CHAPTER 1

CREATION MYTHS
INTRODUCTION

Myths of Creation, or Cosmogonic Myths are myths interpreting how the world came into existence, how did mankind and myriads of objects in this world originate. These myths were the philosophy of the primitive man regarding the initial stage of the world. These were explanations for various natural phenomena. In order to make a living, man strived hard to get himself acquainted with the natural phenomena around him. He mastered the laws of nature. And from then on, he made great efforts to attain the goal of controlling nature, thereby diminishing his brunt of labour, raising production and improving his standard of living. So long man exists, it is an endless process. And this process has its root in the early days of human society. The unpredictable Nature with her merciless appearance posed tremendous threat to the very existence of man. Primitive man with his poor productive forces was unable to cope up with the thousand odds. With his utter ignorance, and incessant quest for knowledge, man started pondering over and probing the mysteries of nature.

Myths are the first revelation of man's attempt to explain various natural phenomena. Thousands of queries made their way into the mind of primitive man. These questions found their place in mythology, and at the same time found equitable solution in the primitive man's vision. Such attempts to find solution tell us that the primitive man had already attained certain observation and knowledge regarding Nature on the basis of continuous empirical practice. Moreover, he paid attention to the regular phenomenal occurrences in the domain of Nature and tried to elucidate them. During its childhood, mankind started having a spirit of imbibing true knowledge while unravelling the secrets of the universe. Although such ideas were utterly at a puerile stage, yet these were the milestones in the path of future scientific advancements by the posterity. But primitive man could not give a scientific explanation to his queries.

Under the influence of pantheistic concepts, and with imagination full of innocence and fantasy, he personified or even deified all natural forces and almost everything in nature. He also elucidated the interrelation between natural phenomena with an equation.
of human relationship. Even inanimate objects, like the sun and the moon, were personified to an extent that they are said to possess human nature. Various natural beings and natural forces played various roles in the life of the primitive man. Therefore, while personifying them the primitive man naturally proceeded from the point of advantages and disadvantages, assigning them different forms. The elements beneficial to mankind were embellished and thereby eulogized. On the contrary, the natural forces harmful to mankind or posing threat to mankind were assigned fiendish images, expressing a feeling of abhorrence and dread.

1.1 CHINESE CREATION MYTHS: NARRATION

China is a vast country with varied ethnic entities. The majority Hans inhabited the river plains of the north. They had to fight all natural odds in the cold, barren north. So in this process they had created myths reflecting their day-to-day hardship. But in the south, that is, to the south of the Yangzi River, especially in the south-western plains, several ethnic minorities lived in complete isolation. The Hans called them 'barbarians' and thus kept them away from their own civilization, devoid of any interaction. The comparatively fertile south made the socio-economic life of the southerners much easier than that of the northerners. The southern myths became enriched in varieties of fantastic imagination after coming in contact with the folk traditions of eastern India. Moreover, the tiny kingdoms in the pre-Qin era had folk traditions much more diverse in nature, both ethnically and linguistically, than those in the post-Qin times. Tradition at the grass-roots level lived on for ages even after political unification under the Qin. Myths were marked distinctively by their respective regional flavour. Cosmogonic myths of minority origin were gradually absorbed by the conquering Hans in the process of such hostile interaction like military expeditions, the purpose of which was to usher 'civilization' in the 'uncivilized' corners of the land.

In spite of having a single written script, even today the Chinese dialects vary vastly from region to region, county to county and even from village to village. In such a situation, with different environmental conditions, the psyché and ethos of the people
differ from place to place, presenting an image of totally different ethnic identity. While delving into cosmogonic myths we can discover several versions of the story—telling us how the world was created.

"May I ask -- about the beginning of the remote antiquity, who did pass on the knowledge? In those days the heaven and earth stood undivided, how did one look into it? In those days all were in chaos, who made it clear? Something is circling round, something is floating, how can we distinguish? Fathomless darkness gave birth to light, how did it happen? The two principles Yin and Yang--born out of fusion, where do they come from after all? The sky-lid has got nine layers, who does manage these all? Such an engineer, what a great person, who was the first craftsman?" 1

Qu Yuan (c.340-c.278BC), a great poet of the kingdom of Chu during the Warring States period (475-221BC), put forth a series of questions regarding the creation of the universe in his well-known poem "Tianwen" (Putting Riddles to Heaven).

There is a mythical fable recorded in the ancient text Zhuangzi even prior to "Tianwen". The fable runs as follows:

The Emperor of the Southern Sea—Shu (swift) and his northern counterpart Hu (sudden) used to meet often in the realm of Hundun (chaos), the Emperor of the Centre. Hundun was extremely hospitable to them but lacked the seven bodily orifices which other men have. To repay his hospitality, Shu and Hu decided to bore the necessary holes in Hundun, at the rate of one hole a day. On the seventh day, when they drilled the last hole, Hundun died.2

The creation myths were formally brought out during the early years of Han dynasty. The general idea was that in the remote ages, before the creation of heaven and earth, the world was just a mass of chaos—full of confusion and obscurity; sans movement and sans expression. Amidst confusion, two great deities came into existence—one a god (Yang) and the other a goddess (Yin). There they painstakingly set up a camp. Later they decided to part from each other. Thereafter eight directions were ascertained. The Yang started governing the heaven and the Yin the earth. Thus our world was created.\(^3\)

In another story, it is said that in those ages when heaven and earth were created, the earth remained inundated. The God sent a giant named Pu Fu and his wife to jointly control the flood. This couple was of an unparalleled size. Each of them was a thousand li\(^4\) tall. They had corpulent bodies. They were really vexed with such a laborious job as harnessing river. So without putting any effort, they casually did the job just to wind up early. When courses for rivers were made, some places were dug deep, some were dug shallow. Some places were clogged, others were blocked. The entire project was virtually in a mess. All these were much before Yu the Great toiled hard to harness rivers and control flood. The God being annoyed at their indolence, punished them by leaving them stark naked—standing in the vast wasteland of the southeastern corner of the earth. They were not allowed to take food or water, they had to brave both summer and winter. The sluggards were only allowed to drink dew-drops falling from the sky and thus allay their hunger. The God said when the Yellow River became clear and transparent, only then they would be able to get back their freedom. It was possible only if the river stops flowing into the sea. But that was utterly impossible. So the gigantic pair basks under the sun forever.\(^5\)

\(^3\) Chapter "Jingshen" (Spirit), Huainanzi (The Book of Scholars) cited in Yuan, n.1, pp. 66-67, 70 (n.6).
\(^4\) Li is a Chinese unit of length equal to ½ kilometre.
\(^5\) Chapter "Dongnanhuangjing" (On the Southeastern Wasteland), Shenyijing (Book of Deities and Marvels) cited in Yuan, n.1, pp.68, 70 (n.11).
Yet another story relates that there was "Guimu"--the Mother Ghost who lived on top of the Xiaoyu Hills in the Southern Sea. She looked utterly strange with a tiger's head and a dragon's feet, with python's eyebrows and flood-dragon's eyes. She had extraordinary skill of creating heaven, earth and ghosts. Ten ghosts were born each time. After giving birth in the morning, Guimu devoured her children at night.  

In the course of our search for the Creator of the universe, we cannot help thinking of Zhulongshen (Candle Dragon Deity) atop Mount Zhongshan--recorded in Shanhaijing (The Book of Mountains and Seas). This deity with a human face had a body of a snake, with red skin and its body stretching for a thousand li. It neither eats, nor drinks, nor sleeps. When its eyes are open it is day, when closed night. Its inhalation is winter, its exhalation summer. Its breathing is also the wind, and absence of breathing means there is neither wind nor rain. By its divine power it holds a wax candle in its mouth and illuminates the north through the gloomy Heavenly Gate. So the people also call the dragon by the name "Zhuyin" (Candle Shade).

There is only one great deity in Chinese mythology who split heaven and earth, that is Pan Gu. The first ever occurrence of his name was in the book Sanwu Liji (The History of the Three Kings and Five Emperors) by Xu Zheng, a historian during the reign of the Three Kingdoms (220-265 AD). The book Sanwu Liji is already lost. However, Taiping Yulan (Taiping Imperial Encyclopaedia) quotes from it, saying that:

Heaven and earth were commingled like an egg in the midst of which Pan Gu was born and he lived for eighteen thousand years. Then heaven and earth split asunder : the pure and bright element became heaven, the impure and dark element earth, while Pan Gu

within underwent nine transformations in one day, turning into a god in heaven and a sage on earth. Heaven grew ten feet higher every day, earth grew ten feet thicker every day, and Pan Gu grew ten feet taller every day. So it went for eighteen thousand years, till heaven was exceedingly high, earth exceeding thick, and Pan Gu exceedingly tall. Then came the three divine emperors.\textsuperscript{8}

Wuyun Linianji, another book by Xu Zheng is already lost, but its passages are still to be found in \textit{Yishi} (Unravelling History). It says that the primogenial vapours were misty. Then it started sprouting and gradually the heaven and earth got separated. Thus the universe was formed. The Yin and Yang elements came into existence. And the primogenial vapours got dispersed. Out of this neutral state came the man. The first living being was Pan Gu. He transformed into various elements after his death. His breath turned into wind and clouds. His voice became thunder. His left eye became the sun, right eye the moon. His four limbs and five bodily organs became the four cardinal points and the five sacred mountains. Blood turned into rivers and seas, veins and arteries the topography, muscles the soil, hair and moustache the stars, his body hairs the grasses and trees, his teeth and bones became metals and stones, his semen pearls, his marrow jade and his sweat the rain. The fleas and lice on his body became the multitude.\textsuperscript{9}

Later on, the book \textit{Shuyiji} (Accounts of Marvels) from the Southern Dynasties (420-589) accounts that:

Lord Pan Gu is the forefather of all elements in heaven and earth, rather every living being have sprung up from Pan Gu. The past saying goes when Pan Gu died, his

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head became the four sacred mountains, eyes became sun and moon, bodily fat turned into rivers and seas, hairs into grasses and trees. During the Qin and Han era, there was a common saying: The eastern mountain was derived from Pan Gu's head, central mountain from his abdomen, southern mountain from his left arm, northern mountain from his right arm and western mountain from his feet. The pre-Confucian saying was that the rivers and seas were derived from Pan Gu's tears, wind from his breath, thunder from his voice, and lightning from his pupil. The old saying was that sunny days were his happiness and cloudy days when angry. During the Wu and Chu era the saying was that Lord Pan Gu and his wife created Yin and Yang. At the present site of the southern sea lies the grave of Pan Gu stretching upto 300 li. Later on men used to go there offering rice and wine to his soul. In Guilin there is a temple of Pan Gu, now people offer sacrifices to his soul. In the southern seas there was Pan Gu-guo or the Kingdom of Pan Gu where every one had but one surname --- Pan Gu.

A popularly narrated tale tells us that:

In the beginning, the heaven and earth were still one and all was chaos. The universe was like a big egg, carrying Pan Gu inside itself. After 18 thousand years Pan Gu woke up from a long sleep. He felt suffocated, so he took up a broadaxe and wielded it with all his might to crack open the egg. The light, clear part of it floated up and formed the heaven, the heavy and turbid matter stayed below to form earth. Pan Gu stood in the middle, his head touching the sky, his feet planted on earth.

The heaven and the earth began to grow at a rate of ten feet per day, and Pan Gu grew along with them. After another 18 thousand years, the sky was higher, the earth thicker, and Pan Gu stood between them like a pillar 9 million li tall so that they would never join again.

10. Shuyiji, cited in Yuan (Ed.), n.9, p.245.
The rest of the story can be found in Wuyun Linianji.

There are several versions of the Pan Gu myth. Among the Miao, Yao, Li and other ethnic minorities of south China, a legend relates Pan Gu the ancestor of the entire mankind, to a man’s body and a dog’s head. The story runs like this:

Up in Heaven the god in charge of the earth, King Gao Xin, owned a beautiful spotted dog. He reared him on a plate (pan in Chinese) inside a gourd (hu, which is close to the sound gu), so the dog was named Pan Hu. Among the gods there was great enmity between King Gao Xin and his rival King Fang. King Gao Xin proclaimed that whoever could bring him the head of King Fang may marry his daughter, but nobody was willing to try because they were afraid of King Fang’s strong soldiers and sturdy horses. The dog Pan Hu overheard what was said, he slipped out of the palace and ran to King Fang. The latter was glad to see him standing there wagging his tail. King Fang thought that his enemy was near his end and that was the reason why the latter’s dog had left his master. So he held a banquet to celebrate the occasion.

At midnight when all was quiet and Fang was overcome with drink, Pan Hu jumped onto the king’s bed, bit off his head and ran back to his master with it. King Gao Xin was overjoyed to see the head of his rival, and gave orders to bring Pan Hu some fresh meat. But Pan Hu left the meat untouched and curled himself up in a corner to sleep. For three days he ate nothing and did not stir. The king was puzzled and asked Pan Hu the reason behind his refusal to eat anything. He also said that a dog cannot marry a human being. Suddenly Pan Hu began to speak like a human being, and said that he could become a man if he were kept covered with the king’s golden bell for seven days and seven nights. The king did as he was told, but on the sixth day, fearing the dog would starve to death, out of solicititude the princess peeped under the bell. Pan Hu’s body had already changed into that of a man, but his head was still that of a dog. However, once the bell was raised, the magical change stopped, and he had to remain a man with a dog’s head.
Pan Hu married the princess and then they moved to the earth to settle down in the remote mountains of south China. There they lived happily and had four children, three boys and a girl, who became the ancestors of mankind.\footnote{Yuan, n.1, pp.72-73. Wei, n.11, pp. 8-10.}

In recent times, Xu Yunhua, a septuagenarian from Sichuan, narrated another myth of Pan Gu which says that heaven was created by Pan Gu and earth was created by Pian Gu. Before they put their hands to work, they came to an agreement that whoever finishes construction first, will be considered the elder brother, and whoever finishes late will be considered the younger brother.

Both of them began working. Pan Gu thought that he was much more competent than Pian Gu and that he would be definitely faster than Pian Gu to build the sky. He was sure to become the elder brother. So he worked a bit and slept for a while. Pian Gu was simple and honest. Moreover, he knew that Pan Gu looks down upon him. So he decided to strive hard without rest. He did his work with all his might. And within a few days he finished constructing the earth.

When Pan Gu saw that Pian Gu had already finished his job, he came out with a dirty trick. After Pian Gu had gone to sleep, Pan Gu asked a person named Ganshangao\footnote{Literally, Ganshangao means mountain-crumpling punt-pole.} to crumple the earth and make it as big as the sky. Ganshangao took up a punt-pole made of hill-bamboo and hit thrice on the earth. The plain and smooth earth got crumpled and became almost as big as the sky. The mountains on earth were thus formed.

Next day, when Pian Gu discovered that the earth has reached the size of the sky, he knew it was Pan Gu who has put him in a fix. After dark, Pian Gu asked a person called Tiezhugan\footnote{Literally, Tiezhugan means iron-bamboo pole.} to puncture the sky. Tiezhugan took a weapon and by piercing it,
made myriads of holes in the sky. The stars and the moon were thus formed. After that, Pan Gu and Pian Gu discontinued shaping up heaven and earth. Heaven and earth remained just as they were then.15

Chinese cosmogony encompasses various mythical themes: the creation of the world, the origin of everything on earth, the origin of man, the deluge, the marriage between brother and sister, and some other aspects. The origin of man is the most common theme in almost every mythology in the world. However, this particular theme is linked with the deluge and re-creation of mankind.

In the earliest records, we find a query: "Nuwa had a physical body, who was the craftsman who made her?16 Then came the two great deities Yin and Yang who, after splitting heaven and earth apart, made insects, fish, birds and animals out of the foul air that had remained between heaven and earth. Man was created out of the fresh air.17 Wuyun Linianji later on put it, as we already know, that the fleas and lice on Pan Gu's body became the multitude.18

Another myth which was in vogue, dating much later than the previous one says that Yin and Yang began with the Pan Gu couple. That is how man was born.19 There is yet another myth telling that man was created by the joint endeavour of all the celestial deities. It says that the Yellow Emperor created the sexual organs of men and women; that Shangpian gave human beings their ears, eyes, noses and mouths; and that Sanglin

17. Chapter "Jingshen", Huainanzi cited in Yuan, n.1, pp.79, 85 (n.1)
18. See n.9.
created their limbs. It also says that Nuwa had seventy transformations. In another source we notice that ten deities were born out of Nuwa's intestine.

A popular myth goes that once heaven and earth had separated, there were still no men. Nuwa set about modelling men out of yellow earth. She was very busy with her work till she could exert no more. So she took a rope and dipped it into the mud and trailed it about so that drops fell off. From the modelled specimens came the noble and rich, while those who dripped from the muddy rope were the humble and poor. It is said that in the remote ages the four corners of the sky once collapsed, and the world got rent. The sky crumbled and the earth grew fissures. Big fires with dancing flames kept on burning, and voluminous water flowed restlessly. Wild beasts started devouring innocent people and fierce birds seized the old and weak. Thereupon Nuwa began to mend the blue sky by melting multi-coloured stones. She cut the legs of a giant turtle and made four pillars for the sky. She killed the black dragon and saved the people of the central plains. Then she heaped the ashes of reeds to check the flood. The chapter also says that the sky was patched, the four corners of the sky were restored; the flood was controlled, the central plains returned to peace; the sinister creatures were liquidated and the people got a new life. They became happy again with the square earth and the round sky. At that time the birds, beasts, snakes and insects hid their teeth, claws and stings and forgot their

20. Chapter "Shuolin" (The Forest of Sayings), Huainanzi cited in Yuan, n.1, pp.79-80, 85 (n.4).


23. Christie, n.2, p.64.

24. Chapter "Lanming" (A View to the Nether World), Huainanzi cited in Yuan, n.1, p.109 (n.14)
The time when the universe was formed, there lived the brother-and-sister pair of Fuxi and Nüwa. They lived atop Mount Kunlun. There was no mankind on earth. Both of them decided to get married but felt ashamed. The brother along with her younger sister scaled Mount Kunlun. Each of them lit fires on top of two hills and sought advice from the Heaven. They asked the God to let the smokes join together if he approved of their union as a conjugal pair; and that he may make the smoke disperse in case of his disapproval. The smokes joined together. The sister came running to her brother, she covered her face with a fan which she had made out of grass. Li Rong remarks that till the present day brides put fans before their faces, just like what happened then.

