CHAPTER 2

POPULAR FOLK DEITIES
INTRODUCTION

The significance and function of folk deities as depicted in Chinese and Tibetan folk literature will be described and discussed here in this chapter. It should be understood that such deities may differ from the Taoist and Buddhist deities. Popular deities are ones commonly worshipped and venerated by rural folks at the grassroots level.

Works of art and literature of any era, of any land and people always require their nourishment from the life-generating milk of mythology. Myths about folk deities emerged in the primitive clan society. In the garb of illusion it came to reveal the psyche of the primitive man under such circumstances where his standard of production was extremely low. The wrath of nature in the form of earthquake, flood, drought, typhoon or landslide struck man with awe. And out of that awe came the concept of gods and spirits, the utterly invincible beings. The natural phenomena beyond man's comprehension were interpreted as creation of god, as miracle of the supernatural. Man started propitiating different natural forces, thus seeking salvation from all dangers in life. Such worshipping of the supernatural gave rise to religion.

The mere fact that powers greater than man are conceived to exist in the universe means that some element of fear enters, especially when there is a complementary belief that some act of human omission or commission may provoke retaliatory acts. Supernaturalism is the essence of all religious phenomena. Goldenweiser divides beliefs in the supernatural into the tenet of animistic faith and the tenet of magical faith underlying both of which is "the third and most important tenet of supernaturalism", the faith in power. All men, at all times, have sensed frustration and fear when faced with problems that their own human resources could not solve. Such feelings come not alone with dramatic displays or the havoc of nature. They also arise, in everyday life, in the give and take of human relations, in encounters with fellow humans who deny, forbid, dominate, challenge, or inflict pain. The unconscious desire for the security of childhood, the Freudian explanation of religion, does give us an important insight into probable
motivations that lead to religious expression.¹

But apart from the hypothesis stated, there are other factors which are to be taken into consideration. The unresolved questions in the mind of the primitive man gave rise to the existence of the supernatural beings. And the myths related to these supernatural beings were part of the infrastructure springing up on a certain economic basis. These myths are, in fact, windows to the early man's conceptual pattern of social reality.

There are several culture heroes who have entered the pantheon side by side with the mythical deities. They have been deified and venerated by the common folk. To the primitive man, the natural forces seemed alien, mystic and invincible. The men who attained the capability of fighting such natural odds and contribute something positive for the benefit of mankind, were deified in course of time. The posterity, especially the rural folk, either in China or in Tibet, have hardly tried to belittle the contribution of these legendary heroes. They have been placed with equal honour and respect along with the mythical deities.

2.1 CHINESE POPULAR FOLK DEITIES: NARRATION

In China, since the era of the Six Dynasties (222-589), especially after the Tang and Song period, quite a few literary sketches were made particularly recording the stories about ghosts, gods, monsters, goblins and demons. But since the Confucian scholars discouraged talks regarding the supernatural, ancient literature lack comprehensive account of mythical figures. There was hardly any conscious effort to collate or systematize folk beliefs in ghosts and gods of that era. Since the Ming and Qing period, work towards that direction commenced. But still there was lack of comprehensive planning towards systematization and categorization of folk beliefs. Textual criticism and research on myths became popular during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). The

achievement was commendable. *Tongsu Bian* (Popular Edition) by Zhai Hao, *Gaiyu Congkao* (Gaiyu Collection) by Zhao Yi, *Chaxiangshi Congchao* (Teahouse Collection) by Yu Yue, etc., made remarkable contribution. But none of these writings dealt with spirits in particular. Though in content they were richer than other books, yet they had a limited coverage. Due to lack of proper methodology, it was difficult for scholars to give a scientific explanation to the relationship between the origin and development of religious consciousness and its socio-historical conditions.

In modern times, the numerous deities, celestial beings and Buddhas who are venerated in China, mainly developed after the Western Han era, especially since the Tang and Song dynasties. These beliefs still have quite a bit of influence in present-day China or at least have left behind some of their vestiges. Such faith in spirits is not only a religious phenomenon, but it is also a component part of the folk tradition and customs of modern China. This has got wider influence among the overseas Chinese and also among the peoples of Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Indo-China and other countries of Southeast Asia.

The deities mentioned in ancient texts are numerous. Before going into details, we would first make a clear distinction of the most popular folk deities of China and then categorize them according to their nature and function:

1. Deities associated with the forces of the physical world;
2. Deities associated with human life, society and various human activities;
3. Local divinities;
4. Deities associated with epidemic diseases or calamities;
5. Culture heroes; and
6. Deities of Taoist and Buddhist origin.

1. The forces of the physical world were all deified.

**Fengbo** (the Count of the Wind)

We find varied names for the Wind God from different sources. At one point he is
called Feilian, the follower of Wangshu, and is said to have been born in the shape of a deer. Its head is that of a bird, with horns of a sheep. It has a tail of a snake and stripes of a leopard.² From his appearance he has been depicted as a beast with long hair and wings. The spiritual men who had attained the Path (道), rode Feilian and flew to other places,³ such as the Duke of Zhou who rode Feilian and went to the seaboard to fight a bloody battle.⁴

The God of the Wind under the name of Fengbo once extended support to Chiyou who had gone to a punitive expedition against Huangdi -- the Yellow Emperor. Chiyou had asked Fengbo and the Rain God, Yushi to unleash a big storm.⁵ When the Yellow Emperor had been to the top of the western part of Mount Taishan with ghosts and gods, it was Fengbo who surged ahead to wipe out the enemy.⁶

Under the name of Fangdaozhang or Fengyi, the Wind God was modelled as an old white-haired man, holding a wheel in his left hand and a wheel-shaped fan in his right. He was called the Heavenly Lord Fang.⁷ Since the olden days the king used to worship

2. Liu Xiang (Western Han Dynasty), (Ed.), Chapter "Lisao" (Elegy), Chuci (The Song of Chu); Hong Xingzu (Song Dynasty), Chuci Buzhu (A Supplement to the Song of Chu) cited in Zong Li & Liu Qun, Zhongguo Minjian Zhushen (Folk Deities of China). Shijiazhuang : Hebei People's Press, 1987, p. 176.

3. Liu An (Western Han Dynasty), Su Fei et al (Comp.), Huainanzi (The Book of the Huainan Kingdom) cited in Zong & Lin, n.2.


5. Chapter "Dahuangbeijing", Shanhaijing (The Book of Mountains and Seas) cited in Zong & Liu, n.2.


Fengbo in order to yield good results for the people. As all had their respective positions for worship, Fengbo and Yushi were worshipped outside the eastern gate; mountains, hillocks and rivers outside the western gate; the sun outside the southern gate; and the moon outside the northern gate.⁸

Fengbo and Yushi are said to have their places in the twenty-eight constellations. Fengbo belongs to the ji star and Yushi belongs to the bi star.⁹

However, Mengpo is the old name of the Wind God.¹⁰ In his poem Jiang Jie laments the departure of the spring rain along with Mengpo.¹¹ In one place Mengpo is praised for doing something good -- blowing, and turning a boat the other way round.¹² But in another case the rural folk used to say when Mengpo became enraged, the gale tossed the ships in the seventh month by the south of the Yangzi.¹³ However, it was Yi¹⁴ who captured the gale at the Qingqiu marsh. Thus the gale could no longer destroy the

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8. Yulan (Imperial Encyclopaedia) cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p. 177.
9. Hanshu (The Book of Han) and as Yan Shigu annotates according to Zong & Liu, n.2. pp. 176-177.
11. Jiang Jie, a poet from the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279), lived in seclusion after the downfall of Song. He actually recalled the past and compared it with the spring rain. See Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p.261. Cihai (Chinese Encyclopaedia). Reduced format. Shanghai : Shanghai Lexicography Press, 1979, p.601.
13. Yang Shen (Ming Dynasty), Danqian Zonglu (Revised Record) cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p.261.
14. Yi, an excellent archer, received a magic bow and arrows from Yao, the fourth mythical emperor. He shot down nine of the ten suns which had scorched the earth. The Count of the Wind destroyed human shelters, so Yi shot at his knee. See Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, pp.250, 303.
houses of human beings.\textsuperscript{15}

\textbf{Yushi (the Lord of Rain)}

The Lord of Rain has no fewer names than Fengbo. Under the name of Shangyang, the Lord of Rain has been depicted as a magic bird with one foot. He could grow big or turn small. He was the one who sucked the sea dry.\textsuperscript{16} Once these one-legged birds flocked to the palace of the King of Qi\textsuperscript{17} and danced in front of the hall with stretched wings. The King of Qi found it unusual. He invited Confucius from Lu\textsuperscript{18} and asked questions. Confucius said that such birds were called Shangyang, and that they would dance to the drumbeats of a torrential rain. He also warned the king that there will be a devastating flood. Therefore, the irrigation canals should be controlled, and dykes should be built. Before long, a continuous heavy rain fell and it inundated all the kingdoms, killing many people. Only Qi was saved after taking precautionary measures on time.\textsuperscript{19}

At the time of Shen Nong,\textsuperscript{20} the God of Rain was Chisongzi who took doses of 'ice-pearl' magic potion. He could enter fire without burning himself. He ascended and

\textsuperscript{15} Huainanzi and as Gao You annotates according to Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p.90.

\textsuperscript{16} Sanjiao Soushen Daquan (The Compendium of Deities of the Three Religions) cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p.182.

\textsuperscript{17} Qi, one of the princely states during the Zhou Dynasty, occupied the present northeastern part of the Shandong Province.

\textsuperscript{18} Lu, one of the princely states during the Zhou Dynasty, occupied the present southern part of the Shandong Province.

\textsuperscript{19} Chapter "Bianzheng" (Political Discourse), Kongzi Jiayu (The Family Tales of Confucius) cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p.361.

\textsuperscript{20} Shen Nong is the second mythical sovereign, said to be the inventor of agriculture and herbal medicine.
descended along with the storm. Pinkyi was the name of Yushi. When Yushi was called, the clouds rose into the sky and rain showered down. The handsome and prosperous god of clouds shared the name Pinkyi.

Yushi, the Heavenly Lord Chen was modelled as a sturdy man with dark whiskers. In his left hand he held a jar inside which there was a dragon. He sprinkled water with his right hand. Yushi was worshipped by burning firewood. However, the one who called himself the Lord of Rain was the dragon.

Leishen (the God of Thunder)

The Thunder God has been portrayed under different names -- Leishou, Leishi, Leigong -- in different ages. It is said that once there lived a filial son who was cooking a dish of chicken for his mother. The thunder struck him. And gradually he transformed into the God of Thunder. His head turned into that of a demon. His mouth turned into a beak. Wings came out of his two shoulders. He took the shape of a chicken.

However, in another place the Thunder God was a beast living on top of Liubo Mountain situated in the sea of Donghai. Its shape was like a bull. With no horns, its dark

22. As Wang Yi annotates according to Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p.304.
25. Ge Hong (Jin Dynasty), Baopozi cited in Zong & Liu, n.2. p.182.
26. Leishou literally means the Thunder Beast.
27. Leishi literally means the Master of Thunder.
28. Leigong literally means the Lord of Thunder.
green body stood on one leg.\textsuperscript{30} Once after reaching the Thunder Pool, that was in the western side of the State of Wu,\textsuperscript{31} Leigong got down from his chariot to quench his thirst. Then suddenly he dived straight to the bottom of the pool. The Yellow Emperor ordered his men to fetch him out. A rumbling sound of the thunder could be heard, coming out from within the pool. The men came up and reported to the Yellow Emperor that Leigong had already turned into a spirit, with a dragon’s body and a human face. And that he was bulging out his belly and howling.\textsuperscript{32}

Storm used to rage whenever the beast emerged out of water or entered water. Its rays were like those of the sun and the moon. The name of this thunder-voiced beast was Kui. When the Yellow Emperor got hold of it, he made a drum out of its skin and short drum-beating sticks out of the bones of the Thunder Beast.\textsuperscript{33} That is why, thunder means the celestial drum\textsuperscript{34}. The sound of the drum could be heard over a distance of 500 li, threatening the people below on earth.\textsuperscript{35}

Apart from the chicken-shaped Thunder God, Leigong is also said to have the head of a pig and the body of a unicorn.\textsuperscript{36} Yet in another place the Thunder God is said to have a head like a macaque.\textsuperscript{37} Leigong turned into a bird and pecked wood in order to collect

\textsuperscript{30} Shanhaijing cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p.139.

\textsuperscript{31} Wu, one of the princely states during the Zhou Dynasty, occupied the present southern part of Jiangsu and northern part of Zhejiang.

\textsuperscript{32} Lidai Shenxian Tongjian (A Comprehensive Record of Divinities Through Ages) cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p.140.

\textsuperscript{33} Shanhaijing cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, pp.139-140.

\textsuperscript{34} Wang Zhi (Song Dynasty), Chapter "Tiangu" (Celestial Drum), Yunxian Zaji (Miscellany of the Cloud Spirit) cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p.402.

\textsuperscript{35} Shanhaijing cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p. 140.

\textsuperscript{36} Fang Qianli (Tang Dynasty), Touhuang Zalu (Miscellany of the Wilderness) cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p.402.

\textsuperscript{37} Soushenji cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p. 402.
material for medicine. Huangdi’s physical examination was done by Leigong. 38

The figure of the Thunder God has been modelled as a man of physical strength with bare chest and belly. He has two wings on his back, three eyes on his forehead. His face is red like a monkey, his chin is long and sharp. He has feet like that of a hawk. His claws are much more terrible. In his left hand he holds a wedge, in his right a mallet, making a posture as if he is going to strike. From head to shoulder five drums dangle around him. His left foot treads a drum. He is called the Thunder God, the Heavenly Lord Jiang. 39 But in another source, the Lord of Heaven (Tiandi) is said to have conferred upon him the title ‘Leimen Gou Yuanshuai’ (Commander Gou of the Thunder Gate). 40 Another figure, featuring the deity of lightning, has a female face with a sedate and elegant appearance, holding two mirrors in her hands. She is called the Mother Lightning, the Heavenly Lady Xiu. These two figures have been placed inside the temples. The villagers light candles and burn incense. They are utterly sincere and full of respect. 41

Yushi and Fengbo were long included among the propitiated, only thunder did not catch the people’s eyes. But later, whenever Yushi was worshipped, he was to be seen with Leishi on the same altar. 42 Fenglong is said to emerge in spring in the third lunar month, bringing rain with him. 43

A folktale from the West Lake of Hangzhou gives us an entirely different impression about the Thunder God. The legend goes that near the picturesque mountain

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42. Wenxian Tongkao (A Comprehensive Study on Documentation) cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p.141.
43. Chapter "Tianwen" (Astronomy), Huainanzi cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p.141.
peak in the suburbs of the city of Zhuji there lived two hard-working youngsters. The boy was called Shiwa, the girl, Huamei. Deep in love with each other, they were making preparations for their wedding. It so happened that the Thunder God in heaven intended to win the girl's hand. He cleft the mountain into two. One half of the mountain on which Huamei was standing, flew and landed in front of the Lingyin Temple in Hangzhou. Shiwa was transformed into a pretty bird, flying after in search of his beloved. On hearing the note of melancholy song coming out of the recesses of the mountain peak he came to know that Huamei was kept in custody under the hill. He kept pecking at the rock with his long beak and finally succeeded in drilling an opening in it. Then Huamei flew out of the chink in the rock in the form of a bird. They flew together through the white clouds, looking for the Thunder God to wreak vengeance on him. Meanwhile the Thunder God was absorbed in his thoughts to marry Huamei. He did not know that the pair of exotic birds were transformations of Shiwa and Huamei. The two rushed at the Thunder God, pecking out both of his eyes. Since then he could only roar in heaven and did not dare to perpetrate outrages anymore.44

Dianmu (the Mother Lightning) or Shandian Niangniang (the Goddess of Lightning)

The deity of lightning is the Sacred Mother of the Golden Rays.45 The one who is sent to the front hall of the Ministry of Thunder, is the Mother Lightning - messenger Xiu.46 The Mother Lightning and the Lord of Thunder were asked to cut a heaven-bound road across the outer territory.47 The Thunder God scolded the Mother Lightning and

46. Yao Zongyi (Ming Dynasty), Changshu Sizhi (Personal Annals) cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p.175.
commanded her to drive the Thunder Chariot. On the banner of Dianmu, there is a picture of a deity in the form of a woman. She puts on a silken garment -- vermilion skirt and a pair of white trousers. In her hands she carries light.

However, li has been mentioned as lightning. The vagina is in the middle. Formerly the feminine vital energy of the earth emitting from the lightning was called the Mother.

A folktale from the southern part of Fujian Province tells us how the Thunder God got a consort - the Mother Lightning. It is said that Leigong is an omnipresent spirit who can distinguish between good and evil among men. He punishes the wicked by striking him dead. However, in the past the Thunder God did not circumspect before striking someone dead. Thunderclaps were not preceded by flash of lightning. Once the god killed someone good by mistake. She was a young widow who lived in extreme poverty, but took good care of her mother-in-law. One day the old lady fell ill and wished to have some meat. The widow in order to show her filial obedience cut some flesh from her own arm and cooked it for her mother-in-law. The old lady could hardly relish the tough meat. She misunderstood her daughter-in-law and asked the Thunder God to punish her. The Thunder God responded by killing the young widow. However, later the old lady discovered the truth from the young widow's blood-scarred arm. The old lady begged for her life to the god. The Thunder God regretted for wrongly killing a good-hearted, dutiful person. Eventually the title of 'Dianmu' was bestowed on the young widow. Before the Thunder God's crashing down, the Mother Lightning casts light first to make a clear distinction between good and evil of the world, to contrast right and wrong -- in order to


avoid error. So now, we see the flash of lightning first, followed by thunderclaps.  

2. Anything that had to do with human life, with society, with various human activities had its gods.

Hou Tu (the Great God of the Soil)

Gonggong gave birth to Hou Tu. Hou Tu gave birth to Ye Ming. And Ye Ming begot twelve sons -- the twelve months of a year. Ye moved according to the movement of the sun, moon and stars. Ye Ming was the time-god. Hou Tu was the God of the Soil.

Lord Gonggong tyrannized over the nine provinces (Jiuzhou). His son Hou Tu restored peace over the nine provinces. When the central domain was ruled by the Yellow Emperor, Hou Tu was its god. In the past there were five officials who looked after the


53. As Guo Pu annotates according to Zong & Liu, n.2, p. 187.

54. This is how Yuan Ke explains as cited by Zong & Liu, n.2, p. 187.


57. During the Spring and Autumn, and the Warring States Period, and before the Western Han era, there was a legend saying that the central plain of China was divided into nine administrative zones by Yu the Great -- the famous geographer, hydrologer and metallurgist who made the land habitable for his people. There are different explanations behind the word 'Jiuzhou'. Presently, 'Jiuzhou' is a poetic name for China.

five elements. Goumang presided over the wood, Zhurong presided over the fire, Rushou presided over the metal, Xuanming presided over the water, and Hou Tu presided over the soil. 59 The subterranean world which was formerly called Youdu, 60 was ruled by Hou Tu. 61

The State of Wu had the custom of offering sacrifices. The God Hou Tu was offered sacrifice in the soil. 62 Heaven was worshipped in the southern suburbs, and earth was worshipped in the northern suburbs. The place where heaven was worshipped was the seat of Yang, and the place where earth was worshipped was the seat of Yin. 63 In the ancestral temple of Hou Tu in Yangzhou, the figure of Hou Tu was modelled after the image of a woman. 64 The eighteenth day of the third lunar month is the birthday of Hou Tu Niangniang (Goddess Hou Tu). 65

At the beginning of the reign of Han Wendi, Han Gaozu was also worshipped while offering sacrifices to the soil. During the reign of Han Pingdi, the wife of Han Gaozu was also worshipped while offering sacrifices to the northern suburbs. 66 During the reign of Han Guangwu, the emperor's mother Bao was placed as the majestic empress

59. See n.56.

60. The word 'Youdu' literally means the capital of the nether world.

61. Chapter "Zhaohun" (Invoking of Souls), Chuci and as Wang Yi annotates according to Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p. 165.


and was offered sacrifices along with the god of soil.\textsuperscript{67} The supreme emperor of the Sui dynasty -- Wendi instituted canons for ceremonial rites. The emperor's father was also worshipped when sacrifices were offered to the god of soil.\textsuperscript{68}

**Cheng Huang (the City-God)**

Eight gods were worshipped of which the seventh was the moat.\textsuperscript{69} Sacrifices were offered to walls and moats.\textsuperscript{70} The imperial chronicles at the tomb of Liang Wudi recorded the rites of worship of the City-God. Beef was prepared.\textsuperscript{71} In 1270 AD a temple started to be constructed at Dadu. The deity was named Youshengwang (the Sacred Lord of Protection).\textsuperscript{72}

The people of Wu were generally afraid of ghosts. Every prefecture and county had a City-God. During the reign of Tang Emperor Xuanzong, that is between 713 and 742 AD, Xuanzhou had the City-God as the household guardian.\textsuperscript{73}

During the Tang period in Hongzhou a petty official in charge of the army, Wang Jianyi fell ill with a tumor in his abdomen. After his death his spirit went to the nether

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{67} Chapter "Shizu Benji" (Records of Ancestors), \textit{Houhanshu} (The Book of Later Han) cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p. 192.
\item \textsuperscript{68} Chapter "Liyizhi" (The Annals of Rites), \textit{Suishu} (The Book of the Sui Dynasty) cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p. 192.
\item \textsuperscript{69} As Zheng Xuan annotates according to Zong & Liu, n.2, p. 194.
\item \textsuperscript{70} \textit{Liji} cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p. 194.
\item \textsuperscript{71} Chapter "Wuxingzhi" (Records of the Five Elements), \textit{Suishu} (The Book of the Sui Dynasty) cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p. 194.
\item \textsuperscript{72} "Qunsikao" (A Treatise of Rites) in Xuwenxian Tong-kao (A Supplement to the Documentary Study) cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p.194.
\item \textsuperscript{73} \textit{Zhongwu Jiwen} (Records of the Central Region of the Wu State) cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p.195.
\end{itemize}
world. There he was praised by other spirits for being a good man. The City-God went through the life-and-death register and found that Wang Jianyi had been caught quite early. He ought to have lived for another five years. Thereupon, the City-God sent him back to the human world.\textsuperscript{74}

At the end of the Southern Song period (1127-1279), the folk hero Wen Tianxiang led a grand army of soldiers and civilians to resist the Mongol invasion. Later he was taken prisoner. The enemy tried their best in every possible way -- by threatening him or by luring him by promise of gain -- to make him surrender. He showed unyielding bravery and died a hero's death. After Wen Tianxiang's death the people of the Southern Song capital Hangzhou bestowed upon him the title 'Du Cheng Huang' (The City-God of the Capital), and built a temple to worship him.\textsuperscript{75}

There is yet another story about the City-God of Shanghai. By the end of the Mongol rule, Qin Yubo, in order to escape the horrors of war, fled to Yangzhou and eventually came to Shanghai. In the second year of the reign of Ming Taizu, he became an official in Shaanxi and later died there. During the Qing dynasty, in 1653, the Japanese pirates invaded the Shanghai county town. The army general responsible for safeguarding the city, spread a rumour that the people of Shanghai were colluding with the pirates. A big official named Zhou Xunfu came to believe this. He ordered his men to take the signal from the first crow of the rooster and massacre the people of the entire city. That night Zhou Xunfu had a dream that Qin Yubo's spirit repeatedly warning not to do such a thing. Zhou Xunfu suddenly woke up and immediately ordered to cancel the plan for massacre. After the news had spread, the people of Shanghai put Qin Yubo as their City-God, in order to express their gratitude.\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{74} Baoyinglu (The Records of Karma) cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p. 199. Hui & Shi (Comp.), n.51, p. 249.

