

# The Korean Tiger: Trickster and Servant of the Sacred

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## Introduction

The tiger remains a prominent character in Korean folk religion and tales despite the fact that wild tigers mostly have been eliminated by the denudation and devastation of their mountain habitats by wood gathering, hunting, and warfare.<sup>1</sup> The enduring Korean fascination with tigers is evident in reported tiger sightings occasionally highlighted in the newspapers of Seoul. The Korean tiger is more than an extraordinary, powerful, and dangerous animal. He is also a trickster, exhibiting magical and sacred characteristics, who ultimately attains the stature of a hierophant, that is, one who manifests the sacred in a conscious and controlled manner.<sup>2</sup>

The typical trickster flaunts idiosyncrasy and idiocy in the face of custom and constraint; he is mediator between culture and nature, humankind and gods—mocking, opposing, and yet benefitting the cosmic order (even if inadvertently). Trickster myths have been recorded for societies on all continents as well as Oceania. They serve as entertainment, vents for personal and social frustration, negative affirmations of belief systems (for the trickster usually suffers for transgressing norms), tributes to adventurism and creative disorder, and as humorous treatments

of the ambiguity and ambivalence of life itself, which is never wholly subject to human will and reason.<sup>3</sup> Carl Jung says that the trickster embodies a collective “shadow,” that is, the largely unconscious, unwanted, and repressed or suppressed aspects of a culture; correspondingly, the typical trickster is predominantly unconscious and dimwitted. Yet the trickster is the forerunner of the saviour, a being partly god, human, and animal—both subhuman and suprahuman. The typical trickster’s bungling has creative and culture founding results. Jung believes that a progressive heightening of consciousness is evident in the Native American trickster cycles he examined. But Jung points out that the process of increasing collective consciousness or “civilization” frequently involves suppression of the awareness of tricksterish contradictions and ambiguity, or else the shadow is projected upon culturally defined enemies. Yet he suggests that a culture may

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integrate the collective shadow, thus graduating to a higher level of consciousness and spiritual maturity.<sup>4</sup> The trickster integrated into collective consciousness then would emerge in the figures of hero and saviour.

Indeed, it would seem that the Korean tiger, in its full range of symbolism and meanings, represents just such a mythological transition—that is, from the tiger as extraordinary animal, to the tiger as numinous trickster, to the tiger as sacred trickster-hierophant. The tiger-hierophant (the tiger who manifests the sacred) may be regarded as the fruition of ideas in Korean mythology corresponding on the collective level to the individual psychological process of attaining spiritual maturity and wholeness through the integration of opposites in consciousness, called individuation. As Mircea Eliade says, the trickster reflects a mythology of the human condition.<sup>5</sup> The mere trickster portrays an existential conundrum: contradictions, unpredictability, uncontrollability, ambivalence, and ambiguity in life. The trickster-hierophant portrays a spiritual resolution: precognition, magical control of events, harmony between polarities, and unambiguous centering in the sacred. However, existential ambivalence and ambiguity remain at least implicit in the trickster-hierophant because of the paradox that humanity is involved simultaneously in the realms of flesh and spirit, mortality and immortality, finitude and infinitude, particularity and universality. The trickster-hierophant reveals that these realms are not irreconcilable contraries, but rather two aspects of one reality; as the Buddhists say, *samsara* and *nirvana* are one. The tiger hierophant serves as a cultural model for the spiritual maturity of the individual and the collectivity. That this model is compelling for Koreans, at least on the folk level, is evident in the high importance which Korean shamans accord to the tiger.

The popularity and prevalence of tiger symbolism in the Korean folk tradition qualify it as an important subject of investigation for Korean religious studies. Furthermore, the panhumanly significant implications of Korean tiger symbolism, despite the localism and culture-boundedness of its expression, rank it together with symbolisms

of the world religions, all of which strive to reconcile the apparent dichotomy between existential and spiritual realities. This essay will employ a synthesis of the perspectives of Rudolf Otto, the German philosopher of religions, and Mircea Eliade, the Romanian historian of religions. It will examine levels of sacredness discernible among religious objects in order to reveal existential and spiritual meanings included in the symbolism of *horangi*, the Korean tiger.<sup>6</sup>

### Levels of Sacredness among Religious Objects

Rudolf Otto uses the term “numen,” coined from Latin, to refer to the transcendental object of religious experience which is rationally inexpressible and ineffable.<sup>7</sup> The numen is experienced as *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, the tremendous and fascinating mystery. *Mysterium* indicates the essential unknowability of the numen-in-itself. *Tremendum* indicates the awesome quality of experiencing the numen; the numen impels both ecstasy and religious dread. *Fascinans* indicates the supremely compelling attraction which numinous experience exerts upon the human subject. The *tremendum* quality is daunting and the *fascinans* quality is alluring. Together these qualities condition religious experience with ambivalence and often ambiguity. The numen seems to manifest itself as something “wholly other” than the ordinary world, since it transcends the limits of the familiar and the humanly intelligible. Yet it is the source of holiness for the ordinary world. Its divine strangeness stirs the mind with wonder and astonishment.<sup>8</sup>

Extraordinary natural objects and events which astonish the mind with their fearfulness or sublimity may arouse feelings which are analogous to the qualities of numinous experience. Such extraordinary things may be regarded as marvels and miraculous beings if the numinous feelings which they arouse become identified with the objects themselves. Thus, the extraordinary thing becomes valued as the numinous thing.<sup>9</sup> Numinous feelings may further be given rational or anthropo-

morphic shape and be filled with ethical meaning. This process, which Otto called schematization, reveals legitimate religious meanings when it derives honestly from experience of the numen without reducing the numinous object to merely rational explanations or doctrines. The category of the sacred (the holy, *das heilige*) refers to the fullness of the numen saturated with characteristics asserting rationality, purpose, personality, and morality. The daunting and repelling quality of the numen is typically schematized as divine justice, moral will, and the wrath of gods. The alluring and attracting quality becomes schematized as majesty, absoluteness, and supremacy of deities. Otto asserts that the holy exists *a priori* in its fullness, but its fullness is only apprehended gradually (and usually parochially) by the historically developing consciousness.<sup>10</sup> In short, Otto posits a scale of sacrality and numinosity: the extraordinary, the numinous and the fully sacred. Although the sacred is beyond human categories and dichotomies, it retains the existential ambivalence inherent in religious experience, though the *tremendum* aspect may be split and dichotomized in mythology as an "evil," demonic, or destructive force in juxtaposition to an exclusively "good" divine force.

Otto focused his attention on the internal qualities of religious experience. Complementarily, Mircea Eliade focuses on the dialectical interaction of the sacred and the profane. The sacred/profane polarity is often equated with the contrasts of real/unreal, absolute/relative, fixed/formless, and cosmic/chaotic. Manifestation of the sacred, termed hierophany, establishes a sense of being, authority, order, orientation, and meaning in the human world.<sup>11</sup> Sacred manifestations are apprehended through symbols which derive their meaningfulness from cultural patterning and validation of panhuman archetypes. These archetypes are intrinsic to human experience of the sacred; they exist *sui generis* and *a priori*.<sup>12</sup> Eliade also posits levels of sacredness in which the sacred is more fully manifest and the symbols more closely approximate their corresponding archetypes. He notes that certain things are so extraordinary that they suggest qualities of the sacred and

may evoke religious experience. For example, the sky suggests the sacred characteristics of transcendence, absoluteness, immense power, and eternity by its own unreachable height, infinitude, eternity, and power. Consequently the sky becomes an object of religious reverence, as the abode or manifestation of a celestial god. The relationship of analogy between an object's characteristics and sacred attributes is termed a homology. Extraordinarily surprising, fertile, freakish, or powerful things are termed kratophanies.<sup>13</sup> When a kratophany is venerated as a manifestation of the sacred, it becomes a hierophany. A hierophany may further be valued as the manifestation of a supreme deity, thus becoming a theophany. For example, a lightning bolt which kills a malevolent person may be regarded as the punishing instrument of the sky god. A hierarchy of successive religious valuations produces a hierophany out of a kratophany and culminates in a theophany.