The legend popular among the ethnic minorities of southwest China is still more rich in imagination. This story is prevalent among the Miao, the Yao and some other tribes. The story tells us that there was a warrior who predicted an imminent disaster on a rainy day. In the face of a raging storm when the black-faced Thunder God descended on earth with a big roar, the warrior pounced on him piercing his hunting fork into the god’s waist. Then he locked the god in an iron cage and let his two children (a boy and a girl) keep a watch over the god. He exhorted them not to give water to the god for drinking. The warrior ventured out to buy some incense, planning to kill the god and make a good dish. After a while, the Thunder God started groaning ostentatiously, giving the children an impression as if he were going to die out of thirst. After some hesitation the children were filled with compassion for the thirsty god. They sprinkled a few drops of water in his mouth. The god broke the cage and came out of it. Out of gratitude he plucked one of his teeth and gave it to the children. He also instructed them to sow the tooth in the soil,


and told them that at the time of calamity they can hide themselves inside the fruit borne by the plant. And saying so he soared up into the blue.

The warrior came back and to his utter dismay found that the Thunder God had escaped. Without much delay he made an iron boat in order to save himself from disaster. The tooth which was sown, bore a fruit which grew at an alarming rate and the very next day it reached the size of a massive calabash. The children cut open the fruit and made it into a comfortable place for hiding. On the third day the deluge came all of a sudden. The torrential rain submerged the hillocks and surrounded the high mountains. Everything got drowned under the menacing water. Only the warrior floated atop the waves in his iron boat. And the children took refuge inside the gourd. The water was so high that the warrior reached the Heavenly Gate. The celestial deities out of fear ordered the Water God to recede the water. The god obeyed and the water suddenly disappeared from the earth. The iron boat landed with a crash and got disintegrated killing the warrior instantaneously. But nothing happened to the children hiding inside the gourd. The deluge spared none. Only these two children were left all alone in this world, the only human souls. Before they did not have any name, but since they came out of the gourd they came to be known as 'Brother Fuxi' and 'Sister Fuxi'.

The two youngsters, relying on their labour, made a happy living. Those days the sky and the earth had no much distance between them. The Heavenly Gate remained open. And they often used to go up the staircase and into the celestial hall to play. Time passed and they became adults. Finally they decided to get married. Very soon the girl gave birth to a lump of flesh. They cut it into pieces and after putting them in a packet went up into the hall to play. Suddenly a gust of wind blew and tore the packet open. The flesh pieces got scattered all over the earth and were transformed into human beings. The pieces falling on tree-leaves got a surname Ye (leaf), those falling on wood got a surname Mu (wood). And thus men got their surnames from the places of their descent. Man was re-created by the Fuxi couple. They came to be reckoned as Creators of
Mankind.\textsuperscript{27}

In the past, Gonggong fought with Zhuanxu, contending to be the supreme ruler of Heaven. Out of anger he knocked against Buzhou Mountain. The pillar of heaven crumbled and the confines of the earth were smashed. The heaven tilted north-westwards, therefore sun, moon and stars moved from east to west. The earth was broken in the southeast, hence all the rivers flowed to the ocean.\textsuperscript{28}

In another record the story is quite similar. In the past, Goddess Nüwa melted multi-coloured stones and plastered the sky. She cut off the legs of a giant turtle and erected at the four extremities of the world. Later Gonggong while contending with Zhuanxu for supremacy in heaven, knocked against Buzhou Mountain out of anger, thereby breaking the pillar of heaven and inflicting damage to the earth. From then on heaven tilted north-westwards; sun, moon and stars moved therein. The earth was broken in the southeast; hundreds of waters flowed down therein.\textsuperscript{29}

Another source records the story quite differently: Gonggong fought with Zhurong, and as he could not win, in a fit of anger he knocked against Buzhou Mountain. It collapsed. The pillar of heaven crumbled and the confines of the earth were smashed. Nüwa patched up the sky by melting multi-coloured stones. She cut the legs of a giant turtle and propped up four extremities. She heaped up ashes of reeds and checked the flood, bringing relief to the central plains. Thereupon the earth was levelled and the sky returned to its original form. The old matter remained unaltered.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{27} Yuan, n.1, pp.81-85.

\textsuperscript{28} Chapter "Tianwenxun" (Lectures on Astronomy), Huainananzi cited in Mao, n.8, pp.131-132; Yuan, n.26, p.101.

\textsuperscript{29} Liezi cited in Mao, n.8, p.132.

\textsuperscript{30} Sanhuang Benji (Original Records of the Three Sovereigns) cited in Mao, n.8, p.132.
Apart from these narratives, there is also the mention of a Creator without a proper name. Here we find that the seventh day of the first lunar month is the day of man.\textsuperscript{31} Elsewhere it is narrated that on the first day of the first lunar month chicken was made, the second day came the dog, the third day the sheep, the fourth day the pig, the fifth day the cow, the sixth day the horse, and the seventh day the man.\textsuperscript{32} Yet another source says that just after the separation of heaven and earth, the first day came the chicken, and the seventh day came the man.\textsuperscript{33}

Wang Chong propounded a theory related to the creation of man in his book \textit{Lun Hêng} (Critical Discussions). He said that during the chilly winter months the cold air prevails and water turns into ice. At the approach of spring, the air becomes warm, and the ice melts to water. Man is born in the universe, as ice is produced so to speak. The Yin and the Yang fluids crystallize, and produce man. When his years are completed, and his span of life comes to its end, he dies and reverts to those fluids.\textsuperscript{34}

Wang Chong continues with his discourse by saying that by which man is born are the Yin and the Yang fluids; the Yin fluid produces his bones and flesh, the Yang fluid the vital spirit. While man is alive, the Yin and Yang fluids are in order. Hence bones and flesh are strong, and the vital force is full of vigour. Through the vital force he has knowledge, and with his bones and flesh he displays strength. The vital spirit can speak, the body continues strong and robust.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{31} Jing-Chu Suishiji (A Chronological Account of the State of Chu), cited in Yuan, n.1, p.70 (n.18).

\textsuperscript{32} Beishi (Northern History) cited in Yuan, n.1, pp. 70-71 (n.18).

\textsuperscript{33} Annotations, Tan Sou (On Old Haunts) cited in Yuan, n.1, p.71 (n.18 contd.).


\textsuperscript{35} See n.34.
1.2 CHINESE CREATION MYTHS: INTERPRETATION

Numerous versions of the creation myth emerged at different places and at different times. From the questions in "Tianwen" we can very well see traces of ancient myths and legends in amalgamation with philosophic theories. Now that merely questions have been posed without plausible answers, it is really difficult to verify the actual facts lying behind myths and legends from remote antiquity.

The fable in *Zhuangzi* is the embodiment of the concept of a myth relating how heaven and earth split asunder. Hundun's seven bodily orifices were drilled by Shu and Hu -- symbols of the swift passage of time. Though Hundun fell dead, but following his death, the entire universe and the world as it is now known came into existence.

In ancient myths Hundun is actually the name of a deity. In the chapter "Xicisanjing" of *Shanhaijing* there is a description of a celestial bird residing on top of Tianshan (Mount Heaven) in the Western Territory. Its shape was like a sack, red like a ball of fire. It had six legs and four wings. It had no eye, ear, nose or mouth, but it could appreciate songs and dances. Its name was Dihong, that is Huangdi or Yellow Emperor of the Central Domain. That is why the fable in *Zhuangzi* points out without hesitation that it is the Emperor of the Centre. Even at one point of time, people regarded Hundun as son of Huangdi. It might be a legend of a much later period.\(^{36}\)

No matter whether Hundun was the Lord of Heaven or the Lord's son, except for the Taoists, who believe in the concept of inaction, letting things take their own course, none would like such an unending expanse of darkness—the chaos. That is why legends of later ages have uglified Hundun. *Shenyijing* (The Book of Deities and Marvels) describes Hundun as a wild beast with the likeness of a dog and a bear. It could not see even though it had eyes, nor could it hear even though it had ears. It was difficult for the creature to walk on its own, but it could sense where others would move. When it confronted persons

\(^{36}\) Yuan, n.1, pp. 66, 69-70 (n.3).
with moral integrity, it used to contradict them vehemently with utter wildness. When it confronted tyrannizing persons of evil character, it used to go along with them perfectly, wagging its tail slavishly. This sort of mean attitude was indeed natural. When it had nothing to do, it used to bite its own tail and laugh sardonically facing the sky. From this legend, we can see how apathetic people were towards Hundun which is synonymous to 'darkness'.

The fact that after drilling the seventh orifice Hundun died, implies that the world was not at a state of normalcy without seven orifices, which man usually possess. The abnormal condition of Hundun lies in the fact that he lacked seven orifices. And drilling of seven orifices symbolizes the dispelling of chaos and thereafter the creation of the world.

The myth in Huainanzi is excessively saturated with philosophic implications. No good story could be formed out of Yin and Yang. In fact, this could not evoke interest among the broader section of the people in China.

The simplicity and rusticity of the story of the Pu Fu couple and their 'exploits' give us an impression of creation of heaven and earth. But unfortunately, the recorded narrative is just a fragment of the original one. The couple's misconduct and improper behaviour creates an impediment towards recognizing them as Creators or ancestors of mankind.

From the fact that the God banished the Pu Fu couple to a desolate corner, reveals what sort of divine punishment was reserved for negligence of duty and disobedience. There was virtually a point of no return. In modern context, this can be interpreted as life-imprisonment. However, it was difficult for the people to accept such ill-charactered giants as their ancestors, more so when the story itself remains incomplete.

The Mother Ghost or "Guimu" has some characteristics identical with the Creator.

37. Yuan, n.1, pp.66, 70 (n.5).
Unfortunately, she is a ghost. And the act of devouring one’s own progeny is simply disgraceful. Moreover, a typical beastly appearance invited general apathy in accepting her as anything near to a Creator. Her progeny, born in the morning and swallowed at night -- can very well be the sun. Or it can be the passage of time which has been depicted by the appearance and disappearance of the newborn ghosts or "gui"--a homophonic word which has three different but interrelated meanings: (a) a shadow cast by the sun, (b) time, and (c) sundial. Interestingly, the Chinese character for "gui" in this context is the combination of three different characters: sun, location and mouth. Probably this is how the pictograph was made, keeping in mind the story of "Guimu" and giving a connotation to it.

The dragon myth in *Shanhaijing* is typical in the sense that the dragon has the extraordinary power to light up the dark corners of the nether world with a single wax candle. Judging from its appearance and capability the dragon is in a position to be recognized as the Creator. But just because it has distinct features of an animal, it could not be personified like other deities. None agreed to regard it as the Creator. At the fag end it became merely a hill-god.\(^{38}\)

By comparing the two passages from *Sanwu Liji* and *Wuyun Linianji*, a point of mutual contradiction can easily be noted, that is the problem of putting the birth of Pan Gu and the creation of the universe into successive order. As the opening words in *Sanwu Liji* say "Heaven and earth were commingled like an egg in the midst of which Pan Gu was born and he lived for eighteen thousand years. Then heaven and earth split asunder..." the fact remains that Pan Gu was born before the creation of heaven and earth.\(^{39}\) (See Figure 1).

\(^{38}\) Yuan, n.1, p.69.

\(^{39}\) Yuan (Ed.), n.9, p. 244.
But again when it is said "the pure and bright element became heaven, the impure and dark element earth, while Pan Gu within underwent nine transformations in one day, turning into a god in heaven and a sage on earth", it seems that Pan Gu was born side by side with the creation of the universe. While saying "Heaven grew ten feet higher every day, earth grew ten feet thicker everyday, and Pan Gu grew ten feet taller everyday", it is notable that the pace of the changing heights of the sky and the thickness of the earth coincided exactly with the pace of the increasing height of Pan Gu. Thus after eighteen thousand years, one can imagine that the body of Pan Gu filled the entire space between heaven and earth. He was just like a chicken yet to come out of the egg-shell. It is really hard to say that he was the earliest human being. Viewing from the logic of the entire myth, it can only be said that it was an embryo symbolizing the origin of life growing simultaneously with heaven and earth. However, the image of this embryo changed in the records of Wuyun Linianji. It was no more the holy foetus emerging before heaven and earth, nor even emerging simultaneously with them, but after the formation of heaven and
Figure 2: Emergence of Pan Gu after the Creation of Heaven and Earth.

Primogenial Vapours

Heaven  

Yang elements

Earth  

Yin elements

First life  
(Pan Gu)

After death

Various natural elements

The time when Yin and Yang elements came into existence, and the primogenial vapours got dispersed, out of this neutral state the earliest man was born. If it is established that the first living being was Pan Gu and that he was a human being, then the myriads of matter springing from his lifeless body would definitely pose a contradiction to the statement that the fleas and lice on his body became the multitude.

The colossal figure of Pan Gu can hardly be considered anything near to a human being. And nine transformations in one day is only possible with divinities, not with man.

40. See n.39.

41. See n.39.
Nor is it possible to derive matter from the corpse of a human being. But after all these are component parts of a myth.

After carefully reviewing *Sanwu Liji* we can come across some other aspects regarding Pan Gu. It took Pan Gu 18,000 years to come out of the egg. Here we can divide Pan Gu's life into two stages: 18,000 years inside the egg; and 18,000 years after emerging out of the egg. Viewing from the very logic behind how we term the birth of a chicken out of an egg, Pan Gu was born when heaven and earth separated, that is, after the egg split into two halves. On the other hand, it has been stated clearly by Xu Zheng that Pan Gu was born in the commingled mass of heaven and earth, that is, before the egg split into two halves. Here in this case, Pan Gu's birth does not confirm with the theory of birth, as in oviparous creatures, after the hatching of an egg. He is said to have born much before the actual breaking of the egg-shell. From the time point of view, the two stages in the life of Pan Gu were divided into two equal halves, with 18,000 years each. With 36,000 years of life span, Pan Gu was inactive for the first 18,000 years and in the latter half of his life he underwent transformation and also increased in height which was on a par with the changing height and thickness of heaven and earth. This implies that Pan Gu did not grow inside the egg. He started growing only after heaven and earth had split asunder.\(^{42}\) His transforming into god in heaven and sage on earth shows that he was governing both heaven and earth with his divine power. Now, there seems to be a contradiction how Pan Gu could manage transforming into god and sage nine times a day and at the same time growing ten feet tall every day. This of course is a part of the mythical fantasy which can never be swayed by our sceptre of rationalism.

\(^{42}\) In this context, I may point out an interesting aspect in the history of the Chinese ideograph 天 (tian or sky) which apparently has some connection with the Pan Gu myth. The character 天 which means heaven or sky, was derived most probably from the image of Pan Gu. With his big ( 大 ) body, Pan Gu stood upright with earth under his feet and heaven on his head. The horizontal stroke on top of the character 天 is the indicator for heaven. Now we can view it thus, Pan Gu -- a man ( 人 ) attained a colossal ( 大 ) height, pushing the heaven ( 天 ) higher with each passing day.
In both the versions of Xu Zheng, that is, in *Sanwu Liji* and *Wuyun Linianji*, lies the dualistic concept of heaven and earth, pure and impure, bright and dark; to be precise, the ultimate principles of Yang and Yin. Apart from the sequential order of Pan Gu's birth, the only difference is in the origin of the primeval life: primordial egg and primogenial vapours (*yuanqi*). In the latter, Pan Gu is born out of the union between Yin and Yang; he is the resultant outcome of sexual intercourse between the male and the female principles in nature. Whereas in the former, Pan Gu is born independent of such intercourse. This puts us into a difficult situation where we are left just with an egg, whose origin remains unknown. Similarly unknown is how Pan Gu came amidst that egg.

In *Wuyun Linianji*, Pan Gu's transformation process began only after his death, whereas in *Sanwu Liji* he transformed, when alive, by his own will. From the creation point of view, more value has to be attached to *Wuyun Linianji* rather than *Sanwu Liji* because Pan Gu does not play any role in creating natural elements in the latter; whereas in the former, he does play such role, of course, unknowingly: after his death.

What explanation can be offered to these self-contradictory statements?

(a) Probably this myth was narrated in different ways among the common folk. One narrative goes that Pan Gu was born before the creation of heaven and earth, and he was the one who split heaven and earth apart. The other narrative goes that he was born simultaneously with heaven and earth. That is, Pan Gu came into the world when heaven and earth split asunder. The last narrative in *Wuyun Linianji* shows Pan Gu was the earliest man born after the separation of heaven and earth, even after the existence of Yin and Yang. Since Xu Zheng had an attitude of incorporating things of diverse nature, hence while narrating he could not avoid contradicting himself. The self-contradictory phenomenon in this sort of narration was essentially the reflection of mutual contradiction which had come up in the very process of propagating this myth.

(b) The myth narrating the birth of Pan Gu was probably collected quite early, after which came the myth of Pan Gu's transformation after death. So, while recording
the latter one, the author had to supplement and revise the original narrative on the basis of new material. This is to say that Pan Gu's birth and transformation were two different myths collected by the author at different times and at different places. Apart from the fact that the author had some changes in his viewpoint, the contradiction in narration also reveals the contradictory phenomena in the handing down of this myth from one generation to the other at different regions.

The record reveals, between the lines, the message that Pan Gu in folklore was a deity at the very first instance, and not a human being. Since he was a deity he had the capability to transform. After "polishing and some rectification" Xu Zheng changed the myth into a human story. That is why the contradiction in narration is actually a reflection of contradiction between the subjective intent of the author and the very logic behind myths.

