

Moon-Moo of Shilla

Moon-Moo of Shilla (문무왕) (文武王) (reigned 661–681) was the thirtieth king of the Korean kingdom of **Shilla**. He is usually considered to have been the first ruler of the **Unified Silla** period. Moon-Moo was the son of **King Muyeol** and Munmyeong, who was the elder sister of **Kim Yu-shin**. Under his father's reign, he held the office of *pajinchan*, who apparently was responsible for maritime affairs, and played a key role in developing the country's diplomatic links with Tang. He was born Prince Beommin (법민;/法敏), and took the name Moon-Moo when he succeeded his father to the throne.

Moon-Moo took the throne in the midst of the long conflict against **Baekje** and **Goguryeo**, shortly after General **Ge-Baek** and Baekje had been defeated at **Sabi** by General **Kim Yu-shin**. In these struggles, Shilla was heavily aided by Tang. The first years of his reign were spent trying to defeat Goguryeo, following an abortive attempt in 661. Finally, in 667, he ordered another attack which led, in 668, to the defeat of Goguryeo. After the small isolated pockets of resistance were eliminated, Moon-Moo was the first ruler ever to see the Korean peninsula completely unified.

Moon-Moo then faced the challenge of freeing his country from Tang domination. After the fall of Goguryeo Tang created the Protectorate General to Pacify the East and placed the entire Korean peninsula, including Shilla, under its rule. To prevent this, Moon-Moo forged alliances with Goguryeo resistance leaders such as **Geom Mojam** and **Anseung**, and launched a frontal attack on the Tang forces occupying the former Baekje territory. The struggle lasted through the early 670s, but by 676 the Tang forces had been expelled from the peninsula. This victory, and the maintenance of Shilla independence, is generally regarded as a critical turning-point in Korean history.

Moon-Moo ruled over unified Silla for twenty years, until he fell ill in 681. On his deathbed, he left his last will and testament, and abdicated to his son, Prince Shinmun. Before he died he said: "A country should not be without a king at any time. Let the Prince have my crown before he has my coffin. Cremate my remains and scatter the ashes in the sea where the whales live. I will become a dragon and thwart the Japanese invasion." **King Shinmun** did as his father asked, and scattered his ashes over Daewangam (the Rock of the Great King), a small rocky islet a hundred metres or so off the Korean coast. Moreover, King Sinmun built the Gomun Temple (the Temple of Appreciated Blessing) and dedicated it to his father, he built a waterway for the sea dragon to come to and from the sea and land, and he built a pavilion, Eegun, overlooking the islet so that future kings could pay their respects to the great King Moon-Moo.



This is the place where legend has it that King Moon-Moo is interred. He was placed here and turned into a dragon to ward off evil spirits. Moon-Moo reigned in the A.D. 600's

In a dream, King Moon-Moo and the famous general Kim Yu-shin appeared to King Shinmun and said to him: "Blowing on a bamboo flute will calm the heavens and the earth." King Sinmun awoke from the dream, rode out to the sea and received the bamboo flute Monposikjuk. It was said that the blowing of the bamboo flute invoked the spirits of King Moon-Moo and General Kim Yu-shin and would push back enemy troops, cure illnesses, bring rain during drought and halt the rains in floods.