
From Tales of Korean folk paintings: Minhwa (p131-135)

Magpies and Tigers (까치와 호랑이)

An important subset of tiger paintings is *hojak-do* (호작도), the paintings of magpies and tigers. In such a painting, a smiling tiger is looking at a magpie sitting in a pine tree. A folktale provides context for this image.

Once upon a time, a tiger wandered into a big puddle in the forest. Incapable of freeing himself, he anxiously waited for someone to rescue him. He endured three days without a meal before a goodhearted woodcutter happened to pass by.

The tiger begged the man to save his life. When the woodcutter obliged, the ungrateful tiger attempted to eat him. Startled by this turn of events, the woodcutter asked an ox and a pine tree to fairly judge the case. But the pair sided with the tiger, urging him to eat the woodcutter.

In desperation, the woodcutter turned to a magpie for a final opinion. The magpie asked the woodcutter and the tiger to reenact the story so that he could make an appropriate judgment.

The foolish tiger returned to the puddle, and the woodcutter was saved. Because of this tale, a magpie has long been considered a friend to humans.



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(via
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