Taking together the formulations of Otto and Eliade, one can for the sake of analysis distinguish three levels of sacredness among religious objects. The ordinary thing is that which (1) does not spontaneously evoke by its natural appearance feelings analogous to *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* and (2) is profane. By this definition, ordinary things are not religious objects. The extraordinary thing is that which (1) evokes by its natural appearance feelings analogous to *mysterium* and (2) remains profane. The incipient numinosity of "the extraordinary" qualifies this as the first level of sacredness, although strictly speaking it is not yet sacred. The numinous thing is that which (1) evokes awareness of the numen and (2) is partially hierophanized or becoming schematized as sacred. The fully sacred thing is that which (1) evokes awareness of the numen, (2) is fully hierophanized, and (3) is fully schematized. As we shall see in the case of the Korean tiger, a single kind of object can be apprehended at all levels of sacredness depending upon context and the religious advancement of the apprehending subject. These levels are not static designations; they are merely descriptions rather than ultimate ontological categories. Since the sacred manifests itself apparently "at will," anything profane may be

hierophanized. Extraordinary things are very suitable media for hierophany, but even ordinary things may become hierophanized (and removed from the "ordinary" realm). Sacred things may revert to a profane condition when a transient hierophany ceases or is no longer recognized. Extraordinary things, by evoking numinous feelings, may open the subject to awareness of the sacred, and thereby become valued as sacred things. Merely numinous things possess the ambivalence and ambiguity inherent in the numen. Unless they are schematized or elevated to a fully sacred condition, their ambivalence is likely to be intense, dangerous, capricious, and tinged with a sense of the demonic. Fully sacred things evoke awareness of the sacred in anyone properly attuned by spiritual consciousness and cultural conditioning. However, a desacralized mentality may remain unaware of the sacred nonetheless. In contrast, the fully aware religious mentality experiences the sacred through all things. Ultimately, the sacred profane distinctions and all other dualisms are transcended. As the religious mentality develops, exposure to numinous and sacred objects can help awaken it to increasing realizations of the sacred in all. Ambivalence and ambiguity remain existential issues, but they are resolved by spiritual awareness of the Real.

The magico-religious power of religious objects derives from their propensity to arouse experience of the sacred. The higher the level of sacredness, the greater the power. Religious power is dangerous because it disrupts and transforms the experiencing subject. This disrupting power must be carefully channeled and controlled in order to produce constructive manifestations in the human world. The power of extraordinary things can be controlled by human ingenuity and courage. The power of numinous things, because of its transcendent nature, can only be controlled by numinous and sacred means, that is, magic and ritual. The power of sacred things can only be controlled through unambiguous alliance with the sacred. This requires transformation of the profane will into a confluent expression of sacred imperatives, which results from transmutation of the self-willful subject into a servant of the religious object. This is

the condition of the hierophant who, as servant of the sacred, is able to master and manifest sacred power.

These levels of sacredness and the means of mastering power at each level are demonstrated in the multifaceted characterizations of the Korean tiger. As an extraordinary animal, the tiger is a powerful being who evokes fear, awe, and respect. The tiger's awesome power qualifies him as a kratophany. Furthermore, Koreans traditionally imbued him with numinous qualities and magical abilities. Accordingly, the tiger is prone toward hierophanization. However, the merely numinous tiger remains dominated by the ambiguity, ambivalence, and dangerousness of the *mysterium*. He has the magical abilities of transformation; yet his ambiguity manifests as trickery which is often destructive. He remains at best precariously associated with the sacred, acting unpredictably as facilitator or bungler of cosmic creativity. The tiger becomes fully sacred when unambiguously committed to the service of deities. He retains the dangerous ambiguity and disruptive power of the sacred but he becomes the master of these qualities rather than their slave. The sacred tiger is a hierophant, an expert in magical and religious transformations who does the bidding of deities for the assistance and edification of humanity. Paradoxically, it is only the *servant* of the sacred who can become a *master* of sacred power.

### The Tiger as Extraordinary Animal

The accounts of Westerners who lived in Korea during the late eighteen and early nineteen hundreds testify that tigers were plentiful even as far north as the 50th parallel, enjoying the cold and deep snow of the mountains. In 1906, Hulbert reported seeing tiger skins which were eleven and one-half feet long with two inch long hair.<sup>14</sup> Various terms are employed to distinguish between different kinds of big cats, according to their appearance, temperament, and behavior. *Horangi* is the general term for tiger, but it is not merely a zoological appellation. *Ho* derives from a Chinese character meaning

simply the animal, tiger. *Rang* means "young boy" connoting a rural boy pure at heart and free in play, unspoiled by upper class training.<sup>15</sup> Although the tiger is physically powerful and dangerous, his name implies a playful boy at home in farm, field, and forest. The Korean name of the tiger points to his ambivalent nature: dangerous, powerful, innocent, harmless.

It is no wonder that the tiger has perennially provoked awe and fear among Koreans. There is an old Chinese saying that Koreans hunt the tiger half of the year and are hunted by tigers the other half.<sup>16</sup> As Hulbert recorded:

The number of human lives lost, and the value of property destroyed by their ravages, is so great as at times to depopulate certain districts. A hungry tiger will often penetrate a village in which the houses are well secured, and will prowl around a hovel or ill-secured dwelling, during several entire nights. If hunger presses he will not raise the siege until he leaps upon the thatched roof. Through the hole thus made by tearing through, he bounds upon the terrified household. In this case a hand-to-claw fight ensues, in which the tiger is killed or comes off victorious after glutting himself upon one or more human victims.<sup>17</sup>

In fact, tigers carried persons off so frequently that this became a favorite excuse for an individual's timely disappearance if pursued by unfriendly authorities. Children are sometimes told that they will be caught by a tiger for their disobedience. The constant threat of depredation by tigers in the past necessitated the construction of baited traps at each end of a village's main street and at strategic points in a tiger's prowling territory. Hunting parties would be arranged by the local magistrate in order to capture and kill especially rapacious tigers. Bearing only matchlocks at the turn of the century, these Korean hunters were in a very vulnerable position when confronted with a tiger on the hunt. Failure at the first attempt to kill him would likely result in the death of the hunter.<sup>18</sup> Special tiger hunters would single-handedly attack a tiger with a lance or short sword, assisted by trained dogs. Only extraordinary hunters could thus master the power of the tiger. Having courageously done so, these special hunters accrued the tiger's attributes of

great power and strength, fearlessness, cunning, and suddenness of attack. Therefore the tiger hunters were employed in the most crucial tasks of national defense against foreign invaders. They regarded the tiger as their symbol of fierceness, martial pomp, and glory. Koreans have in general sometimes referred to themselves as "Valiant Tigers of the Green Mountains."<sup>19</sup> Griffis observed that the flag of the tiger hunters who attempted to fight off the assault of U.S. marines in 1891 "... was a winged tiger rampant, spitting fire, holding the lightnings in his foreclaws and thus embodying the powers of earth, air, and heaven."<sup>20</sup>

Attributes of the tiger are illustrated by Korean popular sayings. Unpredictability and sudden appearance: "Speak of the tiger and then he appears." Ingratitude and unreasoning power: "To nourish a tiger and have him devour you." Voracious hunger: "A tiger's repast." The saying, "Block the hole in a (paper) window at the sight of a tiger," refers to the obvious necessity of early preparation against dire danger and the possible futility of it. The tiger's power is not only feared, but also respected and coveted. Koreans see the importance of confronting danger in order to acquire power: "Unless you enter a tiger's den, you cannot capture a tiger cub; unless you go up a mountain, you cannot catch a tiger." The tiger is of course an incorrigible predator. The saying, "Ask a tiger for meat," refers to the foolishness of expecting something contrary to nature. Yet even a tiger exhibits familial compassion: "Even a tiger thinks of the den where his cubs live."<sup>21</sup> The extraordinary tiger, considered solely as a profane entity, already exhibits qualities and elicits feelings analogous to the *mysterium*. The tiger is both destructive and empowering, thus he is both feared and venerated.

