but our custom is to allow a slave and her master to say their farewells in the same room.’

Kim Changja conceded to Wongang’s request and sent for Wongangami.

‘What shall I do with the unborn child in my womb?’ asked Wongangami.

‘If it is a girl, name her Hallaktōki. But if it is a boy, call him Hallakkungi.’

Wongang left with her a thin thread and pair of combs to be used as proof of identity when the time came.

One night, Kim Changja entered the small hut he had built for Wongangami and attempted to take her as his mistress. She refused him, however, saying, ‘When the child now in my womb is born and begins to sing, can run about on a play horse, and is able to shoulder a plough and plough a field, only then will I consent to such a union.’

Kim Changja had no choice but to wait.

As time passed, the child was born and grew big enough to help plough the fields. Kim Changja returned to Wongangami again with the intention of taking her as his mistress. She refused him, however, saying, ‘My lord, the relationship between a master and slave is like that of father and child. How, then, can you attempt to lie with me?’

At this second rejection, Kim Changja became enraged and was about to call an assassin to have her killed when his third daughter dissuaded him, ‘Since killing the woman slave would surely bring us bad fortune, it is better to overwork the mother and son. Have Hallakkungi move fifty loads of wood each day, and have him twist fifty feet of rope out of straw every night. As for the mother, have her produce five rolls of smooth silk and five rolls of wide-striped silk every day.’

Kim Changja heeded his third daughter’s suggestions and demanded unspeakable amounts of wood, rope and silk from the mother and son daily. But when Hallakkungi chopped a single load of wood and loaded it upon an ox, that bundle miraculously transformed into fifty loads on fifty oxen. A bundle of rope turned into fifty loads of rope, as well, and a roll of silk into five loads.

Kim Changja then decided to increase the workload. He ordered Hallakkungi to go into the deep woods, clear a field and sow a large sack of millet seeds. Hallakkungi entered the deep woods and was about to fell trees to clear the field in which to scatter millet seeds when a huge wild boar miraculously appeared and finished the task for him in no time. He then decided that the weather was wrong for planting millet seeds and ordered Hallakkungi to go and regather what he had sown. When Hallakkungi returned to the
field, an army of ants had already picked up the seeds and piled them in one place. Hallakkungi happily returned the seeds to Kim Changja.

‘One seed is missing. Find the missing millet seed’, Kim Changja ordered again.

Resigned, Hallakkungi came out of the gate to retrieve it and found a king ant awaiting him with a single grain of rice millet in his mouth. Hallakkungi placed the seed in Kim Changja’s hand, and herded away fifty oxen for the day’s supply of wood. On the way, Hallakkungi passed three supernatural beings playing chess in the mountains. They called the boy over and said, ‘Today you will encounter a white deer. Bring it back to the Kim Changja’s house. When it escapes, tell your master you are going after it, but instead venture out in search of your father.’

With fifty loads of wood on fifty oxen, Hallakkungi made his way back home. When he saw the white deer on the road, he mounted it and rode back to his master’s house. Kim Changja was so overjoyed at the white deer that he allowed Hallakkungi a day’s rest.

But the white deer fled that night. Kim Changja ordered Hallakkungi to search for the white deer. Hallakkungi said to him, ‘I will search for the white deer as soon as dawn breaks.’

Then Hallakkungi sought out his mother to inquire about the identity of his father. She told Hallakkungi, ‘Your father is the Flower Warden of the Sōch’ón Flower Garden, licentiate Kim’, and she handed Hallakkungi the thin thread and pair of combs that her husband left her as proof.

‘Mother, will you give me a dough mixture of flour and salt to take with me on my travels?’ asked Hallakkungi.

He stored the mixture in a small bundle and Hallakkungi began his three thousand mile journey toward his father.

Kim Changja then dispatched a dog that could travel one thousand miles after Hallakkungi to retrieve him.

‘We are both living creatures, so there is no need for you to carry me in your jaws. Why don’t you have some of my flour and salt dough?’ Hallakkungi said to the dog.

The dough was so salty that the dog had to search one thousand miles for water, and Hallakkungi took this opportunity to flee ten thousand miles.

Kim Changja then dispatched a dog that could travel ten thousand miles after Hallakkungi again.

‘Why don’t you have some of my flour and salt dough?’ Hallakkungi said to the dog.

The dough was so salty that the dog had to search ten thousand miles away for water, and Hallakkungi took this opportunity to escape a billion miles.

Hallakkungi came upon some folk repairing a house and asked if they knew the whereabouts of the Sōch’ón Flower Garden.

‘If you work with us for three years, we will tell you where it is’, replied the people.

So Hallakkungi stayed for three years and then was told to cross a deep
stream and then a shallow stream. When he crossed the streams, Hallakkungi saw seven crows cawing.

‘Who are you? Why do you cry so?’ asked Hallakkungi.

‘We are the crows of the god of Seven Stars. We are crying with hunger’, said the crows.

‘What do you eat to sustain yourselves?’ asked Hallakkungi.

‘We live off bugs that fly our way’, said the crows.

Hallakkungi caught some bugs to offer the crows and asked them for directions to the Flower Garden.

‘When you encounter three weeping female deities, ask them the way’, the crows instructed him.

Hallakkungi did as the crows advised. When he came to the three weeping female deities, and asked, ‘Who are you? Why do you cry so?’

‘We serve the King of Heaven, but we committed a sin and have been forced to draw water using a cracked water jar. We cry because the task cannot be completed’, replied the female deities.

Taking pity on them, Hallakkungi mended the jar with a mixture of hemp, arrow vine and pine resin. He then drew water for them and asked, ‘Where is the Flower Garden?’ Then the three deities showed him the Flower Garden.

‘Here is the Flower Garden’, said the three deities.

At the Flower Garden, Hallakkungi came upon little girls watering the blossoms and asked the whereabouts of the Flower Warden. The Flower Warden appeared and asked, ‘Who are you and why have you come to this place?’

‘I have come in search of my father, the Flower Warden, Wŏngang’, replied Hallakkungi.

‘Can you tell me who your mother is?’ asked the Flower Warden.

‘She is the daughter of Wŏn Chinguk’, replied Hallakkungi.

‘Have you proof?’ asked the Flower Warden.

‘Here are the thread and combs my father left me’, Hallakkungi handed him the proof.

When it was clear that the boy was indeed his son, Wŏngang, overcome with surprise and joy, instructed his son to recount his journey, ‘Tell me what you saw while you were coming here.’ Hallakkungi told everything to his father, Wŏngang.

Then Wŏngang said, ‘The shallow stream and the deep stream represent your bitter bottomless tears, now that your mother has passed away. When Kim Changja could not capture you and bring you back, in rage he had your mother killed.’

At the news of his mother’s awful death, Hallakkungi became overwrought with fury and bitterness. Looking for a means to avenge his mother’s murder, Hallakkungi asked his father, ‘What flower is this?’

‘This flower has powers to kill the living and revive the dead’, said his father.

After that Hallakkungi sought out the master of flowers for instruction,
plucked the flowers of revival, laughter, fighting and assassination, and learned their secrets.

‘Father, I must go back to the world, but will return when my mission is accomplished’, Hallakkungi said to his father.

Hallakkungi then left for the house of Kim Changja, where his former master greeted him in anger, ‘You lied and told me you were pursuing the white deer. Since you did not return for years, I will kill you!’

‘Master, my pursuit of the white deer led me all the way to the Sŏch’ŏn Flower Garden where I was able to pluck for you the flower that grants thousand years of life with one glance and ten thousand years with two glances’, said Hallakkungi.

‘If this is true, let me see this magical blossom’, asked the greedy Kim Changja.

‘Gather every member of your clan so they all may behold this sight’, suggested Hallakkungi. So it was that Kim Changja’s whole household gathered to look upon the flower. Hallakkungi first brought out the bud of laughter and Kim Changja’s household began laughing so hard they were reduced to tears. Hallakkungi then unwrapped the fighting blossom, which caused a huge fight among the Kim Changja family. Finally, he unwrapped the assassin flower, which compelled them all to murder each other.

Hallakkungi revived Kim Changja’s youngest daughter and asked her the whereabouts of his mother’s grave.

‘Your mother is buried in the field of green bamboo’, replied the youngest daughter.

When Hallakkungi went to the green bamboo field, he saw that only his mother’s skeleton remained. A camellia tree had sprouted on her forehead and a paulownia on her stomach. Hallakkungi exposed the flower that had the power to rejoin bones and reassembled her skeleton. He used the bud that grew flesh, and muscles and skin began to reappear on his mother’s bones. The blood and organ blossoms completed his mother’s body.

When Hallakkungi offered up a prayer to the King of Heaven while striking the body three times with a wooden switch, his mother’s corpse jerked back to life. Dazed, his mother exclaimed, ‘My dearest son, what has just happened to me?’

Hallakkungi explained everything to his mother in detail and asked, ‘Why did the camellia tree sprout on your forehead and the paulownia on your stomach?’

‘Let the extracted oil from the camellia tree on my forehead be applied to the heads of women. And let the branches of the paulownia from my stomach be used as mourner’s sticks for all sons who have lost their mothers. They can lean on them during the funeral’, replied his mother.

When Hallakkungi escorted his mother to the Sŏch’ŏn Flower Garden, his father, the Flower Warden praised his son’s good deeds, and said, ‘Let us live here forever. I will be the Great King of the Sŏch’ŏn Flower Garden and you the Flower Warden. Let us then obtain the flowers of life, revival and long life,
and have all the spirits that perished before the age of fifteen ascend to this garden. This is why childless couples and those wanting long life pray to the flowers of life and long life.⁹

The Original Title: Igongbonp’uri (Origin Myth of Igong)
The Source: Ak’amatsu Chijo & Ak’iba Tak’ashi, Choso Musokūi Yōgu, Sang (Studies in Korean Shamanism, First Half), Osak’a: Okhosōjōm, 1937.

NOTES

1 Sŏch’on: I agree that it originated from Buddhism and refers to India. But in most Korean shamanist myths, its place is in Heaven not real India. And it seems to be a sacred place in which two religious elements of shamanism and Buddhism are mixed. So I didn’t translate it into India here.

2 Kūn: a traditional unit of weight equivalent to 1.323 lb.

3 At present just a few mendicant Buddhist monks are seen in Korea.

4 Wŏngang, Wŏngangami: we couldn’t find the children’s name of Kim Chinguk and Wŏn Chinguk in Ak’amatsu Chijo’s version, but could find it in another version of this myth. So I put their name in rendering this manuscript to clear the relations of the characters in the myth.

5 In traditional Korean society, when two families like Kim Chinguk and Wŏn Chinguk are close, they can decide their children should get married to each other although their children are newborn babies or haven’t been born yet. It shows us that a Korean traditional marriage was an affair between two families, not two individuals.

6 The King of Heaven: in this myth, it refers to the heavenly god’s name, Okhwangsangje, in Taoism.

7 Changja: one who is wealthy or one advanced in age.

8 Stick: the chief mourner used a bamboo stick at his father’s funeral, but leaned on a paulownia stick at his mother’s funeral.

9 This myth was translated by consulting an existing translation; Seo Dae Seok. Myths of Korea (Somerset: Jimoondang International, 2000). In the process of my work, I corrected some errors and omissions that were found in the existing translation.
CHAPTER 22

The House God and the House-site Goddess

Ch’onsarang of the country of Ch’ónha and Chit’al of the country of Chiha exchanged vows for a hundred years and gave birth to a boy whose face was beautiful, whose presence was magnificent and whose speech was eloquent. They named the boy Hwang Uyang because he was born at Hwangsan Field and fostered him as the apple of their eyes.

Several days later, Hwang Uyang learned how to toddle and started to waddle along for himself. When he was seven years old, his parents taught him letters. His parents taught him just one letter, but he knew ten letters. He quickly mastered not only letters but also how to handle wood, stone and clay. So people said that he would be a great man in the future.

When Hwang Uyang was twenty years old, he got married and settled down.

One evening, Hwang Uyang dreamed an evil and awkward dream, so he had an ominous presentiment. He, at once, armed himself, put on a helmet, sat on the floor and kept a sharp lookout.

At this very moment, a strong wind blew from the east into one thousand balustrades and one thousand pavilions in the country of heaven. All the buildings collapsed and the castle in heaven was ruined. The king of the country discussed how to rebuild the castle with all the officials. One of the officials said that there was a man, Hwang Uyang, who was living at Hwangsan Field, and that only he could rebuild the castle.

All the officials reached an agreement that they would send a tall, quick messenger for Hwang Uyang.