The crux of the problem lies in Xu Zheng's attempt to change a deity into a man. As a result he ended up with a blunder, full of flaws. The question is why did Xu Zheng do so at all? Here we have to discuss the attitude of the people towards the ancient myths and legendary figures before Xu Zheng.

As early as during the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476BC) and the Warring States Period (475-221BC), the various schools of thought and their exponents, in order to expound their own political and academic viewpoints, loved to quote copiously from very many sources. They used to discuss the present by extolling the past with a purpose of convincing different monarchs, so that they accept their political propositions and plan for reform. For example, the originators of Zhong Ni's (Confucius) school of thought were said to be Yao and Shun, the legendary monarchs in ancient China. The book Guanzi quoted Lord Wuhuai; similarly Han Feizi quoted Lord Youchao; Lüshi Chunqiu quoted Lord Zhuxiang and Lord Yangkang; Zhuangzi quoted Lord Xiwei, Xiwangmu (Royal Mother of the Western Paradise), Lord Rongcheng, Lord Dating, Xuanyuan (Yellow
Emperor), Lord Zhurong and many other deities.\textsuperscript{43}

Thereupon a great number of prehistoric mythical figures were transplanted into history after undergoing a process of revision, deletion and wrong conclusions drawn by false analogy. There came a sort of trend of bringing ancient myths into the folds of history. This trend dates back to the ancient times. Huainanzi says that the people with common customs honour the past and despise the present and that the adherents to the past must rely upon Shen Nong\textsuperscript{44} and Huangdi\textsuperscript{45}, then only can they adopt this doctrine. Even the great historian of the Western Han, Sima Qian(c.145 BC or 135 BC-?) known for his meticulous scholarship, got influenced by the general idea. Though originally he was sceptical about the five mythical emperors, but later on he wrote Wudi Benji (Original Records of the Five Emperors)\textsuperscript{46}, making it an introduction to Chinese history. As for the Three Sovereigns\textsuperscript{47} prior to the Five Emperors, though having various legends, did not serve the purpose of a human story, and hence were cast aside. The books of Xu Zheng obviously tried to fill the gaps in history left by Shiji (Historical Memoirs) of Sima Qian.\textsuperscript{48}

In order to change the myth of Pan Gu into a human tale, Xu Zheng while

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{43} Yuan (Ed.), n.9, pp.244-249.
\item \textsuperscript{44} Shen Nong is the second sovereign, the mythological inventor of agriculture and herbal medicine.
\item \textsuperscript{45} Huangdi is the first emperor, the mythological inventor of chariot, potter's wheel, compass, ships and armour.
\item \textsuperscript{46} Five Emperors are Huangdi (the Yellow Emperor), Zhuanxu, Ku, Yao and Shun according to Christie, n.2, p.60.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Three Sovereigns are Fuxi, Shen Nong and Yandi according to Christie, n.2, p.60.
\item \textsuperscript{48} Yuan (Ed.), n.9, p.250.
\end{itemize}
polishing the myth, adopted the 'primogenial vapour theory' just to give it a historical image. This theory was prevalent since the Qin and Han era. At the same time, he adopted the philosophy of Yin and Yang.

In the ancient times, numerous creation myths were in vogue in the southern part of China. They explained the formation of the world and the origin of myriads of matters in different ways. But these myths had a common drawback that they simply narrated how the deities used to govern the universe. Not a single word has been uttered about the origin of these deities. That is why Qu Yuan had put his queries in his poem "Tianwen". Xu Zheng had gone through this poem and in order to avoid asking similar questions, he resorted to the 'primogenial vapour theory' while offering explanation to the formation of heaven and earth, and the birth of Pan Gu. But this theory can only illustrate the essence of various matter and cannot explain the changes involved thereafter. Then one has to look into the philosophy of Yin and Yang prevalent since the Zhou and Qin era. Xu Zheng sought to combine the 'primogenial vapour theory' and the philosophy of Yin and Yang in order to establish his theory of creation. And by means of the theory of dispersal of primogenial vapours, he not only found a more or less equitable solution to the birth of Pan Gu but also found an answer to the problem of after-death transformation. Moreover, the two stories have been linked up from the point of content. And that has formed a perfect whole. But surely enough there were modifications at number of places. The last sentence in Sanwu Liji speaking of "the three divine emperors" was undoubtedly added by Xu Zheng himself. And again "the four cardinal points and the five sacred mountains" in Wuyun Linianji amply reveal the world view of the people inhabiting the central and

49. In the history of Chinese philosophy, primogenial vapour is the primeval matter that created the universe. This vapour existed before the separation of Yin and Yang.

50. According to Yuan (Ed.), n.9, p.251, the primogenial vapour theory was popular during the Qin-Han period.

northern plains of China.

After all, the texts of all ages reveal that the Pan Gu myth had originated in the ethnic minority region and later spread to the kingdoms of Wu and Chu not before the middle of the Eastern Han era (25-220)\textsuperscript{52}. It is evident that during the reign of the Three Kingdoms, the advent of Buddhism in China was already 200 years old. At this period, it is not improbable that Indian myths and legends along with the preaching of Buddhism, migrated to China and even influenced the Chinese world view. Myths like that of Pan Gu could not have emerged in the remote ages. Moreover, Xu Zheng had added some mystic flavour of philosophy to the myth.\textsuperscript{53}

\textit{Shuyiji} is said to have been written by Ren Fang of Liang dynasty (502-557). But just like in the case of \textit{Liezi}, someone had plagiarized from ancient novels and attributed it wrongly to Ren Fang.\textsuperscript{54} It is of dubious authenticity. The words "Qin and Han era" are highly unreliable. It can hardly testify that this Pan Gu myth was prevalent during the Qin and Han period. The Pan Gu myth had originated in the south, and later on traversed northward.\textsuperscript{55} There is no trace of Pan Gu's name or deeds in the pre-Qin annals, not even in the works of the Qin, the Western Han or the early Eastern Han. Nor is it available in the classical texts viz., \textit{Shanhaijing}, or \textit{Diwang Shiji} (The Royal Records) which had specially collected very many queer tales and myths of various times. What is the reason behind it? The only probable explanation is that originally there was no person named Pan Gu in the Chinese myths of ancient times. The princes or even people in the Qin and Han era did not know Pan Gu at all.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{52} He Xin, \textit{Zhushen de Qiyuan} (the Origin of Deities), Beijing: Trinity Book House, 1986, pp. 177-178.


\textsuperscript{54} Mao, n.8, p.139. Yuan (Ed.), n.9, p.246.

\textsuperscript{55} Mao, n.8, p.139.

\textsuperscript{56} He, n.52, p.175.
Qu Yuan in his poem "Tianwen" asked: "Who did propagate the beginning of the remote antiquity? Everything was shapeless, then where did these begin from?" His question was aimed at the origin of the universe. If the Pan Gu myth had existed, then Qu Yuan definitely could not have raised such a question.\(^{57}\) The Eastern Han materialist philosopher Wang Chong (27-c.96), a rationalistic critic, advocated the 'primogenial vapour theory' in his book \textit{Lun Hêng} (Critical Discussions). In his essay "Tan Tian" (On Heaven) he writes that before the dispersal of the primogenial fluid (vapour), there was an integral mass of chaos. In the essay "Yan Du" (On Poison) he writes that the ten thousand beings, when created, are endowed with the original fluid. In yet another essay "Lun Si" (On Death) he writes that the primogenial fluid is vague and diffuse, and the human fluid, a part of it. No doubt, he was an erudite scholar. But in his book not even a single line mentions Pan Gu.\(^ {58}\)

Qu Yuan's queries were not only full of abstraction, but for all practical purposes they had no concrete impact on the existence of mankind. Moreover, solution to the problem, unlike other myths, depended solely upon a particular individual and no collective effort was needed for that.\(^ {59}\)

The myth of Pan Hu is actually a search for the origin of the forefathers of a particular ethnic group and some other tribes of cultural proximity. Whereas Pan Gu myth is a search for the origin of the forefather of the entire mankind and the creator of the world, Zhou You of Ming dynasty in his book \textit{Kaipi Yanyi} (In Search for the Beginning) wrote that Pan Gu split heaven and earth with a chisel in his left hand and an axe in his right hand. Such a depiction is neither abstract nor mystic. It is simply an image holding tools of labour. This is undoubtedly the picture of Pan Gu with realistic

\(^{57}\) He, n.52, pp.175-176.

\(^{58}\) Forke (Tr. & Ann.), n.34, passim.

\(^{59}\) He, n.52, p.190.
In the story of Pan Gu and Pian Gu, there is an entirely different interpretation to how mountains, stars and the moon were created. Moreover, a new figure enters the rank of creators. It must be a much later version of the original story where Pan Gu lived alone. He neither had to make the sky, nor did he have any partner to make the earth. There, heaven and earth were formed gradually through the passage of time. But in this case, Pan Gu and a new character Pian Gu create the worldly realm by their strenuous endeavour. Pan Gu has been depicted as a "naughty boy", spoiling the game.

We have to see why both of them were so eager to be considered elder to his partner. Confucius advocated the concept of obedience as part of his teachings on human conduct. He said that the subjects should obey the monarch, the wife should obey her husband, the son should obey his father, and the younger brother should obey his elder brother. So we can realize what disadvantage the younger brother has got where the elder brother virtually rules over him. That is why both Pan Gu and Pian Gu try to attain the advantageous status of being the elder brother. In the process of struggle to attain that status, they perform some acts of mischief which give rise to a few natural elements. Such an outlook towards the Creators, where they have been brought down to the level of beings with human vices, is very natural with the non-mythical approach of the Chinese.

Xu Zheng was an inhabitant of the State of Wu (222-280). This particular cosmogonic myth of Pan Gu was probably popular in southern China (especially in the provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi). During the reign of the Three Kingdoms this myth gradually spread throughout Wu (south-eastern coast). If the birthplace of the myth is Guangdong and Guangxi, it was not before the writing of the Han annals that the myth started coming into vogue in southern Guangdong. The Han dynasty brought about wide interactions with the southerners, especially while going on punitive expeditions against

60. Yuan (Ed.), n.26, p.3.
the Miao tribe. More interaction took place amidst battles, and thus the southern myths and legends percolated through the rest of China. It was Xu Zheng who filled the gaps of the misty ages, thus creating a common ancestor for the entire Chinese nation. Thus the problems related to the creation of the world found quite reasonable explanation within the framework of myths.

No matter how perfect the narrative seems to be, it went too far from the original features of the actual myth. Lu Xun remarked that what is left in China regarding the creation myth is but assumption of a much higher degree which was not an inherent quality of the early man.

There had been a considerably long passage of time since the birth of the myth. Hence the justification of Lu Xun's remarks. Another question arises why the creation story, though heading the list of mythical tales, made an appearance so late in China? Even if we accept the fact that the time of recording of this myth was at a later period, then how did it emerge in the annals of a much later era?

This at least shows that though creation myths came into existence in ancient times, yet the scholars expert in making records held an indifferent attitude towards them. The impact is indeed far-reaching. Firstly, it created a situation which made the creation myth extremely rare. Secondly, due to inconsistency of relationship between various deities, viz., Nüwa, Pan Gu and others, discussions on mythical tales starting from creation myths got shrouded in ambiguity and vagueness. This sort of indifference, evident in the case of origin of the universe, is not only manifested in the field of mythological studies, but is also reflected in the philosophic aspect of the national ethos. The pre-Qin philosophy had least interest in probing into the origin of the universe. It dealt only with a few chapters of Laozi. On the contrary, in the philosophy of ancient Greece, almost all the schools of

61. Mao, n.8., pp.138-139.
thought had interest in the quest for the origin of the universe in varying degrees.\textsuperscript{53} In Chinese literature, myths and legends serve merely as allusions and embellishments in poetry or prose. They left their mark, too, on later fiction.\textsuperscript{64}

Now we can draw a conclusion that the extant Chinese myths are just a few drops in the ocean. And fragments cannot form a system. Rather this sort of fragments did not originate from one particular place. It can be divided into three parts: northern, central and southern. The myths of these three regions were magnificent in themselves, each one of them stood independently as an individual system. But unfortunately, they were destroyed, thanks to various reasons. And what is left till today is but fragments of these three systems. No complete system of Chinese mythical studies can ever be formulated by joining the three. Nothing but fragments can be obtained from within, and these fragments are at times mutually contradictory.\textsuperscript{65}

It seems likely that Chinese myths remained separate fragments for the following reasons: First, the early dwellers in the Yellow River Valley were not an imaginative people; and since their life was hard and they devoted most of their energy to practical matters without indulging in flights of fancy, they did not combine all the old legends into one great epic. Secondly, Confucius appeared with his teaching about the way to cultivate morality, regulate the family, rule the state and bring peace to the world. Since he disapproved of talk of the supernatural, the old myths were not quoted by Confucian scholars, and instead of undergoing further development many of them were lost. But a more fundamental reason was probably the absence of a strict division between gods and ghosts. In the earliest times though there was apparently some line of demarcation between the deities of heaven and earth and the ghosts of dead men, yet ghosts could become deities too. Since men and gods intermingled in this manner, the early religion

\textsuperscript{63} Xie, n.53, pp.76-77.
\textsuperscript{64} Lu Xun, n.8, p.17.
\textsuperscript{65} Mao, n.8, p.139.
was never fully developed, as more new legends appeared the old ones died out, and the new legends lacked lustre. New gods were constantly created, and though the old gods might change their form and names there was no real development of myths and legends.  

In general, the Chinese, as an ethnic group, do not like to indulge in abstract thinking, nor do they subscribe to the idea of philosophic contemplation of any idealistic nature. Myths are products of ethnic consciousness, which certainly reflects the basic characteristics of the culture and trend of thought of a nation. The Chinese myths can be arranged into the following chronological order:

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<th>The ancestor of human ancestors</th>
<th>Myths of astrological forecasting and invention of universe tools of daily usage</th>
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<td>Sun-god:</td>
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Each of these four stages represent certain aspects in the human development. The first stage is concerned with religion. Man was full of awe by the striking rays of the sun, the source of light. He began worshipping this heavenly body, thinking it to be a supernatural being. Myths emerged, saying that the sun is a beautiful, shy girl. She blushes and her face turns so red that it blinds the viewer with piercing rays. Then came the second stage where different clans and tribal groups came out with myths related to their ancestors. Gradually this stage became a part of history. The third stage is related to the political, economic and cultural life of man. Astrologers used to forecast future events, especially the fate of a king or of the entire dynasty. There were always some more intelligent ones who invented tools of daily usage. Men of various occupations made


67. See n.59.
various sorts of implements. The inventors gradually came to be known as folk heroes and were finally deified. The last stage saw the search for the origin of the universe. Man started pondering over the matter, he wanted to unravel the secrets of creation. But since he was not in a position to find out the actual facts, he resorted to fantasy—thereby giving rise to different interpretations about the world around him. Such varying interpretations gradually came to be known as philosophy—the world view. All these four stages cannot be regarded as discrete and unconnected units. In fact, these four stages constitute a concrete whole. Religion, history, politics, economy, culture and philosophy—all come together to form an integral part of human society.

The theory of Yin and Yang as creation deities, was full of mysticism. Nobody believed in the theory of transformation of air or gaseous substance into creatures on earth. So this theory drifted into obscurity without much influence.

Xu Zheng put forth the theory that different parasites on the body of Pan Gu transformed into mankind. Such a saying undoubtedly enhanced the greatness of Pan Gu, but at the same time it also hurt the self-esteem and pride of man. And so this myth too was relegated to oblivion.

The theory in Shuyiji that Pan Gu and his wife procreated the first human beings and they multiplied thereafter seems improbable or rather inconsistent with earlier accounts on Pan Gu. The story of Pan Gu apparently presents more or less a Judeo-Christian theory of myth that projects Pan Gu as the Creator of the world. If we cast aside this argument then the theory of procreation by the Pan Gu couple seems quite fair and reasonable. But it wrecked man's fantasy about Pan Gu. And so this too went down unaccepted.

In this context, we can come back to the story of the dog Pan Hu, which says that he had three sons and a daughter, and they are said to be the ancestors of mankind. In that case, how did they procreate if they were the earliest beings on earth? The plausible answer is by incestuous union which was not an unlawful act in the early days of human
society. In a matriarchal social system where polyandry was in vogue, nothing seems unlikely in procreation by means of consanguineous union when inter-clan marriage was considered a punishable offence. This myth did not find acceptability since Pan Hu had distinct features of a dog. After all how could the Chinese mind regard a dog to be their creator! The consanguineous intercourse was another aspect which did not find acceptance among people at a later period.

The myth of the creation of man by celestial beings is indeed interesting, but unfortunately the records in classics are too sketchy. Among the four deities, we are only familiar with Huangdi and Nüwa. Huangdi, the Yellow Emperor, a part-real, part-legendary personage is credited with founding the Chinese nation around 4000 BC. Nüwa is defined in China’s earliest dictionary by the philologist Xu Shen (c.58-147) as being "in charge of the breeding of all living beings", so possibly her origin is associated with fertility. Hence in the case of Nüwa the word 'hua' explained as 'transformation' by Guo Pu of Jin dynasty, is actually wrong. Here the word 'hua' stands for giving birth or reproduction.68

This shows that Nüwa could reproduce several times a day, and the other deities kept on adding various organs and limbs to the human bodies. But this story must be a legacy of the patriarchal social set-up. On the other hand, we know nothing about Shangpian and Sanglin; not even a single text tells us what sort of deities they were after all. The exact situation of this celestial endeavour is mostly obscure. Therefore this myth too found its way to oblivion.

Nüwa’s creation of ten deities from her intestine amply reveal her creative role. But neither the ten deities were mentioned by names, nor was it a concrete story. It was just a fragment of a story that probably existed in the folk realm in the prehistoric times.