\textsuperscript{75} Hui & Shi (Comp.), n.51, p.249.

\textsuperscript{76} Shanghai Xianzhi (The Shanghai Annals) cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, pp. 202-203. Hui & Shi (Comp.), n.51, pp. 250-251.
There is yet another story where we can discover a quite different flavour. There was a young scholar Xie Sheng who lived with his teacher in a City-God temple. One evening, he noticed a thief sneaking into the temple and asking for the City-God's blessings. Next day Xie Sheng was surprised to see the thief offering a sacrifice of three pig-heads for his success in stealing things. Xie Sheng wrote an essay reproving the City-God. The City-God was shamed to anger. He appeared in the dream of Xie Sheng's teacher, telling him that he wanted to mete out punishment to Xie Sheng. The teacher burnt the essay. But the incident was reported to the Supreme Lord of Mount Taishan by the spirits who were passing along the road. Finally, the City-God was dismissed and prosecuted. Later the local populace removed the original idol, and carved a new idol in accordance with the facial features of Xie Sheng before placing it inside the temple.77

**Menshen (the Door-God)**

Two brothers, one named Yu Lei, the other Shen Tu or Tu Yu, were expert in catching ghosts. There was the Dushuo Hill and upon it grew a huge peach tree. Both the brothers used to live there under the tree. To the northeast of the tree, there was a big cave where a myriad ghosts went in and out. Tu Yu and Yu Lei used to rule over ten thousand ghosts. The Dushuo Hill had two gates. On the southwest was the Gate of Gods which was guarded by Shen Tu. There were evil gods who used to come to the mountain to steal peach-wood. Shen Tu used to cut the nape of their neck with a wooden sword, and pierce a peach-tree branch through their cheeks. Then he threw them into the sea to feed the malicious dragons. On the northeast was the Gate of Ghosts, guarded by Yu Lei. If voracious spirits climbed up the trees to harm anyone for food, they were tied up with reed-ropes and shot at with peach-wood arcs. Then they were flung into the mountain.

77. Hui & Shi (Comp.), n.51, pp. 252-253. This story is popular in the western region of Gansu Province.
gorges to feed the ferocious tigers. 78

That is why the Yellow Emperor instituted rites to exorcize spirits in due season: peach-wood images were set up at the front door; Tu Yu, Yu Lei and a tiger were painted on it. The present custom goes that at the end of the lunar year, on the New Year's eve, houses are decorated with peach-wood figures, reed-ropes are hung up and tigers are painted on doors. Two lanterns are hung by the two sides of the door. They look like the eyes of a tiger. The purpose is to exorcize evil spirits and nothing to do with luck. Later people drew the images of Shen Tu and Yu Lei on peach-wood boards and pasted them on their doors. 79

The king used to make an offering of vegetable to the door-god. 80 On the New Year's day, the houses of the nobles used to hang the images of Shen Tu and Yu Lei. The commoners used to stick the stalks of iris and leaves of cypress at their front doors. 81

Apart from the two brothers, we find another door-god. When the world was created, there were two bats— one black and the other white. Zhongkui who ate ghosts in bedrooms, was the transformation of the black one. 82 On the fifth day of the fifth lunar month, pictures of Zhongkui were hung in halls. In Hangzhou on the Dragon Boat Festival, pictures of Sir Zhong were hung in order to dispel epidemic diseases. 83


80. Chapter "Sangdaji" (Records of Funeral Rites), Liji cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p. 33.


story of Zhongkui's catching ghosts has come up thanks to the drumsticks known as 'zhongkui'. Formerly people used to drive away ghosts with drumsticks, or by brandishing dagger-axe and shield. The posterity called Zhongkui for the purpose of exorcizing evil spirits. Due to long passage of time, he came to be known as the man who chases ghosts. He was a spirit who really devoured ghosts. 84

From another source, we come to know that the door-gods were two Tang dynasty generals -- Qin Shubao and Hu Jingde. When Emperor Taizong 85 was ill, ghosts started screeching outside his chamber and throwing bricks and tiles. The emperor was alarmed at this. Qin Shubao stepped forward. He and Hu Jingde stood guard outside the emperor's bedroom in battle dress. That night there was no further alarm and the emperor slept peacefully. He had portraits of both men painted and hung them on both sides of his palace gate. The ghosts ceased to disturb him. This tradition was carried forward into later years, and so these men became door-gods. 86

In another version, Tang Taizong who had been suffering from insomnia, ordered Yuchi Gong and Qin Qiong to stand guard at his door. His illness was gradually cured. 87

**Zaoshen** (the God of Hearth) or **Zaojun** (the Lord of Hearth) or **Zaowang** (the King of Hearth)

The Kitchen-God or the God of Hearth was once no more than a poor mason whose circumstances forced him to sell his wife into marriage with another man. He

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84. According to the supplementary note to *Jishuo Quanzhen* as cited by Zong & Liu, n.2. p. 238.

85. Tang Emperor Taizong (599-649), whose actual name was Li Shimin, ruled China 626-649. He entered into matrimonial alliance with the Tibetan king Srong-btsan sgam-po.

86. *Sanjiao Soushen Daquan* cited in Zong & Liu, n.2. p. 244.

parted with whatever one would ask for. However, his characteristic ill-fortune forced him to recognize that there was no point in his continued existence. Therefore he committed suicide. But the ruler of Heaven, acknowledging his honesty and kindheartedness, appointed him as the kitchen-god.88

King Zhou instituted the worship of the door and the hearth. The common people worshipped either the door or the hearth. The emperor of summer was Yandi, its deity was Zhurong. Its place of worship was the hearth. Sacrifices were offered to Xianshi who along with Zaoshen governed the millet. This Xianshi was Xianchui. Cooking millets was called xi, which was done by old women. The God of Hearth was worshipped by old women.89

There are quite a few conflicting views on the identity of the Hearth-God. Some say that Yandi invented fire. When he died he became the hearth.90 Some say that the Yellow Emperor invented the hearth. When he died he became the God of Hearth.91 Some say that Yandi and Shen Nong ruled the world by the virtue of fire. When they died they came to be worshipped as the gods of hearth.92 Yet others opine that Zhurong, the son of Lord Zhuanxu, came to be worshipped as the God of Hearth.93 Zhouli (the Zhou Rites) worshipped Zhurong in the form of hearth.94 In another source, we find Ji, the god


92. As Gao You annotates according to Yuan Ke (Ed.),n.4, p. 208.


94. As Wang Liqi annotates according to Zong & Liu, n.2, p. 249.
of hearth, putting on a red robe and dressed like a pretty maid.  

On the night of the last day of the last lunar month, Zaoshen makes a trip to heaven to give an annual report on every family’s merits and demerits. On the New Year’s eve, the people used to ask the Buddhist monks and Taoist priests to recite scriptures. They prepared wine and fruits to be presented to the deity. The picture of zaoma (lit. horse of the hearth) was pasted above the kitchen-stove. Distillers’ grains were put on the door of the hearth. It was said that he would be drunk and then preside over destiny.

Yuexia Laoren (the Old Man under the Moon -- the God of Marriage)

Wei Gu of the Tang dynasty, while making a trip by the side of the southern inn at Songcheng, met an old man -- who was sitting with a bag -- going through a book under the moon. Wei Gu asked him what book was it, the old man replied that it was a documentation for marriage. On asking what was there in the bag, the reply came that there was a red ribbon to tie up the feet of husband and wife. Even if their families have mutual enmity or they live in alien lands, once the ribbon is tied, it would certainly be a pleasant union. After enquiring about his own wife, Wei Gu came to know that she is the daughter of a blind old woman, selling vegetable by the north of the inn. She is just three years old and is as ugly as the old woman. Wei became angry and sent his servant to stab her. Her eyebrows got injured. Wei and his servant fled. After more than ten years, Wei joined the army of Xiangzhou. The prefectural governor Wang Tai considered him to be a competent man, and gave his daughter to Wei as his wife. The girl’s face was pretty but she always stuck a flower between her eyebrows. Wei felt strange and asked about it. He came to know that earlier she was stabbed when the girl was still an infant. The prefectural governor fostered her as his own daughter. Due to mutual admiration, she and

95. Zhuangzi and as Sima Biao (Western Jin Dynasty) annotates according to Zong & Liu, n.2, p. 254.
Wei fell in deep love. The sons and daughters born were all nobles of much fame. When
the mayor of Songcheng heard about this, he named the inn as "The Inn for Betrothal".98

**Chuanggong** (the Lord of the Bed) and **Chuangmu** (the Mother of the Bed)

On the New Year's eve the deities of the bed were worshipped with tea, wine,
fruits and pancakes.99 These were brought to the bedroom.100 People prayed for
peaceful sleep. The custom of Hangzhou was to worship the deities of the bed with thin
pancakes on the 16th day of the first lunar month.101 Chuangmu was worshipped with
wine and Chuanggong was worshipped with tea. It is said that the Lady was addicted to
drink and the Lord was fond of taking tea.102 The saying goes that tea is masculine and
wine, feminine.103 We come to know that Chuanggong was worshipped during the Song
dynasty.104

**Caishen** (the God of Wealth)

Zhao Gongming was a man hailing from the southern hills. Since the Qin era he
had been living the life of a recluse in the hills, seeking spiritual enlightenment. When he
attained it, out of admiration the Jade Emperor issued a decree giving him the title

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98. Li Fuyan (Tang Dynasty), Chapter "Dinghundian" (The Inn
    for Betrothal), Xu Xuanquailu (Sequel to the Black
    Forces of Evil) cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p. 88.

99. Wei Li, Qiantang Xianzhi (The Historical Annals of

100. Qingjialu (Records Fine and Clear) cited in Zong & Liu, n.2,
    p.410.

101. See n.99.

102. Yang Xunji in his poem "Chuye Zayong" (Miscellaneous
    Poems on the Night of the New Year's Eve) writes: "Buy
    sweets to greet the Lord of Hearth, and pour out water
to worship the Lord of Bed". This is cited in Zong &
    Liu, n.2, p.410.

103. See n.100.

104. Tongsubian (Popular Edition) cited in Zong & Liu, n.2,
    p.410.
"Shenxiao Fushuai" (Assistant Commandant of the Magic Cloud). He was placed in heaven. He rode a tiger. He dispelled thunder and lightning, called out rain and wind, eradicated plague and malaria, and helped the sick avert misfortune by prayers. He was "Tiansheng" (Divine Sage), in charge of the golden wheel of justice.105

According to folk custom, the 15th day of the third lunar month is the birthday of the God of the Black Altar. It was said that he presided over wealth and could make men rich.106 In Sichuan, Zhao Gongming of the Black Altar was regarded as the God of Happiness and Wealth.107 This altar in popular custom was called "the Black Altar of Ramadan".108 The folk legend relates that this deity was a follower of Islam. So in Beijing and in the provinces of Jiangsu and Sichuan, pork was not offered to this deity as sacrifice.109 He was offered white spirit and beer.110

The Wealth-God had an assistant by his side. His features and the hair-bun did not resemble those of the Chinese. The popular saying was that the Wealth God was a Muslim and the evidence was provided by the folk adage 'Huihui Jinbao' (lit. the Muslim Giver of Treasure). The origin of this legend can be explained by the impression made by Zheng He's frequent maritime ventures straight up to Arabia at the beginning of the Ming rule. He was an envoy who brought back treasures presented by various countries—every time he passed through. He used to have audience with the Emperor Yongle.111

105. Sanjiao Soushen Daquan cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, pp.626-627.
108. See n.106.
109. See n.107, p. 631.
110. See n.106.
111. Yongle was actually the reigning title of the Ming Emperor Zhu Di (1360-1424) who ruled China 1402-1424.
critics of modern times consider him to be a follower of Islam.\textsuperscript{112}

\textit{Fushen} (the God of Happiness)

The picture of Zhenwu was hung by the bedside of one’s wife, and propitiated by burning incense.\textsuperscript{113} Yang Cheng became the governor of the Dao Prefecture during the reign of the Tang emperor Dezong. The prefecture was full of dwarfs. The emperor was fond of these dwarfs. The best dwarfs were selected to be made palace slaves for amusement. Every year several hundreds were sent to the imperial court as tribute.\textsuperscript{114} Yang Cheng sent a memorandum to the emperor saying that according to the five canons, the prefecture had got only short people but not short slaves. The emperor realised his error and stopped acquiring slaves since then. The people of the Dao Prefecture started worshipping Yang Cheng as the God of Happiness and Emoluments.\textsuperscript{115}

The understanding regarding the two deities of happiness and emolument differ from place to place and custom to custom. Sometimes the celestial official is the God of Happiness, sometimes the second aide is the God of Happiness. In the Daming Prefecture the second aide’s designation was ‘Yuanwai’. These two characters in ‘Yuanwai’ actually indicate the official for financial assistance. Later it became synonymous with the people of riches and honour. Sometimes this deity was seen holding a baby in his lap. Maspero says that this is Zhang Xian, the child-giving deity.\textsuperscript{116}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{112}. See n.107, p.631.
\item \textsuperscript{113}. \textit{Yijian Zhibu} (A Supplement to the Alien Records) cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p.658.
\item \textsuperscript{114}. \textit{Jishuo Quanzheng & Sanjiao Soushen Daquan} cited in Zong & Liu, n.2. p.658.
\item \textsuperscript{115}. \textit{Sanjiao Soushen Daquan} cited in Zong & Liu, n.2. p.658.
\item \textsuperscript{116}. \textit{Minjian Xinnian Shenxiang Tuhua Zhanlanhui} cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, pp.658,660.
\end{itemize}
Shouxing (the God of Longevity or the Longevity Star) or Nanji Xianweng (the Venerable Immortal of the Extreme South)

The big star of the old man at the southern arc next to the wolf of the Western Palace is called Nanji Laoren. If the old man was visible, peace prevailed on earth, and the state prospered; if invisible, then there was war. The Longevity Star belongs to the Jiaokang constellation. The main star in Jiaokang was formerly called shou. It played an important role in extending the life-span of men. Nanji Laoren was often seen in the southern suburbs during the Autumnal Equinox.

In common custom the image of the God of Longevity is painted often with a short stature, very long head and big ears. In the extreme south he is called Laoshou -- the venerable god of longevity. When once the White Lady Snake stole the magic herb from the fairy mountains, a white crane blocked her way. The two prepared for a battle. Just then Nanji Xianweng came and asked why she had stolen the magic pellet. The Lady Snake knelt down and pitifully told him how much she needed the herb to bring her husband back to life.

In mid-autumn, the octogenarians and nonagenarians were presented with canes decorated with a turtledove. These birds do not choke over their food. It is wished that old men do not choke over their food. At an appropriate time, the Old Man Star was

117. Chapter "Shitian" (On Heaven), Erya (That Acquaintance); Chapter "Tianguanshu" (Celestial Official), Shiji (Historical Memoirs) cited in Zong & Liu, n.2., p. 123.

118. Chapter "Tianwenzhi" (Astronomical Annals), Hanshu (The Book of Han) cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p.123.

119. Wu Cheng'en (Ming Dynasty), Xiyouji (Pilgrimage to the West), chapter 7 cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p.185.

120. "Dao Lingzhi" (Stealing the Magic Herb) in Baishe-zhuangji (Romance of the White Snake) cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p.185. "Dao Lingzhi", popularly known as "Dao Xiancao", is a popular theme in Beijing Opera.
worshipped at the Old Man Shrine in the southern suburbs of the capital.\textsuperscript{121}

3. There are stories about local divinities.

**Heshen** (the God of the Yellow River) or **Hebo** (the Count of the Yellow River)

Some say that the Count of the Yellow River had a human face and the body of a fish.\textsuperscript{122} Some say that Fengyi got drowned while taking a bath in the river\textsuperscript{123}, yet others say that he got drowned while crossing the river. The Lord of Heaven made him the Count of the Yellow River.\textsuperscript{124} Under the name Bingyi, the deity rode two dragons. Bingyi is preserved eternally in a fathomless pool, 300 ren deep.\textsuperscript{125}

Long ago princesses were offered as wives to the river.\textsuperscript{126} The River-God had concubines.\textsuperscript{127} During the Warring States Period, the custom was that the witches used to give girls in marriage with Hebo. The worship took place on the paths between fields. During the reign of Marquis Wen of the Wei dynasty, Ximen Bao came as the magistrate

\textsuperscript{121} Chapter "Liyizhi" (Records of Ceremonies), *Houhanshu* (The Book of Later Han) cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p.123.

\textsuperscript{122} *Youyang Zazu* (Youyang Miscellany) cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p.360.

\textsuperscript{123} As Sima Biao says according to Zong & Liu, n.2, p.358.

\textsuperscript{124} Chapter "Shigui" (On Ghosts), *Baopozi* cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p.253.

\textsuperscript{125} Chapter "Haineibeiijing", *Shanhaijing* cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p.358. 'Ren' is an ancient Chinese measure of length equal to 2.3 - 2.6 metres.

\textsuperscript{126} *Shiji* cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p.253.

\textsuperscript{127} The oracle inscriptions of the Shang dynasty (c.16th-11th century BC) on tortoise-shells or animal bones show the characters "Heqie" (concubines of the Yellow River God). See Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4. p.253.
of the Ye County. He abolished this evil practice.\textsuperscript{128}

Formerly in China, generally in areas around the river docks, there were many 'King Temples' (Dawangmiao) where Heshen was venerated and called the King. It is said that the King's most favourite thing was listening to operas. So all the King Temples had stages for operas. Operas were sung for the King on special occasions. The King looked like a small snake. He regulated the stormy waves in rivers. Navigators without exception took care in offering more sacrifices to him\textsuperscript{129}.

When the Qin emperor unified China, he ordered his official presiding over rites, to put down a procedure for worshipping spirits and gods of heaven, earth, famous mountains and big rivers. The shrine of the Yellow River was built at Linjin.\textsuperscript{130} During the reign of Han Xuandi, in 61 BC, only Mount Taishan and the Yellow River were worshipped five times a year.\textsuperscript{131} In 747 AD, during the reign of the Tang emperor Xuanzong, the Yellow River was given the title of 'Lingyuangong' (the Duke of the Magic Source).\textsuperscript{132} In 1040 AD, during the Song emperor Renzong's reign, an imperial edict was passed, giving the Yellow River the title 'Xiansheng Lingyuanwang' (The Living Royal Spirit of the Magic Source).\textsuperscript{133} In 1351 the Yellow River was given the divine title of 'Lingyuanshen Youhongjiwang' (the God of Magic Source and the Great Protector)}


\textsuperscript{129. Pochu Mixin Quanshu (The Book for Dispelling Superstition) cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p.371.}

\textsuperscript{130. Shiji cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p.356.}

\textsuperscript{131. Hanshu cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p.356.}

\textsuperscript{132. Jiutangshu (The Book of Old Tang) cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p.356.}

\textsuperscript{133. Songzhi (The Song Annals) cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p.356.}
Longwang (the Dragon King)

Dragon is the chief of scaled insects. It can lie hidden, it can also appear distinct and visible. It can be tiny, it can also turn gigantic. It ascends heaven in spring and remains hidden in deep pools in autumn. There are different types of dragons in this world. The scaled dragons are called Jiaolong, the winged dragons are called Yinglong, the horned dragons are called Qiulong, and the hornless dragons are called Chilong. The flying dragons are in heaven. Clouds follow them.