The messenger who was ordered to capture Hwang Uyang was in a hurry. He wore a soldier’s helmet with a sun-design silk lining, a blue military uniform and tied a red belt around his waist. Then he departed for Hwangsan Field with a letter of attorney, and arrived at Hwang Uyang’s house in a moment.

The god who was in charge of Hwang Uyang’s fortune stopped the messenger as he was attempting to enter Hwang Uyang’s house. The messenger was completely nonplussed because he had no plan to capture Hwang Uyang.

At this time, the Kitchen Goddess saw the messenger standing vacantly on the road.

‘You, messenger! Why are you moving about in confusion?’ asked the Kitchen Goddess.
‘I am a messenger of the country of heaven. One thousand balustrades and pavilions fell under the east wind. Because there is no carpenter to rebuild the buildings, the officials ordered that I capture and bring back Hwang Uyang. However, his fortune god is preventing me from catching him. So I am in an awkward position’, replied the messenger.

‘When Hwang Uyang goes to the toilet around dawn tomorrow, taking off his armour and helmet, you can catch him’, said the Kitchen Goddess.

‘Please, sir, you should naturally stop me from trying to capture and bring back Hwang Uyang. Why do you advise me to do that?’ asked the messenger.
‘I always think that Hwang Uyang and his wife are perfectly monstrous. When Hwang Uyang comes home from a visit, he usually takes off his long socks and throws them at me. Hwang Uyang’s wife usually puts a kitchen knife on the furnace after she whets the knife on the whetstone. It is perfectly monstrous to treat me like this!’ said the Kitchen Goddess.

After the messenger listened to the Kitchen Goddess’s words, he climbed up a hill at the back of Hwang Uyang’s house, and stayed under a dead tree that night, waiting for Hwang Uyang to come out.

On the next day around dawn, as the Kitchen Goddess said, Hwang Uyang took off his armour and helmet, and headed for the toilet. Just at that moment the messenger ran him down, took fast hold of his ankles, and showed him the letter of attorney. When Hwang Uyang saw the letter, he asked, ‘Excuse me! Why do you try to capture and bring me back?’

‘I came to capture you to rebuild the buildings collapsed because of the strong east wind. Let us go in a hurry to the country of heaven’, replied the messenger.

‘Look here! The country of heaven is my fathers; and the country of earth is my mother’s. Who dares capture me?’ shouted Hwang Uyang.

‘You have already fallen into my hands! Quit giving me excuses and let us go fast’, said the messenger.

As the messenger hurried Hwang Uyang away, Hwang Uyang asked for three months to complete his task because he had no tools to build a house. Since his request was rejected by the messenger, he asked for two months, but this was refused as well. At last the messenger gave him only three days and left.

Hwang Uyang was so dumbstruck that he could not eat and became anxious. His wife thought this strange and asked, ‘Husband, why won’t you eat or sleep? What’s on your mind?’

‘They say that women are not smarter than men, but you are too much. Now that you don’t know how the wind blows, you are a sluggish woman. The truth is that one thousand balustrades and pavilions of the country of heaven were blown down by the strong east wind and there is no one to repair it, so the officials of the country of heaven dispatched one messenger to capture and bring me back. I asked him for three months to prepare carpenter’s tools, but he said that was too long. Again, I asked him for two months, but he gave the same reply and gave me only three days. Now I have been ordered to rebuild them, but I don’t have any tools used in the old times, not even a broken auger. Such being the case, what should I do? So I have a worried look’, replied Hwang Uyang.

‘Husband, are you worrying about such a trifle? Please have a meal and sleep well’, Hwang Uyang’s wife spoke comforting words to her husband.

After putting Hwang Uyang to bed after dinner, Hwang Uyang’s wife rubbed an ink stick on the inkstone, wrote prayers to god on the paper and burned up the prayer paper. Thereupon, from the sky five *mal* of powdered iron and five *mal* of steel pieces came down.
a small bellows of the iron and steel. And then by using them she moulded all kinds of carpenter's tools; a big adze, a small adze, a big saw, a small saw, a big chisel, a small chisel, an ink pad and squares. Now these tools were put into a net bag. And she led a donkey out of the stable, groomed its head, tail and abdomen with an iron-brush, and put a saddle made of tiger-skin on it. Finally, she loaded the tools on the donkey.

It dawned brightly, in the meantime Hwang Uyang's wife prepared everything for her husband's trip. She woke up her husband.

When Hwang Uyang woke up, he observed that all the necessary tools were available and everything for his trip was ready. His heart leaped into his mouth and he was delighted. After Hwang Uyang washed his face and hands, he put on wristlets, leggings and an old gown, and ate breakfast with gusto. Then sitting on the donkey he said good-by to his wife.

As Hwang Uyang was about to leave in a hurry, his wife took hold of the donkey's head, shedding tears, and told her husband, 'If anyone, adult or child, asks you anything on your trip, never answer. When you build a house in the country of heaven, you shouldn't slight old wood and desire new wood.'

'Wife, why do you scold a man who is starting on his way?' Hwang Uyang reproved her and set out on the trip to the country of heaven.

Hwang Uyang passed through one field after another until he arrived at Sojin Field. When he arrived there, he encountered So Chinnang who was coming back after constructing a stone-castle in the country of earth.

'Who is the man over there? You look like a king both from the front and from the back', So Chinnang said.

So Chinnang asked him three times, but Hwang Uyang didn't answer. At last he got angry and shouted, 'It is clear that you are an ill-bred fellow!'

Hwang Uyang was trying to do what his wife told him, but he thought that this insult must have brought disgrace upon his parents. He dismounted from his donkey to answer back to So Chinnang and asked, 'He who uselessly talks to a person on a long trip whether an adult or child, asks you anything on your trip, never answer. When you build a house in the country of heaven, you shouldn't slight old wood and desire new wood.'

'Now we are square. I'm So Chinnang of Sojin Field. Where on earth are you going in such a hurry?' asked So Chinnang.

'I'm going to the country of heaven to build an edifice', replied Hwang Uyang.

'If so, do you know sagakbôp? asked So Chinnang.

'I don't know it', replied Hwang Uyang.

'Look! If you don't know it, the traces of your going there will remain, but not the traces of your returning from the country of heaven', said So Chinnang.

'Why did you say that?' asked Hwang Uyang.

'If you touch wood that I used in the old times, you will die by evil spirits of the woods. In the same way, you will die by evil spirits of the stones and clay.'
If you are like that, you will never come back from there', replied So Chinnang.

‘Would you teach me sagakbŏp?’ asked Hwang Uyang.

‘If you exchange your clothes and donkey with me, I will teach it to you’, said So Chinnang.

Hwang Uyang gave unwilling consent to So Chinnang. He wore So Chinnang’s worn-out clothes in exchange for his good clothes, and rode So Chinnang’s donkey affected by mange instead of his good donkey.

‘Now that I have exchanged my clothes and donkey with you, let us learn sagakbŏp’, said Hwang Uyang.

So Chinnang gave Hwang Uyang an answer against his will, ‘I will tell you about it. If you build a house at Ox-Horse Angle, oxen and horses of the house won’t proliferate. And if you build a house at Man-Horse Angle, you will die after you build the house. Keep that in your mind.’

Hwang Uyang listened to So Chinnang’s caution attentively and went straight to the country of heaven.

So Chinnang, who had already exchanged his clothes and donkey with Hwang Uyang, rushed at once to Hwangsan Field to rape Hwang Uyang’s wife. He arrived at Hwang Uyang’s house, went around it, and watched the movements of the house.

At this time, Hwang Uyang’s wife became gloomy after her husband left, went to the back field with two maidservants, Oktanch’un and Tandanch’un to appease her sadness, and was enjoying an outing among the flowers. She tried one thing after another. She scrubbed away the leaves of a willow and floated them on the stream, and suddenly scattered golden orioles sitting on the side of the rocks. Then, soothing sweetbriers, murmured, ‘Sweetbrier! Sweetbrier on the sands! Don’t feel sad about losing your blooms. You die this November and December and will bloom again next March, but my husband went to the country of heaven to build a house only three days ago. The day when he will come back to me is still far-off.’

While Hwang Uyang’s wife was rambling here and there in sorrow, suddenly crows flew away in the air, cawing out. Hwang Uyang’s wife couldn’t stop an inauspicious premonition, so she called the two maidservants, and said, ‘My house will surely be burgled. Go down in a hurry! Close the front gate and keep it under lock and key!’

When Hwang Uyang’s wife came back home and entered into her room hastily, So Chinnang shouted to her as loud as a clap of thunder, ‘Open the gate! When a husband returns from outside, even a closed gate should be opened. Why did you shut the gate that was already open?’

‘My husband left to build a house in the country of heaven three days ago. There is no way he could be back so soon. Besides, your voice and face are different from my husband’s. I don’t know who you are, but you must leave now’, Hwang Uyang’s wife replied from inside.

‘When I built the house in the country of heaven, I finished three years’ work in only three days, so I got sunburned during the daylight hours, and
was wet with cold dew at night. My face got tanned and voice was broken due to that. It is natural that you don’t recognize me. Open the gate quick!” So Chinnang said.

Now when Hwang Uyang’s wife didn’t open the gate, So Chinnang took off his inner shirt that Hwang Uyang’s wife had made herself, and threw it over the wall. Hwang Uyang’s wife looked over the inner shirt and she could see definitely that the sewing was hers, but the smell of the sweat was not her husband’s. Hwang Uyang’s wife thought herself, ‘How on earth did that man steal my husband’ inner shirt? Did that man happen to kill my husband and steal this inner shirt?’

While Hwang Uyang’s wife was worrying about her husband with a sigh of grief, So Chinnang at the end of his patience hovered about the gate and stuck a paper which had ‘ul_’ written on it on the gate. Then the strongly locked gate opened. So Chinnang entered the house and glared at Hwang Uyang’s wife with bulging eyes and a thunderous roar, ‘Can’t you listen to me?’

Hwang Uyang’s wife was in a wretched situation like a fish caught in a net or a chicken bitten by a dog, but she collected her scattered wits, thought up a trick and replied, ‘To begin a new love with you is possible. But how can I easily forget my old love? Tonight there’s a sacrificial rite for my father-in-law and the day after tomorrow for my mother-in-law, so it would be appropriate to share a bed together after the rites.’

So Chinnang thought Hwang Uyang’s wife was right and waited for her to finish the rites, but Hwang Uyang’s wife, instead of performing the rites, tore off a part of her underwear, and bit her big finger to write a letter on the part with her blood: ‘If you return dead, meet me in the underworld, but if you return alive, come to Sojin Field.’ Then Hwang Uyang’s wife placed the letter under one of the foundation stones supporting pillars of her house.

The next day morning, Hwang Uyang’s wife thought of another trick. She called So Chinnang and said, ‘Seven ghosts have possessed my body after performing the rites, so your family will be plagued by your wife’s home’s evil spirits, and my family by my husband’s home’s evil spirits. After gathering up my housekeeping goods, let us go to your field, Sojin Field. And please build an annex on the hill at the back of your house. If I live in the annex for three years, the seven ghosts will come out of my body. Only after that, can I share the same bed with you.’

So Chinnang had no choice, so he returned to Sojin Field, and did as Hwang Uyang’s wife said.

Meanwhile, Hwang Uyang himself was busy working to build a house in the country of heaven. He cut down logs for lumber from the small mountain and the big mountain, and then he made the upper pillars, middle pillars, girders, and horizontal wall struts from the trees, and trimmed upright trees and crooked trees as they stood. He went up a mountain covered with arrow-root vines, cut them, carried them on his head and came down the mountain.

One day Hwang Uyang had strange dreams. He dreamed of his broken top
hat about the first watch (7 p.m. to 9 p.m.) of the night, of his torn upper

cloth about the second watch (9 p.m. to 11 p.m.) of the night and of his

broken bowl about the third watch (11 p.m. to 1 a.m.) of the night.

As soon as Hwang Uyang woke up the next day, he asked for a fortune-

teller to read his fearful, jumpy dream.

The fortune-teller lifted up his case of bamboo fortune slips, chanting a

spell, ‘Heaven gods! Earth gods! Please let my case tell the right fortune.’

Then the fortune-teller chose a few bamboo fortune slips and threw them

on the floor, and said, ‘I can’t tell this fortune. This divination is unclear.’

‘Fortune-teller, please tell me the divination frankly whether it is good or

bad’, said Hwang Uyang.

The fortune-teller threw once more a few bamboo fortune slips, and said,

‘Now, I have a divination sign. Did you have bad dreams last night?

‘Yes, I had bad dreams last night’, replied Hwang Uyang.

‘Did you dream of your broken top hat about the first watch of the night?’

asked the fortune-teller.

