

# The Legend of Tan'gun

It happened a long long time ago. . .

The heavens were ruled by King Hwan-In. He had a son named, Hwan-Woong. Hwan-Woong often looked down below, to observe the people living on the land. But the sight only made him sigh with worry. One day the King asked his son, "My son, why do you look so anxious, you are the prince of the heavens and soon you will inherit my kingdom. What is there to worry about?"

Hwan-Woong replied,

"Father, I have seen how the people live on the land and I see that they are becoming more and more deceiving. Such a sight upsets me. Permit to descend down, so that I can help these people, father." And he pleaded sincerely. On hearing his plea, the king was proud of his son. Yet at the same time he felt wistful and sad. Nevertheless, Hwan-Woong was granted his wish from the heavens. And he landed on the most important spot of all, in the east - the land that is known as Korea today. When he came down, he brought the wind, cloud and the rain gods with him, along with 3000 subordinates. The King Hwan-In gave his son the rights of heaven together with his blessing. The rights of heaven is like a treasured world stamp given by the king.

Hwan-Woong formed the capital city near Shin-Dan-Su and named it Shin-Si.

His reign on the land encouraged the disappearance of fights and all bad things that had existed before. The animals too became very docile. One day, a tiger and a bear came to Hwan-Woong. They wanted to become humans. Hwan-Woong carefully explained to them that it would require immense patience and that the experience would be too harsh and draining. Yet the tiger and the bear remained reluctant to submit. They told Hwan-Woong that they could sustain any kind of pain if only it meant that they could become human beings. He thought for a while. Then he gave the tiger and the bear twenty garlic pieces and a bunch of crown daisies each.

"Eat these and pray to the gods for a hundred days. You must pray with all your heart. You are not allowed to see daylight for the hundred days. Do you understand?"

The tiger and the bear walked into a cave, contented, with the thought of becoming a human.

For a few days, they prayed to the gods, eating only garlic and the crown daisies. They prayed, "Gods above please hear my prayer. Let be become a human being."

Few more days passed by.

Let us peep inside to see what the two of them are doing. . .

Tiger: I am so hungry that I think I am going crazy!

Bear: Gods above hear my plea; let me be a human being.

Tiger: How can you pray in these conditions! Do you have enough strength left to ask to be granted with your wish? What's the point, we are going to die anyway!

Bear: Hear my prayer; let me become a human being.

Tiger: Dear bear! I cannot stand this any longer!

Are you going to continue praying like an idiot?!

Bear: I know that we will be granted with our wish. Please be patient, tiger.

You can become a human; it just takes some time. . .

Tiger: Dear bear, you do it. I cannot go on like this any longer.

I am leaving you. Goodbye!

Bear: Gods in heaven, Tiger! Tiger! Come back!



The tiger left without being able to sustain the hardship of becoming a human being.

Bear: (With tears rolling down its face) How can you leave like this, tiger. . .

The bear is feeling very sad. Oh no!

Bear: Tiger could not do it, but I must go on till the end.

Twenty days passed.

All the hairs on the bear's body began to fall off gradually.

At long last, one hundred days passed!

Something strange was beginning to happen inside the cave.

The bear was transformed into a woman. And a beautiful one too!

Hwan-Woong named this beautiful woman Woong-Nyo.

And he married her.

Do you think that this is a little strange?

Hwan-Woong must have respected Woong-Nyo's patience and became attracted to her beauty and her kindness.

Anyway, they wed and they lived happily ever after.

The story does not end here.

A son is born to Hwan-Woong and Woong-Nyo. This brought joy to the two people.

A healthy son born to follow his father's footsteps.

This child is the ancestor to all Korean people - he is the famous Tangun.

Tangun grew up to succeed his father. He rules Shin-si.

Later, he changed the capital to the banks of Baek-Ak Mountain, near Pyongyang( was known as ASADAL, in those times). He named the country CHOSUN.

The first ever country to be formed in the Korean Peninsula, B.C. 2333.

According to Tangun,

" We are the descendents of the kingdom of heaven.

The heavens sent their son to aid and give to the people. So that they can live in fortune and prosperity.

Moreover, I was told to spread the heavens' brilliant ray evenly amongst our land.

I will put this into practice."

Hence our nation was found and it was devoted to the welfare of its people.

Tangun cared about his people and the people were devoted to him. They referred to him, as Tangun the Much-Respected - Tangun-Wang-Gum.

This is the first ever Korean Myth.

(Recently, in a move to try to legitimize itself, the North Korean government claimed it had found and excavated the burial site for Tan-gun.)