Zhuanxu rode a dragon and went to the four seas. Emperor Ku rode a dragon in spring and summer. Yu the Great who succeeded in harnessing the rivers, ordered the Five Sacred Mountains to rule the land and the Five Dragons to control the

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136. Guangya (Miscellany of Elegance) cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p.117.

137. Yi (The Book of Changes) cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p.117.

138. Chapter "Wudide" (The Virtue of the Five Emperors), Dadaili (The Grand Ceremony of Honour) cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p.117.

139. The Five Sacred Mountains of China: Taishan Mountain (East) in Shandong; Hengshan Mountain (South) in Hunan; Huashan Mountain (West) in Shaanxi; Hengshan Mountain (North) in Shanxi; and Songshan Mountain (Central) in Henan.

140. The Five Dragons have been symbolized by five colours--green, red, yellow, white and black. They are said to be endowed with fine qualities like benevolence, confidence, righteousness and so on; and are said to be residing in beautiful lakes and fairy ponds. See Songhuiyao Jigao (Abstracts from the Song Era) cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, pp.378-379.
In the vibrating pool, there was a cave on the south of the Lake Dongting. It was more than 100 chi deep. After going more than 50 li, one could reach a dragon palace. The seventh daughter of the Dragon King of the Eastern Sea controlled the Dragon King's pearl reserve. Thousands of little dragons used to guard these pearls.

By nature dragons are fierce and scared of wax. They love jade and the blue sky. They are fond of roasted swallows. Formerly the ones who had had swallow-meat were forbidden to go on a sea-trip. In 714, during the reign of Tang Xuanzong, a Dragon Pool was made by an imperial edict. An altar and a memorial temple were also constructed. Sacrifices were offered in the middle of spring every year.

In a folktale titled "The Legend of the Green Dragon Pool", it is said that since the people of the Liqi village refused to build temples for the Dragon King, nor did they carve his image to worship, the Dragon King decided not to give this area a single drop of rain and let them die of famine. But the youngest daughter of the Dragon King -- Princess Flower and her husband the Green Dragon ploughed clouds and sowed rain over the village. The Dragon King could not dissuade the couple from pouring rain. He beheaded the Green Dragon. From that severed head gushed a stream of clear water and formed a

142. Lake Dongting is situated in the northern part of Hunan Province and to the south of the Yangzi River.
143. 'Chi' is a Chinese unit of length equal to 1/3 metre.
144. 'Li' is a Chinese unit of length equal to 1/2 kilometre.
145. Chapter "Zhenzedong" (The Vibrating Pool Cave), Taiping Guangji (Taiping Miscellany) cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, pp.118-119.
146. Qian Xibai (Song Dynasty), Nanbu Xinshu (The New Book of the South) cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p.117.
large pool near the village. The people call it "Green Dragon Pool".  

4. The human world is vulnerable to pestilences and catastrophes of various nature. There are stories about deities associated with epidemic diseases and calamities.

**Wenshen** (the God of Plague) or **Wuwengui** (the Five Spirits of Plague)

Emperor Zhuanxu had three sons. They became ghosts after death. One of them lived in the water of the Yangzi River. He was the spirit of plague. Many were of the opinion that there were five spirits of plague. They were called "Wuli" (the Terrible Five). Emperor Yao met the people in order to tell them about the Terrible Five. Some thought that there was an entire Ministry of Plague. Lü Yue commanded the six righteous deities of the Ministry of Plague. He was given the title "The Supreme God of the Vast Sky -- the Chief Controller of Plague".

In 591, during the reign of Sui Wendi, five tall and sturdy men appeared high in the sky. They were putting on gowns of five different colours. The court historian Zhang Juren informed the emperor that these five men had come from five directions. In heaven they were five ghosts and on earth they were five spirits of plague called Wuwen. They brought pestilence. It was heaven that sent such contagious diseases. There was no remedy. Later that year many people in the country died of plague. The emperor built a


150. Chapter "Qingzhongjia" (Of Topmost Importance), *Guanzi* (The Book of Guan) cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p.76.

151. Yao was the fourth mythical emperor who regulated the winds through Yi the archer.

152. Chapter "Zhouyu" (Tales of Zhou), *Guoyu* (Stories from Eight Kingdoms) cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p.76.

153. *Fengshen Yanyi* cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p.479. Lü Yue is a character in the Ming novel *Fengshen Yanyi*. 
temple and conferred the title of General upon the five spirits of plague. During the Sui and Tang period they were propitiated on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month. Later, a Taoist priest named Kuang Fu while on a tour came to this temple and stripped the five spirits of plague of their hidden power.\textsuperscript{154}

Quhuangshen (the Locust-Expellent God)

During Emperor Song Gaozong’s reign, in 1156 during the autumn harvest in the Huai and Song regions, when crops were thick like clouds, locusts came in great swarms. Before long, the water-birds named qiu\textsuperscript{155}, shaped like wild ducks but taller and bigger, with long crops under their throat capable of storing enormous amount of food, flocked in thousands. They raised their voices in concert and together they ate the locusts. Just in ten days’ time, not even a single locust was left. That year there was a bumper harvest. This incident attracted the attention of the imperial court. An edict was passed to confer upon the qiu birds the title of “Senior Army Generals -- Protectors of the Country”.\textsuperscript{156}

The temple of the cattail deity was situated on the west bank of the River Lianhe at Haizhou. Prayers were believed to have been responded to whenever attacked by the nymphs of locusts.\textsuperscript{157}

Some believed that when the Southern Song general Liu Qidi died, he became a deity and rendered great service by driving out locusts from the area lying between the River Yangzi and the River Huai. He was named “Meng Jiang” (Valiant General). To the south of the Yangzi, there were many memorial temples. In spring and autumn lots of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{154.} Sanjiao Soushen Daquan cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, pp.478-479.
\item \textsuperscript{155.} ‘Qiu’ is actually a long-legged bird like a crane or an adjutant bird.
\item \textsuperscript{156.} Yijian Zhizhi (More Notes to the Alien Records) cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p.466.
\item \textsuperscript{157.} Chapter "Shenyidian" (Canons of Miracles), Gujin Tushu Jicheng (Collection of Books Old and New) cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p.466.
\end{itemize}
people prayed so that there could be no plague of locusts. The menace of locusts often used to affect all the provinces in the north, including Shandong. Prayers were offered to General Liu Meng. During the reign of Qing Shizong, in 1734 an edict was passed to set up a department for offering sacrifices to Quhuangshen, starting from the winter of every year till the 13th day of the first lunar month.

5. In the remote ages the worship of totems, the worship of nature and the ancestor worship -- often used to overlap. The inventors, manual labour experts of different clans and tribes, or an outstanding chief of a tribe or the head of a clan were all given the title "Culture Hero". They gradually came to be venerated as deities -- possessing the power of supernatural beings. Here legends and myths have no impassable chasm whatsoever. They confront frequent overlapping.

**Nüwa** (the Supreme Mother of Mankind)

The origin of Nüwa is unknown. Nüwa, the younger sister of Fuxi, had a human head and the body of a snake. She was the Sacred Woman, who reproduced myriads of things. Nüwa made music for human existence. Nüwa also invented

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161. "Tianwen" (Queries to the Heaven), *Chuci* (The Songs of Chu) cited in Yuan Ke, n.128, p.108 (n.1). Qu Yuan asked "Nüwa had a physical body, who was the craftsman who made her?"


163. As Wang Yi annotates according to Yuan Ke, n.128, p.108 (n.1).

164. *Shuowen* cited in Yuan Ke, n.128, p.108 (n.3).

sheng\textsuperscript{166}, the making of which is associated with human procreation.\textsuperscript{167}

Nüwa was also the matchmaker because she instituted the rites of marriages.\textsuperscript{168} When the world got divided into different states, she came to be worshipped as the Supreme Matchmaking Deity (Gaomei).\textsuperscript{169} In the middle of spring, cows, sheep and pigs were offered as sacrifices to Gaomei -- the Supreme Matchmaker, or the Goddess of Marriage.\textsuperscript{170} The childless couples begged for having children. Temples of Gaomei were built in the suburbs.\textsuperscript{171} Zuze (The Ancestral Pool) of the State of Yan; Sheji (The Gods of Land and Grain) of the State of Qi; Sanglin (The Mulberry Forest) of the State of Song; and Yunmeng (The Cloudy Dreams) of the State of Chu -- all these were places that belonged to boys and girls.\textsuperscript{172}

Huangdi (the Yellow Emperor)

Huangdi (Emperor) was originally Huangdi (Yellow Emperor).\textsuperscript{173} In the past, the

\begin{itemize}
\item 166. Sheng, a reed pipe wind instrument, is made out of gourd. It has thirteen pipes which are placed to the left while blowing. See Shiben (The Origin of the World) & Chapter "Shiyue" (On Music), Boya (Profound Knowledge) cited in Yuan Ke, n.128, p.109 (n.17-18).
\item 167. Sheng is a symbol of generating new life; see n.165.
\item 168. Fengsu Tongyi cited in Yuan Ke, n.128, p.109 (n.6).
\item 169. Lushi (A Journey Chronicle) cited in Yuan Ke, n.128, p.109 (n.7).
\item 170. Liji cited in Yuan Ke, n.128, p.109 (n.8).
\item 171. Shijing (The Book of Songs) cited in Yuan Ke, n.128, p.109 (n.11).
\item 172. Mozi (The Book of Mohism) cited in Yuan Ke, n.128, p.109 (n.12). Wen Yiduo (1899-1946), a modern Chinese poet and scholar, considered Sanglin and Yunmeng to be places for worship of Gaomei during the Song and Chu periods.
\item 173. Explanatory text, Zhuangzi cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p.347.
\end{itemize}
two words Huang ( 黃 Yellow) and Huang ( 皇 Emperor) were interchangeable. The Yellow Emperor was born out of the seeds of thunder. The Kunlun Mountain is the abode of Huangdi. The Son of Heaven used to go to the Kunlun Mountain to see the palace of the Yellow Emperor. Huangdi was the emperor of the centre. His assistant Hou Tu controlled the four sides.

When Huangdi was on the throne, he put emphasis on self-cultivation and loved the people. He originally did not like to fight battles. But the chieftains of the four cardinal points, with names after their respective colours conspired together against Huangdi. Huangdi observed if a king loses his country, his subjects will be subjects of some other king which was similar to the remarriage of a woman. So he set up tents and built fortresses, and destroyed the four chieftains. Yandi was actually the brother of Huangdi. Each of them occupied half of the world. They fought a battle in the open fields of Zhuolu. Teethed clubs started floating in the flowing blood. Huangdi fought with

174. This is according to Bi Yuan as cited by Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p.347.
175. Hetu Dijitong (Mystic Diagrams of the Yellow Emperor) cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p.347.
176. Chapter "Xicisanjing", Shanhaijing cited in Yuan Ke, n.128, p.171 (n.5).
177. Mutianzizhuan (Accounts of the Majestic Son of Heaven) cited in Yuan Ke, n.128, p. 172 (n.5).
179. Jiangzi Wanjilun (A Thousand Ingenuity of Jiangzi) cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), Shenhua Xuanyi Baiti (Modern Rendition of a Hundred Myths). Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Press, 1982, pp.42-43. The four chieftains are the emperors of the four cardinal points and controllers of four seasons: Taihao of the east controls spring; Yandi of the south controls summer; Shaohao of the west controls autumn; and Zhuanxu of the north controls winter. For details see Table 3 : Mythical Emperors and their Relation to Agrarian Society.
180. Ma Su (Qing Dynasty), Yishi (Unravelling History) cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.179, p.52.
Yandi in the fields of Banquan, commanding a force of bears, brown bears, wolves, leopards, panthers and tigers as the forerunners. And made flags of vultures, pheasants, hawks and kites. Huangdi defeated Yandi after fighting three rounds of battle.

Chiyou made weapons and led a punitive expedition against Huangdi. Huangdi ordered the winged dragon Yinglong to attack Chiyou. Chiyou asked Fengbo and Yushi to blow up a tempest. Huangdi could not win even after fighting several battles with Chiyou. Huangdi then beat a retreat to the Tai Mountains. After three days and three nights of foggy weather, a lady with a human head and a bird's body appeared before him. The lady named Xuannü taught Huangdi the art of war -- the art of launching offensive and laying ambush. Huangdi summoned the celestial lady Ba from heaven. The rain stopped. And then Huangdi killed Chiyou.

Huangdi invented the cauldron and the earthen rice steamer. He drilled wood to make fire and started steaming rice and cooking meat for food. The people ate those and did not suffer from indigestion. Huangdi also made felt rugs and twelve big

181. Chapter "Huangdi" (The Yellow Emperor), Liezi cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.179, p.52.
183. Su E, Sushi Yanyi (Romance of Lord Su) cited in Yuan Ke, n.128, p.190 (n.7).
185. Huangdi wen Xuannü Zhanfa (The Yellow Emperor seeks the Art of War from Lady Xuannü) cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.179., p.60.
186. See n.183.
mirrors to be used in twelve months.\textsuperscript{189} He made chariots and nicknamed them Lord Xuanyuan.\textsuperscript{190}

\textbf{Shen Nong (the Divine Husbandman)}

During the reign of Yandi once a rosefinch brought the ears of nine grains in its beak, and dropped them on the ground. Yandi picked them up and sowed them into the fields.\textsuperscript{191} Some say that millets rained down from heaven during the reign of Shen Nong. Thereupon Shen Nong tilled the land. He started making pottery and smelting metal. He invented axe and other wood-cutting implement, and opened up the virgin soil with the help of a plough and a weeding hoe. Then he nurtured the five cereals which bore a hundred fruits.\textsuperscript{192}

Shen Nong tasted the flavour of a hundred herbs, and within a day's time he came across several poisons.\textsuperscript{193} He lashed a hundred herbs with his red magic whip and came to know completely about their inborn nature: either mild or poisonous; either cold or warm; how do they smell or what taste do they have. He sowed a hundred crops in accordance with their inherent qualities.\textsuperscript{194} Shen Nong's body was made of transparent jade. He could see his five internal organs. He tasted everything to find out their

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{189} 
\textit{Huangdi Neizhuan} (Authorized Biography of the Yellow Emperor) cited in Yuan Ke, n.128, p.227 (n.16). Also see Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p.350.
\item \textsuperscript{190} 
\item \textsuperscript{191} 
Wang Jia (Jin Dynasty), \textit{Shiyiji} (The Retrieval of Lost Records) cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p.299.
\item \textsuperscript{192} 
\textit{Zhoushu} (The Book of Zhou) cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p.299. The lists of five cereals vary largely though many of them do not belong to the group of cereals. The most accepted list of cereals include rice, two kinds of millet, wheat and beans. For details, see \textit{Cihai} (Chinese Encyclopaedia), n.11, p.31.
\item \textsuperscript{193} 
Chapter "Xiuwu" (Cultivation and Devotion), \textit{Huainanzi} cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p.299.
\item \textsuperscript{194} 
\end{itemize}
medicinal value. And could detoxify when affected by toxic substance. Once Shen Nong took a centipede and before he could apply an antidote, he died.\textsuperscript{195}

In 1644 rites were instituted to worship the Spirit Xianyi (the First Physician).\textsuperscript{196} The birthday of Yaowang (Medicinal Monarch) falls on the fourth lunar month. Physicians used to burn incense and queue up to the Temple of the Medicinal Monarch.\textsuperscript{197}

**Guandi** (the God of War and Upholder of Justice)

By the end of the Han dynasty, Guan Yu, the former general\textsuperscript{198} of the State of Shu\textsuperscript{199}, along with Zhang Fei and his assistant Liu Bei formed an insurrectionary army. Guan Yu did not forfeit his honour and died. The title of "Supreme General" was conferred posthumously upon him. He was buried in the Jade Spring Mountains. The common people were touched by his kindness and righteousness. Sacrifices were offered annually.\textsuperscript{200}

During the Southern Song dynasty his name was formally listed in the canons of sacrificial rites. During the Manchu rule he was held in greater esteem. The imperial house and the entire country were placed under his special protection. He got the honorary title "Wudi" (Martial Lord) and was placed side by side with Confucius. He was regarded by the people as the God of War, the God of Wealth and the Divine Protector of

\textsuperscript{195} Zhou You (Ming Dynasty), *Kaipi Yanyi* (Discovery of Redundance) cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, pp.299-300.

\textsuperscript{196} *Qingchao Wenxian Tongkao* (Documentary Records of the Qing Dynasty) cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p.512.

\textsuperscript{197} *Qingjialu* cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p.517.

\textsuperscript{198} *Gujin Tushu Jicheng* cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p.565.

\textsuperscript{199} Shu (221-263) was one of the Three Kingdoms, the other two being Wei (220-265) and Wu (222-280). Shu was established by Liu Bei.

\textsuperscript{200} *Sanjiao Soushen Daquan* cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, pp.567-568.
Merchants and Traders. The people sought his help in resolving their dispute. At the
time of drought, they begged for rain from him. They also asked for prescriptions for
patients. He was also regarded as the most powerful being for exorcizing evil apparitions
and ferocious deities. 201

6. Taoism, a religion indigenous to China; and Buddhism, a religion originating in the
Indian subcontinent, both flourished in China with their complex network of pantheon. In
course of time, these deities, especially those previously considered as alien, underwent
modification to a great extent in order to cater to the need of the common folk. The
populace gradually came to accept and incorporate some of the most powerful deities into
their list of the most venerated ones.

Xiwangmu (the Royal Mother of the Western Paradise)

Xiwangmu emerged as a deity. She is the spirit of the moon, the daughter of the
Heavenly Lord. 202 The Jade Mountain is the abode of Xiwangmu. She lives in caves on
the bank of the shifting sand. Xiwangmu has a human face, with a leopard-like tail and
tiger-like teeth. She is good at roaring. On her dishevelled hair she puts on precious
jades. She presides over natural disaster and the five chief forms of punishment. 203
However, some observed that the Royal Mother is sedate and beautiful like a good lady
near her thirties. 204

Dongwanggong (the Royal Father of the Eastern Paradise) is the lord of the male
immortals, and Xiwangmu is the ancestress of the female immortals. Both of them are

203. Chapters "Xicisanjing" & "Dahuangxijing", Shanhaijing cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p.154. The five chief
forms of punishment in ancient China were mo, tattooing the face; yi, cutting off the nose; fei, cutting off
the feet; gong, castration; and dapi, decapitation.
deities of primary importance, and are parents of Yin and Yang. They are the origin of the world, creating thousands of spirits and groups of objects.\footnote{Jishuo Quanzhen cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p.436.}

\textbf{Yuhuang Dadi (the Jade Emperor)}

Another name of Dongwanggong (the Royal Father of the Eastern Paradise) is Yuhuangjun (the Jade Emperor).\footnote{Zhuding Yuwen cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p.28.} The Supreme Lord -- the Jade Emperor controls the nine celestial chambers. He is appointed as the divine king of the four seas and the five sacred mountains.\footnote{Gujin Tushu Jicheng cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p. 29.} During the reign of Emperor Song Zhenzong, in 1014, an idol of Yuhuang was set up in the Hall of Growing Happiness and was given the title 'Sage'. In 1116 he was named the Supreme Lord, Creator of Heaven, Holder of Magic Figures and Imperial Calendar, Embodiment of Truth -- the Jade Emperor of the Vast Firmament.\footnote{"Lizhi" (Records of Rites), Songshi (The History of Song Dynasty) cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, pp.29-30.}

\textbf{Milefo (Maitreya Buddha)}

The Buddhists say that 5670,000,000 years after the death of Śākyamuni, Maitreya will descend to the world and attain Buddhahood. When Śākya was in this world, Maitreya used to sit by his side and listen to his sermons.\footnote{Pochu Mixin Quanshu cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p.878.}

\textbf{Guanyin Pusa (the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara)}

The one who goes round and sees the happenings of the world -- past and present, the one who surveys the good and evil of the human world, has long been named Avalokiteśvara.\footnote{Zhuanlue (Brief Introduction) cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p.850.}
Once there was a princess named Miaoshan who chose to become a nun. During her stay at the White Sparrow Temple for Meditation she was subjected to hard labour in the kitchen. The God of Hearth gathered all celestial beings in order to help Miaoshan. Her father, King Miaozhuang, however, misunderstood her and eventually had her executed. But King Yama gave Miaoshan the magic peach and sent her back to the earth. She cured the king's ailment in the guise of an old immortal. The king abdicated and led all his men to the Fragrant Hill to practise Buddhism. The Buddha conferred upon Miaoshan the title of 'Thousand-Armed and Thousand-Eyed, Infinitely Merciful, Aid to the Needy and Distressed, the Supreme Being -- the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara!' 211

In another story we find that King Wucheng of the Kingdom of Qi fell ill after excessive drinking. Firstly, a five-coloured object appeared from the sky. When it came near, it turned into a beautiful lady. In no time she transformed into Avalokitesvara. Gently she cured his illness. 212

Guanyin is the embodiment of compassion. According to an agricultural myth, the rice plant has always existed, but at first its ears were empty. Seeing that men lived in hardship and hunger, Guanyin went down secretly into the rice-fields. There she squeezed her breasts so that the milk flowed into the empty ears. Most of the plants were filled, but towards the end she had to press so hard that a mixture of milk and blood flowed and that is why there are two kinds of rice: white and red. 213


212. Beishi (Northern History) cited in Hui & Shi (Comp.), n.51, p.257.

2.2 CHINESE POPULAR FOLK DEITIES: INTERPRETATION

**Fengbo**: Fengbo is the most common form of address for the God of the Wind. The common folk also call him Fengshi or the Master of the Wind. China being a vast country, folk belief in the Wind God varied greatly among the ancient tribes of the land. Some believed that since birds' flapping of wings cause certain movement of air, they deified particular species of birds and named them the spirits of the wind. Some observed that the wind blew from the mountain valleys and caverns; they found some correlation between the Wind God, valleys and caverns. Yet others found some relationship between the drifting of clouds in the wind, and the waning and waxing of the moon, and the rising and setting of certain stars, thereby concluding that the Wind God, the moon and certain stars are interrelated. The natural force of the wind either inflicts loss or brings benefit to social life. But human power has no control over such forces. This is the basic reason why early man started worshipping the wind-spirit. Its natural characteristics constitute the basis of man's illusion about the wind-spirit's appearance, his divine qualities and various mystic notions revolving round him.