‘That’s right’, replied Hwang Uyang.

‘Did you dream of your torn upper cloth about the second watch of the

night?’ asked the fortune-teller.

‘You are right’, replied Hwang Uyang.

‘Did you dream of your broken bowl about the third watch of the night?’

asked the fortune-teller.

‘That’s what it was!’ replied Hwang Uyang.

‘Now, I will read your dream. Listen to me carefully. The first dream tells

you that your house has been destroyed except for the cornerstones. The

second dream tells you that your wife has married someone else. The third

dream tells you that the drinking well in your house is swarming with

tadpoles’, said the fortune-teller.

Hwang Uyang was dumbstruck and wished to return home as soon as he

completed his job, so he quickly finished three years’ work in a year, one

year’s work in a month and a month’s work in a day. As Hwang Uyang

finished his work and looked out of a window, birds were coming back to their

nests.³

After Hwang Uyang finished his job like that, he got on his donkey and

came down to Hwangsan Field in a great hurry. Both mountains and water

were as of old, but his house was already a field of mugworts and only the

cornerstones remained. Hwang Uyang was amazed, so he held one of the

cornerstones, and threw himself down, weeping bitterly.

At this time, low-flying crows flew away cawing ‘kkaok kkaok’ and high-

flying crows flew cawing ‘kkiuk kkiuk’. They sounded very strange, so Hwang

Uyang stopped crying, and said to himself, ‘That the crows’ songs are
different from each other is perhaps because they are trying to tell me some-
thing else. The ‘kkaok kkaok’ song signifies that something pleasant is likely to

happen to me, and the ‘kkiuk kkiuk’ song foretells there must be something

under the cornerstones.’
Hwang Uyang lifted the cornerstone in the front of him and searched under it. As he expected, there was something there, his wife’s underwear that had the message written in blood; ‘If you return dead, meet me in the underworld, but if you return alive, come to Sojin Field.’

Hwang Uyang looked all around again with the letter in his bosom. Everything was in ruins; there were no goldfish swimming buoyantly in the pond of the courtyard, but there were many tadpoles in the drinking well, and the wall around the backyard had crumbled.

Hwang Uyang walked to Sojin Field with a mist of tears and a sigh.

On arriving at Sojin Field, Hwang Uyang sat on top of a willow tree by the drinking well of So Chinnang, and he disturbed his wife’s dreams. So Hwang Uyang’s wife dreamed of cherry flowers in full blossom about the first watch of the night, of a scarecrow hung on top of a door about the second watch of the night and of her broken mirror about the third watch of the night.

After Hwang Uyang’s wife woke from the dreams, she seriously thought about the meaning of her dreams. ‘The first dream tells me that the cherry tree will soon bear fruit. The second dream tells me that my husband is close to me whether he is alive or dead. The third dream tells me that I will soon get a new mirror, in other words, it foretells I will meet my husband before long.’

Hwang Uyang’s wife was very sure of her dreams, so called So Chinnang and said, ‘Look! It seems to me that the seven ghosts came out of my body because I was isolated from you and lived in the annex. Now, I guess I could be in bed with you after performing my ablutions.’

On this, So Chinnang was very delighted, called Oktanch’un and Tandanch’un, and asked both of them to take care of Hwang Uyang’s wife. However, Hwang Uyang’s wife rejected So Chinnang, and said that if she heard someone’s footstep, the seven ghosts would again possess her body. So Chinnang agreed with her inevitably and gave her a gold jar and a gold gourd.

Hwang Uyang’s wife held the gold jar and gourd and went to the drinking well of So Chinnang. When she drew water from the well to take a bath, suddenly the willow tree’s leaves scattered and dropped down into the gold gourd. Hwang Uyang’s wife looked up to the top of the willow tree and her husband was sitting there.

‘If you are dead, come down crying. If you are alive, come down smiling’, said Hwang Uyang’s wife.

To this Hwang Uyang came down laughing from joy and tightly grabbed his wife’s slender hands.

‘Could you not wait? Have you already become another’s wife?’ said Hwang Uyang.

What did I tell you? Because you slighted my notice, I have suffered like this, too. Who can I blame? I have never shared a bed with him to this day, so you don’t need to worry about it. Anyway, if I talk with you here for a good while, we two will be killed by So Chinnang’s sword. Quickly transform yourself into a blue bird and hide in my skirt. After we revenge ourselves on So Chinnang, let us talk about our delightful meeting’, said Hwang Uyang’s wife.
Thus Hwang Uyang turned a somersault three times, transformed himself into a blue bird, entered So Chinnang's house wrapped in his wife's skirt, and hid himself under the floor.

Hwang Uyang's wife called Oktanch'un and Tandanch'un and ordered them, 'Now I will tie the nuptial knot with So Chinnang. Get me a table for alcoholic drinks with side-dishes and serve me with them.'

As Oktanch'un brought the table of side dishes prepared for alcoholic drinks, Hwang Uyang's wife made Tandanch'un offer So Chinnang alcoholic drinks again and again. At last So Chinnang was slightly intoxicated, put his head on Hwang Uyang's wife's lap, and had his shoulders and arms massaged. After Hwang Uyang's wife calmly massaged his shoulders and arms and made him fall asleep, she took out a small adze and a big adze from an attic. She called Hwang Uyang and said, 'Husband, now this fellow has sunk into a sound sleep. Let us revenge ourselves.'

Then the blue bird emerged from the floor, turned a somersault three times and transformed itself into Hwang Uyang. After Hwang Uyang recovered his real form, he pared the skin from the crown of the head of So Chinnang who was in a deep sleep, and put it on his heels. Then Hwang Uyang put skin from So Chinnang's heels on his head. Then he rolled So Chinnang down stone stairs into the yard, and threw him far away, and shouted, 'Do you know your sin?'

Fig. 90 A devil post (upper part).
‘Have mercy on me! I have no sin. I have committed no sin but taking your wife to my home, building an annex on the hill at the back of my house and feeding your wife until now. Please spare my life! In compensation for sparing me, please take my wife and make her your concubine’, begged So Chinnang.

‘I want to kill you, but your heart is too dark. I don’t like even to stain my hands with your filthy blood. Instead, I will make you into a devil post’, said Hwang Uyang.

Hwang Uyang built a big stone box, locked up So Chinnang in the box, and put it up as changsūng, a devil post on the main road so that it would be hated by passers-by. And he had So Chinnang’s wife become a maidservant of tutelary deities to let her feed on the spit of passers-by. And then he transformed So Chinnang’s offspring into a deer, a magpie, a crow, a pheasant and a pigeon, and released them on a high mountain for hunters’ game.

Fig. 91 Devil posts. A devil post called changsūng is set up at the edge of a village or the roadside to serve as a signpost or landmark, or to protect a village from bad spirits, and is made of wood or stone. A pair of posts is put up in common. Human faces are carved on each of the upper parts, and the Great General of protecting Heaven (Chônicađaejanggun) and the Great Woman General of protecting the Earth (Chihayōjanggun) are carved on the lower parts of each.
After Hwang Uyang and his wife revenged themselves like that, they left Sojin Field to go back to their home. However, on their way home, the sun went down, so they stayed overnight in a field of reeds. Hwang Uyang’s wife took off her skirt and hung it like a curtain, and took off her underwear to use as a ground cloth.

Hwang Uyang’s wife wondered what her husband had done when he lived in the country of heaven, and asked, ‘What skills did you learn during the time you were working in the country of heaven?’

‘I didn’t learn any new skills, but I learned that I could finish three years’ work in a day. When I finished all of the work and looked out of a window, birds were coming back to their nests’, replied Hwang Uyang.

‘You have learned a good skill’, said Hwang Uyang’s wife.

‘After you left, I used to pass the time crying. One day, as I prepared a prayer paper and offered it to the country of heaven, the King of Heaven gave me a plate of silkworms. I raised them diligently for ten days and obtained five mal of blue, white and yellow cocoons each. When I wove in front of the loom, finished making your suit and looked out of the east window, people were busy preparing for lunch’, replied Hwang Uyang’s wife.

‘You have a great skill, too’, said Hwang Uyang.

‘Anyway, though we are over forty years old, we still have no child. No chief mourner will follow the back of our death carriages and nobody will serve even a glass of water on the ritual tables for memorializing us if we pass away’, Hwang Uyang’s wife sighed.

Hwang Uyang’s wife heaved a sigh sorrowfully like this, and Hwang Uyang spoke comforting words to his wife, ‘Now, we can’t have any children. However, we can live in conjugal harmony. If we die, I will become a house god and you will become an earth goddess. Let us roam about all over the country. When we arrive at a predestined family, let us build a house, give it wealth, rank, and fame, and prosperity for all time.’

Thus Hwang Uyang became the House God of every street and corner and his wife became the House-site Goddess.

The Original Title: Sŏnju Kut (Shamanist rite of the House God)

NOTES

1 Mal: equivalent to 4.765 US gallons.
2 Sagakbŏp: a carpenter tells fortunes about how to repair a house from the owner’s age.
3 Birds come back to their nests with the coming of night. Accordingly, this sentence states that Hwang Uyang has great building-construction techniques.
4 Stone stairs: these are built to walk up and down between the yard and the floor of the house.

5 In another version, Hwang Uyang makes So Chinnang sŏnang, a tutelary deity.

6 In traditional Korean society, most women start hand-weaving after supper and finish the next morning. It is an impossible task that one could weave silk and make it into a suit in one night. This sentence says that Hwang Uyang’s wife has great skills.

Fig. 92 A noble-couple (from mural paintings of Koguryŏ). Fourth to fifth century.
MYTHS ABOUT

THE GODS OF VILLAGE SHRINES
CHAPTER 23

The Snake Goddess Migrated to Cheju Island

A long time ago, several consecutive magistrates of Naju were forced from office. People thought this was strange and many were intimidated by the thought of becoming the next magistrate of Naju.

At that time there was a man, Mr Lee, who lived in Yongju.

‘If I become magistrate of Naju, I will serve the entire three-year term’, Mr Lee said. And he volunteered and received a royal decree and, in this way, his wish came true.

As he set out for his post, he arrived in front of Mount Yong in Naju. Suddenly thunder pealed across the sky, a hard rain fell on the entire area. When he asked a local official who was accompanying him what was happening.

‘There is an indigenous magistrate in this district. That is why this is happening’, replied the official.

‘Is the indigenous magistrate more extraordinary than me?’ asked Magistrate Lee.

‘Yes, the magistrate is a shrine spirit’, said the official.

‘What should I do?’ asked Magistrate Lee.

‘Dismount from your horse and it should be all right’, said the official.

And so Magistrate Lee got down off the horse. Suddenly the sky cleared, the sun turned red and he arrived safely at his post.

Not three days later, Magistrate Lee heard that the Mount Yong shrine was a propitious place. He arrived in front of Mount Yong and fog rolled in from all four directions until it was pitch black before his eyes. The local official who accompanied him said, ‘My master, please read a Buddhist scripture!’

And Magistrate Lee read the scripture, ‘If you are a divine spirit, please lift this fog.’

And the fog disappeared in all directions and it became clear before Magistrate Lee’s eyes. He climbed Mount Yong and saw a big house that charmed people’s eyes with its eight-storey pavilion with wind-bells hanging from each of its four corners. Magistrate Lee called for the hereditary caretaker of the shrine and asked, ‘Where is the spirit?’

‘If you intend to see the spirit, you must hold a shamanist ritual’, said the hereditary caretaker.

And when they held the shamanist ritual, a giant dragon with three heads and nine tails appeared with its top touching the sky and its bottom touching the ground.
‘That thing is the spirit’, said the shaman.
‘Is the dragon holding a magic gem?’ asked Magistrate Lee.
‘It seems like it has the magic gem in its mouth, but I don’t see it’, said the shaman.
‘What kind of divine power does it have to repeatedly force the magistrate of Naju from his office?’ said Magistrate Lee.

And so Magistrate Lee sent a crimson-hooded assassin to chop up the dragon god, put it in the shrine room and burn it up. It was reincarnated as a jade baduk stone and roamed about like the crane of green mountains.

At that time, Cheju Island’s Mr Kang of the punishment bureau and Mr Han of the personnel bureau intended to pay tribute to the king. On the way to Seoul, they anchored their boat in the Han River and, as they were stepping onto land, a jade baduk stone suddenly fell from the sky. It shone with luminescent splendour. Thinking that it was some object made of iron, they put it in their bag and went on to Seoul. All other tributes from Korea’s eight provinces were rejected. Only Mr Kang of the punishment bureau and Mr Han of the personnel bureau, who came from Cheju Island’s T’osan, were able to pay tribute. They made both a great deal of profit.