The modelling of men out of yellow earth reveals the fact that this myth originated

68. Yuan, n.1, pp.79-80, 85 (n.4).
in the north of China, most likely in the Yellow River valley. The narrative of Nüwa, having two different methods of making men of two different categories—rich and poor, amply shows that the concept of a class society had already permeated the people’s psyché. At the time of recording down this myth it was already a feudal society. Naturally an impression of division of classes was put clearly on this story. Its original form was changed through addition and alteration.

The myth of deluge is common among almost all the world mythologies. The story of "Noah's Ark" is well-known. In this myth of Nüwa, almost all the major calamities in nature have been depicted. The crumbling of the sky was actually, what we now know as torrential rain, thunderstorm, hailstorm or typhoon. The forming of fissures on earth was due to earthquake. "Big fires with dancing flames" were volcanic eruptions or forest-fire. The restless flowing of voluminous water was a reflection of massive inundation, a devastating flood. Wild beasts and fierce birds were the prehistoric creatures: dinosaurs and pterodactyls. It was an unprecedented disaster. The Invincible Nature took a heavy toll. The emergence of Nüwa as the central figure, patching up the sky, is a testimony to the fact that the primitive society was a matriarchal one. She is the symbol of the dominant position or the decision-making power of women in a matrilineal social system. Moreover, Nüwa is the personification of collective effort and strength, the ultimate goal being to check the flood. In fact, she is the first mythical figure to have controlled the flood. Some aspects of the story, for example, Nüwa's mending heaven with molten rocks, destroying the evil to save mankind or heaping up reed-ashes to check flood, are but imagerical epitome of production experiences in the spheres of metallurgy, fishing, hunting, pottery etc. in the primitive society. The liquidation of sinister creatures reflects the universal concept of the good vanquishing the evil forces. The docility of beasts and birds, once endangering the very existence of mankind, shows that man became superior to wild animals and even managed to tame some of them.

In the pre-Qin era there were three schools of thought with different notions of the cosmos. Of the three, the Tian Gai (meaning 'Sky Lid') school, probably the oldest
tradition, maintained that the inverted bowl of the sky revolved on an axis, the Pole Star, with the other stars fixed to the bowl. Earth was either a flat square or a truncated four-sided pyramid with a sea on each side. (This concept is implicit in the oldest forms of the Chinese character for earth). Earth is still, square and yin. Sky is revolving, round and yang. Such a view is no doubt an ethnocentric one.

Though now the central theme is patching the sky, but the main objective was to control the flood which devastated the world in the prehistoric ages. The impression was so deep in the minds of the people that they made a myth expressing their desire to control flood in general and to harness the River of Sorrow in particular.

Li Rong did not mention in his tale how Nüwa and Fuxi came into existence just at the very inception of the world. Here the Heaven or the God has been given the role to decide upon their possibility of getting united in a conjugal bond. The myth of Nüwa getting married with her elder brother Fuxi, was originally a myth of survivors of a menacing flood re-creating mankind. This myth reflects consanguineous marriage system prevalent in the primitive society. But later the narratives in the classics of the Hans, only relates the later half of the actual myth which we find popular among the ethnic minorities of southwest China. The Han narrators overlooked the first half of the story. The time when this tale was recorded, feudalism was at its peak. Dregs of the feudal society were automatically mingled together with the original story. For example, Nüwa covering her face with a fan made out of grass; or brides at present putting fans before their faces, are nothing but dross which ought to be discerned from the actual myth, keeping in view the objective reality of the time of its origin. That is to say, the social environment and certain socio-economic compulsion of the contemporary ages are to be taken into consideration.

In the myth of the minorities, the attitude of the warrior reflects man's desire to conquer Nature in general and to unravel the mystery behind thunder in particular. The

Thunder God has been personified to the extent that he can be caged by a human being. The idea of killing and making cuisine out of a god is not excluded. Thunder is generally associated with cloud and rain, hence the reason why the Thunder God begged for a few drops of water. With a little sprinkling the god regained his strength, this implies that thunder has an indissoluble bond with water: the rain. The unpleasant age-old equation between the ruler and the ruled has been portrayed when the Thunder God out of revenge had the warrior killed, and rewarded the children for their compliant attitude. The mention of the resilient nature of a hollow gourd or the fragility of an iron boat on sudden impact shows that man had already gained certain knowledge of the physical laws of nature.

Gonggong's destructive activities mentioned in "Tianwenxun" of Huainanzi probably took place after Nüwa had erected the pillars of the sky. Liezi testifies this in a clearer fashion. But the question remains why Nüwa had to mend the sky with molten stones and the legs of a turtle even before the crumbling of Buzhou Mountain. What happened to the firmament after Pan Gu had split the two realms apart? The questions remain unexplained. This only shows that the Pan Gu myth of the south was unknown to the makers of the Nüwa myth in the north. This again clarifies the fact that the story of Nüwa actually originated in northern China.70

Whatever be the origin of this myth, "Tianwenxun" of Huainanzi offers an ethnocentric view of the structure of the world by saying that all rivers flow southeastwards.

Sanhuang Benji puts the patching of the sky after the crumbling of the pillar of heaven. In none of the previous narratives have we seen the levelling up of earth and the sky returning to its original form. Nor did they say that the old matter remained the same. Undoubtedly the story underwent modification, and that too in a very ugly way. In this context we can take a look into Chuci (The Songs of Chu). Qu Yuan asked in "Tianwen"

70. Mao, n.8, p.132.
"Who created the body of Nüwa?" "Why was Gonggong so angry? How did earth tilt southeastwards?" But the poet did not utter a single word about Nüwa's patching the sky. He was an inhabitant of the Yangzi River valley, that is central China. Being very fond of myths himself, Qu Yuan could not have forgotten to quote it, had the myth of Nüwa's patching the sky been known to the folks of central China. Although in that era there had been lots of communication between the State of Chu and the north, not all the northern myths did migrate down south to the State of Chu.\(^1\) In all these versions, controversy remains whether the water-god Gonggong fought a battle with Zhurong, the fire-god, or with Zhuanxu, the god of the North.

The story related to 'the day of man' reminds us of a Creator whose deeds are quite similar to those of Jehovah of the Old Testament. But unfortunately the related accounts are so sketchy that in no way we can enter into a detailed discussion.\(^2\) However, till today in some parts of China, the seventh day of the first lunar month is called 'the day of man'.\(^3\) Given the very reason behind the said custom, it is generally accepted that the Creator made man after he had already made six domestic animals. But Yang Fujun writes that since men were discouraged by Nüwa, not to go to the forests for fear of being harmed by ferocious wolves, tigers, panthers and insects, they felt extremely lonely in this world. So later, Nüwa made harmless animals for man.\(^4\) This definitely contradicts the prevalent custom of 'the day of man' and puts the authenticity of Yang's story into question. If Nüwa had created the six animals following man, then who made the ferocious animals? Were they not her creation? If not, then who made them? If yes, then how and why were they made? Yang does not try to answer. Moreover, Yang once

\(^{1}\) Mao, n.8, pp.132-133.

\(^{2}\) Yuan, n.1, pp.69,70 (n.18-19).


again puts it wrongly that the fire-god got defeated by the water-god and that he vented his anger by knocking against Buzhou Mountain. In fact it was the water-god Gonggong who was vanquished by the fire-god Zhurong, and in anger Gonggong struck against Buzhou Mountain with his horns.

In his story Yang Fujun says that it took Nüwa eighty one days to mend the northwestern sky. Only a fissure was left and she could not repair it with the stone jelly. So she asked Fuxi to bring thread and needle. She kept on stitching the fissure for nine days and nine nights, and then the work was done. Yang comments at the end that since the crack was stitched with thread and the ends were not tight enough, perhaps due to this that whenever the northwestern winds blow, it is terribly cold. Throughout his entire narration, Yang has proved himself inconsistent with the myths which have been popularly accepted through ages.

There is another myth saying that just after the creation of the world, there were three white crows who procreated various kinds of birds. This too is a tiny fragment of a creation myth fortuitously left behind to this day.

Wang Chong believes that by a fusion of the fluids of Heaven and Earth all the organisms on earth have been produced. Man does not make an exception. In this respect Heaven and Earth are like husband and wife, and can be regarded as the father and the mother of mankind. The philosopher thinks that man is imbued with the heavenly or vital fluid at his birth. It is a formless mass like the yolk of an egg, before it is hatched, showing in this respect the nature of the primogenial vapours, from which it has been derived. He thinks that the vital fluid has to fulfil two difficult functions, to animate the body and keep it alive, and to form its mind. Wang Chong imagines that all sensations are produced in their organs by the vital fluid, which must be the mental power as well, since

76. Yuan, n.1, pp.69, 71 (n.20).
it thinks and meditates. Insanity is defined as a disturbance of the vital force.\textsuperscript{77}

In his essay "Tan Tian", while speaking on the story of Nüwa, Wang Chong refutes the entire mythical argument by stating that this is a very old tradition, believed by most people. Well educated persons will think it strange, but they have nothing to say against it, or if they have, they are unable to settle the question. He ultimately concludes that according to the laws of nature and from a human point of view, it is all idle talk.\textsuperscript{78}

The cradle of Chinese civilization is not just limited to the Yellow River basin, as opined traditionally. The poetic name 'Jiuzhou' (nine regions) for China can be justified from the fact that there had been other centres of civilization along the middle and the lower reaches of the Yangzi River: Jingzhou and Yangzhou. But not all the centres of ancient civilization could be ascertained. The ancient Chinese culture suffers from pluralism and impermanence under circumstances where almost no theory can be established especially related to religion and myths of the early man. And it is also difficult to form a unitary system to carry on comparison between ancient religion and myths.\textsuperscript{79}

Viewing from the extant manuscripts and historical records, it is evident that the main theme of ancient Chinese myths are mostly centred round the deluge, the deliverance, the emergence of cultural supermen and some other aspects. But hardly any material can be found regarding cosmogony or epics eulogizing legendary heroes. It is impossible to explore and ascertain the actual picture of creation myths and hero-epics. Accounts pertaining to the origin of man emerged very late, and they are highly fragmentary. In a word, ancient Chinese myths pitifully lack a well-organized plot.

From the pre-Qin era there are only two references where Nüwa has been

\textsuperscript{77} Forke (Tr. & Ann.), n.34, pp. 18-19.
\textsuperscript{78} Forke (Tr. & Ann.), n.34, p. 250.
\textsuperscript{79} Xie, n.53, pp.72-73.
associated with the creation of the world. Both of them are excessively brief and their implications are obscure. The poet Qu Yuan felt totally perplexed about the origin of Nüwa, that is why he asked: "Who made the body of Nüwa?" Secondly, the records made in Shanhaijing say that there were ten supernatural beings named 'the Intestines of Nüwa'. They were born as deities and that they lived in the wilderness of Liguang. The expression 'the Intestines of Nüwa' did not imply an individual person or a deity, it was a group of ten deities. But their condition, after they had settled in Liguang, is totally unknown. It was only during the Han dynasty that Nüwa was promoted as one of the Three Sovereigns. The legends of Nüwa were further provided with the qualities of a creation myth. Since none of the texts tells us anything about Nüwa's origin, the entire tale is full of ambiguity for it lacks the key element of a story. Later on Nüwa reappears in the mythical domain along with her spouse Fuxi. They put the world into order afresh and re-created man after heaven and earth had separated. They were never considered as the creators of the universe.

It is not difficult to mark that Nüwa's image at the first instance, though ambiguous, finds some proximity to the Greek goddess of earth Gaea. Most probably she became an image of worship in the matriarchal society. But the latter image of Nüwa takes the dimension of a saviour just like Prometheus. Certainly there are differences in the two images of Nüwa, but in the first instance the flavour of creation is not too pronounced and it is much harder to find out the binding knots of a story.80

1.3 TIBETAN CREATION MYTHS : NARRATION

Tibet, a land with rich cultural heritage, remains mystic from the point of view of cultural anthropology. Many tales, both historical and legendary, remain shrouded beyond the azure clouds. Though it is widely opined that for thousand years the land has been allowed to evolve in self-imposed segregation, cut off from the rest of the world by the

80. Xie, n.53, pp.73-75.
snowy heights of the Himalayan mountains, yet in spite of its isolated appearance. Tibet, unlike China, has in fact been wide open at every front since its earliest days. Only in Euro-American eyes does it feature as a country cut off from world developments. It is true that the age-old culture of Tibet escaped the marching feet of capitalist modernization, but it preserved a wealth of art, culture, tradition and philosophy.

In Tibet, the entire scholarly attention and energy were spent on the writing of the Great Tradition, as Buddhism started influencing the psyché and ethos of the people from the 7th century onwards. More importance was attached to Buddhist philosophy, logic, ethics, art, Dharma history, poetics etc. But Tibetan folk literature remained almost totally neglected. Most of it were passed from one generation to another orally.

Two parallel sets of myths and legends have developed in Tibetan culture: those of the pre-Buddhist religion, referred to as Bon, or even those from the pre-Bon ages; and those of the typical form of Buddhism which evolved in Tibet after coming in contact with indigenous religious practices.

The term Bon was originally applied to a class of priest-magicians, not to the religion itself, which was known as lha-chos (sacred matters) as distinct from mi-chos (human matters). From the point of view of mythology its principal features appear to have been a cult of gods of the sky, the earth and the lower regions, and a cult of mountains and divine kings. The later Bon-po monks (followers of Bon), as known through their literature and living tradition, preserved very little of these earlier beliefs. In the course of their history they absorbed and reproduced all kinds of beliefs with which they met, indigenous and foreign. And between the 7th and 13th centuries - the period of the propagation of Buddhism in Tibet - Bon evolved into a somewhat incongruous form of Tibetan Buddhism. The term Bon now acquired a new meaning, equivalent to that of the Buddhist term chos (Sanskrit dharma), translatable as 'religion' or 'doctrine'.

The Bonpos and the Buddhists wrote in the same language and both used the same Buddhist literature brought from India, except that the Bonpos claimed it was their own
and would not admit its Indian origins. They accepted the Buddhist pantheon but gave its members different names. The pre-Buddhist gods were absorbed into the new Bon pantheon and as the Buddhists introduced a number of pre-Buddhist gods into their pantheon too, a process of mutual amalgamation took place.

It is often suggested that the Tibetans accepted only the more debased form of Indian Buddhism, but in fact they accepted it in all its complexities just as they encountered it. Pre-Buddhist gods and cults were taken into Tibetan Buddhism but always apparently, in a subsidiary manner. For example, local Tibetan gods may be placated at the beginning of the Buddhist ceremonies, so that they will remain quiet and attempt no disruption. One of the main peculiarities of Tibetan Buddhism is the system of reincarnating lamas. Lama (Tib. blama, 'superior') is a polite title given to senior monks and the heads of large monasteries. A reincarnating lama is regarded as the 'manifested body' (sprul-sku) a particular Buddhist deity or a renowned religious teacher. There are hundreds of them, the most important politically being the Dalai Lama, believed to be a reincarnation of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, and the Panchen Lama, believed to be a reincarnation of the Buddha Amitabha.81

With this background, we can now examine the cosmogonic myths with pre-Bon, Bon and Tibetan Buddhist flavours.

Ancient pre-Bonpo concepts of existence, as appearing from two lines inserted in the description of the rgyal-phran (petty rulers), in the Dunhuang Manuscripts, reveal a peculiar aspect of those ages:

"Before that was Ya-yogs,
The cause (rkyen) of the Rum of Beginning (gdod) and End (byid)".

The entity of cosmos according to a concept of the world which has even survived

in Buddhist literature, in a Prajñāpāramitā colophon is the closed Ga’u (box) between the two, Gnam (heaven) and Sa (earth).\textsuperscript{82}

A non-Buddhist origin conception is found in a cosmogonic myth rendered by the Fifth Dalai Lama. He says that according to Po-ti-bse-ru, as to the human generations of subjects, out of the five elements one huge egg emerged. From the outer shell of the egg, the white rock of the gods (Lha) arose. From the inner fluid of the egg, came the white Dung-mtsho (origin lake) which encircled Mer (the red yolk). In the intermediate, diffusive parts of the egg, the rigs-drug separated as all those of intellect. From the yolk of the egg, eighteen eggs were created. The eighteen eggs in the middle, separately appeared as Dung-sgong (origin eggs).\textsuperscript{83}

The Bonpos, although their writings are pervaded with Buddhist ideas, preserved several myths, with some indigenous elements, referring to the creation of the world.\textsuperscript{84}

1. In the beginning there was an uncreated being. From it a white light shone and from it an egg came into existence. It had no parts, but it had the power to move and fly. After five months it broke open and a man emerged. He sat down on a throne placed in the middle of the ocean and arranged the order of the universe.

2. The beginning of the universe was a void. From the void a being came into existence. From that being a light of many colours permeated space. Then wind, fire, water, foam and a tortoise came into existence, one after the other. The tortoise had six eggs of six different colours and from them six kinds of serpents (klu) came into existence as the origin of the six classes of living beings.

3. The universe came into existence from an egg formed from a blue light shining forth from the void.


\textsuperscript{83} Haarh, n.82, p. 287.

4. The universe is created from a serpent hatched from a primordial egg.

5. A female serpent was born from the void. From the crown of her head the sky came into existence; from the light of her right eye the moon and from the light of her left eye the sun; when she opens her eyes, it is day; when she closes them, it is night; from her teeth came the planets and the lunar mansions; from her voice the thunder; from her tongue the lightning; from her breath clouds; from her tears rain; from her nose wind; from her blood the five oceans; from her veins rivers; from her flesh soil and from her bones mountains.