Since the Spring and Autumn, and the Warring States period, gradually there formed a pantheon. And with it came the faith in the Wind God. The folk belief of the central plains has been reflected in *Shangshu* (The Great Book), *Zhouli* (The Rites of Zhou) etc where certain constellation has been identified as the Wind God. The belief prevalent in the southern region were recorded in *Chuci, Huainanzi* etc. The God of the Wind took the shape of a bird or an odd-looking winged beast named Feilian. Comparatively speaking, the mythical flavour of the southern tales is quite strong. These legends retain traces of the primitive religion. Since the Qin and Han period, two forms of belief--northern and southern--merged together to find a place in the canons of sacrificial rites. But in the folk realm none of the legends were mutually exclusive. After the Tang and Song era, in folk legends there appeared the personified Wind God: for example Fengyi or the Heavenly Lord Fang. Phonetically his surname found proximity with the word 'Feng' (wind). His appearance, divine qualities were all created according to man's perception of the wind.
According to Chuci, Wangshu is actually the charioteer of the Moon Spirit.\(^{214}\) Both Wang Yi and Hong Xingzu remark that the vehicle (Sanskrit: _vahana_) of the Moon Spirit is Wangshu. The creatures with whom analogies have been drawn are but swift-moving animals, viz., deer, bird, snake and leopard—traversing at a great speed comparable to the pace of the blowing wind.

The Chinese zodiacal constellation with which the Wind God is said to be exactly identical, is the _ji_ star whose approximate constellation in modern astronomy is Saggitarius. Its corresponding animal is the leopard—the fastest creature on earth that can well match the pace of the wind, or rather which has the power to race with the wind.

_Yushi_: Among the several meteorological deities, the Rain God is the one who claims the most intimate relationship with the social life of man since time immemorial. Just like the Wind God, since the Warring States period, the Rain God too gained prominence in the life of the common folk. The folk belief in the Rain God can be categorized into two sets: the northern and the southern. In the north he was integrated with stellar constellation. The Rain God is said to be exactly identical with the Chinese zodiacal constellation, the _bi_ star which is approximately Hyades — the V-shaped group of five stars in the constellation of Taurus. The ancient astrologers believed\(^{215}\) that it would rain when the sun and the Hyades rise together. In the south the Rain God came to be known as Pingyi. There are some controversies about which god does the name 'Pingyi' stand for. Apart from Yushi, the Thunder God or the Cloud God are also called Pingyi. Maspero\(^{216}\) points out that in "Tianwen" Pingyi is said to have produced rain by croaking. It seems he is originally represented as a toad. There is no doubt, however, that rain comes with the joyful notes

\(^{214}\) Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p.366.


of the amphibians.

In the Han era Yushi got another name, that is Xuanming. This was actually the name of a deity from the north. Later Yushi came to be identified under the names of immortal Chisongzi, Shangyang, or the Heavenly Lord Chen. Though Yushi found his place in the Qin and Han canons of sacrificial rites, but the folk worship of rain differed from place to place. Each place had its local divinities of mountains, rivers or even regional versions of dragons. In modern times, the worship of dragon became the most prevailing practice. And the folk belief in Yushi ceased to exist except in name.

In Sanjiao Soushen Daquan the Lord of Rain is said to possess the capacity to alter its own shape. This is to say that rain either falls heavily, or it drizzles. His volume of water is said to have come from the sea. The dragon being the inhabitant of the sea, has been stated as the principal bringer of rain. In Kongzi Jiayu the drumbeats are actually the rumbling of thunder. Confucius is known to have discouraged discourses upon the supernatural. It might be a story of a much later period, the purpose is to project the wisdom of Confucius and thereby propagate his thoughts.

Leishen: It is quite comprehensible how thunder and lightning were held in great reverence by the primitive man. The rumbles of thunder and the flashes of lightning not only displayed the mystery and power of nature, but also brought violent storm or even led to conflagration causing huge loss of life. Zhu Tianshun, in his book Zhongguo Gudai Zongjiao Chutan (An Introduction to Religion in Ancient China) says that in ancient China, people's blind faith in extraordinary power of thunder and lightning, and their ontology and appearance found roots in the fear psychosis of the primitive man who had been perplexed by the natural power of thunder and lightning. Man's erroneous concept of thunder and lightning, and psychological objectivisation of yielding to their power gave rise to the superstitious content of the thunder and lightning deities and also portrayed their

217. Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p.139.
218. Zong & Liu, n.2, p.139.
Like other gods, the portrayal of a supernaturalistic image of the Thunder God experienced a complicated process of development. Initially it was a pure worship of natural phenomenon which was deified in course of time. This deified figure gradually came to hold an important social position. His image also underwent major transformation:

Beastly image --> Semi-human, semi-beastly appearance --> Human appearance.

Man's awe coupled with imagination modelled the Thunder God after a dragon—a creature of sheer fantasy, possessing the power to bring cloud and rain. Naturally a thunderbolt is only possible when skies are overcast and a rainfall is imminent. Hence a metaphor has been drawn with a rain-bringing creature—the dragon. Apart from such an image, Shanhaijing offers another image, that is of a bull which dashes out from a mythical mountain in the Eastern Sea. Here the lightning which precedes thunder, has been likened to the glowing heavenly bodies.

Maspero writes that Kui's voice resounded like thunder, whose skin the Yellow Emperor had used to make the first drum which he beat with a bone of the thunder animal, the same that the Yaodian (The Canons of Emperor Yao) euhemerized into Director of Music at the court of Shun, the one who charmed the wild animals and made them dance by striking musical tones. 219

What Shanhaijing recorded had indeed originated in the remote past. It depicts the Thunder God in the form of a beast, and considers the rumble of thunder to have originated in the celestial drum. The drum in ancient myths and the roaring of thunder are but one. Later the thunder drum gradually took the shape of an instrument which came to be governed by the Thunder God. Lidai Shenxian Tongjian adopted this myth but modified it, saying that the Thunder Beast was a minister of the Yellow Emperor, and that

the beast was an incarnation of the Lord of Thunder.\textsuperscript{220}

After the Warring States period thunder, wind, rain and cloud all were called 'shi' (master). Most probably this is related with personification of deities. It seems that the name 'Leishi' already existed during the Han era. In the annotation of \textit{Chuci}, Fenglong is the name of the cloud god. Moreover, the word 'Fenglong' is an onomatopoeia of the rumbling of thunder. In a word, the personified Leishi replaced the beastly Leishen, that is Leishou. But in the folk realm, the most common name for the Thunder God is Leigong. Some regard Leigong to be Leishi; yet others believe that Leigong and Leishi are two different entities. \textit{Lidai Shenxian Tongjian} says that Leigong is a minister subordinate to the Yellow Emperor. This is exemplified by the myth that Leigong was a personal physician of the Yellow Emperor.\textsuperscript{221}

The name 'Leigong' first appeared in \textit{Chuci}. At times he looked like a monkey or even like a ghost. But the most common view is that he is like an anthropoid ape. That is why the Monkey King Sun Wukong in \textit{Xiyouji} (Pilgrimage to the West) is known as 'Leigong-lian' or 'the one with a face like the Thunder God'. Since the Spring and Autumn, and the Warring States period, the common folk had been attributing many social functions to Leigong. They thought that he would carry out punishment on behalf of heaven and that he has the capacity to distinguish good and evil. Such a hope was cherished that he would preside over justice in the human world. During the Song and Mongol era titles of nobility were conferred upon him. Gradually he came to be known as Leiwang (the Thunder King).

In the process of personification, the Chinese found it convenient to christen the Thunder God so that he may appropriately find a place in the human world. So, some christened him Commander Gou; others christened him Chen Wenyu—said to have born at the time of Chen Emperor Xuandi of the Southern Dynasty. Chen Wenyu is said to have

\textsuperscript{220} Zong & Liu, n.2, p.140.
\textsuperscript{221} Zong & Liu, n.2, p.142.
originated from the seeds of thunder. This was deliberately done to enhance the greatness of the Chen kings by fabricating direct lineage with the Thunder God. In the folk realm of China, the Thunder God is not at all a frightful figure. People even humour him with such sayings as: "Leigong was beaten down to earth by men so that he could never fly back to heaven."222 Or, "Leigong got squeezed between tree branches and could not soar into the sky until men came to his rescue."223 Or, "In autumn and winter Leigong remains hidden in the subsoil. His shape is like Kui (a mythical creature shaped like a one-legged dragon). People fetch him for food."224 Such sayings amply reflect the insignificance of Leigong as a divine power in the eyes of the Chinese in a later stage.

There are even instances, like the tale from Hangzhou, where Leigong has been depicted as a despot with lustful desire. He bullied the two youngsters—Shiwa and Huamei, and left them in the wilderness. In this context we are reminded of a two-part allegorical saying: "The God of Thunder strikes the beancurd—bullies pick on the soft and weak."225 Shiwa and Huamei—the human siblings avenged their misfortune by blinding Leigong, thereby reflecting a typical Chinese view that gods live for men, gods serve men; and not the vice versa. Gods, if not philanthropic, can be brought to their knees.

Dianmu: The Mother Lightning as the goddess presiding over lightning, did not find its root in the folk belief very early in history. In the earlier belief the Thunder God used to be concurrently in charge of both thunder and lightning. But with the personification of the thunder deity, his masculine character became evident. The lightning deity naturally evolved into his spouse known as Dianmu. The name 'Dianmu' surfaced as late as in the Song era. Later many legends related to the origin of the Goddess of Lightning,

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225. In Chinese, the saying is Leigong da doufu, jian ruande qi.
mushroomed. Sanjiao Soushen Daquan (The Compendium of Deities of the Three Religions) says when heaven smiles, light spreads from his opened mouth. That is lightning. Some originality is there in this particular saying.226

Li mentioned as lightning in Yi (The Book of Changes), is actually one of the Eight Diagrams (bagua) used in divination. In fact, this diagram, pronounced li, represents fire--the sixth of the eight natural phenomena. Clearly enough, the very essence of lightning is fire. Li is symbolically written as ☰, of which the whole lines symbolize the male aspect and the broken line in the middle is the female aspect. This female aspect has been likened to the vagina. And from here the analogy has been drawn that lightning is feminine.

In Changshu Sizhi, the Goddess of Lightning has been christened as Lady Xiu Wenying. Lightning precedes thunder and that is why she is sent to the front hall of the Ministry of Thunder. She is to light up the path before thunder cracks down. And that is how the folktale from Fujian found its existence. So is the analogy drawn in the poem of Su Shi. But interestingly, the Goddess of Lightning is led by a host of deities formed during the Ming dynasty. These deities from the Ministry of Thunder,227 viz., Deng, Xin, Zhang, Tao, Pang, Liu, Gou, Bi and others, with much influence, not only serve the ministry, but also guard the Heavenly Gate of the Jade Emperor. This again is an attempt by lords with the aforesaid surnames to find lineage with deities, and to seek higher position in society.

Hou Tu: Maspero says that corresponding to the gods of heaven, the Lord on High (shangdi) and his Five Lords (wudi), was the god of the soil: Sovereign Earth or Hou Tu.228 He became the great god of the soil of the highest order in the land. Judging from Shanhaijing, Zuozhuan, Zhouli, Liji and other records, we find that as opinions

228. Maspero, n.216, p.98.
vary, no unanimity can be reached regarding the identity of Hou Tu. Nor there can be any explanation to his origin. Some say Hou Tu is a human name, some say it is the name of an official, yet others opine that it is the name of a deity. During the reign of the Western Han emperor Wendi, the sacrificial rites for the Soil God became unified throughout the land. After Wudi those were gradually integrated into a uniform system. Successive dynasties made him into a god corresponding to the Supreme Lord of the universe. But in the folk realm he became the king of the nether world. Since the old saying goes that heaven is yang and earth is yin, so from the late Western Han period till the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420-589), the empress enjoyed the offerings alongwith Hou Tu. After the Sui dynasty the emperor began to enjoy the privilege. Perhaps due to the logic that earth is yin, in the folk belief since the Tang era Hou Tu had been modelled with a feminine face and was named Hou Tu Niangniang. Originally Hou Tu was the deity of the imperial territory and was worshipped specially by the emperor. After the Tang era, the common folk began asking for his blessings. According to Tongsubian\textsuperscript{229}, Hou Tu is worshipped in all funeral ceremonies of folk origin. The old custom related to his governing of the nether world is also followed.

In the Yin and Yang philosophy, the south is yang and the north is yin. Hence heaven and earth found their appropriate place of worship, keeping in conformity with their respective principles.

Chinese folklorists and ritualists, like many others, have been confused by the interlocked meanings of earth, land, soil, fields. The people generally pay honour to the local gods of place whose temples, very simply constructed, are in the fields and whose power extends over small and particular, though not carefully defined, areas.\textsuperscript{230}

**Cheng Huang:** The City God is one of the most important guardian deities in China. In

\textsuperscript{229} Zong & Liu, n.2, p.193.

ancient times cities were surrounded by protective moats. Originally it was the god of the
moat who was venerated for the protection he gave to the people of the walled cities. In
fact, linguistically 'cheng' means 'city-wall' and 'huang' means 'dry moat outside a
city-wall'.

The word Cheng Huang made its formal appearance in Beiqishu (The Book of
Northern Qi). It was after a protracted war between the armies of Northern Qi and
Southern Liang that this name gained considerable significance. From Suishu (The Book
of Sui)\textsuperscript{231} we see that during the Northern and Southern Dynasties the worship of Cheng
Huang had already become prevalent in the land. But the City God gained widespread
popularity during the Tang and Song period. Previously he was a god from the nature,
but with the propagation of Buddhist doctrine in China, people gradually accepted the
hypothesis that man becomes a ghost after his death. Just as in the human world, the life
of an apparition in the nether world is also governed by officials of various hierarchy.
Since the Sui and Tang era the people started conceiving the notion that honest persons
and upright officials can become city-gods. A popular saying of that time goes--"The
fair-mindedness of a person can make him an official in the nether world." This concept
continued exercising its influence till the modern times. Since the Tang rule, Cheng
Huang not only protected the moats and maintained peace, but also looked after the
matters related to flood and drought, good and ill luck, and everything concerning the
nether world. This was clearly a Taoist invention inspired by the immense popularity
enjoyed by Cheng Huang.

The god of ramparts, city-walls, moats and ditches also became known as a
Spiritual Magistrate of the people. Cheng Huang and his attendants exercise in the
spiritual world functions similar to those exercised by the civil governors in the terrestrial
world. They are in constant communication with Yanluo, and report evil deeds to him.
They also communicate with Shangdi, the Supreme Being, from whom their power

\textsuperscript{231} Zong & Liu, n.2, pp.204-205.
derives. They are also believed to have power over diseases and evil spirits. Human magistrates used to consult the local Cheng Huang in his temple about difficult cases, because of his intimate knowledge of his district. He was responsible for the prosperity of his district.

The feudal rule in China reached its peak in the Tang and Song period. People started inhabiting towns and cities. Commerce flourished. Naturally the City God earned respect and a high position in the contemporary society. In order to consolidate his power, the first Ming emperor Zhu Yuanzhang started exploiting the folk belief in Cheng Huang—rooted deeply in the people’s psyche. City God temples were built throughout the empire. With these the emperor sought to control the people spiritually. The result was just the contrary. The people felt a strong aversion to such a move. In the minds of the people, the City God no longer remained a local protective deity but became the embodiment of a feudal bureaucrat. Folktales emerged, satirizing and showing contempt for the City God. He became the target of ridicule for being greedy, ruthless, corrupt, snobbish and incompetent—the attributes of a typical feudal official. Such popular sentiments can be observed in folk legends and literary writings of the Ming and Qing period, an example being Liaozhai Zhiyi (Strange Tales of Liaozhai).

Menshen: The Door God is one of the folk deities who enjoy widespread popularity in China till today. But the understanding of the Door God is multifarious. Some say it is Zhongkui, some say it is Shen Tu and Yu Lei, yet others believe that it is Qin Qiong and Yuchi Gong. Door God was one of the five principal deities to have been offered sacrifices since the early days of religious rites.

The function of the Door God in olden days was exorcising ghosts and ensuring peace at home. The function of protection from any evil was bestowed upon two guardian deities Shen Tu and Yu Lei. These two mythical figures became very popular in the Han


era. They were thought to possess the magical power of catching ghosts. The responsibility of guarding the doors was later handed down to Zhongkui after the Tang period. The early man used to invoke deities in order to exorcise evil spirits and drive away pestilence by brandishing drum-beating sticks named 'zhongkui'. The name of an apparently insignificant tool turned into a person's name.

There is some discourse regarding the origin of the name 'zhongkui'. He Xin quotes Ma Yong as saying that 'zhongkui' was a tool for breaking ice to catch fish, and not for exorcizing evil spirits. But tradition has it that for ages from the Wei and Jin period till the Sui and Tang era, people kept on referring to the god for exorcizing evil spirits as Zhongkui--literally which means the nine-headed (deity) whose surname is Zhong. Both "Tianwen" and "Zhaohun" (Invoking of Souls) of Chuci say, "Xionghui has nine heads." In later ages the name 'Xionghui' changed to 'Xiongkui' and then finally 'Zhongkui'. Here a gradual phonetic transformation can easily be understood.234

In Chinese Taoist lore, Zhongkui is known as the "Great Spiritual Chaser of Demons for the Whole Empire": a beneficient and powerful expeller of demons. The legend goes that he was canonized by the Tang emperor Xuanzong (713-742) for freeing the monarch from the red demon of emptiness and desolation. Zhongkui is one of the seven officials in the Taoist Ministry of Exorcisms. He is especially honoured in the Fifth Moon, known as the pestilential, the evil or the wicked moon.235

The folk belief in two generals--Qin Qiong and Yuchi Gong took shape in the Ming dynasty. Stories on their serving as door gods first appeared in Xiyouji (Pilgrimage to the West). But various plots in Xiyouji originated in scripts for story-telling and folk legends of the Mongol and the early Ming period. The images of door gods in modern folk


235. Leach (Ed.), n.230, p.231.
paintings are mostly those of these two generals.  

Zaoshen: The Hearth God, popularly known as Zaojun, is the most venerated among the folk deities in China. He was venerated both by the monarchs and the populace. Just like the soil, the well, the doorway and the path, the hearth too entered into an indissoluble bond with man's daily life. Man strives daily for food and drink for his own survival. Naturally the diet-giving god earned an honourable position in the human world. He entered Liji (The Book of Rites) as one of the five principal deities. From the records of Shi ji, Hanshu and Houhanshu it is evident that since the Han dynasty, Zaojun became extremely popular both inside and outside the imperial palace. Rich and poor, ignorant and educated alike perform his ceremonies. In the pre-Han times, there were two versions of the Hearth God. The first one is a fusion of the Hearth God and the Fire God. Texts like Huainanzi, Shuowen, or Guzhoulishuo (On the Ancient Zhou Rites) identify the mythical sovereign Yandi and Zhurong; the deities of fire with Zaoshen. In the second version, the Hearth God is said to be the giver of food and drink, and the objective of offering sacrifices is to requite kindness with gratitude. The hearth or zao was believed to be the First Cook, Xianchui. Old women were worshipped because they were the culinary experts making exquisite cuisine. There is no doubt that the concept of treating Zaoshen as Fire God is much older than the other view because the natural element needed in the hearth to cook food is fire. The expressing of gratitude to Xianchui is the legacy of the matriarchal society.  

The Hearth God returns to heaven to report to the Venerable Heavenly Ruler on the behaviour of the family during the year. On the 23rd or 24th of the twelfth lunar month, before his departure, he is offered sticky sweets and agglutinated rice. This is done because he likes them and in hope that his lips will stick together and he will speak no evil. Then his paper image, together with petitions regarding family affairs, is burned. At times, strings of firecrackers are set off and rice-brandy is offered. The rules he  

236. Zong & Liu, n.2, p.244.
enforces have to do with hygiene and decency. On the last day of the year the Hearth God is welcomed back with a new image pasted up and sacrifice offered. Despite this, he looks after the peace and health of the household. The Hearth God is often seen with an image of a woman who is popularly called Zaowang Nainai (Grandmother Hearth). Her duty is to look after the housewives. The god and goddess of the hearth are equally propitiated.

After the Han era, the responsibility of the Hearth God changed. Looking after longevity and fortune became his main task instead of handling diet. With such a great power Zaojun had direct access to the Heavenly Lord. With an intimate relation with human life he could detect each and every movement of a person. Since the Tang and Song era, people started having the notion that as the feudal officials can be bought over through bribery, similarly they can bribe Zaojun to meet their objective. Hence the ritualistic act of smearing of his lips with sweet dishes. The purpose of offering sticky food stuffs was also to keep his mouth shut so that he may not complain anything wrong about the household concerned.