When they left Seoul they were quite happy and on the way thought, ‘This jade baduk stone must be the reincarnation of some extraordinary divinity. The success of the tribute to the king comes from this god’s help. The topography is rough and difficult and the people are simple on Cheju Island, so if we bring this thing back with us, there’s a danger it will start a disgraceful affair.‘

And so they put the jade baduk stone back down in its original place and started across the Han River in their boat. But the weather suddenly changed and big waves and a strong wind came up and lasted for three months and ten days.

They sought out a great master in a Buddhist temple, who said, ‘There is a god you must bring to Cheju Island. If you do not pay respect to that god, you will return as spirits.‘

And this is why, in the eleventh month, in the fierce cold, they took off their clothes and bathed in the waters of the Han River and found a baduk stone, which they brought to the shrine of ships. They prepared every kind of Buddhist offering and held a ritual. After this, they noticed that the waves had calmed and a light fair wind was blowing gently. They were as happy as if they’d been saved from death, and raised a big sail and departed. Not ten days later, they arrived close to Cheju Island and the sailors said, ‘That thing is a ghost without a doubt. If you bring it to Cheju Island, we’re likely to be harmed. We’ll receive complaints from the people of Cheju Island.‘

The sailors each expressed their honest thoughts, but their opinions about the baduk stone were different, so they were unable to settle their disagreement. In the end, the jade baduk stone was hurled into the depths of the great sea. At that moment, a hurricane suddenly blew up. All the people on the boat were frightened to the root of their souls and made a desperate effort to reach land, but they failed. They were unable to go to Choch’ŏn. Nor could they get
to Kimnyŏng. They were simply battered about here and there by the waves until they were exhausted. Finally, they were tipped to one side by a violent wave and washed up on the beach of Yŏn village. Their whole bodies were fatigued and senseless. The boat people dropped with exhaustion as if they were dead.

At that time, a woman as beautiful as the Moon Palace's lady-in-waiting arrived and said, ‘Mr Kang of the punishment bureau and Mr Han of the personnel bureau have rendered meritorious service. And so …’

But before she finished speaking, they woke up and realized it was a dream.

After that the Mount Yŏng shrine goddess was placed to the right of the Yŏn village god, Lady Myŏngwi asked her, ‘Where are you the god of?’

‘I am the Mount Yŏng village goddess in Naju’, replied the Mount Yŏng shrine goddess.

‘Why did you come here?’ asked Lady Myŏngwi. ‘I came here to look at the land, to look at the water, to look at the people’, replied the Mount Yŏng shrine goddess.

‘Here the land is mine, the water is mine and the people are mine’, said Lady Myŏngwi.

‘Where is there a vacant place?’ asked the Mount Yŏng shrine goddess.

‘T’osan Hadang is vacant’, replied Lady Myŏngwi.

‘Well, please show me how to get there’, said the Mount Yŏng shrine goddess.

Lady Myŏngwi recommended Grand Master Lee as a guide. And so the Mount Yŏng shrine goddess went accompanied by the guide to T’osan, but Yŏngsanju T’ohogwan in Sangch’ŏn was enjoying himself there with many people to the accompaniment of music. When he saw a beautiful woman passing by, he suspected these people were not from Cheju Island and so he followed them. He went along behind them, but the Mount Yŏng shrine goddess felt his presence and quickly escaped. The Mount Yŏng shrine goddess arrived at Kŏsinsemimul in T’osan, drank water out of her hands, thought this was a suitable place and so took her place there. Then Yŏngsanju T’ohogwan from Sangch’ŏn rushed in and grabbed her wrist.

‘You are evil! Are you the child of a gentleman-scholar? Are you the child of the middle class? Women aren’t allowed to walk around alone on Cheju Island’, the Mount Yŏng shrine goddess scolded him vigorously.

The Mount Yŏng shrine goddess chopped off her wrist grabbed by Yŏngsanju T’ohogwan with a silver knife. Then she coiled a silk towel around her self-inflicted wound and, with a splash, threw herself into the sea.

Yŏngsanju T’ohogwan, not having realized that she was a goddess, felt ashamed when he discovered the rudeness he had done and left.

After that the Mount Yŏng shrine goddess took her place in Hadang. But nobody came there to offer prayers, and no one ever treated her to a single glass of a sweet drink.

One day, the daughter of Overseer O, accompanied by maidservant Cho, went to the lotus pond at Sumang village to do the wash.
At that time, the Mount Yong shrine goddess looked out on the southern sea and saw a foreign ship. And so she raised a raging wind and caused a shipwreck and the crew barely escaped death and reached land. The crew discovered Sumang village’s lotus pond and went there in search of water. They saw a beautiful girl and, like eagles, they attacked her to rape her. The maidservant Cho took flight and escaped like a flash of lightning, but in the end they caught Overseer O’s daughter. Obstinately she resisted the base and lustful men who had captured her, but in the final fight the chaste young girl died. The cowardly sailors fled like the rushing wind.

When the maidservant Cho came back, she saw her mistress who was covered with blood. The blood-stained corpse was just staring up at the sky in contrast to her normal appearance which was unblemished, like the Jade Emperor’s lady-in-waiting. The maidservant went to her side and looked at her, but tears made it hard to see. Now when the maidservant wiped away the tears and saw her in full, she saw a gruesome scene; blood was flowing out from her once beautiful lips and soaking her gloomy face and clothes, so the corpse was indeed dripping with blood.

The maidservant wailed loudly, ‘Mistress, just once come back to life. Sorrowful mistress, merciful mistress!’

But it was silent in all directions and there was no answer. Her parents’ grief was so deep that they buried their daughter and mourned for her day and night.

At that time, Mr Kang of the punishment bureau and Mr Han of the personnel bureau were married to each other’s sisters and each had a lovely daughter. In the heat of the sixth month the two daughters were pounding at the barley mill when all of a sudden they got sick and were totally paralysed. Obviously, this was a sudden illness, so Mr Kang and Mr Han sent for an acupuncturist who would perform acupuncture on their sick daughters. The two girls, however, went mad and couldn’t recognize their parents or family or any of the village people.

As Mr Kang and Mr Han asked a shaman, prayed and held a ritual, the daughters shrieked with the goddess’s voice and told all about things that Mr Kang and Mr Han underwent when they went to pay tribute to the king in Seoul and told the story about the killing of the daughter of Overseer O. And finally the goddess’s voice was added through the daughters’ mouth as follow: ‘Since I have entered T’osan Hadang, I am defending that place all the time. And O’s daughter is below me recording the deeds of the people. After you got married with the gifts I gave you, you failed to serve me with utmost sincerity. And so I gave your daughters the spirit sickness. In the chest at the bedside of your daughters there is rough silk and fine silk. You should take that and for fourteen days hold a ritual. This will save your daughters.’

When Mr Kang and Mr Han opened the chest, sure enough, rough silk and fine silk were there. When they took it out, beneath the silk there was a snake. They felt suspicious about it, so they at once held a shamanist rite for it, and then the daughters were cured. And so in this manner, the village people
began to serve the goddess sincerely as the master of the shrine, and their ancestor.4,5

The Original Title: T’osandangbonp’uri (Origin Myth of T’osan Shrine’ Goddess)
The Source: Ak’amatsu Chijo & Ak’iba Tak’ashi, Chosŏn Musokŭi Yŏngu, Sang (Studies in Korean Shamanism, First Half), Osak’a: Okhosŏjŏm, 1937.

NOTES

1 Woman: in this myth the Mount Yŏng shrine goddess transformed herself into a jade baduk stone, a woman, and a snake, etc.
2 Yŏngsanju T’ohogwan: the chief guardian god of Mount Halla on Cheju Island.
3 Snake: the Mount Yŏng shrine goddess, that is, T’osan Hadang goddess in the last part of this myth.
4 Ancestor: of course, a snake is not a real ancestor, but Cheju folks called it their ancestor, because they believed that it helped them to earn much money as if their real ancestors did that.
5 This myth was translated by consulting an existing translation; Seo Dae Seok. Myths of Korea (Somerset: Jimoondang International, 2000). In the process of my work, I corrected some errors and omissions that were found in the existing translation.
CHAPTER 24

Gods Protecting a Village

In the country of Sŏlmae in Cheju, the god named Ilmungwan Paramun was born. He wore his hair in a fistlike topknot with a horsehair-woven headband, a soldier’s hat made of animal fur with a sun-design silk lining and a string of bright-round amber in clusters, trousers of silk from the East with a phoenix design, and a jacket of silk from the North with a phoenix pattern.

As he set forth with a drawn bow, his phoenix eyes glared fiercely. He was really a man of commanding presence. If he shot an arrow, three thousand troops would appear; and if he shot another, the three thousand troops would disappear. Besides, he was well-versed in astronomy and geography.

One day, the god Ilmungwan Paramun heard a rumour that in the far, far away country of Hongt’o, there was a beautiful girl by the name of Ko Sanguk, so he mounted a blue cloud and went to find the place. He requested to meet her and, just as expected, a beautiful girl came out.

‘I have longed for you and have journeyed a long way to meet you’, said Ilmungwan.

Ko Sanguk was happy to meet him. She said, ‘Last night I had the strangest dream. I dreamed that I would have the pleasure of meeting you today.’

After she told him that, they were married and lived happily for a few days.

But several days later, another beautiful woman appeared. This one was many times more beautiful than even Ko Sanguk.

‘Who is the beautiful woman?’ asked Ilmungwan.

‘She is my younger sister’, replied Ilmungwan.

After Ilmungwan and Ko Sanguk’s younger sister exchanged civilities to each other, they got along well.

From that time on, Ilmungwan began to feel no love for Ko Sanguk but for Ko Sanguk’s younger sister. He fell even deeper in love with her than he was with Ko Sanguk. He couldn’t forget her even for a moment, so his heart was getting dark every day. He felt a pain every time he met her, but he longed for her if he didn’t meet her. Now he was not a brave hero, but only an ordinary man, a blind lover and a restless person.

Ko Sanguk’s younger sister felt the same way. She couldn’t show her true colours, her unreturned love towards Ilmungwan, so she only felt a pain deep in her heart. Ko Sanguk, however, didn’t know Ilmungwan’s anguish, and Ilmungwan didn’t sense Ko Sanguk’s aching heart. Although they always missed each other, every time they met they felt awkward, and in the end they only treated each other coldly.
About twenty days flew by in this way. Ilmungwan, at last, decided to tell Ko Sanguk's younger sister of his affection towards her.

One day, in moonlight at midnight, Ilmungwan called Ko Sanguk's younger sister and suddenly took her by the wrist, but he couldn't utter a word, just only shed tears. Her face also was bathed in tears. They were much the same, but they could not cry because they were afraid that Ko Sanguk would be awakened from sleep. Anyway, they confessed their love for each other, and they made a plan to elope together without Ko Sanguk's knowledge.

Several days later, in the deep of night, Ilmungwan and Ko Sanguk's younger sister met in secret, mounted a blue cloud, and ran away until they arrived at Mount Halla, the numinous mountain on Cheju Island.

Ko Sanguk woke up in the morning and saw that Ilmungwan Paramun had disappeared. She searched through the entire house, but there was no trace of him. She went to ask her sister, but there was no trace of her either. Only then did Ko Sanguk realize that the two had run away under cover of night. She decided to find out where they had gone. She sent a benediction to heaven and held out a holy flag. The flag fluttered furiously in the direction of Mount Halla even against a headwind.

Ko Sanguk followed the flag and was led to Mount Halla. There she discovered her younger sister who had fled with Ilmungwan Paramun living with him like husband and wife and intoxicated with love. Ko Sanguk's fury resounded through the heavens and, intending to kill both with a single blow, she launched a fierce attack with her catapult. Her younger sister didn't give in, however, and raised a fog that hid her body. Wrapped in a fog like pitch-black night, Ko Sanguk became confused. Although she prayed to the King of Heaven and performed magical arts several times, she could not beat her younger sister. Unable to do anything else, she asked her younger sister to gather the fog. ‘You, a cruel and heartless wench! When I attacked you first, I couldn't kill you because you are my blood sister. You, a sinner, wanted to kill me dead, though, with the black fog. How could you be like that? Didn’t you feel sorry for intending to kill me? You, a wicked woman! I can’t have the heart to kill you. Now let us not hurt each other. Take away the fog!’

As Ko Sanguk asked for compromise, Ilmungwan broke a branch of a Chinese juniper and fixed it into a rocky cliff, and then the branch was transformed into a big rooster crying cock-a-doodle. Then the fog cleared, and next the sun came up in the east, so she could see all around.