6. The world is a tree with three summits and six branches. On each branch there is a bird laying an egg.

In one variant of the egg legend there live two birds. There are eighteen eggs in their nest: six white, six yellow and six blue. From the six middle eggs come men. Then three smiths appear, each belonging to one of the three realms - of the gods on high (lha, white), on earth (gnyan, yellow) and under the earth (klu, blue). To these three, is added a human smith who comes from the middle realm.85

The genealogy of the great clan of Lang (Rlangs po-ti bse-ru) also cite significantly titled works on the creation of the world and its beings, as sources of their accounts. Later, a work entitled 'Oral Tradition, or Origin of Tribes', dealing with the origin of the clans from an egg, has become a part of the Bonpo literature. This is the same story which forms the opening of the Lang genealogy. The story says that an egg appears as the quintessence of the five elements. From its outer shell is born the White rock of the gods on high, from its inner fluid is formed the White lake of conch, and from the glutinous part of the middle come all beings. The soft part of the egg becomes eighteen eggs of which one (or six), in the middle, is as though made of conch. It is a shapeless man, without limbs or senses, but endowed with thought. In accordance with his wish, sense organs break through and he becomes a handsome young man, king Yemon or Sangpo

85. Stein, n. 84, p. 195.
Bumtri. He has a son by a queen. After some generations we reach gods, one of whom, Ode Kunggyel, is elsewhere regarded as the royal dynasty's ancestor, who came down from heaven to earth.\textsuperscript{86}

In another version found under the title 'mdzod phug: basic verses and commentary', the origin of the world runs as follows:\textsuperscript{87}

In the beginning of the beginning there was the Lord Nam-mkha' stong-ldan phyod-sum who possessed the lees of the five causes. From him the father Khri-rgyal khug-pa collected them to his body and uttered softly 'ha' from which sprang wind. As the wind circled fast in the form of a wheel of light there came fire, and as the wind blew hard the hotter the fire became. Dew was produced from the heat of the fire and the coolness of the wind. On the drops of dew atoms clustered. These in turn were stirred by the wind which travelled about in space causing the accumulation of particles to grow to the size of mountains. The world was in this way created by the father Khri-rgyal khug-pa (alias Mngon-rdzogs rgyal-po).

From the essence of the five causes an egg of light and egg of darkness were produced. The egg of light was cubic and as big as a yak. The egg of darkness was in the shape of a pyramid and the size of an ox. The father broke the egg of light with a wheel of light. Sparks of light scattered into space producing the gods of 'Thor-gsas (the scattered gods) and rays of light shone downwards producing the gods of Mda'-gsas (the arrow gods). From the heart of the egg emerged Srid-pa-sangs-po 'bum-khri, a white man with turquoise hair. He was the king of the world of existence. Bskal-pa med- 'bum nag-po (who stands in opposition to father Khri-rgyal khug-pa) caused the egg of darkness to burst in the realm of darkness. Black light went up producing ignorance and fog.

\textsuperscript{86}. Stein, n.84, p. 194.

Black rays went down producing torpor and madness. From the heart of the egg sprang a man of black light. He was called Mun-pa zer-lidan nag-po and was the king of the world of non-existence. These two are the fathers of gods and demons.

From the five causes dew and rain were produced and these became the oceans. As the wind blew and moved the waters of the oceans a bubble the size of a tent sprang up onto the surface, containing a blue egg of light. When it burst by itself a turquoise blue woman appeared. Sangs-po 'bum-khri gave her the name of Chu-lcam rgyal-mo. They coupled without bowing their heads and without touching noses and produced wild animals, beasts and birds. They united bending their heads and touching noses and nine brothers and nine sisters were born to them. The nine brothers caused nine female partners to appear as their wives while the nine sisters created nine male partners as their husbands.

Mun-pa zer-lidan, the demon, created Stong-zhams nag-mo out of his own shadow and she was born in the middle of a moonless night. So she is called the Queen of Darkness. From their union eight brothers and eight sisters were born. They are called Lha-srin. (Lha-srin here is to be understood as Lha-ma-srin, i.e. beings who are not quite gods nor demons). The eight brothers, too, created their own female partners and the eight sisters their male partners. Many more demons were born from these sixteen couples. (See Figure 3)

Symbolism has been related to a general cosmic dualism historically derived from Iranian influences. According to this early cosmological scheme, there were originally two eggs, one white and one black. From the white egg was born the father-benefactor p'an byed; from the black one, the maleficient father, gnod byed. The former is in the light, the latter in shadow which reaches the limit of the light. The former is white and the latter is black and armed with a lance. The former the beneficient father, is called the king of positive existence; the latter, the king of negative existence...Everything good, that
is, the good creation derives from the former; everything bad, that is, the evil creation, from the latter: these produce death and malignant demons. 88

Figure 3: Creation of Gods and Demons in the Bon Cosmology

Nam-mkha' stong-ldan phyod-sum-rje
(space)

lees of five causes

essence of five causes

Khri-rgyal khug-pa
(Light)

Med-'bum nag-po
(Darkness)

Cubic Egg of Light

Pyramid Egg of Darkness

Srid-pa sangs-po 'bum-khri
(The King of the World
of Existence)

Mun-pa zer-ldan nag-po
(The King of the World
of Non-existence)

Chu-lcam rgyal-mo

Stong-zhams nag-mo

9 brothers & 9 sisters (gods)
8 brothers & 8 sisters (demons)

creation of creation of
9 wives 9 husbands
(18 couples)

creation of creation of
8 wives 8 husbands
(16 couples)

Based on Samten Karmay, pp. 193-194.

There is another account of the creation of the cosmos, in the Tibetan traditions, dating from pre-Buddhist times. Here it is narrated that originally there was a primordial

deity called Yab-dag-rgyal-po, "Absolutely Victorious King". From him emanated two men, one named Myal-ba-nag-po, "Black suffering", who is coloured black, carries a spear, and is the author of all strife and evil; the other is called Od-zer-ldan, "Bright one", who is coloured white, creates the sun and moon, teaches culture and religion and is the source of all virtue. (See Figure 4)

Corresponding to this narrative is a more complex Tibetan cosmogony, also from the early Bon period. This cosmic sphere originally was only a Void (Ye-med), which gave rise to Being (Ye-yod). Being in turn gave birth to two principles, one bright and paternal, the other dark and maternal. This pair produced an egg from which two birds hatched, one called Rich Brilliance, the other Tormented Darkness. After mating they produced three eggs. One white, one black, and one speckled. The white egg gave rise to the "world gods" (Srid-pa); the black egg produced "Arrogant Black Man"; and the speckled egg created "Intercessional Prayer".

Figure 4: Dualism in a Pre-Buddhist Creation Myth

Absolutely Victorious King
(Yab-dag-rgyal-po)

↓

Bright One
(Od-zer-ldan)

White-coloured

↓

Sun, Moon, Virtue
(Culture & Religion)

Black Suffering
(Myal-ba-nag-po)

Black-coloured

↓

Strife, Evil

Based on Robert Paul, p.48
One of the world gods, who is called either Sangs-po-bum-khri or Ye-emon-rgyal-po, then created the actual world. To his right he creates the Phya spirits, representing humans; to his left he created the Dmu spirits, representing heavenly spirits; and in front of him he created the Gtsugs, representing animals.89 (See Figure 5 in the next page)

This story has been cited from a Bon text Origin of the Black-Headed Dwarflike Creatures (dbu nag mi'u 'dra chags), whose detailed description of Bon cosmogony is completely in agreement with the brief information provided in the Crystal of Doctrinal Systems concerning the Bon teachings on the origin of the visible world with its hierarchies of gods and creatures. The same story, while being narrated by Hoffmann, has been rendered in a detailed manner with some aspects which are missing in the preceding narrative. Apart from the descriptions already given before, Hoffmann adds that the World God Sungs-po 'bum-khri, and also Ye-son rgyal-po, had no control over the organs of sight, hearing, smelling, tasting, stretching and walking, but he had everything he needed, thanks to the 'Thinking Spirit'. The World God then called the whole habited and uninhabited world into being. He laid gold and turquoise to the right and spoke an intercessional prayer. A gold mountain and a turquoise valley developed from this, and the whole line of the Phya was born. He laid a mussel and a precious stone to the left, and spoke an intercessional prayer. A mussel mountain and a valley of precious stones developed from this and the whole line of the Dmu was born. He laid a crystal and "a red light" (a precious stone?) before him and spoke an intercessional prayer. A crystal mountain and a sea of light developed from this and the whole line of the Gtsugs was born. The Phya are human beings; the Dmu are heavenly spirits; and the Gtsugs, animals.90

89. Paul, n.88, pp. 48-49.
Figure 5

A Complex Cosmology of the Bon—Originating in the Void

Source: Robert Paul, p. 49.
The story of the birth and life of Gshen-rab mi-bo, the founder of the Bon religion, forms the subject of a Bonpo sutra, the *Gzer-myig*. It is modelled on the story of the Buddha Śākyamuni. The descent of Gshen-rab mi-bo has been described in a Bon creation myth, found in the *Gzer-myig*. It says that the Great Mother (yum chen), the Mother of Infinite Space named Sa-trig er-sangs gave forth an emanation—the God of Wisdom (Ye-shes-kyi lha) named Gshen-lha od-dkar. From him came the World God (Srid-pa) named Sangs-po 'bum-khri. And he in turn, gave forth an emanation in human form, the religious teacher Gshen-rab mi-bo, who brought the Bon religion to the world.

In another example from a Bon creation story, Gshen-rab mi-bo, who was originally a divinity, wished to appear on earth to reveal the true religion to men. In order to assume human form, he needed to be born to a human couple. Therefore, he assumed the form of two rays of light, one in the shape of an arrow, the other in the form of a distaff or spindle. These two shafts of light then entered the heads of a human couple, the arrow penetrating the skull of the prospective father, the spindle that of the mother. These two conceived a child, who was born as the earthly personage Gshen-rab mi-bo.

An older version of the Bon creation tale, illustrating miraculous conception of Gshen-rab mi-bo tells us that he came down near a tree. A blue cuckoo was perched on top of it. This apparently was Gshen-rab in another form. The bird alighted on the top of the Queen of the Sky's head. When it flapped its wings thrice, two rays came from its...
sexual organ, one white and one red, and penetrated the mother's body through the top of her head. As soon as he was born he spoke with the same melodious voice as did the cuckoo. 96

Now we come to the Tibetan Buddhist version of the cosmogonic myth. As narrated by Thubten Jigme Norbu, before all times there existed only a void, a dark emptiness. A wind, gentle and quiet sprang up from within this nothingness. From the far cardinal points, it filled the void, growing in power with each passing year. The wind became thick and heavy after several years, forming rdo-rje rgya-tram, a great double thunderbolt in the form of a cross. From the thunderbolt came clouds, one overlapping the other. They grew thick and heavy like the thunderbolt and the wind. Then came the great rain from the clouds. Each drop of rain was as big as a wagon wheel, each drop was enough to inundate the land. For countless years, the great rain fell, and when it stopped falling, it had created rgyatso, the primeval ocean. 97

The surface of rgyatso was smooth and quiet, there blew a gentle breeze, moving the face of the waters softly back and forth. The moving of the waters caused a light foam, Wangchen Serkyi Sashi to cover them. The waters became heavier as the wind grew in strength, gradually the foam became heavy and yellow. So earth emerged from the ocean as butter comes out of cream. The winds blew ceaselessly around the earth that rose like a mountain. When the rain fell once more, the water it dropped was salty. Thus ocean upon ocean, the universe was created.

The great mountain, Rirab Lhunpo, a four-sided column of precious stones stood in the centre. This was the abode of gods. There lay a lake (tso), around it and around the lake a circle of golden mountains. Beyond the golden mountains lay another lake,


encircled again in turn. In all there were seven lakes and seven rings of golden
mountains, the innermost being the mightiest. Seven times earth, seven times water.
Beyond outer mountains lay the outer ocean, Chi Gyatso. It is in chi gyatso that the four
worlds are found, like islands, each with its own shape and different nature. The world of
the south is pointed downward, like a cone; the western world is circular; the wealthy land
of the north is square in shape; and the eastern world is a crescent. On each side of each
world is a smaller island, of similar shape: four worlds and eight islands. This was the
universe, and it was dark.

Rirab Lhunpo is the centre of the universe, and each of its four sides looks out
across the seven lakes and the seven rings of golden mountains to the four worlds. (There
live the Lha, the embodied Gods). The Gods on the side of Rirab Lhunpo facing south
concern themselves with the southern world. The guardian of the southern quarter, in
which our own world of Dzambu Lying lies, is Phagkyepo.

Initially Dzambu Lying was empty. It was sans people, sans flora, sans fauna.
But some of the Gods of Rirab Lhunpo, because of their all past deeds, came from the
upper part of that mountain to Dzambu Lying. Because of their power and greatness they
did not need to work. Food was abundant. There was no famine, no hunger. The world
was sans malady, and the Gods lived long. Their power lay in samten se, a deep
meditation in which creation issues from the mind. Their power was such that there was
no need for light; each God was his own light, and by his own power his body glowed like
a heavenly body.98

After many years of contentment in Dzambu Lying, one of the Gods noticed a kind
of fat, like cream, called sashag. This fat came from the earth itself. The Gods began to
eat the tasty sashag. The more they ate, the more their powers diminished, the more feeble
the light they created. Finally, when all the sashag was gone, they had lost their longe-

98. Norbu & Turnbull, n.97, p.21.
ness. It was then that the sun and the moon and the stars were created for Dzambu Lying, for the light of the world that had been the light of the Gods, and their power, had vanished.

In this way the Gods became people. They depended on the sun, the moon and the stars for light. They ate a cornlike plant called myugu. It bore large fruits. Mang Kur (meaning "many people made him king") taught the people how to build houses, telling them that each family should have its own house and its own fields. Each family was taught the art of planting, growing and reaping of its own food. In this way came the human beings, having been Gods. In this way men became subject to the cycle of life and death for while living they must work, fight, steal and get sick. Thus this world was created.

Later we find how the Tibetans came into existence; in other words, how human beings originated in the land of Tibet. The Tibetans came from a union between two incarnations, one of which had taken the form of a monkey, the other having become an ogress, evil and given to the eating of flesh.

After the creation of the universe, and of Dzambu Lying, the Tibetans believed that their country was under water. Through the blessings of Chenresig, Lord of Mercy, the water slowly dried up leaving Tibet surrounded by great mountains. It was a lovely country of valleys and hills, peopled with Mimayin, invisible and intangible spirits. They can do both good and harm. There were no human beings to begin with. But both Chenresig and his consort Dolma sent their incarnations into Tibet. Chenresig's incarnation took the form of a monkey, Trehu Changchub Sempa. The monkey incarnation was under vows of celibacy, and lived alone in quiet meditation. Dolma's incarnation, however, was an ogress and a cannibal, called Tag-senmo. Senmo, the ogress, became very lonely. She told Trehu of her loneliness and begged him to stay with her. At first Trehu refused, saying that he came to fulfill his vows. But Senmo was so distraught that Trehu was overcome with compassion and using his supernatural power went straight to the great Potala, abode of Chenresig, to ask for advice. Chenresig told
Trehu that the time had come for Tibet to have children of its own, and that he was to return and take Senmo as his wife.

The monkey and the ogress married, and they had six children which some people say were drawn from the six kinds of creatures that fill the world: Gods, Demigods, Human beings, Ghosts, Animals and Fiends. The monkey father left the six children to fend for themselves. On returning a number of years later to see how they were faring, he found that they had multiplied, with children and grandchildren. All these offspring were real people, human beings, the first Tibetans, but there were so many that there was not enough fruit on the trees to feed them all. Trehu set off once again for the Potala, and Chenresig gave him different kinds of grain, from Mount Rirab, to take back and plant. So the first seeds of life were planted in Tibet.

There is another version of the same story, narrated in a slightly different manner. The Tibetans believe that in the prehistoric era, central Tibet was one large sea or lake, of which the numerous existing lakes are remnants. A sixteenth-century historian says that according to the Manjuśrīmūlatantra, a hundred years after the death of the Buddha, the lake in the Land of Snows is said to have dwindled and a forest of ēśāl trees is said to have appeared there. The historian remarks that in accordance with this prediction, a hundred years after the death of the Master (the Buddha), the lake that once covered the Land of Snows finally dried up....A short time after Tibet was formed thus, Avalokiteśvara and Tārā, in the semblance of a monkey and a rock-demoness, had first of all monkey off-spring. Gradually, these became men. The first village they made is commemorated in (the saying): "Trena (monkey-beginning) in the land of Kongpo, (the first) district of the land of men."99.

Yet, another version of the same legend, narrated in the Ma-ni bka'-'bum (revealed treasures), probably dating from the twelfth century tells us that the Buddha Amitābha told the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara that as Śākyamuni had not converted the Land of Snows, it

99. Stein, n.84, p.37.
was the duty of Avalokiteśvara to carry out this missionary work. Avalokiteśvara sat on top of Mount Potala and looked at the land he was to convert. Its creatures were ignorant and pursued evil ways. He emitted from the palm of his hand a ray of light and from it appeared a monkey. He instructed the monkey in the Doctrine and sent him to meditate in the Land of Snows. The country was divided into nine regions: three upper regions inhabited by elephants and deer; three middle ones by rock-ogres and monkeys; and three lower ones by ogres. There were no men at that time. The monkey, engrossed in meditation was approached by a rock-ogress disguised as a female monkey, but he paid no attention. She changed herself into a beautiful woman, approached him again and asked to be his consort. The monkey refused, but she threatened that if he did not consent she would summon the ogres to devour the creatures of the land, and the ogresses would bear young and, being many, they would take possession of the whole land and devour the whole world.