### **The Tiger as Numinous Being**

In so far as the tiger is considered to be simply a profane animal, it is possible to master him by extraordinary human means. The profane tiger is dangerous and destructive; humans can safely appropriate his power

only when he is killed. However, Korean experience of the tiger is not limited to the profane level, since the numinous quality of tiger-power is a fundamental aspect of traditional Korean experience. Tiger-power is sought because it is numinous in order to magically enhance human power. The king's body guards wore hats made of the cheeks and whiskers of a tiger during the Yi dynasty. A man gave a tiger's claw to his bride as a sign of his courage or as an evil-repelling amulet. Wealthy persons laid a tiger-skin on the floor of their best rooms. Officials covered their chairs or palanquins with a tiger-skin to signify nobility. Tiger paintings and talismans were posted on a commoner's front door to repel malevolent spirits. A child sometimes carried a tiger's claw around the neck for magical protection. Men drank wine mixed with gelatin made from tiger's bones to cure impotence or increase sexual vigor.<sup>22</sup> Griffis' 1897 account is apt; Koreans ascribed the tiger with . . .

all the mighty forces and characteristics of which he is actually possessed, but popular superstition attributes to him the powers of flying, of emitting fire and hurling lightning. He is the symbol of strength and ubiquity, the standard of comparison with all dangers and dreadful forces, and the paragon of human courage. On the war flags this animal is painted or embroidered in every posture, asleep, leaping, erect, couchant, winged, and holding red fire in his fore-paw. On works of art, cabinets, boxes, and weapons the tiger is most frequently portrayed and is even associated as an equal with the four supernatural beings.<sup>23</sup>

Since the numinous tiger is an ambivalent, ambiguous, and dangerous entity with extraordinary power, there may be harmful as well as beneficial consequences for humans who contact the tiger. According to *Samguk yusa*, a history of the three kingdoms written during the thirteenth century, it was believed that a catastrophic event would occur if a tiger appeared in the courtyard of the royal palace. This belief persisted until the end of the last king's rule in Seoul.<sup>24</sup> By magical power the tiger was thought to imitate a human voice or transform into a woman in order to lure people out of their homes at night to their doom.<sup>25</sup> Commoners refrained from social contacts

and women stayed indoors on the first tiger-day of the first moon because a woman's sojourn on that day could provoke a tiger to kill one of her family members.<sup>26</sup> Tigers were reputed to augment their powers by consuming the human body and soul together. Certain large tigers, after eating a human victim, are believed to manipulate the soul as a puppet to aid the search for more prey. Indeed, the souls of persons devoured by tigers have been venerated in shamanistic shrines in Seoul.<sup>27</sup>

The numinous tiger is an ally of the mysterious, the prodigious, the catastrophic, the miraculous. His appearance is a portent of strangeness and danger since he embodies the qualities of the *mysterium*. He is overpowering, unfathomable, dangerous, ambivalent. He is uncontrollable by profane means. The merely numinous tiger is an amoral entity who arbitrarily destroys or creates according to his own intentions or the intentions of those who have magically controlled him.

### The Tiger as Sacred Entity

The tiger becomes fully sacred only as the servant of a deity. The sacred tiger is morally good. Legitimate human contact with the tiger, though dangerous, is always auspicious. Asia Korean shaman has said, the tiger who acts as servant of the mountain spirit (*san sin*) does not harm benevolent persons.<sup>28</sup> This fact does not gainsay his terrible nature, rather it clarifies and deifies it. His righteous wrath cannot be avoided by profane means. It is said that an evil person will be devoured if he intrudes upon a mountain. Similarly, in Buddhist temple paintings, the tiger is sometimes depicted devouring the souls of the wicked in hell.<sup>29</sup> Given the syncretistic relations between Korean shamanism and Buddhism, the sacred tiger is regarded as the servant and messenger of Buddhas as well as mountain spirits.

The tiger's natural dwelling is the mountain wilderness; as the saying goes, "only a high mountain is fit for the habitation of tigers."<sup>30</sup> The tiger is the most extraordinary and powerful being who lives in the mountains. When a tiger descends into a village, he evokes religious dread beyond ordinary fear, since his

descent from mountain heights is analogous to the disrupting impact of sacred manifestations. The tiger is a kratophany by virtue of his extraordinary power. He is regarded as a hierophany in Korea because of his intimate association with sacred mountains which are points of contact between heaven and earth. The tiger's shamanistic ability to traverse the three cosmic zones is indicated by his ascents and descents between mountain and village, that is, the realms of nature, supernature, and human culture. As servant of *san sin*, the tiger becomes a theophany; his predations are schematized as the acts of a god. Therefore, when a tiger harms a person, his act may be regarded as divine sanction.

A Seoul newspaper report illustrates the folk interpretation of the sacred tiger's behavior.<sup>31</sup> In a mountain village during the summer of 1979, an infant boy mysteriously disappeared from the yard while his mother was briefly away. After a thorough search of the village, which revealed no clues concerning the child's whereabouts, the parents slept and has a significant dream. The local mountain spirit chastised them for previously harming the spirit of an old tree on their property. The parents awoke convinced that *san sin* had sent *horangi* to steal their child. True to their suspicions, the child was later discovered in the woods, apparently having been carried in the mouth of a tiger. The boy said that he had been *playing* with a tiger. In fact, he was not seriously injured, but the sacred tiger had effectively reprimanded the misbehaved parents!

### Mastering the Tiger

*Horangi*, as servant and representative of the mountain spirit, is thoroughly hierophanized. When the merely numinous tiger becomes servant of a fully sacred entity, he is transmuted into a hierophant, that is, a specialist in channeling manifestations of sacred power. The hierophantic tiger can be a spiritual guide for the human hierophant, the shaman or shamanist practitioner. Neither the merely biological tiger nor the merely numinous tiger are capable as guides of the

human hierophant. The mountain spirit is represented typically as a wise old man with a companion tiger whom he caresses or rides. In this image, the numinous tiger is shown mastered by alliance with a sacred being. This symbolizes the efficacious release of sacred power which occurs when a numinous thing is elevated to the level of the fully sacred. The old man is master of the tiger; the sacred tiger is master of the shamanist practitioner; the shamanist practitioner is master of the merely numinous tiger.