Ko Sanguk shouted with anger, ‘Sister, a damned bitch! Ilmungwan, a fellow worse than a brute! I believed at first that if I killed you two, it would appease my anger. I, however, couldn’t allow myself to do it. Sister, a witch! You are no longer my younger sister. Change your family name to “Chi”. Though I want to go back to my hometown, I will go wherever my feet lead me because I am ashamed for your folly that would be obviously laughed at by everybody. You, go to the place you want. Let us go our separate ways.’

Thus, Ko Sanguk severed all her ties and descended Mount Halla.

Chi Sanguk, that is Ko Sanguk’s younger sister, and Ilmungwan decided to
look for a place, so they put down a telescope and compass and with them they surveyed the area. They found a suitable place at Salorūm’s summit on Mount Halla. There they set up a white tent and established their territory.

Kim Pongt’ae from upper Sŏdong who wore outwear made of otter fur and a topcoat made of dog-skin and rode a horse, had gone to the mountain to hunt with his dog. When he saw the white tent, he thought, ‘Only gods are allowed white tents. That’s strange. They must be gods.’

And so he went within a hundred paces and, bringing his two hands together, he bowed deeply. Ilmungwan saw this and asked him a question, ‘What kind of person are you?’

‘I’m Kim Pongt’ae from upper Sŏdong’, replied Kim.

‘Why did you come here?’ asked Ilmungwan.

‘I came to hunt. What type of god are you?’ asked Kim.

‘I am Ilmungwan Paramun who was born in the country of Sŏlmae. And this is Chi Sanguk from the country of Hongt’o. She has power over rain that falls on the earth’, said Ilmungwan.

‘Why did you come here?’ asked Kim.

‘We received an order from the Jade Emperor to come, look and take control of the people’, said Ilmungwan.

‘Oh, I see’, said Kim.

‘You are destined to be our guide, so you must lead the way’, ordered Ilmungwan.

‘Yes, I would be much obliged’, said Kim.

‘What is the name of yonder village?’ asked Ilmungwan.

‘That is upper Sŏgwī. The one below it is lower Sŏgwī’, replied Kim.

‘And the one to the west, which village is that?’ asked Ilmungwan.

‘That is Sŏhŭng village’, replied Kim.

‘Well then, show us the way to upper Sŏgwī’, said Ilmungwan.

And so Ilmungwan Paramun and Chi Sanguk came to upper Sŏgwī, but it was not a suitable place for them to assume their places.

‘We will have to stay at your home for hundred days. What do you think about that?’ asked Ilmungwan.

‘My house is filthy and dirty. If you stay at my house, you will smell all kinds of stench: dust, smoke, cooked food, people. May I humbly inform you that you can’t stay in my house?’ replied Kim.

‘All right. Let us go your house’, said Ilmungwan.

Kim Pongt’ae was obliged to show them his house. And then he built them a small wooden-house because he couldn’t live with them under the same roof.

‘I am very sorry to say that you will stay at this house for the time being’, said Kim.

Ilmungwan and Chi Sanguk stayed there for three months. But the smells of cooked food and dust there displeased them, and they didn’t like the sight of people riding horses, nor did they like the sight of animals. So they thought, ‘we can’t stay here anymore’, and they decided to leave.
‘We are sorry to give you so much trouble. Several months from now, you will hear from us’, they said to Kim. They went to a cave named Môkkohul and assumed their places there. They liked the sound of the rushing brook and the luxuriousness of the woods, but could not endure the melancholy and so they decided to find a new place.

‘Although we are in discord with Ko Sanguk, maybe she will help us. What do you say to that?’ asked Ilmungwan.

‘I agree’, said Chi Sanguk.

So they went to find Ko Sanguk.

Meanwhile, after Ko Sanguk left Mount Halla, she became a village goddess in Sôhong district. Ilmungwan and Chi Sanguk sent word to Ko Sanguk; ‘we would like to meet you sooner or later at Kasimôrimaetdol.’

Ilmungwan, Chi Sanguk and Ko Sanguk met at the appointed place with one another, Ko Sanguk had not yet forgiven her younger sister.

‘Why did you call for me?’ asked Ko Sanguk.

‘Rather than continuing in this manner, we came to consult harmoniously with you about how we should divide the boundary for the purpose of taking both land and people’, said Ilmungwan.

‘We’ve cut our ties once, so what is harmony and consultation to us?’ Ko Sanguk said cold-heartedly.

Nevertheless, Ilmungwan pleaded with her and Ko Sanguk suggested that they decide the boundary by shooting an arrow and throwing a stone. First Ko Sanguk threw a stone with her catapult, next Ilmungwan shot an arrow. At once the arrow and stone flew far away in the air. Ko Sanguk’s stone landed at Hakdam and the arrow of Ilmungwan landed at Munsôm.

‘By making Hakdam the boundary between you and me, I will occupy Sôhong district. You can occupy upper and lower Sôgwí, that is, Tonghong district located in the north of Munsôm. Once you go there, the people from Sôhong district cannot marry Tonghong villagers and Tonghong villagers cannot come to Sôhong district. You should remember that’, said Ko Sanguk.

After she said that, Ko Sanguk entered Sôhong district and Ilmungwan and Chi Sanguk went to lower Sôgwí and assumed their place there. But no people came there to perform rituals for them.

One day, the eldest grandson of the O family from upper Sôgwí became ill. He was in grave condition and told the entire story of Ilmungwan and Chi Sanguk. He said that it was because people neglected these gods that they had made him ill. And so the O family went to lower Sôgwí and consulted with the Song family and they gathered the people of upper Sôgwí and told them the story. Then they built a shrine and went to Seoul and bought all types of silk, gold and silver rings, big pearls and strings with amber, and offered them to the gods.

After that, they celebrated Kwasemunandaejae, the New Year’s Great Ritual, during the first month, Yongsinimaji, the Ritual to welcome the wind god, on the fifteenth day of the second month, Mabullimjae, the Ritual for the horse, on the thirteenth day of the seventh month, and the Birthday Ritual on
the first day of the eleventh month. Afterward, Kim Pongt’ae took charge of these rites for Ilmungwan and Chi Sanguk. So these two gods became village gods in upper and lower Sŏgwi.

Before that, Imperial Kŭmsang’s wife, who protected Sujin Cove, heard that some new gods had assumed their places in upper Sŏgwi, and she went to find and greet them.

‘What kind of gods are you?’ asked Imperial Kŭmsang’s wife.

‘We are Ilmungwan and Chi Sanguk’, replied Ilmungwan and Chi Sanguk.

‘What for did you come here?’ asked Imperial Kŭmsang’s wife.

‘We came to rule the people of upper and lower Sŏgwi’, replied Ilmungwan and Chi Sanguk.

‘I have ruled the people of lower Sŏgwi until now’, said Imperial Kŭmsang’s wife.

‘Oops! We made a mistake. If we had known that you were here, we wouldn’t have come here. We are very sorry to trouble you’, said Ilmungwan and Chi Sanguk.

Thereupon Imperial Kŭmsang’s wife laughed and showed them her kindness.

‘I am growing weak and cannot stop the dangers coming from both the east and the west. Nor can I rule the people from east to west. If you will rule the people of upper and lower Sŏgwi, I will take charge of the Dragon Palace and

Fig. 93 Painting of Magistrate Lee's inspection tour of Cheju Island. This painting was by Kim Namgil who drew Magistrate Lee Hyŏngsang's (1653–1733) inspection tour on Cheju Island in 1702.
rule over the diving women, coming and going ships, and the visitors on the ships’, said Imperial Kûmsang’s wife.
So Imperial Kûmsang’s wife went to the Dragon Palace. And Ilmungan Paramun and Chi Sanguk took charge of upper and lower Sŏgwī, ruled over them and received ritual offerings from the villagers.¹

NOTE

¹ This myth was translated by consulting an existing translation; Seo Dae Seok. *Myths of Korea* (Somerset: Jimoondang International, 2000). In the process of my work, I corrected some errors and omissions that were found in the existing translation.
CHAPTER 25

Cheju Island’s Divine Gods

The god of the upper Song Shrine is Kŭmbaekju, the god of the middle Song Shrine is Saemyŏngju and the gods of the lower Song Shrine are Paramuni’s parents from India.

Paramuni always disobeyed his parents. Therefore, his parents put their son into a stone box, put into his mouth a gem that emits light at night and floated the box on the sea. The box floated here and there for about three years and eventually arrived at the gate of the Dragon King’s palace.

A dog barked at the box. The Dragon King asked his three daughters the reason why the dog barked.

The first daughter answered that was because stars were twinkling on the sky and the net was swinging on the gate. The second daughter answered that it was because the wind was blowing. Only the third daughter answered correctly that it was because a box was hanging on the gate.

The Dragon King asked his three daughters to bring the box and opened it. Within the box, was a man who had Dragon’s eyes and a long, thick triangular beard, and a gem in his mouth that emitted light at night and who was sitting in front of a heap of books.

‘Who are you?’ asked the Dragon King.

‘I came here because of my unfilial behaviour’, said Paramuni.

Paramuni explained everything. After listening, the Dragon King gave him due credit and made him marry his third daughter.

However, after the marriage the couple never visited him, and the Dragon King was so angry that he expelled them to the secular world.

The exiled couple arrived at Cheju Island, visited the shrine of Paramuni’s parents and told the whole story. After listening, the parents praised their son for his creditable behaviour, let the couple live with them and let them move away after several years.

After leaving his parents and going to T’osan, the daughter of the Dragon King said, ‘This is my first visit to Cheju Island and I don’t know anything about it. Therefore, I want to tour with Mount Halla first.’

‘Do what you want’, Paramuni lightly answered. When she separated from her husband and climbed up Mount Halla alone, there was a prolonged drought for seven years. She was thirsty and could not find even a drop of water. The anxious lady luckily found some water from the spoor of a young wild boar. Gladly, she spread a handkerchief on the water and sucked at it carelessly with the hair of a wild boar.
When she returned to T’osan and met her husband, he unpleasantly asked her, ‘Why is there a bloody smell on your body?’

‘In fact, when I was on top of the mountain, I was thirsty and anxious to find water. I luckily found some water from the spoor of a young wild boar. I spread a handkerchief on the water and sucked at it, but I carelessly sucked at a hair of the wild boar, too’, said the daughter of the Dragon King.

‘What odd behaviour for a decent lady!’ Paramuni was angry. Paramuni exiled his wife to Mara Island. Thereafter, he got the ninth daughter of Saegum-sang as a second wife. One day, the second wife asked, ‘Where is your first wife?’

‘I exiled her because she had an unchaste demeanour’, said Paramuni.

‘What happened?’ asked the second wife.

After listening to the whole story, she said, ‘How can we live together if you exile your wife due to such a small misdemeanours? I will go and bring her here.’

‘Do what you said’, Paramuni said.

When the second wife visited Mara Island, the daughter of the Dragon King already had seven boys and lived a miserable life.

‘Oh! My poor older sister! Let us go!’ the second wife said.

‘Who are you and why do you want to save a person like me?’ asked the daughter of the Dragon King.

‘I am the second wife of Paramuni. When I realized that you are innocent but expelled, I came here to suggest you that come back and live with me’, replied the second wife.

‘Oh! What a thoughtful person you are! I will do what you say’, said the daughter of the Dragon King.

After they returned to T’osan, the two wives lived with their husband and seven boys.

One day, the three decided to become divine gods of Cheju Island. The first and the second wife decided to become the god of Ilil Shrine, Paramuni and his seven sons decided to be gods of each village shrine of Cheju Island. They governed the secular world.

The Original Title: Sinjung-bnp’uri (Origin Myth of Divine Gods)
The Source: Ak’amatsu Chijo & Ak’iba Tak’ashi, Choso’n Musoküi Yöngu, Sang (Studies in Korean Shamanism, First Half), Osak’a: Okhosöjóm, 1937.
CHAPTER 26

Sir Paekju and Sir Kŭmsang, Witchcrafters

When Paekju, Im Chŏngguk’s daughter who was born in a grove of bamboo outside Sŏdaemun,1 Mount Nam, Seoul, was seven, she was abandoned by her father and mother because of her mischievous behaviour. Then she became the second-wife of her maternal uncle who lived in the Dragon Palace under the sea.