Perplexed, the monkey went to see Avalokiteśvara to ask what to do. The Bodhisattva told him it was proper to mate with the ogress, for their descendants would become human beings, among whom the Doctrine would spread. The monkey obeyed and the ogress gave birth to six sons. They had bodies covered with hair. Their faces were red and they had a taste for flesh and blood. Their father took them to a forest called the Peacock Woods, where lived other monkeys, and left them there. When he came back after a year, he found that they had increased by five hundred. Their offspring were neither monkeys nor yet men. They suffered from heat and rain in summer and from snow and cold in winter, and they had nothing to eat. The father monkey gave them some food, but when they devoured it they were in pain, their hair fell off and their tails disappeared. In distress he went to see Avalokiteśvara once more. He was consoled and told that his descendants had now become men and that Avalokiteśvara could carry out the mission of converting them. He was given seven kinds of grain, precious dust and other minerals for his children and he went back to them and instructed them how to cultivate
land and procure food. The dust and minerals were scattered over the whole land.100

The Bsam-vas dkar-chag, composed in 1854 AD by Dbang-phyug rgyal-po, narrates that the Ape (spre'u) and the Rock-demon (brag-srin), after being blessed by Avalokiteśvara and Tārā, copulated, and six beings appeared. The six mortal young apes with different behaviour gradually increased in number and became the kingdom of the Tibetans. In those ages, men were very ferocious and barbarous. Because the words of the Law were unknown, they spontaneously started doing unvirtuous actions like killing, etc. They lived like a gang of srin-pos. Avalokitesvara as an incarnation taught and bestowed blessings by introducing offerings like grain etc. He gradually guided them along the path of the Ten Virtues (dge-bcu), improved the bodily constituents like good looks and mild extraction.101

The most recent version of the Buddhist tradition is found in the rather elaborate account given by the Pakta-ya completed in 1934. It reads that Avalokiteśvara appeared as the Ape (spre'u), the origin of families, a Bodhisattva. And Tārā bestowing blessings took the appearance of a wild animal, the Rock-Demoness (brag-srin-mo) who shows out on the pure surface of the young moon. After their copulation, there appeared the six families, the six children who were of different mortal behaviour.

On the father's side they were quick of thought, compassionate, and considerate. On the mother's side they were red-faced, indulging in sinful deeds, and crude. From them developed what gradually became the kingdom of the Tibetans.

There are also some texts which contain a Buddhist, quasi-historical explanation of the origin of the Tibetans, presenting them as the descendants of Indian refugees. The text of the Deb-ther-sngon-po reads that before the appearance of the Teacher Muni, in the beginning of the Kali-yuga, the five Pāṇḍava brothers led to battle a host consisting of

100. Skorupski, n.81, p. 51.
101. Haarh, n.82, pp.182-183.

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twelve or thirteen divisions. A king named Rupati, who fought at the head of his army, suffered a defeat and fled to the region situated inside the snowy mountains disguised as a woman. His descendants settled there. "Nowadays his line is called Bod", so said the Ācārya Prajñāvarman (Ses-rab-go-cha).102

The same mixture of traditions can be found in the critical note text by Dpa'-bo-gtsug-lag. The text says that the people of all Tibet descended from Ru-pati. Later in his text Dpa'-bo-stsug-lag notes when the Pandu-sons and Sgra-ngan (Duhsásana) in the past fought with twelve armies, the king called Ru-pati fled with a hundred followers to the Snowy-Mountains, having donned women’s attire. They increased and to-day they are known as Bod.

In Bu-ston’s Chronicle this origin tradition is outlined the way in which the human generations first appeared in Tibet. One reads in the Lha-las phul-du-byung-ba'i bstod-pa'i 'grel-pa written by the Ācārya Ses-rab-go-cha that at the time when the five Pandu-sons of the family of the Sakyas were fighting with the twelve armies of Sgra-ngan, a king named Ru-pa-ti together with one thousand warriors, disguised as women, fled into the Glacier Mountains. The Tibetans are considered to be the offspring of them.

Correspondingly we read in the Thob-yig by Dza-yā Panḍīta that in the Kaliyuga, King Rupati fled to the Glaciers together with a thousand warriors in the appearance of women. This is narrated in the Lha-las phul-byung-gi bstod-pa'i-'grel-pa. But in other texts it is told that in Tibet in those ages when there were plenty of wild animals, six children, separated themselves from the families of wild creatures. They issued from the coupling of the Ape and the Rock-demoness by the particular grace of Avalokiteśvara (Thugs-rje-chen-po).

We confront different origin traditions of the Tibetans in the 'Dzam-gling rgyas-bsad which tells us that the people of Tibet are said to descend from the Ape

102. Haahrh, n.82, pp.171-172.
(spre'u) by the Tibetans, to descend from Ru-pa-de and his army by the Indians, and to Descend from the Zan-me'o and his army according to the old Chinese records. 103

Sarat Chandra Das (1849-1917) gives an account which seems to depend on Tibetan sources unknown to us. It says that prior to the advent of Śākya Simha, during the war between the five Pāṇḍavas and the twelve legions of Kaurava armies, one of the warrior princes, named Rupati, through dread of war, fled towards the snowy country of Tibet. For fear of being pursued by the enemy or by his suzerain, the chief of the Kauravas, for deserting the field, he dressed himself in female attire, and with only one thousand followers took shelter in Tibet. He found the country, Pugyal, widely peopled by a race of men, still in a primitive state. They welcomed him as their king. By his mild and peaceful behavior he won their affection and ruled over them for many years. Under his and his descendants' rule the people multiplied, enjoyed prosperity and developed the arts. From Rupati to the foundation of monarchy in Tibet by Ğa-Thi-tsanpo (Gna'khri-btsan-po), in the beginning of the fourth century before the birth of Christ, the history of Tibet is very obscure. During this long interval, after the fall of the house of Rupati, the country was partitioned into several petty states, ruled by insignificant native chieftains and princes.

There are other concepts of the world, but not in the strict sense as seen in the previous forms, nor in true form of a narrative. Haarh points out that among many peoples of the Altai regions and in Siberia the tent symbolizes the world. This conception of the world is also known from Tibetan sources. A pole outside the tent or the main or central pole inside the tent, if such a pole belongs to the structure of the tent, symbolizes the central structure of the world or the support of heaven. It is thus conceived in a way analogous to the conception of the central mountain Rirab or Sumeru. The top of the pole or the smoke-hole of the tent, depending on the structure of the tent, symbolizes heaven in various aspects such as the center of it, the entrance to it, or more specifically, the Polaris.

103. Haarh, n.82, p.176.
In the Tibetan conception of the World-Tent, the tent has eight ribs giving the sky, which revolves about the pole, the appearance of a wheel with eight spokes. Reminiscences of this conception are found in a deity connected with the myths of the originator of the Tibetan royal line Gna'-khri btsan-po, the god Skar-ma-yol-sde or Guardian of the Star-Curtain. The pole of the Tibetan tent of the world was imagined as the glacier mountain Ti-se, the top of which passed through the central hole of the tent or heaven. The central hole, which was also imagined as a window or dkar-khung, was called gung. This term specifically applies to the centre of heaven marked by the pole. In the general formulation of this conception of the world, the tent-pole, the top of which indicates the centre of heaven, may be used metaphorically of heaven itself.\footnote{104. Haarh, n.82, p. 141.}

Giuseppe Tucci's description of a Tibetan cosmos of a quite special nature is that the atmosphere is like a tent pitched upon the universe: the wheel of the sky is a tent with eight ribs. The pole is Mount Te-se, Ti-se Sumeru. On the top there is a hole through which the summit of this mountain-pole passes. This is the centre of the higher plane of the atmosphere. It is a window (dkar-khung) and a centre (gung).

This seems to imply that above heaven there is the infinite luminous space from which, through that very hole, sun, moon and the stars receive their light: this is probably Spu-yul (the Realm of the Dead).\footnote{105. Haarh, n.82, p.222.} This image of the world is in itself different from what we otherwise know of Tibetan concepts of the world.

1.4 TIBETAN CREATION MYTHS: INTERPRETATION

In the process of exploring the pre-Bonpo Tibetan concepts of existence, of life and death, we are virtually compelled to draw our conclusions from the narratives surviving in Buddhist texts. These narratives are highly fragmentary and constitute only a negligible fraction of the original myths, but these are parts of the foundation on which better known
concepts have evolved at a later period.

The notion of cycle, establishing an identity between beginning and end, in a completely abstract form, is clearly stated in the reference of rum (uterus). The beginning and the end, in this context, obviously indicate birth and death. And such a conception probably reflects the peculiarity of pre-Bonpo notions of existence. The concept of rum implies the very existence of ya-yogs. Both in concrete and abstract sense, ya and yogs symbolize above and below, up and down, high and low. Cosmogonical analogy can be drawn between the ideas of gnam-sa and the concept of the two opposite principles expressed by ya-yogs. Creation took its course in the closed box (ga'u) of the world, formed by gnam (heaven) and sa (earth). The antithetical principles of the white and the black light, and the male and the female emerged. In this function of the primeval source of life, the Ga'u corresponds to Rum. That is to say that the dual process of creation commenced with the white and the black light, with pho and mo, the male and the female principles, within the cosmos shaped like a box (ga'u) having two parts: upper and lower. This ga'u was also compared to a uterus, the place of departure of life and the place of arrival for the dead. The generalized idea of the ancestors of the Tibetans unmistakably refers to a primitive notion of a reciprocal action between the world of the Living and that of the Dead, an eternal cycle of Life and Death, as indicated in the concept of the Rum of the Beginning and the End. The mutually opposed realms of life and death converge in the idea of Rum in their extreme stages. This exactly corresponds to the concept of two extremities in the world spheres, converging and constituting the closed Ga'u.106

Bipolarity can be noticed in some other aspects as well, e.g., heaven and earth are regarded as king and people; a mountain's bright side (dags) and dark side (srib), as husband and wife; right and left as maternal uncle and sister's son; head and body as father and son; and the upper (phu) and lower (mda') parts of a valley, as master and

106. Haarh, n.82, pp.17, 314.
The peculiarity of pre-Bonpo cognition of world and existence lies in the imagination of duplices of antithetical principles.

The Fifth Dalai Lama quotes rlangs po-ti bse-ru (Lang genealogy). Excluding the first two sentences and the last sentence, added by the Dalai Lama, it can be undoubtedly said that this is not an original composition. It is either a re-edited version or a composition of fragments originating separately. In this portrayal of creation, the white rocks of the lha or the white glacier mountains were created from the egg-shell. This lha is invariably synonymous with the lha (god). From the albumen, depicted as Dung-mtsho, emerged the rigs-drug, the six species of the intellectual beings. This Dung-mtsho or "the lake of origin or generation" encircled the yolk in the middle of the egg. Eighteen separate eggs, the eggs of origin (Dung-sgong), turned out from the yolk. These eggs begot the eighteen generations or clans. In this case, the source of the eighteen clans seemingly stands independent of the rigs-drug, while they are generally regarded as the descent of the six major groups, e.g., Bod-mi'u gdung-drug.108

On the one hand the idea of an origin from eggs seems to reflect matriarchal concepts among the Tibetans, on the other hand it characterizes certain ancient traditions of the origin of the world, particularly of the origin of the Tibetans or the primary Tibetan tribes. However, the egg theory of creation is a quasi-anthropological viewpoint.

The six variants of the Bonpo creation myths are narrated in no well-designed manner. These are fragments of different stories prevalent among the Bonpos. The origin of the cosmos involves the creation of something out of nothing. Here in most of these versions foreign influences are evident. The Bonpo chronology starting from an egg is an Indian belief of Brahmáṇḍa (the primeval egg of the Creator Brahmá); and in fact is found in the Mahábhárata. The concept of void is clearly Indian, whereas the light permeating space might be Iranian. The tale of the female serpent has a Chinese influence. The

107. Stein, n.84, pp.42-43.
magical nature of the egg, capable of flying, tends to reflect the power to levitate, commonly known among the spiritualists of both India and Tibet. The succession of various elements culminating in foam and finally a tortoise, shows some influence of the famous Hindu myth of churning of the sea (Samudra-manthan) and the emergence of a tortoise from within, known as Kurma-avatar (tortoise incarnation), widely known in the Hindu mythology. The serpent (klu) is actually a clear borrowing of the image of Nāga, a deity propitiated by the Hindus. The world, where it has been compared to a tree with three summits, seems to be a Chinese concept, for the ideograph representing mountain (ﾑ) is derived from the much older character 亝 showing three summits.

In the legend of the two birds with eighteen eggs, the colours of the eggs represent the three realms of the world. (The concept of the three realms of the world is again an Indian concept of Tribhuvan). And along with these colours came the representatives of the three realms: the gods, the men and the serpents. Both in the Bonpo and Buddhist pantheon, the number six is an exceptional number\textsuperscript{109} denoting the members of a group of deities. The three levels of the world: the sky with its white gods (lha), the surface of the earth with its gods of the trees and rocks (red btsan or yellow gnyan) and the subterranean domain with its black or blue aquatic gods (klu), are combined with three groups of six deities in each of these realms, making the total eighteen.

The reference of a second human smith emerging from the middle realm and adding to the already existing three smiths, perhaps denotes that ultimately it is the human labour which is shaping up the whole world. It may also indicate that it is men who can be elevated to the level of lha by their good deeds or can be relegated to the domain of klu by their evil-doings. These smiths presumably goes on to mould the eggs in some way, but there the narrative comes to an abrupt end leaving behind an incomplete substance, from which we cannot deduce any significant theory.

The Lang genealogical myth at its beginning is a highly sophisticated account and

\textsuperscript{109} Haarh, n.82, p.286.
resembles Bonpo creation myth. But, undoubtedly the foreign influence is strong so far as
the eggs are concerned. The remainder of the genealogy is a tangled and ill-preserved
legend with a stereotyped pattern. The White rock of the gods, coming out of the egg's
outer shell, is masculine in Tibetan, whereas the White lake of conch, shaping out of the
egg's inner fluid, is feminine. And it is said that all beings emerge from the glutinous part
in the middle.

It is interesting to note that the White rock of the gods is an indicator of the phallus
which manifests itself with its hardness. This hard-nature has been projected by the hard
outer shell of the egg. The White lake of conch is actually a symbol of the vagina. The
conch-shaped vagina with its inner fluid contrasts sharply with the protrusive appearance
of the rock-shaped phallus. The glutinous mass in the middle is in fact the commingled
mass of sperm and ovum from which new life emerge. It has been mentioned that out of
the eighteen eggs only one or six have an appearance of conch. This probably indicates the
recessive character of the female vis-à-vis the dominant male character -- manifested in
their offspring by means of genes. It is also said that the man, made of conch, is endowed
with thought. This seemingly shows superiority of the mother in a matriarchal social
set-up.

The last part of the account leads nowhere. In fact, Stein\textsuperscript{110} puts it in this way
that ancestral legends were like the armorial bearings of noble families. They would
squabble over them, each family claiming divine origin and trying to annex famous
ancestors.

In the creation myth entitled 'mdzod phug: basic verses and commentary', all the
brothers and sisters play important role in forming the original structure of the world and
its environment. The father, Sangs-po 'bum-khri, assigns each of his children to a
particular role. The brothers are called the Nine Males of the Created World (Srid-pa
pho-dgu), and their sisters are known as the Nine Females of the Created World. It was

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110. Stein, n.84, p.195.
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from the third sister Mi-mkhan ma-mo, and her husband Rdzi-ba dung-phyur that man
descended. The couple had eight offspring who are the original progenitors of man.\textsuperscript{111}

In the Bonpo theory, there is no indication of Time, but Space plays an important
role in the creation of the world. Nam-mkha' stong-ldan phyod-sum-rje is the
personification of space. He is invisible and passive. In later Bonpo tradition he is
stylised as Bon-sku which corresponds to Chos-sku (Dharmakāya). Khri-rgyal khug-pa --
the king possessing clarity, is the same as Gshen-lha 'od-kar (God of Wisdom). He is
visible and active, and is stylised as Longs-sku (Sambhogkāya). He perceived that
Med-'bum nag-po intended to create a world full of misery so he quickly acquired the lees
of the five causes from the Lord of Space. With the lees he created the world, but not the
beings which were born to Srid-pa sangs-po 'bum-khri.\textsuperscript{112}

The Iranian influence of duality is certainly present in the Bonpo creation myths.
The duality of light and darkness, white and black, good and evil, gods and demons, the
world of existence and non-existence. Creation and destruction forms one of the
fundamental tenets of the Bonpo doctrine. Rituals and ceremonies performed by the
Bonpo for anyone's benefit are viewed from this angle of dualism. Gods should triumph
over demons, and good over evil.

However, this dualistic concept is noticed in the early stages of Bon or old Bon.
This dualism is probably the legacy of the pre-Bon time. After absorption and assimilation
of Buddhist ideas, Bon re-shaped itself with many things of Indian origin. Its cognition
came to be characterized by a general concept of triplicity, in which an intermediate stage
or principle has been interposed between the extremes. In pre-Bonpo cognition, the world
took its shape from two opposite spheres, Heaven and Earth (Gnam and Sa, or Gung and
Sa). In the Bonpo cognition the world was distinctly divided into three different spheres:
Gnam, Bar, and Sa indicating heaven, the intermediate space, and the earth. While

\textsuperscript{111} See n.87.
\textsuperscript{112} Karmay, n.87, p.194.
another definition gives Gnam, Bar, and 'Og, signifying heaven or the upper sphere, the intermediate space, and the underworld (or the lower sphere). The middle part of the universe Bar, is an enlargement of the Ga'u, and thus represents the illuminated, atmospheric space between heaven and earth in the sense of the abode of Man.

Coming back to the story, we find that a blue egg of light bursts and a turquoise blue woman appears from within. This blue egg of light is definitely a conglomeration of Indian and Iranian concepts. The blue colour is typical of the klu, which shows the importance of the subterranean world ('Og) among the Bonpos. This means that 'Og is the medium of the klu. The mention of a tent in the story reflects the old nomadic life and tradition of the Tibetans in the high-altitude grasslands. The tent is also a symbol of the world which we have already seen and would discuss again at a later stage.

The myth of p'an byed and gnod byed is the most explicit rendering of the primal, ambivalent quality of the father, the king, or the creator of the world. It may imply that the son wishes to become identical with his father or to assume his father's special role and status. The wish to generate oneself is embedded herein. Interestingly, there is no mention of the mother from whom a new life originates. Hence there is a chance to categorize this story having been designed under the patriarchal or patrilineal social order; completely obliterating the role of the mother.