We have already noted examples of controlling tiger-power on the levels of the extraordinary and the merely numinous. Tiger hunters accrue the tiger's powerful attributes by killing him. Contact with the tiger's body-parts conveys magical efficacy. In cases when the numinous tiger seems unconquerable by human means, numinous enemies of the tiger are invoked to subdue him. For example, the name of a monstrous enemy of the tiger used to be called out by villagers at night to ward off tigers.<sup>32</sup> In the Buddhist context, a lion dance for expelling evil spirits was imported from China during the Three Kingdoms period (ca. 50 B.C.–A.D. 670); at one point during some present versions of this dance, a lion, who is regarded as a Bodhisattva or messenger of a Buddha, kills and devours a tiger.<sup>33</sup> A fully sacred lion conquers a dangerous and errant numinous tiger. Tiger paintings and talismans were frequently used to repel evil influences; in these cases the tiger is usually held in check by another powerful numinous or sacred force. Only the power of a mastered tiger can be safely used to master misfortune.

A common folk painting representation of *horangi* is a large tiger contentedly posed beneath a pine tree, which is a long life symbol.<sup>34</sup> The tiger bears a wide grin, sometimes humorously idiotic; but he also possesses fiercely staring eyes which repel evil influences. Sometimes he has an *ūm/yang* (yin/yang) design on the knees, shoulders, or tail tip, aligning him with the primary cosmic polarity which originates from nonduality. His face and tail are spotted like a leopard, his main body is striped like a tiger. This suggests a compatibility and resolution of contrary characteristics: fierceness/gentleness, frightening power/humorous demeanor. This is con-

sistent with the meaning of his name, as discussed previously, and reflects the harmonization of polarities which occurs by centering in the sacred.

The tiger is sometimes pictured beneath a pine tree with a taunting magpie perched above him in a branch. Folk tradition has it that a person hearing the calls of a magpie in the morning will receive good fortune. This bird acquires its numinous character as messenger of heaven. On each seventh night of the seventh moon, magpies are said to fly to the sky in order to form a bridge across the milky way, allowing the Plowman's and Weaver's stars to meet in a love tryst arranged by the sky god, *hananim*.<sup>35</sup> In similar talismans, a somewhat more fierce tiger crouches beneath an eagle, falcon, or three-headed bird. In these cases, the tiger is held in check by creatures of the sky, which is superior even to the tiger's mountain.

Evil-repelling tiger images often smile; they are often humorous and playful in appearance. They retain the power of fiercely staring eyes, but they are controlled. This conjunction of numinosity and control marks the constructive manifestation of sacred power. The tiger is sometimes painted white in association with the heavenly spirits of the four directions: blue dragon (east), white tiger (west), red bird (south), and turtle-snake (north). Here the tiger is assimilated to the basic construction of the cosmos. In all cases, the tiger remains ambivalently powerful and dangerously disruptive, for these are basic existential aspects of numinous experience. But he is rendered magically protective and creative by centering in the sacred. The conjunction of numinosity and control is also evident in Korean geomantic beliefs derived from Chinese sources. The white tiger shaped mountain is an important factor in selecting a propitious place for Buddhist temples, graves, or any important site. In fact, Buddhist temples were sometimes built at a given location specifically to compensate for the geomantic inauspiciousness of an area. The dangerous power of the numinous tiger mountain could be effectively controlled by the presence of a Buddhist temple:

White tiger refers to the mountain range on

the right side of the geomancy cave. . . . According to the Tsang-shu, the mountain must be shaped as if it is well tamed, with its head bowed, in order to be an auspicious White Tiger. A commentary on the Tsang-shu interprets this statement to mean that the tiger should be well tamed like a well trained dog whose master does not have to worry about being bitten.<sup>36</sup>

A sixteenth century Korean geography record states:

Yun chu said, "A mountain in the east of Kumchou is shaped like a walking tiger, also there is a rugged and dangerous looking rock which is called tiger rock or *Hoam*." A geomancer examined this rock and built a Buddhist temple, named *Hogap* (literally, the corner of the tiger) at the northern end of the mountain. Also there is a bridge. . . . All of these structures were made to control the mountain shape of Walking Tiger.<sup>37</sup>

The part the tiger played in the mythical founding of Korean culture illustrates his precarious association with the sacred. Tangun, the mythical founder of ancient Chosŏn, is sometimes regarded as a shamanistic king.<sup>38</sup> The myth of Tangun relates that the son of the celestial god descended to earth in order to establish an agricultural civilization based on the harmony of earth, humanity, and heaven.<sup>39</sup> At that time, a bear and a tiger wished to be transformed into human beings so that they could beget human children. They asked this of the heavenly king on earth. He gave them magic herbs and instructed them to hide in a cave for 100 days in order to obtain their wish. However, the tiger disobeyed and remained an animal. Eventually, the bear-woman mated with the heavenly king; they bore Tan'gun who established the kingdom of Chosŏn and ruled for 1500 years. The tiger's tendency toward fickleness and noncontrol are indicated by his disobedience and consequent failure in the transformation attempt. But Tan'gun became a mountain spirit after his long reign and presumably established mastery over the tiger, since the tiger has become the servant of the mountain spirit and a hierophant in his own right.



## The Tiger in Korean Folk Stories

The Korean equivalent expression for "once upon a time" means "long ago when tigers smoked long pipes."<sup>40</sup> Thus the tiger is linked directly to the timeless realm of mythos, *illud tempus*, and introduces it in a story. The expression also indicates a mutual transference of human and tiger behaviors. Mature men and women, having fulfilled major responsibilities of raising their families, are honored for their many years of effort. They may relax and respectably smoke long-stemmed pipes. The smoking tiger image reminds one also of disrespectful young men and women who (at least in the traditional view) transgress propriety by smoking. It expresses the potential respectability of *horangi* (a tiger who is like the elderly) and the potential impropriety or malevolence of persons (a person who is like a malicious tiger). The smoking tiger's ambiguity is humorously illustrated in a folk painting in which *horangi* appears ridiculous smoking a very long-stemmed pipe held for him by a hare. One wonders why the tiger is smoking tobacco rather than eating the hare! Perhaps it is because the hare has eluded his predatory schemes and returned a trick, as happens in many stories.<sup>41</sup>

The principle that the tiger must first become a servant of the sacred in order to master sacred power is dynamically exhibited in folk stories. The tiger is variously characterized as an extraordinary animal, a merely numinous being, and a fully sacred deity. The accounts of tiger hunters highlighted the extraordinary power of the tiger to emphasize their own valor. But when the tales are more than objective reports or simple boasting, encounter with the tiger always reveals some point about danger and ambiguity in life. For example, a story relates that once a traveler noticed the tail of a tiger protruding from between two large rocks. Fearing for his safety, he grasped the tiger's tail, pinning the animal between the rocks. A difficult struggle ensued. After some time, the traveler asked a bypassing Buddhist monk to kill the tiger while he continued holding the tail. The monk refused since killing animals was forbidden to him. In great consternation, the traveler at last convinced the

monk to hold the tiger's tail while he himself killed the tiger. This compromised the monk's conscience, but the monk did consent considering the dangerous situation. However, as soon as the monk took hold of the tail, the traveler departed, saying, "Your noble example has converted me to Buddhism so I can no longer kill the tiger!" The monk was left struggling with the tiger (as well as with a dilemma in his value system thus exposed!).<sup>42</sup> Here, encounter with a tiger, though restricted to its extraordinary aspect, results in a drastic situation and an intensification of awareness that the ambiguity and dangerousness of life often elude constraint by human values and intentions. In some stories, although the tiger is eventually defeated by a protagonist, the encounter has been so disruptive as to incite the suicide of the hero!<sup>43</sup>

In most stories, the tiger is highly anthropomorphic and even god-like, because of his numinosity. He can assume human behavior and appearance and display many other tricksterish and magical abilities. He is supernatural and superhuman and is at the same time, in a sense, subhuman because he lacks self-awareness, moral consistency, and is at best precariously connected with the sacred at the merely numinous level. The numinous tiger is predominantly negative, destructive, terrifying, and often ludicrous — emphasizing and at the same time moderating the *tremendum* aspect of the *mysterium*. The numinous tiger's trickery and magic are poorly controlled and capricious. In contrast, the sacred tiger is highly aware, in fact, almost omniscient. The sacred tiger is morally consistent, clearly allied with deities, and is an intentional benefit to the cosmos.