Seven fathers-in-law taught her seven kinds of witchcraft, gave her magic bags: a blue bag with blue powder, a white bag with white powder, a red bag with red powder, a black bag with black powder, a yellow bag with yellow powder and a green bag with green powder, and gave her a knot, chuhwang-dangsa.2

One sunny day, the eighth of March, when she was fifteen, her uncle opened the gate of the Dragon Palace and let her go. Paekju went back to her parents and begged for their mercy. However, her parents still angry abandoned her again, saying, ‘Go wherever you want.’ Then, fifteen-year-old Paekju bid them farewell with her face bathed in tears. Then, going out with a maid, she guessed the Secrets of Nature, and figured out that her maternal grandfather lived on Mount Halla on Cheju Island. Therefore, she headed towards the south to find her grandfather.

Passing by several market-places in which rice cake, cooked rice, ramie, grasses and trees were for sale, Paekju stayed in Ch’ungch’ŏng Province for a day and then went down to Chŏlla Province. When she went over a steep ridge, she saw a thousand scholars playing with many kwangdae, talented entertainers.

Paekju ordered the maid, ‘Go and borrow some musical instruments!’

The maid asked the thousand scholars, ‘Sir, Paekju wants to borrow some musical instrument from you.’

‘What is the sense of it? A woman is a wicked being even in a dream’, the thousand scholars shouted, and the maid told her what the thousand scholars said. Paekju was ashamed and took out the blue bag and blew blue powder toward the thousand scholars. Suddenly they complained of pains, saying, ‘I feel a pain in my chest’, ‘I have diarrhoea’, ‘I am going to die.’

Watching this scene, one scholar acknowledged her extraordinariness and apologized to her, ‘Please, save our lives. We will give you whatever you want.’ On hearing this Paekju lifted the spell and then the thousand scholars were saved.
She borrowed one instrument called a Kōmungo and played it while singing about her sorrow when she separated from her parents.

Paekju took leave of the thousand scholars, passed through several places and arrived on Cheju Island. She went to Lady Chŏngjung, who had settled on Apsŏn Island, to introduce herself. 'My name is Paekju, Im Chŏngguk's daughter who was born in a grove of bamboo outside of Sŏdaemun, Mount Nam, Seoul.'

'Why are you here?' asked Lady Chŏngjung.

'Sir Chŏnja who lives on Mount Halla, Cheju Island, is my grandfather. I am going to visit him. Could you show me the way?' asked Paekju.

Then, the lady called the Illrwetdo goddess who settled on Changgwi Hill and ordered, 'Guide her to the mountain.'

Then, they passed through several places and hills, and crossed a bridge. When they entered the riverside at Saetdari, a young lady passed by.

'Who are you?' asked Paekju.

'I am skipper Hŏ's daughter', said the young lady.

'Is there a room for me to stay tonight?' asked Paekju.

'Yes, please follow me', the young lady said.

When Paekju found a seat, skipper Hŏ's daughter asked, 'What kind of food do you like to eat?'

'I cannot eat any food that bare hands have touched because of the smell of the hands, or that a metal knife has touched because of the smell of the knife. But I can eat various fruit cookies cut by string, a hoof-shaped rice cake, a steamed rice cake, cooked buckwheat within a brazen bowel, a clean sweet drink prepared with rice and malt, a cooked radish, and an egg appetizer.'

Then, skipper Hŏ's daughter served the food. They stayed there that night.

The next day when they departed, Paekju gave her a bag and said, 'If you are in a trouble, hold this bag and think of me. Then I will save your life up to three times. I will make your family have a long life and give it more fortune.'

Paekju climbed up to Lake Paekrok on Mount Halla through several areas. However, she couldn't find Ch'ŏnja, her grandfather. By practising divination, she found that he had gone towards the northeast. Then, she headed to the northeast.

A hunter passed by when she went down through several places. He wore an upper garment made of the skin of an earth weasel and a lower garment made of the skin of a mountain weasel, and carried with him a matchlock, a powder keg and a bullet box with a four-eyed dog.

'Excuse me! Do you know where Ch'ŏnja is?' asked Paekju.

'Yes, I am his executive servant. Please follow me', replied the hunter.

Arriving at his house, the hunter – he was in fact Soch'ŏnguk – let her stay outside, while he went into his house and changed his dirty clothes to a clean and formal suit. He looked like an upper-class person who lived in Seoul.

'Paekju, please follow me', said the hunter.

When she followed him and entered into the house, she saw a heap of bones of cows and other animals and smelled a stink. She realized that she
had been deceived by a burglar who stole horses and cows, and she tried to run away.

When she tried to run away, the hunter grabbed her wrists. She pulled out a knife and shouted, ‘You look gentle, but you are mean. You little pig! I don’t need this wrist that you hold.’

Fig. 94 Ch’ёнja (a son of Heaven) in Newat Shrine on Cheju Island. Date unknown.
Paekju cut off the wrist, threw the pieces to the hunter and wrapped the wrist with a silk bandage. Coming out of the house, she made straight for Ch’önja and greeted him.

‘Who is this young lady?’ asked Ch’önja.

‘My name is Paekju, Im Ch’ŏngguk’s daughter who was born in a grove of bamboo outside of Sŏdaemun, Mount Nam, Seoul. I worked out that Ch’önja is my grandfather and I came to ask him if I could stay here and to beg for food while I can help him’, said Paekju.

‘What kind of food do you like to eat?’ asked Ch’önja.

‘I can eat various fruit cookies cut by silk string, a hoof-shaped rice cake, a steamed rice cake, cooked buckwheat within a brazen bowel, a clean sweet drink prepared with rice and malt, a cooked radish, and an egg appetizer’, replied Paekju.

‘You deserve to settle with me. What are your accomplishments?’ asked Ch’önja.

‘I went to the Dragon Palace of sea and learned seven kinds of witchcraft from seven uncles’, replied Paekju.

‘Come in’, ordered Ch’önja.

When she sat down, there was a fresh pungent bloody smell.

‘Why does your body stink with a bloody smell?’ asked Ch’önja.

‘When I ask Soch’ŏnguk to guide me to you, he grabbed my wrist so I pulled out a knife and cut off the wrist’, replied Paekju.

‘What a rude fellow! How dare he insult my granddaughter! Is he a bandit or a pirate? I cannot tolerate it’, shouted Ch’önja.

He immediately gathered all shamans and proclaimed, ‘When a descendant of mine came to me, Soch’ŏnguk tried to outrage her. This is unbearable. Divide the land and water from his one! Don’t drink the same water! Don’t use the same road! Don’t marry with them! Don’t go to Kanma Village if you live in Sehwa Village and don’t come to Sehwa Village from Kanma Village.’

After Ch’önja announced this, it became law. Juggling seven magic bags, Paekju made all shamans serve Ch’önja with ritual food.

Meanwhile, Kûmsang was born at Ayangdongch’ul, Mount Nam, Seoul. His father was the Heaven and his mother was the Earth.

His height was nine feet, his face was as dark as charcoal and ink, his eyes were like those of a phoenix and he had a long, thick triangular beard. He was the greatest general in the world who wore an iron helmet, carried a half-moon shaped blade, a sharp dagger and wore iron shoes.

Kûmsang climbed up to the top of Mount Nam, looked down to the royal palace and annoyed the people with a sulphur fire. The worried king called a vassal who studied the stars to find their fortunes.

‘On the top of Mount Nam, a traitor-would-be great warrior was born’, said the vassal.

‘How can we catch him?’ asked the king.

All the ministers of the kingdom discussed what to do and distributed fliers
Fig. 95 One of Changgun (a general) Gods. Date unknown.
all over the country; ‘If you catch the unknown warrior who lives on the top of Mount Nam, you will be rewarded with a piece of land and a thousand pieces of gold, and you will be a feudal lord who rules ten thousand houses.’

Thereupon, many great generals flocked from all quarters. Commanded by the king, they armed themselves with iron helmets, carrying half-moon shaped blades, sharp daggers, wood-made bows, flags, spears and swords. They besieged and restrained Mount Nam day and night

‘I can kill all of you at once if I glare fiercely and sway my half-moon shaped blade. However, I will not move so that you can be rewarded’, said Kūmsang.

Kūmsang sat quietly and let the warriors catch him. The great warriors put an iron net on him, took him in a carriage and brought him to the royal palace.

‘Who are you?’ asked the king.

‘My name is Kūmsang whose father is the Heaven and mother is the Earth’, replied Kūmsang.

‘In order to be a warrior, you need my approval. Without my approval, a warrior is like a traitor. Give your word that “it is justifiable for a warrior who has no approval to be killed”. Cut your thumb and write the words with your blood’, ordered the king.

However, after Kūmsang write his words with blood, the king commanded the soldiers to kill him. But their attempts to kill him by trampling and kicking with their feet, and hitting with stones failed. The king discussed with the ministers, ‘How can we kill him?’

‘He will die if we build an iron house with an iron room, make him sit in the room, and make a fire using bellows for a hundred days with a thousand sacks of charcoal’, said the ministers.

The king ordered them to do so. Then Kūmsang also tried a trick: he wrote two words, bing (ice) and sól (snow), put them on the floor and sat on the words.

After making a fire for a hundred days, and the king guessed, ‘Now, he must be killed.’

When the iron door was opened, Kūmsang shouted, ‘How come you let me live in this cold place? My beard frosts over and it is too cold to live here.’ Closing the door after shouting, he took the situation into account and became enraged. Therefore, he kicked the door with his iron shoes three times and it broke down.

He ran out of the palace. When crossing over Tongjŏk River, Seoul, he found a warship. He loaded it with goods and food and took refuge with a million soldiers.

He entered Cheju Sea by passing through twelve seas, went towards Mount Halla through Sasu, tried to enter upper Sehwa Village after staying in Wumok Estuary, Cow Island. At that moment, Ch’ŏnja recognized that a foreign warrior was trying to enter. He created a wind by blowing. Then, the ship was pushed away like a fleeing fox.

Arriving in front of Sehwa Village with the help of another wind, Kūmsang
folded two masts and dropped anchor. He took a boat and entered Sehwa Village. Then, he arrived at Sondŏrang Ridge and was greeted by Ch’ŏnja.

‘Who is this warrior?’ asked Ch’ŏnja.

‘My name is Kŭmsang who was born at Ayangdongch’ul, Mount Nam, Seoul, whose father is the Heaven and mother is the Earth’, replied Kŭmsang.

‘Why did you come here?’ asked Ch’ŏnja.

‘After looking at the secrets of the nature, I found that you and Baekju are a good match with me tied by heaven. That’s why I came here’, replied Kŭmsang.

‘Then, what do you drink and eat?’ asked Ch’ŏnja.

‘I drink a barrel of alcoholic drink, and eat a big lump of rice cake, a bucket of cooked rice, and a whole pig’, replied Kŭmsang.

‘Spit-spit! You filthy fellow! Get out! You are not suitable to sit with us’, shouted Ch’ŏnja.

When Kŭmsang got out to a narrow alley while stroking the back of his head, Paekju was sitting there and asked, ‘Excuse me, warrior! If you want to make a good match with me tied by Heaven, why don’t you stop eating what you have eaten and make a good match with me?’

Kŭmsang thought she was right, then went to Ch’ŏnja and said again, ‘I will stop eating what I have eaten from now on.’

‘Then, wash your neck with porridge made with rice and red-beans, wash your body with clear, refined rice wine, and brush your teeth with a clear sweet drink made with rice and malt’, ordered Ch’ŏnja.

Then Kŭmsang did what he said and married Paekju. As time passed from a month to two months, three months, and a hundred days, Kŭmsang became thinner. Kŭmsang was about to die.

Paekju felt pity and said, ‘He will starve to death because of me. How anxious it is!’

Paekju went to Ch’ŏnja and begged, ‘Grandfather, please consider it. How can you let him die because of me?’

‘Then, how can we save his life?’ asked Ch’ŏnja.

‘In my opinion, we will prepare a sacrificial rite with a pig for him, and then we can save his life’, replied Paekju.

Ch’ŏnja thought it seemed reasonable and allowed it.

Then, Paekju looked around Kim Chwasu’s house which was on Chage Hill, Sehwa Village, and found big pigs, white pigs and black pigs under the step board of the toilet. She sneaked into the house at night and put a spell on the first daughter of Kim Chwasu to make her suffocate.

‘What has just happened?’ Kim Chwasu called a female shaman and let her find a reason.

‘There is a big pig in your house and Kŭmsang wants to be served by a sacrificial rite with the pig’, said the female shaman.

‘Then, I will serve it to him’, said Kim Chwasu.

Kim Chwasu washed the head of the pig, cut the left ear a little to indicate
that this pig was for a sacrificial rite. And then the female shaman performed the rite with the pig. Thereupon, Kim Chwasu’s daughter recovered soon.