Ji, which is referred to as the God of Hearth, is a homophonic word meaning 'auspicious insect'. The red-shelled insect that is mostly found on top of a kitchen range is popularly called 'cockroach'. People also call it zaoma, which in Sichuan is known as touyoupo or 'the oil-pilfering woman'. Pochu Mixin Quanshu says that the red-coloured insect is the most harmful creature for man. But Youyang Zazu (Youyang Miscellany) says that this cricket-shaped insect named zaoma dwells mainly in the crevices of kitchen-walls. If a person's kitchen is infested with such insects, he would have no

237. Leach (Ed.), n.230, pp.1129-1130. Although here the annual journey of Zaojun is said to take place on the 23rd, 24th or 26th of the Eleventh Moon, but all the Chinese sources put it on the 23rd or 24th of the Twelfth Lunar Month. See Yuan Ke, n.128, p.124; Hui & Shi, n.51, p.238.

238. Zong & Liu, n.2, p.263.

239. Zong & Liu, n.2, pp.263-264.

Yuexia Laoren: The Old Man under the Moon, nicknamed Yuelao (the Venerable Man of the Moon), is supposed to unite by an invisible thread those persons destined to be married. He is the god who unites persons in marriage. Later the word 'yuexia laoren' became synonymous with matchmaker or go-between.

Why after all the old man sits under the moon? From time immemorial human hearts fill with poetic flavour and romantic feelings at the sight of the moon. Love gushes from the bottom of one's heart in a moonlit night. The moon evokes both exuberance and melancholy. Lovers met and still meet under the moon to spill their emotion. Virtually the moon helps them to unite. Romeo and Juliet stories, found everywhere in the world, hardly miss the moon—perhaps the main inspiration for making love.

Marriage, if not in the modern sense, at least in the archaic sense, is rooted in love. Marriage, a legal union of a man and a woman as husband and wife, is said to be an aftermath of predestined relationship. The God of Marriage finds out the appropriate bonds between men and women, and ties them up in conjugal union.

The concept of destiny or fate is essentially of Indian origin. This concept went to China along with the flourishing of Buddhism in China during the Tang period. The notion of destiny (Sanskrit: adṛśta) was translated into Chinese as 'yuan' which again means 'cause' or 'reason' (Sanskrit: hetu). The fate which brings lovers together is 'yinyuan' in Chinese. The word 'yin' which apparently means marriage, actually reflects the concept of 'hetu' or cause which a woman is bound with. That is why 'yin' also means 'bride' who is fated to marry a man chosen apparently by Yuelao.

Chuanggong and Chuangmu: Since the Tang and Song era, no matter whether inside the palace or among the populace, everybody venerated the pair of protective deities of the bed chamber. The bride and the bridegroom do obeisance to the Lord and Lady of the

Bed when they enter their nuptial chamber. They are propitiated to preserve the bed chamber from quarrels, but their particular function is to ensure pregnancy. The pair of deities are also worshipped when children suffer from measles and smallpox. As a usual practice, they are propitiated in the bedroom at the end of every year. Wine, tea and cakes are put before the images, and the images are turned to face the bed, while the couple, with clasped hands kowtow thrice before the bed. During the Ming and Qing rule, the newly-wed couple together paying obeisance to the deities was in vogue. Chuangmu is worshipped to this day in the countryside of Taiwan.242.

Obeisance is done to Chuanggong and Chuangmu in the hope that they would bless the couple with everlasting harmony. Even more blessing is required for remarriage and procreation, and to pacify the spirit of the deceased wife so that it does not disturb the new couple. When the baby is born, an altar is made inside the delivery room to propitiate Chuangmu. The purpose is to express gratitude to the goddess for ensuring the well-being of both mother and child. But after all who are these deities of procreation? Chuanggong is the Zhou king Wenwang and Chuangmu is his wife because it is said that Wenwang had a hundred sons.243 This sort of a belief is a vestige of nature worship. Only human souls have been deified because they were thought to be the symbols of fertility.

Caishen: Ever since human society entered the phase of private ownership of means of production, monetary wealth has become the most important power dominating almost every aspect of social life of human beings. Capitalist mode of production gradually developed in China as she entered the modern era. With it the concept of fetishism reached its highest stage of development. So the God of Wealth became one of the most universally venerated deities. Yet the understanding of Caishen differed from time to time and place to place. As Jishuo Quanzhen says that the commonly venerated god of wealth is a Muslim in the north, Zhao among the Hans, He Wulu among the Mongols, or the five

sons of Gu Xifeng during the Chen rule. Multiformity of the Wealth God has caused great confusion. In modern times, it is said that there are two categories of Wealth God: civil and military. Bi Gan, a Shang dynasty official loyal to his sovereign, became the civil wealth god; and Guandi became the military wealth god. Minjian Xinnian Shenxiang Tuhua Zhanlanhui says that the dragon, the harbinger of happiness can be seen by the side of Caishen. It is to be noted that in the provinces of Shandong and Zhejiang the green dragon is commonly identified with the Wealth God. Usually only Caishen is depicted on scroll paintings, sitting at the centre of the picture. In case there is a woman depicted by his side, he is called Caigong (the Lord of Wealth) and his spouse is called Caimu (the Mother of Wealth). 244

Among various forms of Caishen the most popular one is Zhao Gongming. He is not a creation of the Song era as propagated by Pochu Mixin Quanshu. We find him in the Taoist legends as a deity. He appears for the first time in Soushenji where he is one of the three generals sent by God to inspect the acquiring of human lives by the subordinate ghosts. During the Wei and Jin period till the Northern and Southern Dynasties, Zhao Gongming was regarded both as the god of the nether world and of pestilence. So after the Sui and Tang era he was placed among the five spirits of plague. In the Mongol and the Ming period we see that Zhao was sent by God to protect the furnace for making the Taoist pills of immortality. 245

Most probably "the Black Altar of Ramadan" is the sacred black stone in the Kaaba Mosque of Mecca - towards which the followers of Islam offer their prayers.

During the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) a powerful eunuch and an expert in sea navigation--Zheng He (1371-1435) undertook seven voyages within a span of three decades, touching more than thirty kingdoms on his way to the Western Seas (Xiyang). Zheng He set on his voyage in 1405 AD and passed along Java, Sumatra, Bengal, Ceylon

244. Zong & Liu, n.2, p.625.
and Kerala. Between 1407 and 1435, Zheng He—a Muslim by religion—went up further across the Arabian Sea to the east coast of Africa, the Persian Gulf and Mecca. Through this 'Sea Silk Route' he brought back enormous wealth to China. Tributes were paid to the Ming court by the vassal states. Maritime trade flourished between China and other countries—far and near. Foreign trade in China witnessed many contribution by Persian and Arab merchants who brought valuable treasure from the Middle East as trade items. Trade relation between China and 'the barbaric world' started in the Tang era. It flourished even more during the Mongol rule. In folktales the word 'Boshiu' or "the alien people from Persia" reminds us of treasure merchants who were followers of Islam. So the expression—"the Muslim Giver of Treasure" is a reality. Even numerous narratives in Liaozhai Zhiyi testify in favour of this.

Fushen: In the folk customs of the Song era, Zhenwu became the God of Happiness. According to Tangshu (The Book of Tang) it was Yang Cheng, the governor in the court of the Tang emperor Dezong, who came to be venerated as the God of Happiness for his virtuous act. Yang Cheng was regarded as a power behind happiness till the Mongol and Ming times. But this was the time when he was erroneously said to have hailed from the court of the Han emperor Wudi. In the modern times the celestial official or his aide took over the charge of ushering happiness. Happiness was often associated with procreation and continuous growth of the genealogical tree. "More progeny means more happiness" (duo zi duo fu) is an age-old concept not only in China but also in all other ancient civilizations of the world. This concept is still alive in rural China to this day. From the social point of view, procreation had such a significant function that ultimately the child-giving deity Zhang Xian became the divinity of happiness.

Happiness itself is highly abstract. Since the Chinese character fu, meaning


247. Most of the child-giving deities in China are female, only Zhang Xian is male. See Hui & Shi (Comp.). Vol.1. n.51, p.170.
happiness, has no resemblance with anything concrete, the nocturnal creature bat however came to represent it. But how? In Chinese, 'bat' and 'happiness' are homophones. The bat (fu) is a symbol of good fortune and happiness (fu) in China. It is a word pun, as the sound (fu) for bat and happiness is the same. That is why bat is considered an auspicious creature in China.

**Shouxing:** In order to measure the position and movement of sun, moon and the five planets the ancient astronomers in China divided the zodiac into twelve equal parts. In order to explain the seasonal changes they divided the sky around the ecliptic into twelve parts, starting from the west towards the eastern direction. Of these twelve signs of the zodiac, the tenth one is Shouxing (lit., the star of longevity). These signs were also associated with the 24 solar terms in the traditional Chinese calendar. Each of the zodiac signs was marked by two or three constellations. The position of Shouxing is approximately to the east of the 28 zodiacal constellations, that is in the two constellations of Jiao and Kang. By the end of the Ming rule when western astronomy migrated to China, the names of the 12 zodiac signs were translated into Chinese according to the

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**248.** The five planets known to the ancient Chinese astronomers were named after the five elements: metal, wood, water, fire and earth. Earth was not considered a planet. See the table below for details:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names of Planets</th>
<th>Names of Corresponding Elements</th>
<th>Other names of the Five Planets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Venus</td>
<td>Metal</td>
<td>Mingxing (Bright Planet), Taibai (Bright White), Qimingxing (Daybreak Star).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jupiter</td>
<td>Wood</td>
<td>Suixing (Year Star), Taisui (Grand Old Star). Chenxing (Time Star).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercury</td>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Yingshuo (Sparkling Planet).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mars</td>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>Zhenxing (Evil-Exorcising Planet).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturn</td>
<td>Earth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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western concept. Thus Shouxing was later replaced by its corresponding constellation, the Libra. However, the approximate constellation of both Jiao and Kang is the Virgo, one that precedes Libra. Since Shouxing found its place at the head of the constellation, it is called 'shou' or longevity.

During the Han dynasty temples were constructed to worship Shouxing. Actually the purpose was to propitiate the Venerable Immortal of the Extreme South. Originally he was in charge of deciding the fate of the nation by extending or shortening the life-span of an imperial house after judging its merits. Later he came to be regarded as the god of human longevity. So in the Eastern Han period the worship of Shouxing and the ceremonial activities to pay respect to the old were combined together. In the Tang and Song period, the original meaning of Shouxing was unknown. So Shouxing, Jiao, Kang and 'the Old Man of the South' Star were thought to be synonymous.\(^{250}\)

The Longevity God has been depicted as an old white-haired man holding a long crooked stick. His peculiarity lies in his high forehead and long head. A person of ripe old age presiding over longevity is only too natural because he himself has lived long to see the world. He knows the secrets of preserving life. He is the god who determines the length of each man's life. The magic pellet on top of the fairy mountains reveal that Nanji Xianweng originally had some Taoist connection. Making pills of immortality was a Taoist practice.

In China the peach is an emblem of marriage and a symbol of immortality as well as of longevity. The god of longevity is often pictured as issuing from a peach. His symbol is the peach in which he is often shown seated on a deer--a symbol of sexuality. The split peach represents the vulva and his coral sceptre the erect phallus.\(^{251}\) Longevity has long been associated with existence and reproduction. Primeval culture has the two

\(^{250}\) Zong & Liu, n.2, pp.125-126.

basic themes of existence and reproduction. Man, since long, had been venerating the spirit of life, and seeking to continue his own lineage through procreation. It is this continuance of life through successive generations which is represented by shou.

Heshen: The Water God of the Yellow River is the most influential river god in China. The Yellow River or Huanghe had a significant position in the economic and cultural life of ancient China. It rises in the Bayankara Hills of Qinghai Province and flows into the Sea of Bohai by the north of Shandong Province. Huanghe has a long course of 5,464 kilometres. That is why Heshen initially had multiformity and regional characteristics along the entire basin. The Shang kings attached great importance to the worship of Heshen. They built temples to propitiate the Yellow River God. After Zhou a system evolved where the Sons of Heaven or emperors used to propitiate the deities of the five sacred mountains and four rivers. The Spring and Autumn, and the Warring States period witnessed grand ceremonies to worship Heshen. Though the understanding and the sacrificial rites of Heshen differed from place to place, but his popular name Hebo was the same everywhere.

In Chuci, Hebo has been depicted as a lover. It reflects with a human touch how a man was deified as the Yellow River God around the contemporary State of Chu. The custom of Hebo getting married every year with a beautiful maiden was in vogue during the Qin and Wei period. Shiji has narrated this and told us too how this custom got abolished. Zhu Tianshun believes that such a custom was actually a barbaric act of human sacrifice to propitiate the River God. This in fact was a legacy of a much earlier age.

Heshen earned many honourable titles of Duke, King, Marquis etc. in the process of worship. Initially it was the worship of natural phenomenon which later took the shape of a white dragon or a giant fish or a merman-like creature. It was even later that a man

was deified to replace the earlier aquatic creatures. After the advent of Buddhism to China, the nagas of the Buddhist sutras gradually merged with the dragon—the deity venerated at the grassroots level in China. It became the symbol of Water God. Since the Tang and Song era the Dragon King started playing a decisive role in rivers, lakes and seas. And Hebo gradually passed into oblivion except for some occasional appearances in Taoist texts. Then again in the Ming and Qing era the notion of human spirits turning into river gods started prevailing in the Yellow River basin. Fengyi got drowned to become a ghost only to be appointed by the Supreme Lord as the Yellow River God.

The Yellow River, formerly known as the River of Sorrow, used to destroy crops and render people homeless through massive inundation. The people at the grassroots level suffered the most. Side by side with expression of awe, he was uglified to a certain extent in order to register popular resentment against Heshen for his outrageous act every year.

**Longwang:** There are no real dragons in the world. It is actually a creation of human fantasy. It is an animal deity born out of early man’s illusion about forces of nature. The Dragon King gradually became important as Hebo turned increasingly insignificant as the god of waters. The Dragon King virtually came to occupy the entire domain of rivers, lakes and seas. In ancient myths and legends he held a fairly high position, later to become one of the four magic beasts symbolizing good omen. In scientific terms, the dragon is only a strange totem from a particular period of history. According to historians and archaeologists, the primeval Xia tribe, which lived along the upper-middle reaches of the Yellow River, used the dragon as its totem. Nonetheless, many characteristics of this creature may be found in the real world. The dragon is believed to be a benevolent,

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254. Unicorn (qilin), phoenix, turtle and dragon are called 'siling' - the four propitious omen.
helpful, life-giving creature composed of nine salient features\textsuperscript{255} of other animals: (a) horn like a stag, (b) forehead like a camel, (c) eyes like a demon, (d) neck like a snake, (e) belly like a sea monster, (f) scales like a carp, (g) claws like an eagle, (h) paws like a tiger, and (i) ears like an ox. It is the symbol of the male principle, the striving force of nature, the \textit{yang}.

Rain is the first need of an agricultural people. In ancient Chinese legends the Dragon King has been depicted as bringer of rain, controller of the ocean and all storms and waters, and inhabiter of all lakes. The phenomena of water-spouts is always associated with him. In dry seasons the peasants bring his image from the temples and show him the damage done by the droughts. In Beijing\textsuperscript{256} he receives particular attention at the Big Bell Temple (Dazhongsi). Dragons were propitiated in the Han era for ushering rain. Since the dragon has the power to transform into Sons of Heaven or other great figures, he started symbolizing the ancient emperors. The ruling class believed that monarchical power was determined by the gods. Thus the dragon became the symbol of the "morality of the emperor and the power and prestige of heaven".\textsuperscript{257} In the 4th millennium BC a dragon delivered the eight mystic diagrams, the Bagua, to a legendary emperor. In the Xia dynasty dragons were associated with ancestor worship and fertility.\textsuperscript{258} After the migration of Buddhism to China, the nagaraja of the Buddhist sutras, known as the bringer of cloud and rain, earned the title 'King' in the Tang and Song period. Though possessing supernatural power the Dragon King however was not assigned responsibility to protect land. But after the Song era, the Taoists derived certain aspects of their religious faith

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[255.] Luo Yuan (Song Dynasty), Chapter "Shilong" (On Dragon), \textit{Eryayi} (Those Elegant Wings) cited in He Xin, n.234, p.68. Kulphy, n.251, p.55.
\item[256.] Leach (Ed.), n.230, p.654.
\item[258.] Leach (Ed.), n.230, p.323.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
They created the Dragon King of the entire heaven, the Dragon King of the four seas and five cardinal points. Gradually the Dragon King started inhabiting all the water-lying areas of the earth. Even abyss, pools, hot-springs and wells came under his jurisdiction.

**Wenshen:** Formerly the acute infectious diseases, mainly incurable maladies were generally termed as *wen* or *yi*, that is pestilence. Due to the malignant and rapidly contagious nature, and grave consequences of such diseases, people in ancient times suffered from terrible fear. Being unable to resist the scourge of diseases or to find a proper antidote, they believed that this was being caused by the Five Spirits of Plague. Idols of these five spirits were built later on. After the Jin period it was said that Zhao Gongming infected the human world with plague on behalf of the Supreme Lord. The folk narratives of the Sui and Tang period project Zhao and others as the five gods of plague. In the Song era the great king Zhang presided over the Ministry of Plague. In the Ming novels, with six deities as his subordinates, Lü Yue was given the charge of the Plague Ministry. These dreadful deities of pestilence were propitiated in order to prevent them from inflicting harm to mankind.

The hierarchical structure of the human society with distinct division of labour had a great influence upon the conceptualization of the bringers of pestilence. Compartmentalisation of their respective functions reveal that various forms of seasonal maladies were taken account of under the common roof of the Ministry of Plague. Scarlet fever, measles, cholera, rinderpest—all came under the common category of epidemic disease or *wen*.

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Ouhuangshen: In ancient times locust\textsuperscript{261} was one of the great enemies of crops. Swarms of locusts used to destroy the fruits of labour of poor peasants. The people suffered great misery. Those days the people were unable to offer any sort of resistance to the plague of locusts. So they placed their hopes on divinities. For instance, when the area of Anhui and Jiangsu was hit by locusts during the Jin dynasty, fortunately it was a big flock of migratory birds that feasted on locusts. The birds came to be venerated as "the Protectors of the Country". During the early Qing era, temples were built to worship Pushen (cattail deity) in the prefecture of Haizhou. The legend relates to how the deity was capable of eradicating locusts. However in the Ming and Qing times, general Liu Meng was believed to possess the magical power of exterminating locusts. There are innumerable legends on such deities capable of driving locusts away. Though the worship of such deities were banned during the reign of the Qing emperor Kangxi, the popular faith in Ouhuangshen however did not fall into a decline. During the reign of the Qing emperor Shizongxian (popularly known as Yongzheng), the rituals of worship formally found their way into the state canons.

Nüwa: At the dawn of civilization, human beings started living in a matriarchal society or rather in a matrilineal commune. In those primitive communist societies, women were the rulers, not really in the monarchic sense, but as heads of the then existing social organization. Woman became the symbol of creation and nurture, and hence the mother of entire mankind. Such a motherly figure is represented by Nüwa, an enormously benevolent and life-generating deity. She is a mystic character occupying a prominent position in ancient Chinese legends. Nüwa is one of the very ancient goddesses who is said to have patched up the sky and also created man out of the loess soil.

However, differences of opinion exist between scholars; some regard Nüwa to be

\textsuperscript{261} The Chinese character for locust (蝗, pron. huang) has two components: insect and emperor. Locust was also called the King of Insects (Chongwang) as we see in the Supplement to the Qing Court Documents, cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, pp.468-469.
the wife of the sun god Fuxi, others produce evidence in support of their theories that Fuxi and the moon goddess Nüwa were merely brother and sister. He Xin professes that the ancient Chinese ritual of sun and moon worship was the mother of the dualistic concept of yin and yang. The intercourse between yin (the feminine or recessive characteristics, or the negative principles in nature) and yang (the masculine or dominant characteristics, or the positive principles in nature) gave birth to all existing phenomena in the celestial and earthly domain. On the other hand it has to be seen that this dualistic concept sprang up from the very model of copulation between Fuxi and Nüwa. This concept of copulation gradually transformed into mythical imagery. The brick-paintings excavated from the Han tombs reveal a synthesis of these two human-headed, reptile-bodied deities. These are vestiges of phallism, the yoni of Nüwa being the principal object for worship. This can be exemplified by the fact that Nüwa is venerated by some Chinese ethnic minorities of Yunnan for her role as the Goddess of Marriage, and at times, as a child-giving deity. Her gigantic vulva is thought to be the source of all living and non-living beings.

Nüwa reported to Fuxi that men and women were living together indiscriminately without law and that this was degrading the morals of the people. Fuxi then prohibited marriage between persons with the same family name and instituted the system of go-betweens, presents, and ceremonies. It was Nüwa who instituted marriage rites. The places for worship of Gaomei, the go-between, differed from one kingdom to the

262. He Xin, n.234, pp. 54-55.
263. He Xin, n.234, p.45.
266. Leach (Ed.), n.230, p.427.
other. Some worshipped her in hills and forests, as the Song State did in Sanglin (lit. mulberry forests); and some by the banks of rivers and pools, as the Chu State did in Yunmeng (lit. cloudy dreams). The places chosen were always picturesque.

The making of the musical instrument 'sheng' by Nüwa reflects the fact that she was also the goddess of aesthetics in general and of music in particular. Songs and dances constitute a significant part of human life. The creation of 'sheng' originally had a very close relationship with love and marriage because it is music that brings joy to the human mind and thus fills it up with tender feelings. So Nüwa is the Sacred Lady who disseminated culture.