Creation of something out of nothing has been demonstrated once again in the myth of the "Absolutely Victorious King". The sun and the moon, created by Od-zer-Idan, are the elements which at the first instance filled the human mind with awe. Thus the seeds of religion were sown. And with it came the culture. The images of a perfect creator, a perfect teacher and the ultimate source of all virtue have been epitomized in the white-coloured existence of Od-zer-Idan ("Bright One"). Myal-ba-nag-po, with his spear, symbolizes all evil. This image is exactly identical with the image of gnod byed, armed with a lance, depicted in the previous narrative.

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The void is the primal state, and since it cannot be divided, it has to create something that is divisible for the purpose of creating this world. From the abstract realm of Void appears the concrete Being. Now, Being can be divided into two halves: one is bright and male, the other dark and female. Here two modes of reproduction are introduced: one by sexual intercourse and the other by means of egg. Reproduction by sexual union implies a fundamental duality which unites to produce unity, while an egg is an ideal representation of a unitary origin which can produce multiplicity as it is highlighted in this case. The pair of Rich Brilliance and Tormented Darkness are born from one, that is, from an egg. But the egg itself is born from a sexual union between an even primordial pair, the bright and the dark. The three eggs produced by Rich Brilliance and Tormented Darkness, make a Triad, with the middle one (speckled) combining both the elements of black and white. Communication between the gods of the white egg and the arrogant man of the black egg is maintained by the medium of "intercessional prayer". Problems erupt when animals, one of the triad produced by the World God, are placed as medium of contact between divinities and human beings. At first it seems to be an absurdity. But its solution can be found in the Bon religion based on a cult of animal sacrifice. In such sacrifices, mediation between man and the gods was realized precisely through animal mediators. Animals are thus analogous to "intercessional prayers." 114

The cosmogonies of this type, which are already present in some very early Indian texts (Brahmanas and Upanisads), can be put in the following pattern: Non-Being → Being → egg → world formed from its parts. 115

In the description given in the Bon text dbu nag mi'u 'dra chags, much importance has been attached to the spiritual aspect of human life. The characteristic feature of a human being lies in his power to think logically and rationalize all natural phenomena

115. Stein, n.84, p.247.
around him through his cognitive mind rather than just to possess different sense organs and lead a bovine life. This very aspect has been highlighted here as we see how Sangs-po 'bum-khri was endowed with the mental faculties.

In this narrative we see three mountains, two valleys and a sea. Mountains symbolize the phallus, and valleys or seas represent the vagina. Mountains stand high above the earth's surface and hence corresponds to the erect male organ. Whereas seas or valleys are areas with considerable depth and therefore have been visualized as the female organ. Here the male and the female aspects in nature have also their roles to play, for example, the lofty mountains and the low-lying areas between hills, that is, valleys or deep seas lying far below the earth's surface; the sun-bathed, dry tops of mountains, and the wet valleys lying in the shadows of the mountains. All these antithetical elements are mutually complimentary and thus signify unity in duality. Dualism has been expressed in the form of such imagery, keeping in conformity with the physiological features of human beings: both male and female. These dualistic aspects of nature are finally depicted as parents of human beings, heavenly spirits and animals.

The story of Gshen-rab mi-bo's birth and life is part of the cosmogonic myths of the Bon. Here the absolute figure is the Great Mother, from whom emerge the triad: the God of Wisdom, the World God and the human founder of Bon, Gshen-rab. The search for even higher and more refined realms of the absolute, led to the Buddhist theory of the Ādi-Buddha.116 The unrefomed Lamaist sects in Tibet acknowledged a primordial Buddha whom they worshipped under the name of Samantabhadra. He represents the ultimate absolute, the Dharmakāya. He is one of the representations, of the Ādi-Buddha. According to the Gzer-myig, 'The Creator of the Spirit' (sems) is called

Tantrism, which began about the seventh century A.D. to tinge Buddhism, is based on the worship of the Active Producing Principle (Prakriti) as manifested in the goddess Kāli or Durgā, the female energy (Sakti) of the primordial male (Purusa or Siva), who is a gross presentation of the Supreme Soul of the universe. In Tibet, the Ādi-Buddha is frequently represented with his female energy (Sakti). The source of Sakti is usually referred to as 'the Great Mother' (yum chen). In a structure, where the Great Mother is portrayed as the foremost initiator of the triad, there ought to be a partner for her creative endeavour. And that partner appears in the form of the 'Body of Heavenly Pleasure', often viewed as a mystic personage. From the creative communion of the Great Mother and 'Ādi-Buddha' Samantabhadra there is produced the God of Wisdom attached to the 'Body of Heavenly Pleasure', i.e., Sambhogkāya; and a World God for the sphere of the 'Changing Body', the Nirmāṇkāya. The latter guides and rules our visible world.

The story of Gshen-rab's descent on earth has been narrated in the third chapter of the Gzer-myig. The future saviour presents himself to the god of wisdom Gshen-lha od-dkar and the reigning world god Sangs-po 'bum-khri. Gshen-rab is told that he must be incarnated amongst men and not amongst gods, Asuras, animals, Pretas (ravenous demons) and denizens of Hell. A last look is now taken by Gshen-rab from the peak of the world mountain Rirab or Sumeru down on to his future birthplace and his future parents. (This is just an imitation of Avalokiteśvara, taking a last look from the top of Mount Potala down on to the Land of Snows for his future mission.) A white ray descends from Heaven, enters into the head of the prince Rgyal-bon thod-dkar and reaches his sexual organs, whilst a red ray similarly descends and enters the body of Rgyal-bon's wife Rgyal-zhad-ma.118


118. Hoffmann, n.90, pp.86-87.
In this example, as Robert Paul puts it, Gshen-rab mi-bo who is born to human parents both is and is not identical with the divinity who exists in the unconditioned realm. That divinity, in order to enter the world of duality, had to divide himself in two, a male and a female half, using the medium of light. This duality is now reunited through sexual union to produce the synthesis, the earthly Gshen-rab mi-bo. This human is now simultaneously a conditioned human being of flesh and blood, and a manifestation of an unconditioned deity.\textsuperscript{119}

The arrow and the spindle are traditional symbols for male and female throughout Tibetan culture. The arrow indicates that the Tibetans in the past were hunters and warriors; men used to venture out with weapons, while women stayed indoors looking after the household. The spindle reflects the occupation of women at the weaving machine: an indicator of homely care. On the other hand, the arrow symbolizes the phallus and also the male nature of cruelty and destruction, whereas the shape of a spindle is likened to the vulva and it possesses the female nature of compassion and creation or reproduction: weaving out a new life.

The story of Gshen-rab's miraculous conception through a blue cuckoo, has been narrated in the twenty-second chapter of the Report of the Ministers devoted to the Bon religion. This story has come down to us in a truncated form. From the body of Gshen-rab five-coloured rays of light emit and enter into the 'turquoise bird cuckoo' which is perched on the top of a sacred willow trees.\textsuperscript{120} This five-coloured rays of light is probably a rainbow. As Robert Paul puts it, the rainbow is the ideal symbol for the transitional form a deity of light must take upon entering the created world, since this pure light to enter the conditioned world would be like passing through a prism, in which the undivided plentitude of colours in a clear crystal becomes transformed into an array of

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\textsuperscript{119} Paul, n.88, p. 55.

\textsuperscript{120} Hoffmann, n.90, p.87.
Somehow, on top of a tree a blue cuckoo emerges from the rainbow. In Bon as well as in many other Central Asian traditions, blue is the sacred colour of the high god associated with the dome of the sky. In the same traditions, the world is often likened to a tree, whose roots are in water and the subterranean world, and which reaches through the world and touches the firmament. A cuckoo is, of course, a bird; and birds are associated with the sky. Moreover, the pre-Bon traditions maintained that the progenitor of the ancient Yarlung Dynasty was Bya-khri or Bird Throne. The Buddhist tradition also maintained the bird-like signs characterizing the progenitor. Now it is believed that part of the district of Yarlung was under the rule of the Bya or Bird Clan. Thus, the blue cuckoo on a tree-top symbolizes a sky god, who is now in appropriate form to mate with the Queen of the Sky. Gshen-rab mi-bo, born from this union, is thus in some sense identical both with the blue cuckoo and with the crystalline light.

The cuckoo emits two rays of light from his phallus, one white and one red, to impregnate the Queen, his would-be mother. Since white and red normally symbolize the male and female dyad, it is interesting to note that both the light beams, white and red, come from the male phallus. Thus, it is being claimed that everything to sexual creation is but paternal contribution: both male and female halves, while the mother is a mere receptacle. Such a theory simply helps to attain the objective of patrilineal ideology, which attempts to exclude women from the process of descent altogether. The motive behind it is clear, especially in this case. The earthly Gshen-rab must be completely identifiable with his own progenitor. But in sexual reproduction this can only be possible if the female contribution to the offspring is nil, either materially or genetically. Apparently being born from two, Gshen-rab is actually born from only one, his father. Therefore the postulates of this particular tale, formulated by the Bon priests, tend to

121. See n.119.
122. Paul, n.88, p. 56.
totally negate the role of women in the descent of their semi-divine, semi-human mentor, thereby dubiously putting the tenets of the Bon in a so-called irrefutable position capable of dominating women in particular. This means that the matriarchal system of pre-Bon, with its egg theory of creation, was later replaced by the patriarchal system of Bonpo.

The entire story, narrated by Thubten Jigme Norbu, is found in the Chojung, the Tibetan history books written by scholars of the 13th century or even earlier. This story of creation is called the Jigten Chagtsul, or "narrative concerning the creation of all worlds."¹²³ Rirab Lhunpo is in fact Mount Sumeru 84,000 miles high,¹²⁴ the axis of the system of worlds. The human life full of torment gave rise to the fantasy of a torment-free world of the divinities. Unlike Greek mythology, these divine figures were not omnipotent gods. They were personified deities. These deities eventually transformed into human beings as a result of their greed and other wrong-doings like theft. This justifies the religious doctrine attributing all human suffering to the Karma (Tibetan, Lei); the past evil deeds would definitely beget harmful results. The unrestrained attitude in the tasting of sashag is the index of temptation, as a result of which the gods became powerless and darkness engulfed the whole world. Thereupon, various heavenly bodies were created to illuminate the world. According to legends¹²⁵, which the Tibetans knew from translations of Buddhist scriptures (the Kangyur), human society with all its inequalities -- king and subject, rich and poor -- came into existence step by step through quarrels about food. The origin of the Tibetans themselves was imagined in the same evolutionist spirit.

Interestingly, it is said that a man found his genitals uncomfortable and tore them from his body, thus turning himself into a woman.¹²⁶ Though a queer theory, it tends to

¹²³. Norbu & Turnbull, n.97, p.25.
¹²⁴. Here 84,000 is a mathematical figure expressing multitude.
¹²⁵. Stein, n.84, pp. 45-46.
¹²⁶. Norbu & Turnbull, n.97, p. 22.
explain that it was man who came first in this world and that woman was just a piece of creation done casually by man himself. This too, like the preceding tale, attempts to negate the role of women in reproduction, especially when it comes to the primeval process of creation.

In the later part of the narrative, comes the tale of creation of man in the land of Tibet. Here we notice that man was created by the union between a forest monkey and a rock-ogress. As Stein suggests that the first Tibetans had their homes in the south-east, in mountainous country with forests, inhabited by monkeys. This forest-covered region was comparatively warm and suitable for agriculture. Moreover, the cradle of royal power Yarlung was the most fertile district of Tibet. So the five (somewhere six) kinds of grain: barley, wheat, rice, sesame and peas were cultivated in the Yarlung valley where the apes gradually took on the shape of man. The earliest tribes of Tibet are referred to as mi'u, a name which in its present form means 'dwarf' or 'little man'. But this name came from a Chinese term 'mihou', denoting the monkeys from whom the ancient Ch'iang were said to be descended. In the Gzer-myig, Tibet is described as the country of the flesh-eating red-faced Srin-po (sa-zan gdong-dmar srin-po Bod-kyi-yul). Sa-za signifies flesh-eater or carnivora, and since prehistoric time Sa-za gdong-dmar (Red-faced Carnivora) have particularly designated the Tibetan people itself. The Pakta-ya relates briefly that in Tibet (Bod) it is told that the issue of the union between the Ape (spre'u) and the Rock-Demoness (brag-srin-mo) were the Redfaces (gdong-dmar), who are the offspring of the Family of the Carnivora (sa-zan-gyi rigs).

The story found in the Mañjuśrīmūlataṇtra can be analysed from the time perspective. If the lake really dried up in accordance with the prediction of the Buddha,

127. Stein, n.84, p.28.
128. ‘Mihou' in Chinese means macaque or rhesus monkey.
129. Stein, n.84, p. 46.
130. Haarh, n.82, p.160.
then it must have dried between the fifth and sixth centuries B.C. because Gautama Siddhārtha lived between the fourth and fifth centuries before Christ. Hence it can be stated that the earliest ancestors of the Tibetans, the Ape and the Rock-Demoness, bore offspring more than a hundred years after the death of the Buddha. Stein\textsuperscript{131} informs us that in the south-eastern Tibet, near the Tsangpo’s (Brahmaputra) great bend, there are three districts, Dakpo, Kongpo and Nyang. An area covered with virgin forest borders on Kongpo. The first forest-dwelling Tibetan received from their monkey ancestor the five, or six, cereals including barley which is the staple foodstuff. Agriculture became predominant, at least in the cultural centres. Barley is particularly suited to Tibetan conditions because it grows at altitudes as high as 15,000 feet. There is even a second harvest in some regions, for example, rice and barley are cultivated in Kongpo. Kongpo produces bamboo and cinnamon. The bamboo shoots are eaten and the wood made into bows, arrows and spears. From all these accounts it is evident why the first men in Tibet chose Kongpo to be the place of their activities. From the mythical epoch of the earliest Tibetans to the legendary kings, Kongpo along with Yarlung was the political centre which later moved to Lhasa.

The ancient concept of the relationship between Man and his ancestral world of the Dead, and his origin from this world in the continual circulation between life and death, was so deeply rooted that even the Buddhist myth of the origin of the Tibetans, as given in the \textit{Ma-ni bka'-bum}, had to recognize it when representing the goddess Tārā in the appearance of a Brag-srin-mo, or Rock-demoness, as the maternal origin of the Tibetans, giving them as heritage the red faces (gdong-dmar), the lust for flesh and blood (sa-khrag-la dga'-ba), and all the worse features of human character.

The quotations from the Bsam-yas dkar-chag, and the Pakta-ya, present versions which are mutually related and in their fundamental features ultimately depend on the 34th chapter of the \textit{Ma-ni bka'-bum}, as it immediately appears from their common,

\textsuperscript{131} Cf.Stein, n.84, pp.20-38.
Characteristic references to the interference of the Supreme Grace for the benefit of the future propagation of the Doctrine in the land of the Tibetans.\textsuperscript{132}

The \textit{Ma-ni bka'-bum} makes a list of the virtues and vices of the Tibetans. From their monkey ancestor the first inhabitants inherited hairy bodies and red faces, and from their demon ancestress the absence of tails and a taste for meat. Some inherited devotion, zeal, wisdom and kindliness from their father. Others acquired from their mother the lust \textit{ill}, physical strength and courage.\textsuperscript{133}

The legend of Rupati appears in all the versions as a legend of the origin of the Tibetans, and in some sources it is therefore combined with the authorized tradition of the descent of the Tibetans from the Ape and the Rock-demoness. The legend of Rupati presents a certain interest, because all the versions of it apparently depend on one and the same primary source which is available to us, that is, the \textit{lha-las phul-du-byung-ba'i bka'-pa'i 'gre-pa}, a commentary to the Deva-atisaya stotra written by \textit{Ses-rab-go-cha or \textit{avarman}. This acarya was occupied with the translation of Buddhist texts into Tibetan. It thus appears that the creation of particular Buddhist traditions concerning the pre-Buddhist era in Tibet can be referred to a very early phase of Tibetan Buddhism, at least to the latter half of the 8th century A.D.\textsuperscript{134}

The text of \textit{Ses-rab-go-cha} has had a certain importance for the development of the Buddhist tradition of the origin of the Tibetan kings, although the text itself contains nothing but a very short account of the descent of the Tibetans from Rupati and his companions. Even the historical period to which Rupati belonged is not stated by \textit{Ses-rab-go-cha}, but the Tibetan versions quoting this author refer the events to the time of the \textit{rakṣetra} war as a matter of course, and thus connect the idea of the origin of the Tibetans with the Brahman tradition of the Indian epic \textit{Mahābhārata}, and with events

\begin{enumerate}
\item[132.] Haarh, n.82, p.184.
\item[133.] Stein, n.84, p.40.
\item[134.] Haarh, n.82, pp.176-177.
\end{enumerate}
belonging to the beginning of the Kaliyuga long before the birth of Buddha-Śākyamuni, while in the general Buddhist tradition the same events of the Mahābhārata are connected with the time of Buddha and the appearance of Gna'-'khri-bstan-po.

No doubt Sarat Chandra Das' account is based on Tibetan sources, but there are also some inferences made by the author himself. Das lets the primary events take place before the time of Buddha and makes Rupati the head of a ruling lineage belonging to a period prior to Gna'-'khri bstan-po and the petty rulers (rgyal-phran) preceding him.

In the 'Dzam-gling rgyas-bsad, another tradition has been added to the two already known origin traditions, the Chinese tradition that the Tibetans descended from a mythical clan Sanmiao.135 Tibetan sources rarely mention this tradition which has no significance in the development of these concepts. Even the Chinese sources hardly mention the Sanmiao as the progenitors of the Tibetans. Such an account must have appeared at a later period in China with a motivation to justify that the Tibetans are but people of the Chinese mainstream.