Accordingly, Ch’ŏnja and Paekju have been served with various fruit cookies cut by a silk string, a hoof-shaped rice cake, a steamed rice cake, cooked buckwheat within a brazen bowel, a clean sweet drink prepared with rice and malt, a cooked radish, and an egg appetizer. Kûmsang has been served with a barrel of drink, a big lump of rice cake, a bucket of cooked rice and a whole pig.

When people kill the pig for the rites, they go to the backyard, spread green leaves and kill the pig on the leaves. They serve the fur first, then the blood, and claws. They boil the pork, they need to remove twelve bones and serve all of them on twelve wooden plates.

NOTES
1 So-daemun: there are four gates in Seoul: Tongdaemun (or Hŭninjimun, the east gate), Namdaemun (or Sungryemun, the south gate), Sŏdaemun (Tonŭimun, the west gate), and Pukdaemun (or Sukch’ŏngmun, the north gate, does not exist now.).
2 Chuhwangdangsa: it has yellow and orange strings. It has been used to connect people to a spirit in Korean shamanism.
3 Chwasu: the chief of self government body, Hwangch’ŏng, in Chosŏn dynasty of Korea.
MYTHS ABOUT
HEROES
Fig. 96 One of Changgun (a general) Gods. Historical generals who rendered meritorious services for the nation were worshipped as gods by shamans. Shamans believe that these gods protect humans and themselves from misfortune, and drive sundry evil spirits away. Courtesy of Kahoe Museum. Date unknown.
A long time ago there was a man called Soch’önguk born at Kobuni Ridge in lower Songdang village, and a woman called Paekjunim born on the white sand dunes of the country of Ch’önja in the southland.

One day, Paekjunim came to know from a divination sign that she was predestined to marry someone who had been born in Songdang village on Cheju Island. So, at the appointed time, she journeyed there and met Soch’önguk, and their predestined marriage took place. They settled into married life and had five children.

When they conceived their sixth son, Paekjunim said, ‘Soch’önguk, we have so many children, can we remain idle? How are we going to raise the child? Please do the farm-work.’

Soch’önguk surveyed the fields. He had nine bags of rice seed and nine bags of millet seed, so he hitched the plough to his ox and went out to till the fields. Paekjunim prepared nine bowls of soup and nine bowls of rice for Soch’önguk for lunch and brought them out to the fields.

‘I am going to till a bit more before I eat’, said Soch’önguk, so Paekjunim returned home. While Soch’önguk kept tilling the fields, a monk from T’aesan Temple passed by and said, ‘Master Farmer, if you have any lunch, may I beg a small portion? I want to eat a little to satisfy my hunger.’

Soch’önguk thought it would be impossible for the monk to eat it all up, and so he told him to eat. But the monk from T’aesan Temple ate all nine bowls of soup and all nine bowls of rice and fled.

After Soch’önguk had tilled the fields, he was hungry and went to eat his lunch. But when he looked, he saw that the monk from T’aesan Temple had eaten everything and run away, leaving him nothing to eat. Soch’önguk was very hungry, but could do nothing other than kill the ox he had been using to plough the fields. He ran it through with a branch and roasted the meat. But afterwards, he was still hungry and so he looked around the area and there was a female cow. He caught it and ate it and in that way he relieved his hunger.

Soch’önguk had the heads and hides of the two cows beside him and was tilling the fields with the harness around his waist when Paekjunim came by.

‘Soch’önguk, why are you tilling the field with your stomach?’ asked Paekjunim.

‘A monk from T’aesan Temple was passing by and stole and ate the nine bowls of soup and the nine bowls of rice and then ran away. I couldn’t do
anything other than catch and eat the ox I was using to plow the fields. Then I caught and ate the neighbour’s cow and that’s how I satisfied my hunger’, said Soch’önguk.

‘Catching and eating your own ox is fair. But you are a cow thief if you catch and eat the neighbour’s cow. From today on, let us live separately’, said Paekjunim.

So Paekjunim went north towards the mountain, and Soch’önguk went south towards the sea.

All Soch’önguk knew how to do was hunt, so he carried a barrel of gunpowder along with his rifle and went up into the mountains and caught all sorts of animals. He took the daughter of Ch’öng Tonggal as his concubine and they lived together eating only boiled meat.

In the North, Paekjunim gave birth to the son she had conceived. When the child was three, she put him on her back and set off to find Soch’önguk. While searching for him, Paekjunim saw a hut with smoke rising from it. When she approached the hut she saw Soch’önguk. When Paekjunim put the child down, he pulled on his father’s beard and pressed on his chest. At that, Soch’önguk said, ‘When this child was conceived, we were forced to separate. Ever since it was born, its behaviour has been terrible. However, I do not have the heart to kill it, so I’m going to throw it into the East Sea.’

So Soch’önguk put his three-old son into an iron chest, put a lock on the chest, and threw it into the East Sea.

The iron chest went down to the land of the Dragon King, and got caught on a branch of a coral tree. At that, a strong wind was stirred up, with many clouds. When the Dragon Land’s Great King noticed this, he said, ‘Oldest daughter, go find out what is happening.’

‘There is nothing happening’, the oldest daughter responded.
‘Second daughter, go out and look’, ordered the king.
‘There is nothing happening’, the second daughter replied.
‘Youngest daughter, go out and look’, ordered the king.
The youngest daughter returned and said, ‘An iron chest is caught in the branches of a coral tree.’
‘Oldest daughter, fetch it here’, ordered the king.
‘It won’t budge’, the oldest daughter responded.
‘Second daughter, fetch it here’, ordered the king.
‘It won’t budge’, the second daughter replied.
‘Youngest daughter, fetch it here’, ordered the king.
The youngest daughter took it lightly and brought it down. Then the Great King spoke again and said, ‘Oldest daughter, open the lid and look inside.’
The oldest daughter tried, but could not open it.
‘Second daughter, open the lid and look inside’, ordered the king.
The second daughter tried, but neither could she open it.
‘Youngest daughter, open the lid and look inside’, ordered the king.
The youngest daughter kicked it with her foot three times and the lid opened. Inside the iron chest, a jade-like boy sat surrounded by books.
‘From where do you come?’ asked the king.
‘I live on Cheju Island in South Chosón’, replied the boy.
‘Why did you come here?’ asked the king.
‘There is a great uprising in the country of Ch’ónja in the southland. I was on my way to suppress the uprising, but I was pushed by a storm to the land of the Dragon King’, replied the boy.

The Great King scrutinized the boy and recognized him as a great general, and then said to him, ‘Please, enter my older daughter’s room.’

The boy gave no answer. The Great King said, ‘Please, enter my second daughter’s room.’

The boy gave no answer. The Great King said, ‘Please, enter my youngest daughter’s room.’

And the boy went to the youngest daughter’s room. The youngest daughter brought an abundant table into the room, but the boy didn’t even glance up.

‘Chosón General, sir, what do you eat?’ asked the youngest daughter.

‘Even though they say my country is small, I can eat an entire pig and an entire cow’, replied the boy.

The youngest daughter told the Dragon Land’s Great King of the conversation and the Great King said, ‘Can I not entertain my son-in-law?’

So each day, a pig and a cow were caught to entertain the boy and the storehouse emptied. The Great King knew that if he continued to host his son-in-law, Dragon Land would be ruined. He said to his youngest daughter,
‘They say that once a woman is married she is no better than a stranger, and so you must go with your husband.’

At that time, though the youngest daughter was showing signs of pregnancy, she and her husband got into the iron chest and were tossed out into the water.

The iron chest washed up on the white sand dunes of the country of Ch’ónja in the southland, a strong wind picked up. In the country, torches began burning brightly during the night. During the day, the sky vibrated with sounds and there was commotion in the country of Ch’ónja.

Rumours of all sorts were frequently heard around the country, and the king of the country of Ch’ónja said, ‘Why is the royal palace filled with this commotion? I command someone to go to the beach and look around.’

A servant for the king went to the beach and returned to his Lord, ‘My Lord, I went to the beach. There is an iron chest there and extraordinary things are emanating from it.’

‘Call for Blind Man Hwang’, ordered the king.

Blind Man Hwang came to the king and performed divination. From the divination, they learned that if they wanted to open the chest, then the king must put on his clothes and hat, light incense and candles, and bow to the north four times. Unable to do anything else, the king donned his clothes and hat, and bowed to the north four times, and the iron lid opened. The king asked the jade-like young man and the young woman sitting within, ‘From which land do you hail?’
We live on Cheju Island in South Chosŏn', replied the young man and woman.

'Why have you come here?' asked the king.

At that time, the powerful enemies to the North were attacking, so the young man said, 'I have come to repel the northern enemies and restore peace to the world.'

The king took him by the wrist and brought him into the palace. He gave him an iron helmet, a set of armour and a dagger and arrows and named him general of a large army. Thus equipped, the young man left to do battle.

In the first battle, he killed a two-headed general. In the second battle, he killed a three-headed general. And in the third battle, he killed a four-headed general. Then there were no more generals to oppose him. When he had restored peace to the world, the king said, 'You have defeated all of these generals. For this I shall give you land and water and you can live by collecting taxes from the land and state.'

'That is not what I desire', said the young man.

'Well, then, tell me. What is it you desire?' asked the king.

'I want to return to my home country', said the young boy.

After the young man said this he chopped down a dry pine tree and made it into a warship. He loaded the ship with provisions and coral and, accompanied by a host of soldiers, returned to Chosŏn.

They passed by Kyŏngsang Province and Chŏlla Province and all the islands and came to Cheju Island. When they reached the sea around Cheju Island, they made their way through the tides and ran the ship aground on the beach of Cow Island. The young man looked around Cow Island and said, 'This place has food only for horses and cows. Let's go to Cheju Island.'

After they entered Tumonjige Cove on Cheju Island, they saw Chongdal village, they found good land where they could live on the abundant salt. Then they left from there and went up into the nearby mountains such as Hanjakji, Mŏlmi Hill, Chinggaengi Hill, Utdarangswi, Aldarangswi and Pijanamgot through Pulgunjakji. The young man made the sound of a large cannon that shook the earth. His father Soch'ŏnguk and mother Paekjunim looked at their maidservant and asked, 'Why is there the sound of a cannon?'

'Your son — who you tried to kill when he was three years old and who you put inside the iron chest — has come to attack you', replied the maidservant.

'You are an evil woman. Over the years the iron chest surely would have rusted away. How could our sixth son still be alive?' Soch'ŏnguk scolded her.

Again came the sound of a large cannon and the sixth son arrived. His father was so scared that he fled to Kobuni Ridge at lower Songdang where he died and remained. His mother, filled with terror, fled to Tangorūm where she died and remained.

When Soch'ŏnguk was alive, he was a good hunter. Thinking that his father must have liked game, the son called for the best hunters from each village and together they went hunting. All the animals they caught were offered to Soch'ŏnguk at a ritual. The young man hit the gong three times, and a million
soldiers gathered and he said, ‘Soldiers, you may return to your home country.’

After the soldiers took their leave, he said to his wife, ‘Let us go sightseeing on Mount Halla.’

They passed by lower Songdang and upper Songdang and arrived at a pond. The young man drank some water and looked around. Then he said, ‘This is a spot where a famous general could be born. Let us go upward on the blowing wind.’

And on their way, they arrived at Kimnyŏng village. They took a good look around and went from there to upper Koenegi. The wind that brought them up blew down, and the wind going down blew up. And they looked down at lower Koenegi. The stars were shining, the moon was shining and lower Koenegi was big enough for them to settle there.

Deciding to settle there, they descended into the village.

‘Soch’ŏnguk’s sixth son, by command of the Jade Emperor, at the shrine of Kimnyŏng village, will fashion remarkable things for the people’, said the young boy.

‘Where will you settle? Please tell us’, said the village’s people.
‘I will settle at Lower Koenegi Shrine’, said the young boy.
‘What do you eat?’ asked the people.
‘I eat an entire cow and an entire pig’, replied the young boy.

Fig. 97 An idol of Koenegitto on Cheju Island. It is made of basalt.
‘We are a poor people. How can we catch a cow for your sake? We’ll butcher a pig from each house and offer them to you’, said the people.

‘Do that’, the young people consented.

And so the young man¹ and his wife settled at lower Koenegi.

From that time on, the village’s people butchered pigs, weighed out one hundred catties each, boiled it and held a ritual to worship.²

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The Original Title: Koenegidangbonp’uri (Origin Myth of Koenegi Shrine)

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NOTES

¹ Scholars call the young man Koenegitto because he settles at Koenegi and is worshipped to this day by the village’s people.