The negatively numinous tiger displays treachery and ferocity, ingratitude, greed, vengefulness, foolishness, and immorality of every kind.<sup>44</sup> In some stories, hypocritical or evil Buddhist monks are revealed to be harmful tigers. Thus a pseudosacred person is debunked and defeated. In all cases, the negatively numinous tiger is defeated or controlled by the astounding magical abilities of another being who is either positively numinous or fully sacred. This situation is analogous to the control of tiger-power employed in talismans.

The hare is regarded to be very clever and benevolent; the hare is able to turn the tiger's wicked desires and dimwitted tricks back upon himself in order to humiliate and defeat him. Similarly does the wise talking toad outwit the tiger in order to assist a good-hearted man. In one scatological tale, a malicious tiger is conquered by four brothers who possess quite amazing abilities: the first could chop wood and quarry stone at one month of age; the second could blow down trees by his own breath; the third could flatten mountains with an iron rake; and the fourth could flood large areas by prodigious urination. Needless to say, these outstanding characters had no trouble subduing the tiger. In another story, a dwarf who can shoot an ant off a rock from a quarter mile distance without hitting the rock eliminates a large community of criminal tigers, thereby avenging his father's murder.<sup>45</sup> In two similar tales, a person sentenced unjustly to die by a tiger is rescued by a troop of friendly beings who appear in the nick of time: in one version, an egg, a drill, a lump of clay, a turtle, a millstone, a straw mat, and a wooden back-pack all act in concert to destroy the tiger.<sup>46</sup> In all the stories, the victim of the tiger's treachery and trickery is innocent or defenseless; the victor over the tiger is clever, extraordinary, and allied with sacred values or entities.

The following detailed analysis of three tiger stories will illustrate the behavior of the numinous tiger as trickster and the sacred tiger as hierophant.<sup>47</sup> The tale called "The Sun and the Moon" involves the defeat of a negatively numinous tiger by the backfire of his own tricks.<sup>48</sup> The second story, "The Tiger's Magic Eyelash," involves the defeat of an immoral human by the magic of a sacred tiger who assists an unfortunate man.<sup>49</sup> The final story of "Kim Hyōn and the Tigress" portrays the loving self-sacrifice of a sacred tiger for the benefit of her human lover and recalcitrant tiger brothers.<sup>50</sup> Each tale moves through three phases: initial presentation of an insecure situation, a drastic transformation initiated by the presence of a tiger, and a restoration of improved world order indirectly or directly determined by the acts of a tiger. This structure of events is homologous to hierophanization in general and rites of passage

in particular.

*Horangi* as merely numinous tiger cannot fully determine the outcome of events; sometimes he is the victim of his own tricks, or the victim of deserved human vengeance, and sometimes he inadvertently serves a creative purpose in the cosmos. This is the case in the first story. In the latter two stories, the sacred tiger's heightened awareness, morality, and holiness emerge. Primarily, *horangi* is the provoker of drastic situational transformations. He provokes transformation by a series of disruptive actions, in other words, tricks. Magical trickery in these tales may be seen as a particular schematization of disruptions, numinous manifestations, and hierophanies. At the three levels of the extraordinary, the merely numinous, and the sacred, crises are structurally similar but religiously different in accordance with the degree of sacredness. The merely numinous tiger symbolizes the existential situation presented by profane crises and profane reactions to them, schematized as the acts of the trickster. The sacred tiger symbolizes the existential situation presented by sacred crises which occur when the often profane pattern of ordinary life is disrupted by hierophany.

The following characteristics are basic to the typical trickster:<sup>51</sup> (1) performance of extraordinary or magical tricks; (2) shifting shape by disguise or self-transmutation; (3) situation and value inverting by unexpected turns of action; (4) transmitting or imitating actions, messages, meanings, or power from the sacred; (5) performance of sexual and gastronomic feats and other lewd behaviors. The trickster's behavior focuses on: (1) initiation of drastic change instigating personal or cosmic beginnings, ends, and critical transitions; (2) transgression, destruction, or domination of boundaries both physical and cognitive. In the case of the merely numinous tiger, two qualities condition the other characteristics: he tends to be unwitting (unconscious) and self-centered. Only the hierophantic trickster is master of himself and situational transformations. The three selected tiger tales will be examined in terms of these characteristics as they vary in manifestation at the levels of the numinous and the sacred.

## Analysis of Three Tiger Tales

### *The Sun and the Moon*

Long ago an old widow was returning home to her boy and girl from her day's labor at a rich neighbor's house. She suddenly met a tiger while crossing a hill. The tiger demanded that she give him one of the buckwheat puddings she carried, under threat of death. The tiger reappeared to her several times more as she went down the path, each time demanding to have a cake, and each time pretending to be a different tiger. Finally, her puddings were all gone. However, the tiger appeared again and demanded to have one of her arms; necessarily, the old woman removed an arm and gave it to him. He continued to harass her, depriving her of both arms and legs. Having lost her limbs, she rolled down the hill until the tiger swallowed what was left of her whole.

At home, her hungry children continued to wait for her. In the meantime, the tiger disguised himself in their mother's clothes and came to their door. Noticing his strange voice and hairy arms, the children would not let the tiger in although he pretended to be their mother. The children slipped outside the back door when they discovered his deceit.

They climbed into the branches of a tree just before the tiger crashed through the house to find them. Searching behind the house, the tiger mistook the reflections of the children in a well to be themselves and pretended to try to rescue them. The children laughed at his stupidity, attracting his attention to their hideaway. Pretending to be friendly, he asked them how to climb the tree; upon their advice he foolishly spread sesame oil on the trunk causing him to slip down. Finally out of innocence, they told him to borrow an axe in order to cut footholds in the trunk. In this manner, he promptly began climbing up the tree.

Seeing their immediate danger, the children prayed to the god of heaven to send down an iron chain for them to climb; immediately god answered their prayer. The tiger reasoned that god would give him the opposite of his request since he was a bad creature, so he prayed for a rotten straw rope. But since god is straight-forward, he gave the tiger exactly his request. When the tiger climbed a little way up, the rope broke; the tiger fell to the ground and was pierced by sharp stems of

broom corn. Thus, the tiger's death caused the leaves of broom-corn to be covered with blood-red spots ever since.

One day the heavenly king told the children that they must assume some duties. He instructed the boy to become the sun and the girl to become the moon. But the girl was not comfortable being out at night, so they reversed roles. Eventually, the girl became embarrassed by the stares of people who watched her in the open every day. So she grew brighter and brighter until it was impossible for anyone to look directly at her.