**Huangdi:** The Yellow River valley is known as the cradle of the Chinese civilization. The Yellow Emperor was originally the name of a tribe that inhabited the central plains, comprising the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River. The name of the tribe is derived from the yellow soil of the Yellow River basin. In legends the Yellow Emperor is said to be the common ancestor of different tribes of the central plains. Even if he were an individual, he might have been the chieftain of the tribe named after him. The fact that he was a man either from a matriarchal society or carrying the vestiges of a matriarchal society, can be seen firstly from his surname Ji, a character with woman as its semantic part. Secondly, from the fact that Huangdi and Yandi were brothers born of the same mother but different fathers, we would notice that polyandry was in vogue.

Huangdi's assumed name was Xuanyuan because of his making of chariots. In fact, xuan is a high-fronted, curtained carriage used in ancient times; and yuan means the shafts of a cart or carriage. Various legends describe him as an inventor of numerous things on earth. Sericulture, vessel, vehicle, Chinese characters, temperament of

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267. Lei Zu, the wife of Huangdi, was the first to domesticate wild silkworms. See Leach (Ed.), n.230, p.427.

268. Cang Xie, a minister of Huangdi, invented the Chinese characters after observing the footprints of animals and birds. See Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p.185. Yuan Ke, n.128, p. 228 (n.31).
music, medical science, arithmetic, potter's wheel, compass. ships, armour etc., were all said to have originated in the ages when Huangdi lived. He is considered the first of the five emperors of the mythical dynasties, a culture hero bringing civilization to the doorsteps of his progeny, the Chinese nation.

Yandi, one of the three mythical sovereigns, was the chieftain of a clan who had challenged the supremacy of Huangdi. Yandi, with the people of his own clan, migrated eastward to settle in the central plains. There both the tribes entered into one of the most bloody battles which is said to have involved predatory animals and birds. Yandi organised the chieftains of other clans against Huangdi but was defeated at the end. Another clan-chief Chiyou made an assault upon Huangdi's strategic positions. Huangdi was extremely bewildered by the tactics applied by Chiyou. Chiyou, a man of Yandi's lineage, was the inventor of various types of weapons that posed tremendous threat to Huangdi's survival. Moreover the formidable allies of Chiyou: the wind and rain caused heavy damage to Huangdi's encampment bringing down his soldiers' morale. Ultimately Huangdi had to learn the art of war from Xuannū. Most probably Xuannū was Xuanniao (lit. black bird)\(^\text{269}\), thought to be the venerated ancestress of the Shang tribe.

The narrative can be summarized thus: (1) Huangdi represented the good and Chiyou the evil; (2) Chiyou had supernatural abilities of making cloud and fog, invoking wind and rain, and bringing storm; (3) Huangdi could not have won the battle with Chiyou if not helped by Nū Ba (Lady Ba) and Xuannū. White dragons and red tigers also fought for him.\(^\text{270}\)

The restoration of order is implicit in many of the invention stories. The grandson

\(^{269}\) 'Shangsong' (The Sacrificial Songs of the Shang), Shiijing (The Book of Songs) cited in He Xin, n.234, p.76 says that under the order of Heaven, Xuanniao descended on earth to procreate the Shang (\text{Tian ming Xuanniao, jiang er sheng Shang}.)

of Shen Nong, Chiyou, rebelled against Huangdi. The former invented war and weapons: the latter countered with armour. Chiyou called down thick fog: Huangdi invented the compass to guide his troops. Ba, the goddess of drought aided Huangdi against the Count of the Wind and the Lord of Rain, who were allies of Chiyou, but Huangdi finally exiled her to preserve men from excessive drought. The function of the ruler was to maintain everything in balance.  

Shen Nong: Shen Nong, called the patron of agriculture, succeeded Fuxi. He was the second of the three legendary sovereigns. In ancient times when primitive tribes used to live by fishing, hunting and gathering, Shen Nong invented agriculture. About 2700 BC, with a spade-shaped farm tool he taught his brethren the art of tilling land. Shen Nong invented the plow and discovered how to sow seeds. His image with the head of an ox on a man’s body is very natural because it is the ox which helps man to plough fields. In other words, Shen Nong was deified to such an extent that his image became a synthesis of man and ox due to his enormous contribution to agriculture. The story of Shen Nong reflects the entire process of development from nomadic life to settled life in ancient China. He is also accredited with the discovery of medical properties of certain herbs and with dissemination of knowledge on therapeutics.

In some narratives Shen Nong is none other than the mythical sovereign Yandi. But such a theory has been refuted by other classical texts. However, the method that Shen Nong applied to find the properties of herbs and then to prepare antitoxin out of them was elaborate and risky. His achievements earned him respect and admiration. Hence he is venerated as the God of Medicine.

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271. Christie, n.213. p.64.

272. Shiji cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.4, p. 299. Shen Nong has been portrayed as having a human body and an ox's head (ren shen niu shou).

In the process of his search for medicinal herbs Shen Nong got poisoned several times\textsuperscript{274} but managed to detoxify with the help of tea. But at the end he died, leaving his research work incomplete. Shen Nong was a sage-like figure who united many tribes and became chieftain of their united league. Because of his philanthropic deeds and spirit of self-sacrifice, he was deified not very long after his death. But worship of the God of Medicine began as late as in the Mongol period.\textsuperscript{275}

Guandi: The Divine Emperor Guan or Guandi, popularly known as Guangong, was actually a historical personality—a senior general named Guan Yu from the Shu State (221-263) during the period of the Three Kingdoms. At the close of the Eastern Han dynasty when the rebellion of the Yellow Turbans swept through the empire, Guan Yu concluded an alliance of friendship with two other men whom he had encountered on the road and who, like himself, were fired by patriotism. One of them was Liu Bei, the later founder of the Shu Han dynasty of Sichuan; the other a butcher, Zhang Fei. Guan Yu was honest, loyal, just and courageous beyond all measure. During a war with the Wu State (222-280), Guan Yu ran into an ambush and was taken prisoner. He was brought to the enemy capital where he swore that he would rather die than yield. Thereupon he was executed.

Guan Yu did not have much influence among the common folk during the period between Wei and Tang. But suddenly by the end of the Northern Song dynasty he began to have a meteoric rise. He underwent a series of posthumous promotions: first he was venerated as duke, then prince, later as king, then again as a great god who vanquishes the devils, and the last dynasty eventually revered him as a great divine helper of the heavens. He is also known as the war saint and is a powerful saviour in all emergencies, even when

\textsuperscript{274} Huainanzi as cited in Yuan Ke (Ed.), n.179, p.38 says that Shen Nong used to get poisoned seventy times a day. This is actually a numerical hyperbole.

\textsuperscript{275} Jifu Tongzhi (The Imperial Records of Zhili Province) cited in Zong & Liu, n.2, p. 518. Zhili is now known as Hebei Province.
humans are plagued by devils. Guan Yu is venerated as the Master of War, together with Confucius, the Master of Peace.\(^\text{276}\) He is honoured as the patron of war because he prevents rather than because he promotes war.\(^\text{277}\) His cult grew in importance under imperial patronage.

The reasons behind worship of Guandi can be explained from the viewpoint of the feudal rulers of the contemporary period: firstly for his loyalty, courage and excellent skill in martial arts; and secondly for laying down of his life for his country. But the people at the grassroots level attached importance to Guan Yu for his code of brotherhood; and secondly for remaining faithful and unyielding. Whenever a new dynasty was founded his holy figure appeared. Temples were constructed to him, and great sacrifices of oxen, sheep and pigs were made. The objective of the ruler was to make Guan Yu the model of loyalty in order to utilize the services of his subjects for ulterior motive: either expansion of empire or punitive expedition. The populace prayed for good fortune; for curing diseases and averting disasters; for exorcising evil spirits and punishing traitors; and for looking after the Department of the Nether World.\(^\text{278}\). That is why Guan Yu is also venerated as the upholder of justice. In his temple the executioner's sword was kept. He was invoked much for predictions about the future.\(^\text{279}\) To the common man he was a kind of Robin Hood figure. Guan Yu is said to have killed a tyrannical official at the end of the Han dynasty. The story of Guan Yu and other folk heroes is recounted in Sanguozhi Yanyi (Romance of the Three Kingdoms)--a semi-historical account of events at the end of the Later Han dynasty, written at the beginning of the Ming period.

**Xiwangmu**: The Royal Mother of the Western Paradise is a fabulous fairy princess said to...

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278. Zong & Liu, n.2, p.574.

279. Christie, n.213, p.70.
dwell in the Kunlun Mountains, and to have troops of fairies and genii under her command. Xiwangmu, daughter of the Supreme Lord, is the goddess of epidemics. Throughout the region, where she dwells, stretches the desert, 'the Shifting Sands', liusha, which the author rather seems to have imagined as a sort of river of liquid sand, and which is necessary to cross to reach the Jade Mountain\(^{280}\), that is Mount Kunlun. Xiwangmu is the consort of Dongwanggong. She is formed from the female (yin) principle of the universe. Dongwanggong is the Taoist Lord of Immortals. When the primitive and inactive void moved to produce creatures, it created first in the east the sovereign male principle yang. Dongwanggong is the Lord of the East\(^{281}\). Yin and yang principles in Chinese philosophy and religion are assumed to be in eternal opposition. In this opposition they achieve a dynamic balance. Thus harmony is achieved. Xiwangmu represents yin and is the ancestor of the female immortals.

There is some dispute over the physical appearance of Xiwangmu. While most of the sources depict her as a deity with tiger fangs and tail of a panther, the rest argue that it is incorrect to mention her as a beautiful lady on the one hand and make her possess such beastly look on the other.\(^{282}\) Actually it is an attempt to give a supernatural look to the deity solely by adding something non-human. The purpose is to place her in an honourable position. Such a semi-human, semi-beastly image of Xiwangmu probably reflects a quite primitive faith. Later during the Warring States period, texts like Zhuangzi and Mutianzizhuan (History of Mu, the Son of Heaven) depict Xiwangmu as an immortal who had attained spiritual enlightenment or as a semi-human, semi-immortal monarch. By that time she was already deified. She is said to have held the elixir of life. When the emperors of the Western Han dynasty sought the art of immortality, Xiwangmu obviously became one of the most venerated ones, a white-haired old lady.\(^{283}\) Here she is

\(^{280}\) Maspero, n.216, p.375.
\(^{281}\) Leach (Ed.), n.230, p.1131.
\(^{283}\) Zong & Liu, n.2, p.439.
a typical Taoist goddess. Once in 6000 years the magic peaches ripen in the gardens of her palace. Then it is her birthday and all immortals gather to eat the fruit which renews their immortality.\textsuperscript{284}

When Dongwanggong assumed the name Yuhuang Dadi, the name of his consort changed too—from Xiwangmu to Wangmu Niangniang (the Great Queen Mother).

\textbf{Yuhuang Dadi:} The Jade Emperor is believed to be the most venerated folk deity of the highest order in China. Liaozhai Zhiyi says, "Both are the greatest, Yudi (the Jade Emperor) in heaven and Huangdi (the emperor) on earth".\textsuperscript{285} Yuhuang Dadi became the symbol of imperial power in the supernatural world. He is the Supreme Deity of Taoism; the Supreme Ruler of the Taoist Heaven and the Universe.

Yuhuang Dadi is regarded as the giver of life, the vitalizing power of earth, judge, forgiver, and saviour of mankind.\textsuperscript{286} In fact this Taoist divinity is in competition with the primeval notion of the Supreme Lord, Shangdi and later with the Confucian rationalistic concept of heaven or tian. Some scholars report that he is part of a Taoist trick to bolster up a theology threatened by the increasing popularity of Buddhism.\textsuperscript{287} In one tradition Yuhuang Dadi is a ruler of Heaven and patron of the Chinese emperors; in yet another tradition he is the creator of mankind.

\textbf{Milefo:} Maitreya Buddha is one of the Buddhist deities venerated widely in China. According to Buddhist legends, he was born in a Brahmin family, later to become a disciple of Śākyamuni (Tathāgata). He is believed to be the one who is yet to come. That is to say when the Ādi-Buddha dies, it is Maitreya who will inherit Śākyamuni in future and will descend to the world to attain Buddhahood and preach the Buddha doctrines. In

\textsuperscript{284} Christie, n.213, p.62.
\textsuperscript{285} Zong & Liu, n.2, p.35.
\textsuperscript{286} Leach (Ed.), n.230, p.537.
\textsuperscript{287} Leach (Ed.), n.230, p.1192.
modern times some secret societies in China used to operate under the banner of Maitreya. A secret society named Bailianshe or the White-Lotus Sect used Maitreya's name for seditious purposes. Since the Sui and Tang period, Chinese history witnessed several peasant uprisings organized under the banner of Maitreya and under the slogan of "Maitreya is coming into the world". Maitreya virtually became the driving force behind the peasants in building up strength and staging rebellion. He became the symbol of radical transformation.

The form of Maitreya venerated in the Chinese folk culture is a figure laughing eternally. He is a fat monk exposing his chest and belly. This, in fact, is not the original image of Maitreya. The Laughing Buddha, who is associated with wealth, was actually a monk named Xie Ci during the Five Dynasties (907-960). This tenth-century "baggy monk" (Budai Heshang) occupied the honoured position of wealth-giver. Maitreya is associated with future. And future is always bright, full of hopes. Hope and brightness are both directly and indirectly related to wealth. A fat monk with an ever-bright face is understandably connected with wealth. The Laughing Buddha is actually a sinicized form of Maitreya, a complete distortion of the original.

Guanyin Pusa: Guanyin is the Chinese Goddess of Mercy; the most universally respected and most widely known of all Chinese divinities. Historically, she is a transformation of Avalokiteśvara, the gentle disciple who was born from a tear shed by the lord Buddha at the spectacle of the suffering of the world. In Buddhist scriptures all the Bodhisattvas are said to be sans birth sans death and sans sexual distinction. But one thing is clear that the Indian Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara was a male figure. In the Northern and Southern Dynasties, Guanyin was a male figure and sometimes a female figure. But from the Tang period till the modern times Guanyin was distinctly a female figure. In the folk realm

Guanyin is a beautiful young lady.

In Chinese art, there are 35 manifestations of Guanyin. Most of these manifestations were the creation of Chinese Buddhism with only a few having roots in the original sūtras from India. The sexual transformation of Avalokiteśvara is attributed to Empress Wu Zetian, who ruled between 684 AD and 704 AD, the only empress to have borne the title of 'Tianzi' (Son of Heaven) in spite of her being a woman. Wu Zetian was eulogized as goddess Xiwangmu (The Royal Mother of the Western Paradise) and Shengmu (The Sacred Mother). Perhaps due to this, that since the Tang period Avalokiteśvara no more remained a male deity. His ultimate transformation into a female form had a direct effect on the folk belief and customs. The populace started reflecting their common aspiration through the all-virtuous image of Guanyin.

Guanyin is widely known as Bodhisattva "Daci Dabei Jiuku Jiunan" (the infinitely merciful, the one who helps the needy and relieves the distressed). To the common man it seemed very natural to think that a soft and kindhearted person can only be a charming lady. The thousand-armed, thousand-eyed figure of Guanyin with enormous compassion (mahākaruṇā)—entered the folk culture during the Mongol and Ming period. People started believing that Guanyin was Miaoshan in her previous life.

Guanyin is essentially a protector of women, and one legend is that she fled from her father’s court to preserve her virginity. She is also known as Songzi Niangniang, the lady who brings children. That is why she is often shown carrying a child in her arms. Embroidered slippers placed before her image induce pregnancy among sterile women.

2.3 TIBETAN POPULAR FOLK DEITIES: NARRATION

In mean altitude, Tibet is the highest inhabited area in the world. Topography, weather and altitude -- all these factors have an enormous effect upon human beings. The

immensity of the landscape, in which human existence is strangely dwarfed, the violent and unpredictable phases of the weather, and the often inimical aspect of the elements have predisposed the Tibetan to seek supernatural defenses against unfriendly nature and have led him to place special value on the acquisition of supranormal control devices and the exercise of thaumaturgic power. The extremes of temperature, constantly experienced, have a very special stimulating effect, which may be one of the reasons for the intensive, often compulsive, aspects of Tibetan endeavour once that endeavour has been channelled into religious observance.293

The Tibetan lives in an atmosphere charged with malignant demons and spirits; and the great practical attraction of Buddhism for him is that it can protect him, so he is led to believe, against most of these supernatural enemies. Yet it should be remembered that in the higher Hindu civilization of India the ostensible object of the Brahmanical sacrifice was also to chain the demons.

The great majority of the Tibetan demons are of a non-Buddhist character. A considerable proportion of the aboriginal evil spirits have been adjusted by the Lamas to the type of somewhat analogous bloodthirsty demons in the later Tantrik Buddhism of India, and these are to be coerced or propitiated on the lines of the Indian ritual. But the larger number demand the rites of the pre-Buddhist religion to which they belong, viz., the Bon. These spirits are mainly personified natural forces and malignant ghosts, but several are animistic and fetishes, and all are saturated with sacrificial ideas.294

The pantheon, most of which is shared by the two religions: the Bon religion of today and Tibetan Buddhism, is comprehensively summed up in the Tibetan bipartite term lha adre ("god-goblin"), which clearly reflects a dualistic concept of existence. But a

triptite view of the cosmos is suggested in the existence of another system having three
categories: (1) those above, the lha (gods), (2) those of the middle region, the sa-bdag
(earth lords) and/or the gnyan (argali), or strong ones, and (3) those of the underworld,
the klu (serpent spirits) or Nágas.

Of these two systems, the bipartite one is probably Bon in origin and the tripartite
one is probably Buddhist. The Bon pantheon is more populous, a vast swarm of primitive
gods and demons. In general they have darker and more vengeful dispositions, for they
exist within the context of a Bon dualism of unending conflict, a sense of struggle that is
all pervading.295

The Tibetan pantheon is perhaps the largest in the world. The complex network of
gods and demons makes it almost impossible to categorize them. However, a broad
classification can be made in the following manner:
1. The ancient Bon deities: gods, spirits and demons;
2. The Bodhisattvas;
3. Culture heroes:
   (a) Indian;  (b) Tibetan.

1. The ancient Bon deities: gods, spirits and demons

   The original Bon religion was the national Tibetan form of the old
animist-shamanist religion.296 Ancient Chinese texts and the Tibetan manuscripts from
Dunhuang depict the Bonpos more as sorcerers or priests who performed sacrifices on the
occasion of funerals and oaths, and cured the sick by exorcisms.297 Bon was probably

295. Ekvall, n.293, pp.24-25.
296. Helmut Hoffmann, Die Religionen Tibets, Edward
      Fitzgerald (Tr.), The Religions of Tibet. London :
297. R.A. Stein, La Civilisation tibétaine, J.E. Stapleton
      Driver (Tr.), Tibetan Civilization. London : Faber and
      Faber Ltd., 1972, p.235.
conveyed to Tibet in the company of racial migration. It is animism in character. It teaches that there exist countless, free spirits in the universe, whose movements bring good or ill-fortune to men.298 The deities belonging to Bon, the oldest spiritual tradition of Tibet, date back to the pre-Buddhist era in Tibet:

**Lha (Gods of the Sky)**

The lha, is a host of supernatural spirits. Lha are godly spirits who are propitiated. They are guardians of passes and dangerous passages, and each such place is marked by a labtse, a mound of stones to which each passerby adds a stone or a prayer flag even today. These spirits have accumulated good deeds over the ages, and because of this are able and willing to help humans.299 The lha are a class of white deities, well-disposed towards human beings.300 The lha are generally benevolent celestial beings. Many other deities were popularly called lha, including those supposed to rest on one's shoulders and gods of food, the hearth, and roads.301

**Klu (Gods of the Subsoil, or the aquatic deities)**

The original habitat of the klu was rivers and lakes, and even certain wells. They have their homes on the bottom where they guard secret treasures. An expiatory poem of the Bonpo says. "The klu kings are in all streams...."302 The klu are associated with water. Bringing rain, she also brings fertility. Thus she is the patron deity of women.


301. Tadeusz Skorupski, Chapter 4 : Tibet, in Richard Caven-dish (Ed.), n.213, p.55.

specially young maidens. Lakes and sources of springs, where shrines have been built, are sacred to her. Klu punishes with leprosy, rheumatism, and skin diseases. She can be propitiated with offerings of what are called the three whites and three sweets. Klu is associated with snakes, blue-grey horses, and blue-grey mules. Klu wears a gown of feathers and seamless watersilk representing mist. She rides a blue horse with white stripes in water designs and holds a crystal vase filled with gems. The klu can be vindictive when their natural home is disturbed. The pollution of water, the construction of barrages and dykes, irrigation works, altering the course of rivers are acts that can lead to illness if not carried out at the astrologically correct time. They can take revenge by sending diseases such as leprosy to the responsible human beings. The klu are the gods which haunt the environment and especially with those of the watery 'subsoil'. Upset by the labours of 'civilization', the building of houses, ploughing and so forth, which disturb the soil, the deities bring on illnesses. Only the Bonpos can cure them, by finding out the cause and by using their ritual thread structures and figurines.