² This myth was translated by consulting an existing translation; Seo Dae Seok. Myths of Korea (Somerset: Jimoondang International, 2000). In the process of my work, I corrected some errors and omissions that were found in the existing translation.
CHAPTER 28

Kunung, the Warrior God of Preventing Misfortune

Kunung’s grandfather was named Heavenly Emperor Chesŏk and his grandmother Earthly Emperor Chesŏk. His father was Grand Progenitor Wang – General Wang – and his mother was called Hūsuk. His oldest son was Wang Kūn, his second son was Wang Pin and his youngest son was Wang Sarang.

Kunung’s father lived as a widower, making his living by chopping down trees and selling lumber.

One day, a youngster wearing a straw hat came and said, ‘I am a son of the Dragon King in the East Sea. The Dragon King in the East Sea and the Dragon King in the West are at war and our country is losing, so I have come to request the help of the great General Wang.’

‘I am afraid of nothing in the world except seawater. How then can you ask me to go underwater?’ answered General Wang.

‘If you come with me, you will be fine’, said the son of the Dragon King.

The son of the Dragon King in the East Sea put General Wang on his back and went down into the water. A path appeared in the sea, and they went to the land of the Dragon King.

The Dragon King in the East Sea was delighted, ‘Tomorrow we will fight the Dragon King in the West Sea. I will act as if I’ve been defeated and return underwater and the Dragon King in the West Sea will go above the water to boast. At that point, you will kill him with an arrow.’

General Wang agreed to this plan. The next day, the fight broke out and the Dragon King in the East Sea acted like he had been defeated and went underwater. When the Dragon King in the West Sea went above the water to boast about his victory, General Wang shot and killed the Dragon King in the West Sea with his arrow.

The Dragon King in the East Sea came out and was delighted and asked, ‘What should I give you as a reward?’

Before General Wang could answer, the son of the Dragon King whispered to him, ‘Tell my father you want nothing except that inkstone case. My sister is within. If you do that, everything will go well.’

And so General Wang said he would like the inkstone case and, unable to do anything else, the Dragon King gave him the inkstone case.

General Wang took the inkstone case and returned once again to the
human world. When night fell, a beautiful fairy emerged from the inkstone case, they slept together, and she brought all the clothes and food he desired. After three years, they had three children. The first son was named Wang Kün, the second son was named Wang Pin and the third son was named Wang Sarang. And General Wang enjoyed a very wealthy life.

One day, the daughter of the Dragon King said, ‘From today on, you will continue to live well as a wealthy man. But I am not human and so must return to the Dragon Palace. You are all still Kunung gods, Warrior Gods, however, and should continue to receive offerings’, and she came back her home.

In this way, General Wang and his sons became Warrior Gods who prevent misfortune.¹

The Original Title: Kunungbonp’uri (Origin Myth of Kunung)
The Source: Ak’amatsu Chijo & Ak’iba Tak’ashi, Choso Musoku (Studies in Korean Shamanism, First Half), Ōsaka: Okhosōjō, 1937.

¹ This myth was translated by consulting an existing translation; Seo Dae Seok. Myths of Korea (Somerset: Jimoondang International, 2000). In the process of my work, I corrected some errors and omissions that were found in the existing translation.
CHAPTER 29

Tribute of One Hundred Head of White Horses

Once upon a time, when Mr Yang lived on Cheju Island, he became Cheju’s magistrate commanded by the Seoul government. At that time, the Cheju government offered a hundred white horses to the Seoul government, where the royal palace was, as tribute each year. No matter who became Cheju’s magistrate, they offered the horses after the end of the year and before the first day of spring.

After becoming the magistrate, Mr Yang offered the horses as tribute three times without questioning. When it was the fourth time for him to offer the horses, he gathered a hundred white horses at the grazing land for horses. Suddenly, he became greedy and wanted to take these horses for himself. Therefore, he wrote a petition to an official in charge of tribute in the Seoul government, ‘If I offer a hundred white horses as tribute, the people on Cheju Island will be in difficulties and they have to live with deep sighs and worries.’

After presenting the petition, he told the horsekeepers, ‘You have offered the tribute until now. However, from now on, I will do it by myself.’

Usually, when they offer tribute, they are anxious to prepare extra horses in case the official rejects the horses that he doesn’t like. Therefore, they were delighted to accept his suggestion.

‘Please, do what you want’, they all said.

Then the horsekeepers and other people channelled all their energy into preparing a ship for the horses at Tonjitgae, Whabuk, and to taking the hundred white horses on board.

Mr Yang lied that he was going to offer the tribute, and anchored the ship at one of the provinces on the mainland. He sold all of the horses there, bought goods with the money, took the goods on board, returned to Cheju Island, and sold them all.

When Mr Yang didn’t come to offer the white horses, the official didn’t urge him to pay the tribute in order to see how long Mr Yang could be obstinate and not offer it. Mr Yang didn’t offer the tribute three times and took it for himself.

Thereupon, the official sent a subordinate to Cheju to investigate what had happened. After the subordinate investigated, he reported that it was outrageous for Yang not to send the horses. Shortly after, the official sent a commander and an assassin to kill Mr Yang.

Suspecting something, Mr Yang then called two local officials and asked, ‘Who has the best and the fastest ship on Cheju Island?’
‘The old man called Ko Tongji has the best and the fastest ship’, they replied.

After commanding them to anchor Ko Tongji’s ship at one place and telling a lie that he would go sightseeing, Mr Yang departed there with Ko Tongji,

Fig. 98 A scene of tribute of white horses. Most mountain areas of Cheju Island are horse-breeding farms for tribute. If the number of horses for tribute is decided by the Ministry of War, it is first given to the government office that takes charge of the tribute of horses. And it is next given to the governor of Cholla Province and last to the magistrate on Cheju Island. Horses that are chosen from all horse-breeding farms are gathered by the main government agency on Cheju Island for inspection and carried to Haenam, Kangjin, and Yongam of Cholla Province by ship, and again carried to the capital by land. At this time, feed for horses and wages for dray-horsemen were paid for by the people on Cheju Island. This painting by Kim Namgil is dated 1702.
and passed over the horizon from Cheju Island. When they arrived at a small island, another ship came closer and bumped into their ship. It was obvious that the commander from Seoul and the assassin were on this ship.

The commander asked, 'Where is this ship going?'

The boatman, Ko replied before MrYang did, 'This is the ship for MrYang to go sightseeing.'

'Things are going wrong!' MrYang was flustered with sweat beaded on his forehead.

The Commander jumped aboard and yelled, 'Who is MrYang?'

'I am MrYang.'

The commander and the assassin pounced on him with spears and blades like a big tiger.

When MrYang agilely reacted to their attack and fought back with his bare hand, in a flash the blade of the assassin was in his hand. MrYang brandished the blade like a ray of sunshine and a flash of lightning. The head of the assassin was cut off and disappeared, and his body fell into the water.

The agile commander also roared and wielded his spear three times, but he couldn't defeat MrYang. Eventually, enervated, the commander knelt down before MrYang and begged.

MrYang roared at the commander, 'I anticipated what is happening. Listen carefully. The official in charge of tribute runs this country to make a better country for the people to have a better life, and the people want to live well together while serving the king. However, Cheju Island's people among others have to offer a hundred white horses once a year. How big is the stomach of the king to have a hundred white horses a year? I wanted to have the horses like the king, but because of the poor, starving Cheju Island's people, I couldn't have all of them to myself. After careful consideration, I carried the horses to the main land, bartered them for goods, came back again to Cheju Island, and gave the poor people the goods free. How dare you try to kill this kind of person? Even heaven cannot tolerate your attempt. Therefore, please go back and report what I said to the king.'

The commander, who knelt down and just listened, suddenly jumped up and grabbed the hair of MrYang. Then, he tightly tied the mussed hair to the rope of the mast and shouted to the boatman, Ko, 'Pull the rope!'

When Ko pulled the rope with his shaky hands, the body of MrYang was hanged under the mast.

MrYang said while he was hanged, 'Cut off my head with your spear.'

When the commander wielded the silver spear while weeping, the body of MrYang spilt into two parts. Falling under the ship, the body of MrYang rolled over and reached the sea of the Dragon King's palace. The body then changed into blue, yellow and red dragons and entered into the palace. The commander hugged the bloody head of MrYang and cleaned up the blood. He put the head on a board, wrapped it with a white scarf, and put it on the bow.

The head of MrYang gave the boatman Ko his last words, 'If you return to
Cheju Island, you will have to tell the Yang family to worship me, telling my story with music, from generation to generation. If they do as I say to you now, I will make them live well for many generations.'

The commander returned to Seoul, gave the head of Mr Yang to the king and told what he had done to the official in charge of tribute. Thanks to the Mr Yang, the Cheju government no longer had to offer a hundred white horses as tribute to the Seoul government.

After the boatman Ko returned to Cheju Island, he transmitted Mr Yang’s request to the Yang family. Thereafter, the Yang family worshipped Mr Yang as a spirit, and they have told the story about him with music when they worshipped him. They say that Mr Yang can make them prosper and live well for many generations.

The Original Title: Yangimoksabon’uri (Origin Myth of Magistrate Yang)
The Land around Mount Paekdu was prosperous and a good place to live. However, it was turned into barren land in a single day because a malicious black dragon swept away the farmers' fields. The black dragon messed up the irrigation ducts and water with its fiery sword. As a result, all grain in the fields was dried up and died. The fertile land became useless sterile land with cracks all over the place due to the dryness. It became an inhabitable land for humans.

There was a small country nearby Mount Paekdu ruled by the King Ch'ingp'ung. He had a beautiful daughter with many talents. She received many marriage proposals, of course, from princes around the area. However, she rejected all of them. She declared that she would marry a hero who could defeat the black dragon so that the people in her country could be saved from famine.

A general, whose last name was Paek, lived near Mount Paekdu. Although General Paek worked hard to find a stream for his people, it was a useless effort because the black dragon hampered his effort. The black dragon turned a fountain site into a stone every time when the general found a new one. The general was outraged but he had to swallow his anger with a deep sigh. At that moment, a princess appeared in front of his face and told him that he would be strong enough to defeat the black dragon if he would drink the magic water for hundred days. Then, she guided him to the place where the magic water was, and left him. General Paek faithfully drank the magic water for three months and ten days. Just as she told him, he had incredible strength at the end of hundred days.

The princess reappeared and recommended that General Paek climb up to the summit of Mount Paekdu. General Paek shovelled the ground and threw away the dirt. He made a new summit each time when he threw away the dirt. He shovelled sixteen times and threw away the dirt all around him and it became summits around Mount Paekdu. This is the story of the sixteen summits around Mount Paekdu.

At the bottom of the dug ground, spring water underground gushed out like a river. While General Paek and the princess were enjoying their success, the black dragon appeared out of nowhere. In the blink of an eye, the black dragon pierced General Paek's chest with its fiery sword. With the unex-
pected blow to a vital spot, General Paek collapsed with bleeding heavily. The princess quickly carried him to the place where the magic water was, where he drank the magic water for a hundred days to regain his strength.

The black dragon reappeared when General Paek and the princess had

![Fig. 99 Warriors in a mural painting of Koguryo. Fourth to fifth century.](image)

![Fig. 100 The appearance of a hero (Lee Chiyŏn. 45.5 x 37.9 cm. Mixed materials on paper. 2004.)](image)
finished digging at Lake Ch’ŏnji. Now, water at Ch’ŏnji is full. Swinging his sword, General Paek fiercely fought the black dragon. With help from the princess, General Paek struck down the fiery sword. It broke into two pieces and the tip of the fiery sword fell onto the northern cliff side of Mount Paekdu. As it fell onto the cliff, it slashed the cliff and water started to flow from the crack. Since then, Lake Ch’ŏnji water flows away on the north side of Mount Paekdu.

After defeating the black dragon, General Paek and the princess built a crystal palace under Lake Ch’ŏnji to guard the lake and lived happily ever after.

Mount Paekdu is well known for sudden transitions of weather even today. Visitors to Mount Paekdu should expect sudden thunderstorms accompanied with hail, heavy rain and heavy snow throughout the year. It is said that the black dragon still takes revenge on General Paek because it cannot accept its defeat in the fight a long time ago.

The Original Title: Ch’ŏnjisu (Lake Ch’ŏnji)
The Source: Chŏng Cheho et al, Paekdusan Sŏlhwamu (The Study of the Folktales of Mount Paekdu), Seoul: The Institution of History and Culture, Korea University, 1992.

Fig. 101 The journey of heroine Paridegi (Lee Chiyon. 64 × 42.5 cm. Mixed materials on paper. 2004.)
Further reading


Institution of Old East Asia (ed.), *Tongasias Yösông Sinhwa* (East Asian Myths about Women), Seoul: Chipmundang, 2003.