The tricks of the tiger in "The Sun and the Moon" are malicious and premeditated. He pretends to be many different tigers independently approaching the old woman. He acts out a clear plan to deprive the woman of each hard-earned cake, then her own limbs, finally swallowing her torso whole, all performed in a most tormenting manner. The tiger attempts to eat her children by trickery and deceit, even attempting to trick the high god, *hananim*. But when the children escape to the tree, which is a spiritual ascension symbol associated with the *axis mundi*, his tricks turn back on the trickster. The tiger foolishly mistakes the children's reflection in the well to be the real things, making himself the butt of the children's laughter. Then he is duped by the children's own obviously deceptive advice to spread sesame oil on the tree trunk. The tiger's defeat comes when he attempts to trick the high god. *Hananim* is a compassionate being eager to fulfill the prayerful requests of those who ask of him. Thus the straightforward children's sincere request is answered; they climb the iron rope from heaven to safety. The tiger, who cleverly asks for a rotten straw rope expecting to receive the opposite because of his deceitful nature, instead gets exactly what he asked for and plunges to his death. Deceit defeats itself.

This tiger shifts his shape by dressing in the woman's clothes. Further, he lies to the children in order to account for his strange voice and rough arms, attempting to shift their impression of his shape.

The first situation inversion occurs when the woman encounters the tiger after having labored for her family's food, and is deprived of it. She loses all that she has, including the

parts of her increasingly disassociated body. Later, after failure to persuade the children to allow him entry to their house, the tiger breaks in—but they have escaped. Again, as the children are trapped in the top of the tree one expects their doom; but a rebounded trick destroys the tiger instead. Danger/safety inversions are stressed in this tale.

This tiger does interact with the sacred in a rather malign way. Inadvertantly, he becomes a moral exemplar of deceit defeating itself. Through direct conflict with the high god, a moral message is transmitted to the hearers of the story. This tiger is unambiguously negatively numinous, that is, evil.

The tiger performs the amazing gastronomic feat of swallowing the woman's torso whole, still maintaining a voracious hunger for her children.

At each appearance of the tiger, the scene is set for danger: unpredictable drastic change. This is the first thing that a listener realizes when hearing of the tiger's approach. The woman encounters danger each time she passes over a hill, in other words, when she approaches the threatening unseen. She is at a time of crisis: the elderly widow must feed her children in a society which traditionally discourages women's activity outside of the house. She succumbs to her difficulty. The tiger throws her off balance by first consuming her food, her arms, her legs, until she topples over and rolls into his mouth. In fact, the tiger forces her to dismember herself. She becomes destructured, disintegrated into malicious circumstances. However, the tiger unintentionally initiates a favorable change for the lives of her children. They are taken up into heaven by the high god without suffering death, and become the sun and the moon of benefit to everything in the cosmic order. In the sacred cosmos, order arises out of disorder. Even the rather insignificant fact of red stains on corn leaves is accounted for by the shedding of tiger's blood.

In this case, the tiger represents the inversion of norms: greed, malice, deceit, and open hostility as opposed to the positive values of diligence, sincerity, and harmony manifested by the ideal Korean family and the compassion of the high god. This family's situation is itself an inversion of what Koreans desire.

It seems a cruel fate that an old woman with two children should have to provide for her family alone.

This tiger is a boundary destroyer, transgressor, and dominator. He traps the woman by stepping into her path. He tries to trick his way into the children's home, finally smashing in. He chases them up a tree seemingly into a fatal trap. But the way to heaven cannot be commanded by malicious forceful intrusion. Ultimately his transgression of the final boundary between earth and heaven results in his own body-boundary being fatally pierced.

This story represents a confrontation with destructive danger coming from without the self which is both situational and environmental. An initially insecure situation is radically disrupted, leaving an innocent person killed. But the victimizing tiger is destroyed, cosmic order is restored and augmented. Disintegration leads to reintegration. This tiger is predominantly dull witted, misguided, and self-centered.

### *The Tiger's Magic Eyelash*

Long ago there lived a virtuous farmer named Yongp'ali in Kyōngsang Province. Unfortunately, he was married to an unusually brutish woman who constantly tyrannized him. One day she chased him out of the house, so he went for a walk on a deep mountain path. Suddenly a strange old man with long white beard appeared and asked him what were his troubles. Yongp'ali described his miserable life.

The old man gave Yongp'ali an eyelash to put on himself. Looking with the eyelash on, he saw that the old man was really a huge tiger. This tiger explained that tigers never eat virtuous people, but rather they rid the world of pigs and dogs with contaminated minds who pretend to be humans. The tiger told Yongp'ali to run home and look at his wife through the magic eyelash to see if she was a woman or a pig. If she was a pig, the tiger instructed, Yongp'ali should hurry to a nearby village where he would find a nice widow willing to take good care of him the rest of his life.

Following the tiger's advice, he ran home and discovered that his wife was truly a sow!

True to the tiger's words, he then found a fine widow in the nearby village.

In the story of "The Tiger's Magic Eyelash," the tiger is a representative of creative sacred power and his trick is magical. He can reveal the true nature of people which is hidden beneath deceptive physical appearances. He explains that evil persons are killed by tigers because they are truly beasts deserving of divine punishment.

He shifts his shape by magical transformation. The mutual identity of the mountain spirit as old man and tiger is revealed. His magic eyelash shifts all shapes by clarifying perception itself. This tiger can see beyond the boundaries of space and time, disclosing the past, present, and future.

He inverts Yongp'ali's unfortunate situation. He discloses that this sad man's wife is really a pig in disguise; he provides him with a good new wife. The tiger's righteous actions enforce sacred cosmic order. The miserable man obtains great benefit by the restoration of a proper marital relationship. As for the pitiful deserted wife — her boundaries have been severely and justly crossed.

In this story, cosmic order is restored by the tiger's inversion of a perverted situation. His tricks reveal and defeat hidden situational and environmental dangers.

### *Kim Hyön and the Tigress*

During the reign of King Wönsöng of the Silla Kingdom (785-799), a man named Kim Hyön met a beautiful young woman at Hüngnyun Temple. They both went to the temple to walk around a pagoda there on an auspicious day, hoping to have their wishes fulfilled. There they met and fell in love.

When their days of prayers were over, Kim Hyön accompanied the girl to her home, located deep within a forest. Her mother was surprised to meet her lover and insisted that he hide in a corner before her sons came home. Soon the young man was shocked to hear the roars of approaching tigers. These tigers burst into the house eager to consume the human flesh that they smelled.

However, the mother interrupted them and said that a heavenly oracle had descended, indicating that they must be punished for

having broken their promise to Buddha not to harm living creatures. The young woman promised them that she would redeem them by sacrificing herself, but told them to leave immediately. The three tigers left in shame. The maiden woke Kim Hyön from his swoon and explained the situation. She said that unfortunately she was not human, but was very grateful for the love they had shared. Since she had taken her brothers' punishment upon herself, she devised a plan whereby Kim Hyön would kill her by sword. At first he refused; however, she convinced him this was heaven's will. With many tears and a long kiss they parted until the appointed time.

According to plan, the tigress disrupted the west market of the capital so that the king requested volunteers to hunt the tiger. Kim Hyön answered the king's request and met his tigress lover at an appointed place. She left instructions that the soy sauce of Hüngnyun Temple could be used to heal tiger-inflicted wounds. Then she quickly plunged Kim Hyön's sword into her throat.

When she died her tiger form was revealed. Soon a large crowd gathered and cheered Kim Hyön for his bravery in killing the tiger. The king gave him awards of gold and silver in return for the tiger skin which he spread upon his throne.

Kim Hyön always remembered his lover with sad heart, despite his gaining fame and riches. He had a temple built in her remembrance as she had requested and often prayed for her soul.

In the story, "Kim Hyön and the Tigress," the tigress' tricks are motivated purely by love for a human male and Buddha's law. The tigress' shape shifts between a tiger and a woman. As a woman she joins in loving embrace with a human male and as tiger she sacrifices herself for the deliverance of her brothers from divine punishment.