Here goes a story, in brief, which illustrates the dominant role played by the klu in certain events. In a certain country lives a certain king who is made 'the elect of the created world' (srid-pa'i bskos-mkhan) among all the gods of the created world (srid-pa). He marries. One day, a blue snake appears, touches the water-mill and vanishes. 'The elect' asks an expert (dbyal) and a 'little child of the mind' the reason. It is the last-named who tells him that he must throw precious stones and medicines into the mill. Later the married couple are ploughing--and the king of klu appears in the shape of a marmot. The man tries to kill it, but it disappears. The 'Bonpo' (dbyal) explains that it was a god. Shortly afterwards the couple are taken ill. After a number of treatment and diagnosis, the


304. Samuel, n.300, p.162.

man finally appeals to the Miraculous-Queen-of-the-World, the White-Lady-of-the-Sky (srid-pa'i 'phrul-gyi rgyal-mo gnam-sman dkar-mo) who in turn questions the King-of-the-Sky (gnam-gyi gung-rgyal). The King of the Sky looks in his magic mirror and discovers the cause of the illness: the ploughing, which has angered the king of the klu. But he gives no remedy. The man then appeals to the 'little child of the mind' (yid-kyi khye'u-chung), who asks Shenrap for help. The latter, at last, identifies not only the cause, but the remedy. The king of the klu must be restored to health. 306

The retiring of the klu to their abodes in the nether regions is called klu-ldog. The time for klu-ldog is generally calculated by the Tibetan astrologers to fall in December. The coming upwards of the klu from their retreats in summer is called klu-thebs. This time is fixed in Tibetan almanacs for worshipping them. The residence of the klu or serpent gods is klu-khang, an imaginary palace supposed to exist at the bottom of the sea or of some lake where they reside. 307

Gnyan (Spirits of the trees and rocks)

These malignant spirits infest certain trees, rocks, and springs, which reputed haunts are avoided as far as possible. These places are studiously shunned and respected, and usually daubed with red paint in adoration or other offering to propitiate the spirit. 308

In every monastery and temple the image of the gnyan, as an idol or fresco, is placed within the outer gateway, usually to the right of the door, and worshipped with wine, and occasionally with bloody sacrifice, and it is given a more or less honorific name. The local demon of the red hill near Lhasa, surnamed Potala, and the residence of

306. Stein, n.297, pp.243-244.


the Grand Lama, is called gnyan-ch'en tang. 309

The gnyan, who roam around on mountains and in valleys, and make their lairs in slatey rocks, woods and ditches as they please, are easily annoyed by human beings, and then they send sickness and death. As they also make their haunts on mountains they are closely related to the mountain gods. The god of the powerful Thang-lha mountain chain, who is named after it, is also known as the great gnyan. An expiatory poem of the Bonpo says, "...the gnyan kings are in trees and stones...."310

Gnyan is the god of Tibetan folk culture and the patron of rulers and all patriots. He is associated with the mountains. He is offered cheese, the three whites and three sweets, and the spikelets of grain plants. Gnyan is offended by the chopping down of any trees that may be held sacred locally, by the digging up of the sacred ground, by the smell of burnt food, and by the beams of torches or lamps cast on the tops of hills or mountains consecrated to him. He punishes by magnifying physical weaknesses and causing domestic chaos. The horse and deer (especially the musk deer) are his sacred animals, as well as quadrupeds in general and birds. His female counterpart is associated with storms and weather. The colour of gnyan's armour and per311 are most often white. He carries a white pennant banner and either a platter or vase of jewels.312

In another description, gnyan are spirits, generally badly intentioned, who live in the atmosphere or on the earth's surface, on plains and in forests. Many of them live in trees. One should be careful not to cut trees on certain days indicated in the astrological almanacs. The gnyan cause many illnesses, and certain cancers are attributed to them.

310. Hoffmann, n.296, p. 18.
311. The per is a kimono-like garment reaching to the ankles with wide, triangular sleeves and a pleat over each hip. The per was the garment of ancient Tibetan royalty. The warlike figures wear armour beneath the per. See Trungpa, n.303, p.301.
312. Trungpa, n.303, p.302.
They are described as having an animal form, of bovine type, yellow or green in colour.\textsuperscript{313}

**Sa-bdag (Lords of the Soil)**

In general neutral terms, they can become irritated when one 'wounds' the soil. In their domain, through work, excavation, or building.\textsuperscript{314} Sa-bdag are gods of the ground of any locality supposed to be jealous and angry beings. of terrific appearance, to whom on many occasions offerings are brought.\textsuperscript{315} They are deities bound to particular places, which they control, including individual mountains, villages and fields.\textsuperscript{316} An expiatory poem of the Bonpo says:

"...The Masters of the Earth are in the five kinds of earth:

There, it is said, are the Masters of the Earth, the klu and the gnyan..."\textsuperscript{317}

**Bdud (The personified evil principle)**

The bdud are spirits who are openly malevolent. These are beings who were violently opposed to the dharma in their past life. They create obstacles for the practice of yogis and they feed on human flesh. Their colour is black.\textsuperscript{318}

There are four bdud devils: (a) the avoidable devil, (b) the unavoidable devil, (c) the demon of merriment, and (d) the demon of pride.\textsuperscript{319}

\textsuperscript{313.} See n.304.
\textsuperscript{314.} See n.304.
\textsuperscript{315.} Das, n.307, p.1258.
\textsuperscript{316.} See n.301.
\textsuperscript{317.} Hoffmann, n.296, p.18.
\textsuperscript{318.} See n.304.
\textsuperscript{319.} Das, n.307, p.666.
Bdud are said to be evil-tempered demons of the higher spheres, shaped like birds, fish, herbs, stones. Their leader, 'The Merciless Blood-Head', inhabits a black castle, nine storeys high.\textsuperscript{320}

Bdud is associated with darkness. He brings bad luck unless propitiated with offerings of leftovers. He is connected with crows and black pigs. Bdud rides a black horse with a white blaze and wears iron armour and helmet and a black per. He holds a sword and a spear with a black banner and carries fastened to his saddle a water bag filled with poison, and a long black board with a handle with his victims' names inscribed on it.\textsuperscript{321}

\textbf{Btsan (God of Fire)}

The btsan has the power of instant destruction. He is associated with speed and actions, especially destructive ones. Because of the swiftness of his horse and his quickness to anger, he kills his enemies not externally but by instantly entering their bodies through the mouth or anus. He is the patron deity of bandits and warriors. Ills associated with him are heart attack or death by accident. Making fire in inappropriate places, roasting meat, or in general creating disturbances or disharmony in any environment are offensive to him. Goat blood and goat meat are offered to btsan. He is associated with brown horses and jackals. Btsan wears copper armour beneath his red per and rides a red roan. His image is associated with blood and fire and he strikes at sunset. He holds a scimitar and a lasso.\textsuperscript{322}

The air is the domain of the btsan who still live on in the minds of Tibetans today. They are supposed to appear as 'savage huntsmen, red in colour, wearing helmets and armour, who ride on light-red horses over the mountains under the leadership of their

\textsuperscript{320} See n.301.
\textsuperscript{321} See n.312.
\textsuperscript{322} See n.303.
king'. Whoever is unfortunate enough to fall in with them in the loneliness of the mountains is pierced by their arrows and falls victim to a deadly sickness.\textsuperscript{323}

In another description, the btsan are red spirits who live in the rocks. They are all male, and are the spirits of past monks who have rejected their vows. Btsan who have been tamed by great practitioners often become protectors of temples, sanctuaries, and monasteries. One makes red offerings to them.\textsuperscript{324}

**Ma-mo (Mother-she-devils)**

The ma-mo constitute a very numerous class of ferocious female deities. These black goddesses personify natural forces that can be devastating when they are disturbed.\textsuperscript{325}

The ma-mo are the "disease mistresses" (nād-bdag). They are sometimes the spouses of the foregoing malignant demons.\textsuperscript{326}

**Mimayin (Invisible and Intangible Spirits)**

Sometimes the mimayin can still be seen, like ghosts, and they can do both good and harm. The invisible mimayin are real, to the children, as spirits that have powers quite different from those of human beings. Some of them can help in times of need. They may be known to live in a certain lake or on a certain mountain, and even adults will go there and pray when in need. These good mimayin send harvests and look after the people but if angered, they can harm them. That is why, all over Tibet, one finds prayer flags on hills, mountains, by lakes, and always on the crest of passes. Mimayin may be

\textsuperscript{323} Hoffmann, n.296, p.19.
\textsuperscript{324} See n.304.
\textsuperscript{325} See n.304.
\textsuperscript{326} Waddell, n.308, p.370.
spirits of those who have died with an unfulfilled wish in their minds.327

**Thehu-rang or The-brang**

He is thought to be embodied in boulders and ashes, as well as in dice. He brings success in games, particularly dice, but also any board games. In ancient warfare, he was thought to guide the trajectories of catapulted boulders. Fever and dizziness are associated with him. The appropriate offering to him is popped barley with milk. He is the patron god of children and blacksmiths and to a certain extent he is also associated with rain. The-brang rides a goat and wears a goatskin over his black per. He carries a bellows and a hammer.328

**Gza’**

He is the god of psychological energy, lightning, hailstorms, and, more recently, electricity. When disturbed, he can addle the senses or cause epileptic fits and madness. He can be offended by the interruption of anything continuous—for example, by the cutting of a rope or by the spoilage of paint or ink. He is mollified by offerings of goat meat and goat blood. He is the patron of magicians and is associated with dragons. Gza’ rides an angry crocodile. He has eighteen faces, one for each kind of mythical lightning dragon. These are topped by a raven’s head that shoots out lightning bolts. He is six-armed and holds a victory banner, a snake lasso, a bag of poisonous water, a bow, and a bundle of arrows. He has a large mouth in his belly and his body is covered with eyes.329

**Thab-lha (Hearth God)**

The Bon believed in three offerings, or sacrifices. There were sacrifices to the ancestral spirits, the High Offering. There were sacrifices to the family spirits, the

329. See n.312.
Middle Offering. The third, Low Offering, was to the dead. There were specific rites for each, but the most important in daily life was of course the family rite, the Middle Offering, to the God of the family hearth, thab-lha. He had to be pleased daily by offerings of butter or tsampa and could be easily angered. In particular if the hearth became sullied in any way, if food were allowed to spill or boil over, or if dirt were allowed to enter with the fuel, this angered thab-lha to such an extent that misfortune would settle on the household until a Bon priest was called to purify the hearth.330

In Tibet from time immemorial the defiling of the hearth by the overflowing of boiled milk, broth of meat, or of any other thing edible or useful except water, from any utensil, is considered to be a great calamity which brings immense trouble to the owner. When a hearth is so defiled, the owner must immediately cleanse it out. The ground which held the hearth should be dug out and thrown into water, in default of which the gods of the middle region, sa-bdag, become annoyed and punish the owners or defilers with the disease of leprosy. In order to escape such punishment, that is, to be cured of leprosy, the patient goes to a Bon priest in quest of a remedy. The priest of course attributes the disease to defiling of the hearth. An elaborate ceremony is conducted then to appease the wrath of thab-lha. The soiled hearth is dug out, the priest goes into a trance and takes a lump of the earth, which is then examined. If a living or dead larva of an insect is found in it then the ceremony of cleansing and propitiation is considered successful.331

The hearthstone spirits are strange, jealous creatures, who swarm at the rising of the smoke in a new tent, and take proprietary though at times perverse interest in the new hearth. Because of their displeasure, children die or are born dead. Their spiteful blows bring blindness, strange swellings, and the swift rotting of anthrax, the 'earth poison'. If


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the hearthstone spirits are angry, no tent can hope for peace.\textsuperscript{332}

Thab-lha punishes whenever offended. If someone keeps his socks on the hearth for drying, his legs start aching. If someone spits on the hearth, he starts stammering, or has great difficulty in speaking.\textsuperscript{333}

**Pho-lha** (Man’s God) and **Mo-lha** (Woman’s God), and some other deities.

Stein explains that in the microcosm of the environment, the sacred mountain or ‘god of the country’ (yul-lha) is equated with the dmu\textsuperscript{334} ladder; and that other microcosm, the human body, is thought of along similar lines. Man has in him five, or sometimes six, ‘protecting gods’ (’go-ba’i lha). One of them is yul-lha who dwells on the top of the head, where the dmu rope starts from. On the shoulders live the ‘warrior god’ (dgra-lha) and the ‘man’s god’ (pho-lha).\textsuperscript{335}

In the ancient story of the mythical King Gri-gum btsan-po, the king allowed himself to be inveigled into a duel with his chief minister, and unknowingly he laid himself open to the black-magic arts of his opponent by placing a dead fox on his right shoulder and a dead mouse on his left, whereupon dgra-lha left his body through the dead fox, whilst pho-lha left by the dead mouse, with the result that the now unprotected king was easily killed by his enemy.\textsuperscript{336} That Gri-gum could cut his dmu rope was his own fault for wrapping his head in a black turban and laying the corpses of animals on his shoulders, a defilement which had rendered the three corresponding protector gods

\textsuperscript{332.} Ekvall mentions the hearthstone spirits in the context of a nomadic tent in his novel *Tents Against the Sky*, based on his long residence among Amdo nomads. This is cited in Samuel, n.300, p.188.

\textsuperscript{333.} This is based on an informal discussion on the Bon deities between me and Kyongtul Rinpoche, a Bonpo monk in January 1994 at New Delhi.

\textsuperscript{334.} See under interpretation for pho-lha and mo-lha.

\textsuperscript{335.} Stein, n.297, p.222.

\textsuperscript{336.} Hoffmann, n.296, p.21.
(mgur-lha\textsuperscript{337}, dgra-lha and pho-lha) powerless.\textsuperscript{338}

The man's god (pho-lha) and the woman's (mo-lha), the maternal uncle's god (zhang-lha), the life-principle god (srog-lha), the warrior god (lit. the god who protects against enemies, dgra-lha) and the god of the country (yul-lha)--all these deities occupy various parts of the human body. They are always born at the same time as the person concerned. Through pho-lha, males (pho) are multiplied and one has a numerous line of descendants; through mo-lha sisters are multiplied, and the female fortune grows; through zhang-lha one has good relations with others and prospers; through dgra-lha one has much wealth and few enemies; through the life-force god (srog-lha), one obtains long life and steady life-force.\textsuperscript{339}

On the roof of houses, two altars of heaped-up stones represent pho-lha and mo-lha. A flag set up beside them is the dgra-lha. These are the 'gods of the summit' (rtse-lha)\textsuperscript{340}. A man's protecting gods, particularly dgra-lha and pho-lha, residing in his body and born with it, are also represented outside it by objects such as stones, flags or trees; and, moreover, are identical with the protecting deities of the dwelling-place (house or country)\textsuperscript{341}.

Worship of the pho-lha secures long life and defence against accident; by worshipping the dgra-lha enemies are overcome. Worship of the mo-lha and zhang-lha procures physical strength; worship of the yul-lha glory and dominion and of the nor-lha wealth.\textsuperscript{342}

\textsuperscript{337} Mgur-lha is a god of hunting with the Mongol shamans according to Das, n.307, p.283.

\textsuperscript{338} See n.335.

\textsuperscript{339} Stein, n.297, pp.222-223.

\textsuperscript{340} See n.335.

\textsuperscript{341} Stein, n.297, p.227.

\textsuperscript{342} Waddell, n.308, p.375.
Pho-lha is the tutelary deity of a man's right side. When a boy-child is born, pho-lha helps the mother's mind. Her right pulse beats fast. Mo-lha is the tutelary deity of a man's left side. When a girl-child is born, mo-lha helps the mother's mind. Her left pulse beats fast. 343

Nebesky-Wojkowitz lists the 'go-ba'i lha as srog-lha or 'god of life' with its seat in the heart, pho-lha in the right armpit, mo-lha in the left armpit, dgra-lha at the right shoulder, and yul-lha at the crown of the head. Other lists substitute zhang-lha for either yul-lha or mo-lha. 344

Dgra-lha (God of War)

Dgra-lha, the patron of warlords and warriors, is identified to some degree with storms and storm clouds. He is offended by mistreatment of weapons. He punishes by humiliation and scandal, insomnia and nightmare, and even by loss of one's bla (soul). 345 He is offered barley-beer, tea, and the three whites and the three sweets. The white yak, horse, eagle, and raven are sacred to him. Dgra-lha rides a horse, usually reddish brown. He wears armour and helmet of lacquered metal and a red per. Eighteen pennants fly from his helmet. He holds a long-staffed flag with eighteen ribbons flying at its edge. He wears a belt which holds a bow and arrows, a lasso, an axe, a spear, a dagger, a sword, and other instruments of war. He emits a tiger from his body, a black bear with a white heart from one of his legs, a jackal from each eye, and a hawk and eagle from his

343. See n.333.
345. According to Stein, n.297, p.226, the 'life' or vital principle (srog) is sometimes equated with the 'soul' (bla). Sometimes the conscious mind itself becomes synonymous with the soul (bla). But normally bla is bound up with the body, in particular with breath, while the vital principle (srog) is linked to the blood. Sometimes bla is compared with the higher souls, hun, of the Chinese, which are also related to the breath.
Phyug-lha (God of Wealth)

He rewards thrift with prosperity and punishes waste with poverty. He can also bring rheumatism, ulcers and swelling diseases. He is the patron deity of merchants and of the household and is offered butter and grain. He is associated with the earth, as well as with sheep, yaks, and horses. Phyug-lha rides a yellow horse or a lion. He wears a golden per over golden armour and a golden hat with four sides in the stylized form of flower petals. He carries a multi-coloured, cylinder-shaped victory banner in his right hand and a scroll in his left. He vomits gems.347

Me-lha (God of Fire)

Me-lha is a general name for gods or deities; gods are supposed to eat the sacrificial offerings through the help of fire which is called the mouth of gods.348 The text Hjiig-rt'en lugs-kyi bstan-bcos urges to make one’s cooking hearth in the south-east corner of the house which is the quarter of the god of fire.349

When King Gri-gum btsan-po was assassinated, the Bon priests, not knowing how to conduct the funeral rites (so as to prevent his spirit from doing mischief to the living), invited three Bon priests to perform the funeral. One of these priests propitiated me-lha the god of fire, and thereby was enabled to travel in the sky, mounted on a tambourine. He could perform miraculous feats, such as cutting iron with the quills of birds, et cetera.350

347. See n.312.
348. This is what Satish Chandra Acharya said while explaining the Sanskrit terms from Tibetan-Sanskrit Lexicons of Tibet, according to Das, n.307, p.972.
Chu-lha (God of Water)

The word chu-yi thub-pa or the Mighty Lord of Water also means animals living in water. However, in Tibetan mythology there is no general god of water. Irrigation streams and channels are under the protection of a special deity and the various large rivers have each a protecting river-god respectively. For example, the goddess who rules over the forest of Kongpo and is believed to possess the power of stopping at will the course of the great river Tsang-po, is called Chu-srin rdo-rje ri-mohi bran-mo.\textsuperscript{351}

However, there are people who maintain that chu-lha is the god of water who feels offended when pairs of socks are washed in water (meant for public usage), or if someone spits or urinates there. He punishes the defilers by causing pain or sore to their feet, mouths or genitals. At the banks of rivers and ponds, the two-metre filthy stretch of water should be left untouched before using it for consumption.\textsuperscript{352}

Stag-lha me-hbar (The Tiger God of Flaming Fire)

He is the chief Bon god universally worshipped.\textsuperscript{353} The original motive of the "Dance of the Red-Tiger Devil" appears to have been to expel the old year with its demons of ill-luck, and to propitiate with human sacrifice and probably cannibalism the war-god and the guardian spirits, in order to secure good-luck and triumph over enemies in the incoming year.\textsuperscript{354}

\textsuperscript{351} Das, n.307, pp.420-421.
\textsuperscript{352} See n.333.
2. **The Bodhisattvas:**

Tārā (The Saviouress) or Sgrol-ma

There are infinite legends in regard to the origin of Tārā, one of them being that she was born from a blue ray that shone from the eye of Amitābha. The generally accepted legend, however, is that a tear fell from the eye of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara at the sight of misery in the human world. This tear, falling in the valley beneath, formed a lake. From the waters of the lake arose a lotus-flower, which, opening its petals, disclosed the pure goddess Tārā.\(^{355}\)

It is related that the Fifth Dalai Lama\(^ {356}\) had once, from the top of his Potala, seen the goddess Tārā regularly circumambulating that palace. Later he discovered that Tārā was accompanying a poor old man regularly on his circumambulations. Being questioned, the old man disclosed that he had learnt Tārā’s text by heart and had been reciting it for forty years. He was asked to recite the text, and was found to have got it wrong. He was then made to learn the correct text. But as soon as the old man had learnt it and recited it in place of the other, Tārā ceased to appear. He was then authorised to recite the text as he had been used to, and Tārā showed herself as before. When he recites the faulty text, the Dalai Lama concluded, his mind is concentrated on Tārā, and she comes to bless him. But when he recites the right text his mind is attached to it. That is the difference.\(^ {357}\)

The Goddess Sgrol-ma is the one who saves from transmigratory existence. She is said to be mild by day and wrathful by night. She is also believed to be a giver of wealth.

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356. *The Fifth Dalai Lama*, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso (1617-1682) built the Potala Palace (between 1645 and 1694), naming it after Mount Potala, the abode of Avalokiteśvara.