None of the Tibetan accounts tell us exactly in what way the Tibetans descended from King Rupati and his army in an alien land like Tibet. From S.C. Das' account it does not seem, however, that King Rupati was the Creator of the Tibetan people. On the contrary, he has been depicted as an usherer of a prosperous age, a rich culture.

While discussing the tent theory of the world, Stein points out that the sky was an eight-spoked wheel and the earth an eight-petalled lotus--both of them Buddhist symbols. Simultaneously there was a three-tiered vertical scheme: sky, earth and the subterranean world. Often the two systems fused and were mutually complementary. Only the middle

135. Chapter "Zhuixingxun" (On Deformity), Huainanzi cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), Zhongguo Shenhua Chuanshuo Cidian (Dictionary of Chinese Myths and Legends), Shanghai: Shanghai Lexicography Press, 1985, p.23, says "...Stretching from southwest to southeast,...there live....the Sanmiaoos". Also see Yuan, n.1, pp.378, 384 (n.7).
tier is occupied by man, which is thought of as a ladder between the other two. A small
group, the family, occupies a small analogous world, the house. If the sacred mountain
Rirab is the central pillar of the world--pillar of the sky and fixing peg of the earth--these
two expressions are drawn from the house or tent, and are synonyms of the house's 'god
of the soil'. Stein concludes that these scraps of mythology no longer contain, in the
present state of the texts, anything but allusions to the architecture of the house, or the
structure of the tent.

All these varying myths, seemingly endless, constitute the entire bulk of the
Tibetan cosmogonical concepts. In spite of the tremendous power of Buddhism, the Bon
religion played its role within the very existence of Buddhism, ultimately moulding it into
a religion with Tibetan characteristics--later known as Lamaism. So strong has been the
influence of the Bon religion that without understanding it nobody can expect to
understand the people of Tibet, or their practice of Buddhism. Though geographically
isolated, Tibet had contacts with the outside world--India, China and Persia (Ta-zig); and
also with the Turks (Dru-gu) and the Uighurs (Hor). In the process of interaction, the
Tibetans during the pre-Bon and Bon era, came in contact with the cosmological concepts
of different cultures. They gradually integrated those ideas to form a cosmos of their
own, of course, without admitting their respective origin.

These legends of origin have never been unified or systematized. The very reason
lies in the fact that there was no organized church, no priest invested with authority to do
so. What we know now are simply the ones that have come down in Buddhist or Bonpo
garb.136

Bon replaced the previous religion, it introduced a third, celestial sphere in the
concept of cosmos; and a third, divine world in the concept of existence. But how and
where did the Bon religion and its idea of celestial gods develop? The tradition generally
tends to show that it was introduced to central Tibet from outside, particularly from the

136. Stein, n.84, p.208.
Western regions where the population though related to the central Tibetans had undoubtedly been influenced by the culture and religion of their western neighbours, above all the Persians. This cultural influence undoubtedly accounts for the occurrence of ideas of Gods of Light as the source of origin which, when applied to the origin of the Tibetan kings, are quite alien to the ancient and original ideas of the Tibetans.\(^{137}\)

The idea of the egg as the primary source of origin is still living in Tibetan popular traditions. It is interesting to note that the form of this idea is that of the contemporary existence of a multitude of origin eggs or, more specifically, a quadruple of origin eggs, each of which being referred to one of the four quarters of the world as its separate origin egg. According to traditions from Ladakh, also known from the Ladakh version of the Gesar legend each of the four quarters of the world originally had its own origin egg from which the four rulers or guardians of the quarters originated.\(^{138}\)

One of the prominent characteristics of Tibetan Buddhism is to attain the ultimate goal by means of sexual union. Hence we come across several myths studded with phallic symbols. Their implications are described in an exceptionally vivid manner. Lamaism expresses its highest goal through the image of deities in sexual bond as the symbol of the Great Bliss (mahásukha). From psycho-physiological point of view, Wisdom (prajñā) and Means (upāya) must be united and this union culminates in Great Bliss, a system symbolically depicted in Tibetan paintings of deities in deep embrace (yab-yum)\(^ {139}\).

The cosmogonic myths become legendary history with the story of the first king (who claimed divine origin) to achieve control over the tribes and petty kings. His coming was later given a religious gloss with the ascription of his origin to India in accordance with the pious Buddhist tendency to make the holy land of India (Aryabhūmi) the source of

\(^{137}\) Haarh, n.82, p.318.

138. Haarh, n.82, p. 162.

139. Cf. Stein, n.84, pp.185-186. Literally 'yab-yum' means father and mother.
all that was good or worthwhile.

1.5 CHINESE AND TIBETAN CREATION MYTHS: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Almost every ethnic group in the world has had myths narrating the creation of the world, and then there is a period of chaos and destruction, after which it is mended by divine power to set everything into order. There is the Greek myth of 'inundation' and the Scandinavian myth of 'Ragnarok' or 'the divine calamity'. In China, the northerners have myths identical to that of 'Ragnarok'. There ought to be a myth starting with the creation of the universe.

In Chinese mythology, the myths which were last to come--were the creation myths. Huangdi--the Yellow Emperor, Fuxi and, Nüwa were none other than the Jade Emperor (the Supreme Deity of Taoism), the Lord of the Vast Sky, and the Supreme Mother of Mankind--the most infinitely resourceful deities. But various stories about them insist that it is better to call them just the creators of mankind or the initiators of human civilization than to consider them as the creators of the universe or lords of Nature. In all the legends, emphasis was laid on their personification. They were deities with parents and spouses. No doubt they were creators but certainly not omnipotent divinities sans beginning sans end. This sort of mythological concept projects the peculiarity of the Chinese way of thinking, laying particular stress on virtue and pragmatism in human conduct.

Such sort of outlook can be exemplified by what once Wang Chong, one of the most rationalistic and critical philosophers in Chinese history, wrote in his treatise Lun Hêng, disproving the existence of spiritual beings. He argued that the dead do not become spiritual beings, do not possess consciousness, and cannot harm people. He said that when a person dies, his blood becomes exhausted. With this his vital force are extinct, and his body decays and becomes ashes and dust. He then with a rhetoric refutes the theory of a dead becoming a spiritual being. Wang went further saying if a spiritual being is really the spirit of a dead man, then, when people see it, they ought to see the form of a nude, he
puts a query and explains himself saying that garments have no spirit.\textsuperscript{140}

Just as Wang Chong criticised the traditional belief in spiritual beings, Fan Zhen (b.450) attacked the Buddhist belief. He argued that physical form and spirit were identical and that, as the physical form disappears, so does the spirit, as the sharpness of a knife disappears with the knife. Later, since the 12th century, Neo-Confucianists have attacked both the Taoist and Buddhist belief in everlasting life. Wang Yangming (1472-1529), for example, said that the Buddhists lure people into their way of life by the promise of escape from the cycle of life and death, and the Taoists, who seek immortality, do so with the promise of everlasting life.\textsuperscript{141}

The tendency of thinking which centres on the actual daily life of man and neglects the transcendental universality, naturally makes man worldly and materialistic. Although some mythological accounts exist in records such as Huainanzi, Shuyiji and Sanwu Liji, there is very little mythology of the Chinese, especially in connection with the process of how the sky, earth, sun, moon and human beings were created. From ancient times, the Chinese who were lacking in mythological imagination have been very materialistic and worldly. The fundamental aims of the Chinese were to satisfy the physical and material demands of human beings. The Chinese are not fond of mysterious extraordinary imaginations. Metaphysics did not develop well in China. Records mentioned in Wu Jing (the Five Classics) mostly represent events connected with the actual human world, and are hardly concerned with the transcendental worlds.\textsuperscript{142} The scholars have never taught


\textsuperscript{141}. Chan, n.140, p.291.

the vanity of belief in gods or in the survival of souls.\footnote{143}

Such was the way the ancient Chinese visualized the world and, like most of the peoples of antiquity, they gave themselves the place of honour in 'the middle country' (Zhongguo) of the earth, the sole hearth of civilization amidst the barbarian hordes. The Chinese pride themselves as the chosen people living just under the Heaven (Tianxia), their country being surrounded by Wo (Japan) or literally the land of dwarfs, in the east, and the lands of barbarians in the west. Thus their anthropocentric outlook is coupled with ethnocentrism, or rather more specifically with Sinocentrism.

The vast highland of Tibet, with no value from the standpoint of a capitalistic economy, has evolved a unique culture. The religious culture of Tibet contains an element of universality. Lamaism had influence more or less upon the vast inland area of Asia covering the interior of China proper, Mongolia, Manchuria and Central Asia. The Tibetans do not pride themselves as the chosen people or as those who live in the centre of world civilization as the Chinese did. They rather respect India as the land of sages, and regard their country as a remote region of the world. The culture of the Tibetans is strikingly homogeneous. But in the distinctive configuration of the culture we identify as Tibetan, we find unmistakable traces of the influences, impacts, and pressures which, within historic time, have moulded and changed that culture. Tibet is uniquely the region where the two great and competitive cultures of Asia--of China and of India--have met and been syncretized.

It might be said that, as in China, the primary interest is only in the fitting out of the world, not its creation. And when Bon felt obliged to have cosmogonies like the great rival religion, it found them, all right, but they quite betray their foreign origin.\footnote{144} The lack of a fixed mythology about the origin of the Tibetan race and its connection to Indian


\footnote{144. Stein, n.84, p.245.}
mythology, seem to show that they are not quite conscious of the genealogy of their race. Such lack of genealogical recording of their race or nation can be attributed to their unconditional submission to Lamaism.

The Tibetans got a big bulk of their philosophy and religion from India. Their complicated and illusional imaginations tally exactly with that of the Indians. A man has to go through repeated transmigration in a cycle of birth and death. In China such thought did not manifest itself. The Chinese did not practise deep and religious introspection. Every activity of social life of the Chinese was greatly influenced by religious thoughts and religious customs which were to a great extent the basis of public morality, customs, family system, government system and the legislation of the Chinese. The basis of the Chinese religion is utilitarian and worldly. The Tibetans highly esteem the faith of rebirth or incarnation. And they are other-worldly, transcendental and mystical. The Chinese, on the contrary, are generally this-worldly, humanistic, realistic and pragmatic.

In the beginning, before the formation of Heaven and Earth there existed nothing but Hundun or void, which evolved of itself and was in a state of chaotic agitation from eternity, until it fell into utter confusion and disorder. In this state of chaos, the order, distinction, cognition, classification and nomenclature of things were unknown. The Chinese account bears a striking resemblance to the account as to the origin of the world in all Tibetan works on mysticism that in the beginning there existed nothing except void from which the world arose. The primeval chaos possessed the virtue of giving rise to distinct existences. From its internal agitation, it produced first of all Namba (species), and nature, which were like male and female. Heaven is said to have been anciently the father and Earth the mother. The Tibetan Gnam or Chinese Tian means both Heaven and potential energy. Tibetan Sa or Chinese Di meaning Earth is purely a matter that has productive powers.¹⁴⁵

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In Tibetan, we find Gnam (sky), Sa (earth), Dags (sunny slope of the mountain) and Srib (shaded slope of the mountain). The two latter terms correspond exactly with the primary meaning of the Yin and Yang of Chinese systems. Originally, yin meant what is concealed and unknown to us, and yang meant what is manifested and known to us. They were originally concepts of attributes of things based on their status relative to other things, and were not originally concepts of substance or force. According to their derivative meanings, anything which is in front of or before other things is called yang, and that which is in back of or after other things is called yin. Consequently, what is progressive or active or generative is yang, and what is retrogressive or passive or degenerative is yin. Such antithetical principles can be seen in the early Tibetan cognition of human relationship which were formulated in conformity with characteristics of various natural phenomena.

In the Tibetan myth, the queen of the nāgas, born out of the void and called She-Who-Arranges-The-World, creates this world out of her own body. This female serpent corresponds to a great extent to the Candle Dragon Deity or Zhulongshen in the Chinese myth. Later, we find that the snake’s transformation into various natural elements are quite identical with that in the case of Pan Gu.

At the first instance Pan Gu’s role as a Creator offers a Judeo-Christian theory of myth. But in fact, this is a story of a Creator with a pinch of salt and a sense of humour. It is a reflection of Chinese non-mythical approach towards the supernatural forces. It also reflects a non-serious attitude towards the Creator and a non-biblical type of approach towards the creation of the world as exemplified by the absence of God in both Great and Little Traditions. Klu or the serpent, on the other hand, assumes the form of a concrete creator, rather in the shape of an animal. Klu is part of the chthonic myth having roots in the nomadic tribes of Tibet.

146. See n.107.
The Chinese theory of creation of man out of clay is sheer fantasy. The Tibetan theory of creation of man out of apes closely resemble with what was later advocated by Charles Darwin in his Theory of Evolution. This shows that the Tibetans, of course, under the influence of Buddhism, had the basic concept of evolutionary transformation of apes into homo sapiens. There is no doubt that they found some behavioural affinity between monkeys and men, and therefore, came out with their theory of man's monkey-lineage. Since the Tibetans considered themselves as cruel, flesh-eating savages, they put an ogress to be their ancestress. Thus, it is evident that the Tibetans were conscious about the theory of heredity to some extent, though not necessarily in the present scientific term. The monkey-ogress theory of procreation is a quasi-historical imagination of the Buddhists.

The creation of man by Nüwa offers an anthropocentric theory. Her endeavour to create man is a fertility myth. Thus a higher form of social evolution has been projected through the procreation theory in both simple and complex forms. However, the clay theory about man's creation is a quasi-rationalistic one. This theory brings out the fragility of human existence, the mortality of human beings in a very philosophic manner. The Tibetan egg theory is a quasi-anthropological one where the ovum has been assigned the primary role to procreate through sexual reproduction. But the question remains how did the egg originate. There is a possibility that man was fired with imagination at viewing birds flying high in the sky. We might deduce that the primordial egg was a creation of birds. The egg theory of creation sans women's role cannot be interpreted in terms of anti-female bias. Such myths grew in the matriarchal ages. And in those ages the egg theory was found proper since it had links with birds that laid eggs apparently without visible intercourse that preceded the egg formation. My observation can be substantiated by the historical fact of the founding of a Bird's Kingdom at Yarlung in the remote ages.147 There is another instance where birds are synonymous to Tibetans. The Eleventh Dalai Lama (1838-1855) in his Bya sprel gyi gtam-rgyud (Story of Monkeys and

147. Haarh, n.82, passim.
the Birds) brings out an allegory of the war between the Tibetans and Gurkhas at the close of the 18th century. Here the Tibetans have been likened to birds, and the Gurkhas to monkeys. The descent of the Tibetan race from bird's egg is thus based on a mythical as well as legendary ground.

The tent theory of the Tibetans is a quasi-empirical one, very close to the Tian Gai perception. As we see in depiction of sky and earth by the Tian Gai school, Tian Gai is the name of the upper umbrella, and metaphors relating the cosmic structure to a chariot are quite common. Sometimes the sky is conceived as a chariot wheel with the Pole Star at its hub, but it is more often like an umbrella. Though it frequently has four or eight supports rather than one at the centre, no attempt being then made to explain how it revolves. However, at a later stage we can proclaim that the Tibetan tent theory is both natural and Buddhistic. The already existing realistic description of nature as it appeared to the nomads in cosmological terms was later interpreted in Buddhistic terms. In the Tibetan version we see that the sky was an eight-spoked wheel. And unlike the square shape of the earth in the Chinese version, here it is an eight-petalled lotus. The Buddhist symbols, the dharma-cakra and the utpala were superimposed on the nomadic concept of heaven and earth.

The theory of Rupati as an ancestor of the Tibetan race is the outcome of the Buddhist bias about India. Anything positive was identified with the teachings of Buddha. And since Buddha was an Indian, a descent of the Tibetans from a man coming from the holy land was deemed appropriate for propagating the new doctrine among the Tibetans. Or it might be an attempt to project the Tibetans as a direct lineage from the 'Aryabhumi'(India).

In the story of Rich Brilliance and Tormented Darkness, we find the paternal

148. Stein, n.84, p.269.
150. Stein, n.84, p.41.
principle as bright and the maternal principle as dark. This has a parallel in the concept of yin and yang. The speckled egg, produced by the birds of brightness and darkness, is unique since it reflects the Bon introspection into the concept of heredity and the probability of producing a hybrid. Like the theory of creation of man from apes, this Tibetan insight again reflects a more scientific approach to the mythical world than the Chinese. The latter, though essentially non-mythical in nature, sought to interpret certain cosmological principles in terms of philosophy. The rich antithetical principles in the Tibetan myths are in sharp contrast with the rather poorly decorated lacklustre world of the Chinese myths.

Just as Pan Gu, Nuwa and other gods created the world and man, and were not omnipotent spirits, so was Khri-rgyal khug-pa who created the world. It is not the same as the creation of the God of Christianity or Islam where God creates the world out of nothing. The idea of omnipotence does not exist in the Bonpo tradition. It is not a Judeo-Christian myth of creation, but rather of procreation. For example, each of the sons of Sangs-po 'bum-khri creates independently a female partner. The goddesses simply appear as a result of their desire.

The Chinese mythical characters have been time and again endowed with human qualities and in due process they have been personified to such an extent that myths have eventually turned into historical events. But the Tibetan gods, though procreators, did not occupy places in history. The Tibetans were not good historiographers like the Chinese, and hence 'lacked' the art of mingling myths with history. However, an attempt to historicise the first legendary King of Tibet and also the events centred around him - though seemingly identical with what we have seen with the Chinese, definitely played a politico-psychological role in shaping up to a great extent the religious conviction both among priests and plebeians.

151. Karmay, n.87, p. 192.
To sum up, we would compare and contrast the Chinese cosmology with that of the Tibetan in the form of a table in order to give an insight to different concepts of creation of man and the universe at a single glance. We would try to highlight some major concepts more or less chronologically.

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