The first situation inversion occurs when the woman suddenly appears behind the lonely praying man. The next major inversion occurs at her forest home when her family is revealed to consist of voracious tigers. Then, her brothers are divinely condemned for their misdeeds; but she sacrifices herself in order to obtain their saving repentance. Even more extreme, with noble intentions she convinces her human lover to kill her.

Thus she conveys positive sacred signific-

ances. Love overcomes loneliness. Repentance brings blessings. Self-sacrifice yields spiritual reward for oneself and material benefit for loved ones.

This tiger's sexual feat is her romantic union with a human male. This contrasts with her brother's evil gastronomic feat of devouring innocent humans.

Traditional Korean values are inverted with the romantic coupling of radically disparate persons without any regard for parental consent.<sup>52</sup> This is a wish fulfilling inversion. Also, ordinary Korean families do not live in remotely isolated homes in the forest; this is the exact opposite of the norm. But it is understandable that a family of tigers would live in a mountain forest.

A boundary is defined by the lovers' encircling the Buddhist pagoda. This is a magical action which seals a place for security and defines a spot where magical fulfillment of wishes becomes possible. The lovers cross the boundary of conventional behavior. They cross out of the village into the mountain forest. They meet at night. The evil tigers burst through the boundary of their home. The good tigress disrupts the activities of the city marketplace but only in the service of sacred goals. And finally, she drives her lover's sword through her own neck, willingly spilling her own blood, passing beyond the boundary of death and thereby elevating her human lover into the benefits of a higher social level.

This story represents a situation of inner danger. Irreconcilable contradictions within the situation require an inner sacrifice for resolution. The romantic union destined for sad separation and the necessity of atoning for immorality within the family unit demand the defeat of self for the triumph of the greater social and cosmic order.

The amazing abilities which *horangi* displays in all of these stories indicate his integral connection with the sacred even if he is at times unaware of it. The merely numinous tiger is excessively unconscious; therefore he is neither wholly centered in the sacred nor the profane, but precariously wavers between them. Despite his complete self-centeredness, he often unintentionally augments the cosmic order. The tiger in the story of "The Sun and the Moon" is oblivious to sacredness and even

attempts to deceive the high god. He is only dimly conscious of reality for he cannot even distinguish it from mere reflections in a well. He is easily duped by the children and his own tricks backfire. His passage between mountain and village symbolizes his potential as hierophant, but he is evidently ignorant or unaware of this. Instead, he is obsessed with an extremely low form of desire, gluttonous greed. In fact, he actually imitates the hierophant by attempting passage from earth to heaven via an *axis mundi* in the form of a tree and rope. But because of malicious intent he falls to his death. This tiger is too malevolent, dimwitted, and self-centered to gain full participation in the sacred, which is a necessary precondition for successful communication between earth and heaven. Even his self-control is tenuous. He fails at both magic and deceitful trickery. His shifting of shape is a malintended misrepresentation of himself. His dominating drive is to consume, a drive which finally consumes himself. The changes he induces are always destructive, except for creation of the sun and moon and for his own demise; and these later results are inadvertent. *Horangi* as mere trickster laughably fails to control his own circumstances while disrupting the circumstances of others.

The hierophantic potential of the tiger is actualized in the other two stories. In the tale of "The Tiger's Magic Eyelash," *horangi* is totally centered in the sacred, being a mountain spirit, and he transforms the needy Yongp'ali's life for the better. His clarity approaches omniscience; he reveals the true nature of people hidden in deceptions. Tigers' killing of humans in this case is divine retribution; the misfortune of Yongp'ali's wife results from her own unrighteousness. This tiger works his tricks of transformation to produce a sacred order out of disharmonious circumstances. In "Kim Hyön and the Tigress," *horangi* demonstrates her centeredness in the sacred by devotion to Buddhist precepts and to her human lover. Her desires and actions are other-directed and spiritually self-fulfilling as well. Her self-sacrificing death represents transition to a higher degree of sacredness.

Both of these sacred tigers' tricks are magical and religious. Their shape shifting en-

ables them to serve the needs of others and reveals their own true nature. Their inversions of situations and values always brings about an improved state of affairs. The sacred messages which they enact are clarifying, materially rewarding, and spiritually enlightening. These tigers are fully conscious and fully controlled. *Horangi* of the first story is possessed by self. The latter two *horangi* are self-possessed (self-aware and steadfast in morality) and are possessed by the sacred in a shamanistic sense. The first tiger is the target of laughter; the latter two reveal the foolishness of others' impropriety and profaneness.

### Conclusion

Life is full of vagaries and dangers which cannot be controlled by human reason and egotistical schemes alone. The symbolism of the merely numinous tiger emphasizes these uncontrollable aspects of life, including the ineffable nature of the *mysterium*, especially in its frightening and disruptive manifestations. The tiger's failure as a self-willed trickster demonstrates that profane attempts to control events are ultimately doomed. In the introduction, it was stated that existential ambivalence and ambiguity remain at least implicit even in the symbolism of the sacred tiger because of the paradox that humanity exists simultaneously in the realms of particularity and universality. Furthermore, experience of the sacred itself is conditioned by both fearfulness and fascination. These apparent dualities are reconciled in the symbolism of the sacred tiger. In talismanic paintings, the tiger's own body harmonizes yin and yang, gentleness and fierceness, tameness and wildness. In mountain spirit paintings, the tiger's ferocity and raw power are allied with the serenity and benevolence of the wise old man. In folk tales, the sacred tiger champions virtue through service to deities, working his magic to transform a disordered dualistic world into a harmonious cosmos.

As a successful world transformer and master of circumstances, the sacred tiger is an ideal model for the human specialist of the sacred who communicates between heaven,

earth, and underworld to maintain cosmic harmony, especially at times of misfortunes, crises, and critical transitions. Like the sacred tiger, the Korean shaman has a social and religious responsibility to help people deal with life's vagaries and dangers by sacred means. Accordingly, Korean shamans often appeal to the tiger, as manifestation of the mountain spirit, in order to invoke and channel sacred power. As one Korean shaman put it, the tiger is a great spiritual teacher.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, the symbolism of the sacred tiger teaches that the realmaster of circumstances is the servant of the sacred who, guided by clarity, impeccability, and centeredness in the sacred, wields the power of transformation for the edification of the world.

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### FOOTNOTES

1. A statistical analysis of thematic elements in 326 Korean tales revealed that, "After human-kind, tigers were found in 13% of the references to thematic vehicles." James H. Grayson, "Some Patterns of Korean Folk Narrative," *Korea Journal*, vol. 16, no. 1 (January 1976) pp. 16-17.
2. Since the Korean tiger is often attributed with personality and sexuality, I have adopted the convention of referring to the tiger by the pronoun 'he.' However, when the tiger assumes human form, the sex may be either male or female.
3. William J. Hynes presents a thorough discussion of the trickster's general characteristics in, "Beyond Sacred and Profane: Tricksters as Cosmic Dissembling Others," unpublished manuscript, 1981.
4. Carl Jung, "On the Psychology of the Trickster Figure," trans. R.F.C. Hull, in Paul Radin, *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972 edition) part five, pp. 195-211.
5. Mircea Eliade, *The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969) pp. 156-158.
6. It should be noted that the tiger is not the only creature in Korean lore attributed with tricksterish characteristics. *To-kkae-bi*, mischievous and usually harmless spirits, are also trickster-like; however, they do not reach the high

- level of sacredness possessed by the hierophantic tiger. See Donald Dean Owens, "Korean Shamanism: Its Components, Context, and Functions" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1975) pp. 112-113. This article is adapted from Edward R. Canda, "The Tiger and the Shaman: Mastery of Sacred Power in Korea" (M.A. thesis, University of Denver, 1979).
7. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey (London: Oxford University Press, 1950) p. 5.
  8. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
  9. *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.
  10. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6, 108, 140, 130-134.
  11. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Harvest Book, 1959) pp. 8-10, 34.
  12. Idem, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: World Publishing Company, Meridian Book, 7 print, 1971) pp. 9, 58-59.
  13. Idem, *Sacred and Profane*, p. 119 and *Patterns*, pp. 18-24.
  14. Homer B. Hulbert, *The Passing of Korea* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1906) pp. 21-22.
  15. cf. Horace H. Underwood, "Hunting and Hunters' Lore in Korea," *Transactions of the Korea Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 6 pt. 2 (1915) p. 37; and William Elliot Griffis, *Corea, the Hermit Nation* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897) pp. 322-323. The term *bum* is also commonly used but without the connotation of *horangi*. I am indebted to my wife, Hwi-Ja Canda, for this pleasant interpretation of the term *rang*.
  16. Griffis, *Corea*, p. 321.
  17. Hulbert, *Passing of Korea*, pp. 322-324.
  18. Underwood, "Hunting," p. 40.
  19. Angus Hamilton, *Korea* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904) p. 225; Underwood, "Hunting," p. 38; and also Dr. Edward K. Lim, "Korea and Her Wonders," *Korean Survey* 6-6 (June-July 1957) p. 7.
  20. Griffis, *Corea*, p. 320.
  21. Ha Tae-Hung, *Maxims and Proverbs of Old Korea*, Korean Cultural Series no. 7 (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1964) pp. 151-154. See also: Griffis, *Corea*, p. 322.
  22. Griffis, *Corea*, p. 321; Lim, "Wonders," p. 7.
  23. Griffis, *Corea*, pp. 300-301.
  24. Cited in Rhi Bou-Yong, "Psychological Interpretation of a Korean Fairy Tale: Sister Sun and Brother Moon," *Korea Journal* vol. 13, no. 5 (May 1973), p. 9; see also: Underwood, "Hunting," p. 37.
  25. Hulbert, *Passing of Korea*, p. 59.
  26. Ha Tae-Hung, *Folk Customs and Family Life*, Korean Cultural Series no. 3 (Seoul: Korea Information Service, Inc., 1958) p. 7.
  27. See Zozayong, *Spirit of the Korean Tiger*, Korean Art Series no. 2 (Seoul: Emille Museum, 1972) p. 7; Ha Tae-Hung, *Folk Tales of Old Korea*, Korean Cultural Series no. 6 (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 5 print, 1972) p. 258; Charles Allen Clark, *Religions of Old Korea* (Seoul: Christian Literature Society of Korea (?), 1961) p. 180.
  28. This shaman's view of *san sin* is included in Canda, "The Korean Mountain Spirit," *Korea Journal*, vol. 20, no. 9 (September 1980) pp. 11-16.
  29. Zozayong, *Korean Tiger*, pp. 7, 9.
  30. Ha, *Folk Tales*, p. 153.
  31. This account is further examined in Canda, "Korean Mountain Spirit," p. 14.
  32. Griffis, *Corea*, p. 322.
  33. cf. Yi Tu-Hyon, "Mask Dance Dramas," trans. Alan C. Heyman, in *Traditional Performing Arts of Korea* (Seoul: Korean National Commission for UNESCO, 1975) pp. 62, 71-72; and Heyman, "Korean Folk Music and Dance," in Chun Shin-Yong, editor, *Folk Culture in Korea*, Korean Culture Series no. 4 (Seoul: International Cultural Foundation, 1974) p. 98.
  34. Much of the following information is derived from: Zozayong, *Korean Tiger*, passim.
  35. Kim Yong-Ik, *The Moons of Korea* (Seoul: Korea Information Service, Inc., 1959) p. 44.
  36. Hong-Key Yoon, *Geomantic Relationships Between Culture and Nature in Korea*, Asian Folklore and Social Life Monographs no. 89, Prof. Lou Tsu-K'ang with Wolfram Eberhard, editors (Taipei: Orient Cultural Service, 1976) p. 38.
  37. *ibid.*, p. 165. Yoon states that there is also an opposite theory that the crouching tiger is auspicious. One assumes that this power of the crouching tiger must be balanced by some other feature of the local environment for it to be auspicious.
  38. Owens, "Korean Shamanism," p. 23.
  39. Ilyon, *Samkuk yusa: Legends and History of the Three Kingdoms of Ancient Korea*, trans. Ha Tae-Hung and Grafton K. Mintz (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1972) pp. 32-33. A Han dynasty tomb in Shantung contains a pictorial story similar to this. In this Chinese version, as McCune interprets it, a tiger seems to give birth to Tan'gun out of his mouth while a bear performs a ceremonial



- dance. McCune suggests that the Korean version may represent a shift from tiger to bear as the progenitor in deference to a dominant clan with a bear cult. It seems that the tiger's sacred status is clearly established in the Chinese version.
40. Ha, *Maxims and Proverbs*, p. 153.
  41. This painting is reproduced in: Zozayong, *Introduction to Korean Folk Painting* (Seoul: Emille Museum, 1977) p. 21. For one version of a relevant tale, see: Y.T. Pyun, "The Tiger and the Hare," *Tales from Korea* (Seoul: International Cultural Association of Korea, 1946) pp. 40-42. See also a Jungian discussion of the tiger as a negative animus in: Rhi, "Korean Fairy Tale," *passim*.
  42. Pyun, "The Traveller and the Tiger," *Tales from Korea*, pp. 26-28.
  43. Zong In-Sob, "The White Eared Tiger" and "The Tiger Priest," *Folk Tales from Korea* (Seoul: Hollym Corporation, 1970) pp. 86-88, 90-92.
  44. *Ibid.*, pp. xxiii-xxiv.
  45. Pyun, "Tiger and the Hare;" Zong, "The Ungrateful Tiger," "Four Sworn Brothers," and "The Tiger and the Dwarf," *Folk Tales from Korea*, pp. 183-184, 162-166, 78-82.
  46. Pyun, "The Old Woman and the Tiger," *Tales from Korea*, pp. 21-15; see also: Zong, "The Young Gentleman and the Tiger," *Folk Tales from Korea*, pp. 160-162.
  47. The following material was originally presented in: Edward R. Canda, "Horangi the Korean Tiger: Trickster and Servant of the Sacred," paper delivered at Rocky Mountain-Great Plains Regional Meeting of the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature, Boulder, Colorado, April 1979.
  48. Abridged from: Zong, "The Sun and the Moon," *Folk Tales from Korea*, pp. 7-10.
  49. Abridged from: Zozayong, *Korean Tiger*, p. 7.
  50. Abridged from: Ilyon, *Samguk yusa*, pp. 356-359.
  51. I wish to thank Dr. William J. Hynes for his formulation of the following five trickster characteristics at: Trickster Myths Seminar, Iliff School of Theology, Denver, Colorado, Summer 1978.
  52. I have projected present traditional Korean values upon this story from Silla, possibly with some inaccuracy. However, the general tone of the story certainly indicates that a transgression of values occurs here.
  53. Canda, "The Korean Mountain Spirit," p. 15.

## *Sijo*

Let's play while we're young  
 We can't when we grow old.  
 No flower stays red for ten whole days;  
 The moon when it's full begins to wane.  
 We can't become boys again;  
 Let's play while we have the chance.

**Anonymous**  
*Translated by Kevin O'Rourke*