357. Stein, n.297, p.175.
There are mainly two forms of Tārā: the White Tārā and the Green Tārā. The story of their origin is that Avalokiteśvara (Tib. spyan-ras-gzigs), whose distinctive trait is his compassion for the sufferings of all living beings and his wish to save them, is so moved by looking down at the sufferings of earth that two tears fall, one from each eye. The tear from his left eye becomes a lake, in which a lotus grows, whose blossom is the Green Tārā. From the right tear, another lake is formed, which gives forth a lotus whose blossom is the White Tārā.\^{359}

The White Tārā (Tib. sgrol-ma dkar-po, or sgrol-dkar) is figured with a white complexion, and the left hand holding a long-stemmed lotus flower. She has seven eyes, the eye of fore-knowledge in the forehead, in addition to the ordinary facial pair, and also one in each palm and on each sole of her feet, hence she is called ‘Tārā of the Seven Eyes’.\^{360}

The White Tārā symbolises perfect purity, and is believed to represent Transcendent Wisdom, which secures everlasting bliss to its possessor. She is the consort of Avalokiteśvara, and is represented at his right hand, generally standing.\^{361} She is believed to have been incarnate in the 7th century Tang princess Wencheng (Chn. Wencheng Gongzhu; Tib. Wong Shen Konjö)\^{362} the wife of King Srong-btsan-sgam-po.\^{363}

The Green Tārā (Tib. sgrol-ma ljang-k' u, or sgrol-ljang) is represented as a

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363. Getty, n.355, p.120.
bejewelled lady with a green complexion.\textsuperscript{364} She is seen seated on a lotus throne, the right leg pendant, with the foot supported by a small lotus. She usually wears the five-leaved crown.\textsuperscript{365}

The Green Tārā is considered by the Tibetans to be the original Tārā; the most dynamic manifestation of Tārā. She symbolizes the Divine Energy.\textsuperscript{366} In Tibet, she is associated with Bhrikuti, the Nepalese queen of King Srong-btsan-sgam-po. Midnight and mountains seem to fit the mysterious energy of Green Tārā. She has eight manifestations as saviour from the eight dangers.\textsuperscript{367}

Avalokiteśvara (the lord who looks in every direction) or Spyan-ras-gzigs (with a pitying look)

In the Ma-ni bka'-'bum (The Hundred Thousand Precious Words) it is related that once upon a time, Amitābha, after giving himself up to earnest meditation, caused a white ray of light to issue from his right eye, which brought Padmapāṇi (Avalokiteśvara) Bodhisattva into existence. Amitābha blessed him, whereupon the Bodhisattva brought forth the prayer: 'Om, mani padme. hum!'--'Oh! the jewel (of creation) is in the lotus!'\textsuperscript{368}

The Mani-bka'-'bum in chapter 2, mentions that spyan-ras-gzigs was doubly evolved on earth; first appearing from a ray of white light which issued forth from the left eye of Amitābha, and secondly being born as a youth of 16 from out of a lotus-bud\textsuperscript{369}. Avalokiteśvara is supposed to have been incarnate in the Tibetan King Srong-btsan-

\textsuperscript{364} Waddell, n.308, p.359.  
\textsuperscript{365} Getty, n.355, p.123.  
\textsuperscript{366} See n.365.  
\textsuperscript{368} Getty, n.355, p.57.  
\textsuperscript{369} Das, n.307, p.806.  

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sgam-po, as well as in every successive Dalai Lama, and is the principal tutelary deity of Tibet.³⁷⁰

3. **Culture Heroes:** In the Tibetan context, the term "culture heroes" has to be understood in the sense of such personages who possessed the spirit and made endeavour in disseminating the Buddhist doctrine in the Land of Snow -- previously dominated by the Bon. The monks or ascetics, having remarkable insight into the ethical and philosophical aspect of life, were considered extra-ordinary. Their deeds were glorified by deifying them. The deification of these historical personages was a part of a systematic effort by their followers in forming different sects within the broad framework of Lamaism. In other words, the contribution made by these historical personages enriched Tibetan Buddhism both in form and content, and made them immortal heroes of cultural significance. Here we classify these culture heroes into two categories: (a) Indian, and (b) Tibetan.

(a) **Indian**

Atisa (982-1054) : Dipaṅkara Śrījñāna, popularly known as Atisa, was born in the town of Vikramapurī in a royal family of Gaur in undivided Bengal during the reign of King Mahāpāla.³⁷¹ He underwent training with both Mahāyāna teachers and the Mahā Siddhi (grub-ch'en) or wizard-priests, one of his most notable masters being Chandrakirti.³⁷² He studied all the schools of Buddhism, including Hinayāna, but above all the Tantras.³⁷³ In a very short time, Atisa became well versed in grammar, philosophy and medicine. He chose the female Bodhisattva, Tārā as his protective deity, and consulted her in all the problems of his life.³⁷⁴ As his fame spread Atisa was

³⁷⁰ Getty, n.355, p.59.
³⁷¹ Hoffmann, n.296, p.119. Waddell, n.308, p.35 (n.4).
³⁷² Waddell, n.308, p.36 (n.4 contd.).
³⁷³ Stein, n.297, p.72.
³⁷⁴ Hoffmann, n.296, p.120.
summoned to the famous monastic university of Vikramasila in Magadha. He was invited to Tibet, and finally in 1040 he left Vikramasila with his companions and arrived in western Tibet in 1042. He came to be known to the Lamas by the name Jo-wo-rje-dpal-ldan Atisa (The Illustrious Noble Lord Atisa). At Mtho-ling, the monastic centre of western Tibet, Atisa worked closely with the octogenarian translator Rin-chen bzang-ings. Atisa struck an ideal mean between the doctrines of the sutras and tantras. Atisa sought to retain the study of the Tantras. He endeavoured to balance the requirements of religious discipline, philosophy and mysticism as perfectly as possible. Atisa's Lamaist Reformation movement resulted in the new sect, Bka-gdams-pa. This sect was founded by Atisa and his chief disciple 'Brom-ston (1005-64). Two other disciples of Atisa, finding the severe discipline not to their taste, and wishing to reintroduce at least some of the old familiar deities, founded the semi-reformed sects of Bka-rgyud-pa and Sa-skya-pa. Those who had not been convinced at all by the teachings of Atisa and followed the old belief became known as the Rnying-ma-pa, the Old Sect.

Atisa also did literary work of his own, and its most important fruit is Bodhipathapradipa (Lamp for the Way of Enlightenment). Informed with the purest spirit of an elevated Mahāyāna, the book begins with the classification of men into three groups. Those in the first and lowest group strive only for the happiness of Samsara and are self-seeking; those of the second and intermediary group devote themselves to a virtuous life in the interests of their own purification; whilst those of the third and highest group desire to obtain salvation for all. Atisa taught the pure theg-pa chen-po (Mahāyāna) doctrine, free of all tantric elements while at the same time supporting the tantras.

375. Hoffmann, n.296, pp.120-121.
376. Waddell, n.308, p.35 (n.4).
378. Hoffmann, n.296, p.121.
380. Hoffmann, n.296, pp.121-122.
his greatest contributions to Tibetan Buddhist literature is a discourse in pure Theg Chen tradition upon the different goals that man may set himself and their relative value.  

One important achievement of Atisa was his revision of the Tibetan system of chronology. He wrote his work on chronology in Central Tibet in the year 1051. In the previous centuries dates were reckoned only according to the well-known animal cycle of twelve (mouse, ox, tiger, hare, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, hen, dog, and pig) which was in use throughout Central Asia, but which was at best a very primitive method of computation. Thanks to the addition of a further cycle of constituents made up of combinations of the five elements, iron, wood, water, fire and earth, a cycle of sixty years was introduced which allowed a much more accurate time computation.

Padmasambhava or pad-ma hbyung-gnas (Lotus-born):

Popularly known as Guru Rimpoche, he was born in Swat in undivided Punjab. His legend begins in the Sukhavati Paradise, not long after Buddha Sākyamuni's time. Avalokiteśvara looks down toward earth and notices that the king of Udyāna has threatened to destroy all the religions in his kingdom if he cannot have a son. The Bodhisattva fears for the people and asks Amitābha Buddha if there is not something more that can be done for them. Amitābha replies by extending his tongue, which emits a rainbow-trailing meteor that shoots straight down to Udyāna, landing in the middle of a lotus lake. A few days later, the prime minister discovers a giant lotus there, with a beautiful eight-year old boy sitting radiantly upon it. When he asks the boy who he

383. Hoffmann, n.296, pp.122-123.
385. Swat was previously known as Uddiyāna whose Tibetan name is Udyāna or U-rgyan according to Stein, n.297, pp.36, 57. However, the name has been put as Udyāna in Hoffmann, n.296, pp.51,53, and Udayana in Das, n.331, p.74.
is, he replies that he has no name, and no country, but the kingdom of Dharma. His father is compassion and his mother is perfect wisdom. The boy is called Padmasambhava, Lotus-born, and he is adopted by the king, himself a great Tantrist. Padma has a pleasant childhood, but soon disturbed people with his unconventional behaviour. He kills several of the subjects who, in their present or former lives, had injured Buddhism; and on this the people complain of his misdeeds to the king, demanding his banishment, which sentence is duly carried out, to the great grief of the king and the royal family. Padma left society and went off to become a Buddha, which he soon accomplished. He left the monkhood and became an adept. He meditated in cemeteries and wilderness and tamed many demons, converted many barbaric kingdoms to Buddhism, and accomplished the power of longevity.

In the middle of the eight century AD the Tibetan King Khri-srong lde-btsan sent to India inviting Padmasambhava to Tibet. Padma was renowned for his knowledge of dharani (mystical sentences) and of their efficacious application, and was warmly welcomed. He remained fifty years in Tibet, founding monasteries and teaching the Tantra-Yogacarya doctrine. He is said to have subdued all the malignant gods in Tibet, sparing only those that became converted to Buddhism and that promised to be defenders (Dharmapala) of the doctrine. Padmasambhava, in his turn, promised to enroll them in the Mahāyāna pantheon and to see that they were properly worshipped. He claimed to have received from the dakini the books from which he acquired his miraculous powers.

At the end of fifty years Padmasambhava disappeared miraculously, and is said to have entered the body of a Yaksha king, Me-wal, where he has reigned supreme over all the Yakshas up till the present day, and in perpetual youth is preaching the doctrine of

386. See n.367.
387. Waddell, n.308. p.381.
388. See, n.367.
Lamaism in a paradise which rivals that of Amitābha’s western heaven of Sukhavati.\textsuperscript{389}

Padmasambhava defeated many local devils of Tibet. He obtained an oath from them that henceforth they would serve only the cause of Buddha. Among numerous episodes, Padmasambhava has been depicted vanquishing the Bon mountain god Yar-Iha sham-po. There is a story which says that when the master journeyed to the valley Sham-po, the god Sham-po took on the form of a white yak. From nose and mouth whirled snow storms. His breath belched forth like great clouds. He rained thunderbolts and hail. Then the master seized him by the muzzle with the iron-hook-gesture\textsuperscript{390}, bound his neck by the rope-gesture, bound his feet by the fetter-gesture. And when he had defeated the yak by means of the bell-gesture and subjugated both body and soul, the god gave his heart’s blood and was bound by an oath and was given a treasure (holy writings) to guard.\textsuperscript{391}

The god of the powerful Thang-Iha mountain chain, who is named after it, is also known as the great gnyan (gnyan-ch’en thang-Iha). Like many other mountain gods he is said to have been converted and incorporated into the pantheon of Lamaism by Padmasambhava. The story goes that when the master proceeded to Phya-than-la pass, the demon Thang-Iha transformed himself into a great white snake, and thus seeming like a chain of mountains he tried to bar the master’s progress. Thang-Iha rained thunderbolts, which the master turned to fishes, frogs and snakes, that fled to a neighbouring lake. Then the master melted his snowy dwelling, and the god, transforming himself into a young

\textsuperscript{389} Getty, n.355, p. 176. 

\textsuperscript{390} The word 'gesture' in this context is the translation of mudra (Waddell, n.308, p.383). However, Waddell maintains no consistency in explaining the word mudra. Sometimes it is posture (p.335), sometimes mystic attitudes of fingers (p.141), and sometimes it is distortion of the fingers (p.141) which is certainly an erroneous interpretation.

\textsuperscript{391} Waddell, n.308, p.383 (n.1). Hoffmann, n.296, p.55.
boy, offered up his life-essence, together with that of all his retinue. 392

The grandson of Srong-btsan sgam-po, Khri-srong lde-btsan, who reigned from 775 to 797, was converted to Buddhism by Padmasambhava and promulgated many laws prohibiting Bon practices and beliefs considered contrary to Buddhism. For example, he banned sacrificial ceremonies and belief in a cosmic creator. 393

Padmasambhava has been glorified by the Rnying-ma-pa sect; and his legends are preserved in Tibetan literature in the writings of Rnying-ma-pa. These writings reveal an inextricable mingling of legendary and historical happenings, and contain many contradictory accounts. 394

(b) Tibetan:

Mi-la ras-pa (1040-1123), or Mi-la, the 'One clothed in Cotton Garments', or grub-pai dban-p’yug Mi-la (the mighty saint, Mi-la)

Mila’s father, a wealthy merchant, died when Mila was only seven years old, leaving his property in his brother’s charge till his son reached his majority at fifteen. This uncle, however, appropriated everything to himself, and left young Mila and his mother destitute, and even persecuted them. Young Mila’s mother, therefore, sent her son to become a Lama in order to learn the mthu-art (magic or witchcraft) of destroying people by sorcery. So he set off and later joined a party of monks. Yung ston-p’ro-rgyal, a mthu-teacher, taught him sorcery for several years until he obtained the power to destroy his cruel uncle’s house. After being instructed in the mode of compelling hailstorms and destroying his uncle’s crops, Mila became a pupil of Marpa. 395 Marpa (1012-1096), who had visited India, handed on to his disciple Mila the mystical songs (doha) of the Tantric

392. Waddell, n.308, p.383 (n.1).

393. Trungpa, n.303, pp.299-300.

394. Hoffmann, n.296, pp.52-53.

395. Waddell, n.308, p.65(n.5).
Mila was set many tiresome tasks by Marpa, such as building forts and pulling them to pieces again. Mila set about his task, not for a moment questioning his master. Having tried every means he could to discourage his disciple, Marpa was finally convinced of Mila's sincerity and initiated him into the secret doctrine, the mysteries of the magic circles, and set him severe ascetic exercises. The rest of Mila's life was now devoted to lonely meditation in the Tibetan mountains, on rocky slopes and in hidden grottos, for the benefit of all living creatures.

Mi-la ras-pa, Cotton-clad Mila, mendicant monk and poet, spent his life wandering through Tibet performing miracles, converting the nomadic people to Buddhism, and writing his *Hundred Thousand Chants* (mgur 'bum). This voluminous work describes the experiences of the master after his Enlightenment, his wanderings and his conversions, and it is written in a traditional contemporary style and with impressive imagery. It also contains numerous hymns or chants in which Mila describes his material and spiritual experiences. These chants of Mila, something unmistakably personal, contain matters relating to the outside world, and to the life of the Tibetan people, and also entrancing descriptions of nature in the high mountains of Tibet. Many of these verses are popular among the ordinary Tibetans down to this day. The following is a typical example:

'This is the hermitage, called the "Palace of Enlightenment":

Above towers the high white glacier mountain of the gods;

396. Stein, n.297, p.73.
397. Waddell, n.308, pp.65-66 (n.5).
399. Waddell, n.308, p.66 (n.5 contd.).
401. Getty, n.355, p.177.
Below are many faithful bringers of gifts;
Behind the mountain is a veil of white silk;
Before me grow the wish-fulfilling woods;
Meadows and green valleys stretch far away;
Over the lovely and scented water lilies,
Buzz and swarm the insect folk.
At the edge of lake and pool,
Water fowl crane their shapely necks.
In the spreading branches of the trees,
Swarms of birds sing sweetly.
Moved by the wind, the bearer of scents,
The foliage dances in the air.
High in the crowns of the trees
The monkeys twist and turn.
On the soft green carpet of fields
The four-footed creatures browse,
Whilst the herdsmen their masters
Sing songs and pipe the melancholy flute.
Below the slaves of worldly greed
Busy themselves with their follies.
But I, the Yogi, look down on it all
From my perch on these glorious mountains
And take the inconstant world as a parable.
Earthly goods are to me as a reflection in water,
Life is the deceit of a dream.
And my pity goes out to the unenlightened.
The vastness of space is my banquet,
No distraction disturbs my meditation.
That all diversity is encompassed in my spirit,
That all the things of the three-world circle
Although irreal are yet visible, how wonderful that is!402

Mi-la ras-pa is represented always holding his right hand cupped behind his right ear, as if he were listening to the 'echoes of nature'. His left hand is seen holding a begging-bowl.403 Despite his ascetism he was a man keenly aware of beauty, and he describes with love and reverence the countryside all around him, from one season to the next, so full of life. Flora and fauna were all alive to him, yet they also served only to remind him further of the impermanence of all things, the illusory nature of all existence. Once his clay food bowl broke, it reminded him once more of the transitory nature of all things.404

Sákya Pandita (1182-1251):

Dkon-mchog rgyal-po, a member of the old school, the Rnying-ma-pa, became a pupil of 'Brog-mi, a great scholar and translator who rejected the old tantras, following the new school of Atisa. In 1071 Dkon-mchog rgyal-po founded the monastery of Sa-skya ('Fallow Land') in western Tibet. To guard against ignorance and delusion, he laid great stress on a systematic study of the Buddhist scriptures.405

Dkon-mchog rgyal-po's grandson, Kum-dga rgyal-mtshan, usually known as Sákya Pandita, was among the famous Sa-skya hierarchy. Sákya Pandita showed the rare combination of academic and spiritual attainment, and undertook a careful study of non-Buddhist scriptures which enabled him to establish more firmly than ever the preeminence of Buddhism in Tibet. He inflicted defeat on a renowned Brāhmaṇ

403. See n.401.
405. Norbu & Turnbull, n.299, pp.193-194. However, according to Hoffmann, n.296, p.135, it was 'Brog-mi who founded the monastery of Sa-skya in 1073.
philosopher in a debate on Vedānta. Acknowledging defeat, the Brāhman became converted and took holy orders as a Buddhist monk. 406

Kun-dga rgyal-mtshan is credited with being particularly learned and knowledgeable. As a linguist he mastered not only the languages and literature of India, but also the idiom of Bru-sha (Gilgit). 407 By his great proficiency in the five great sciences, namely the mechanical arts, medicine, grammar, dialectics and sacred literature, as well as in the minor sciences of rhetoric, synonymics, poetry, dancing and astrology, in short, almost all the sciences, and chiefly by his studying and translating the theological works of the orthodox and the heterodox schools, he acquired the name of Sākya Pandita. 408

The fact that Sākya Pandita established relations with the rising world power of the Mongols was to prove of great importance. He was invited to the court of the Mongol Prince Godan, where he is supposed to have cured him of a serious illness by reciting a dharani. 409 Sākya Pandita succeeded in obtaining the friendly interest of Godan in the cause of Buddhism, and henceforth Buddhism became very important for the Mongol nomads. He made himself particularly useful to the Mongolians by providing them with written characters for their language. 410

Sākya Pandita wrote a collection of moral precepts in verse.

1. He who is not made glad by praise, nor saddened by insulting words, Who well abides in what he knows, A holy man is, that's the sign.

408. Das, n.331, p.97.
409. See n.407.
410. Hoffmann, n.296, pp.136-137.
2. A great man's counsel, carried out with effort.
   Is ruined by the wicked in an instant.
   A field that's cultivated for a year.
   Hail lowers it to dust within an instant.

3. Its own defects, the throng of evil-doers
   Ascribes to others, whomsoever they be.
   Its beak, which it plunges in ordure.
   The crow wipes on a pure object. 411

Tsogkha-pa (1357-1419):

Tsogkha-pa was born in the town of Tsogkha in Amdo in eastern Tibet. It is said that the tree which overshadowed the house in which he was born has the imprint of a Buddha on its leaves. 412

The Buddhism of those days displayed a number of disagreeable features, one of which was a more and more blatant urge on the part of the priesthood towards temporal power, and another the predominance of magical arts according to Tantric rituals. The appeal of Atisa for a real Buddhist outlook and way of life had found no effective echo amongst the majority of the priesthood, and his work had to be done all over again. The man who carried out this task was the great reformer Tsogkha-pa, whose name as a monk was Lo-sang-tagpa (Sumatikirti). 413

Tsogkha-pa, as a boy, took the first five vows: not to kill, commit adultery, steal, lie or drink intoxicating liquor. 414 Like Atisa and his Bka-gdams-pa order, he insisted once more on the need for monastic discipline and the gradual path (morality) for the

412. See n.401.
413. Hoffmann, n.296, p.160.
generality of men and even as a preliminary to total liberation. In 1403 he composed his work in two volumes: Lam-rim and Sngags-rim.\textsuperscript{415} The first volume, the Lam-rim distinguishes men according to their faculties and recommends the slow path of virtue to those of whom too much should not be asked, and in any case to every one as a necessary preliminary foundation. The end of the Lam-rim, and all the Sngags-rim are devoted to the twin procedures of production and reabsorption.\textsuperscript{416} Tsongkha-pa took the decision to mark the renewal of the discipline by founding a new order. At first, this was called 'new Bka-gdams-pa', but later Dge-lugs-pa ('those who follow the path of perfect virtue') or Dga-ldan-pa, from the dga-ldan ('Place of Joy') monastery, founded in 1409.\textsuperscript{417}

At the age of thirty-seven he bethought himself of paying a visit to India and invoked Mañjuśrī to advise him on the matter. Mañjuśrī appeared before him and said, if by remaining in Tibet, through the medium of yoga, he could invoke the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, great good will accrue to living beings. Mañjuśrī then warned him, saying, if, for that particular purpose which can as well be attained by residence in Tibet, he visits India, his life will be shortened. Consequently, he will do less good to the world. On hearing this, Tsongkha-pa gave up the idea of visiting India.\textsuperscript{418}

The characteristic feature of Tsongkha-pa was his puritanism, and his determination to restore the unambiguous requirements of Buddhism, particularly in the matter of religious discipline, to their old authority. This earned him the title of 'Reformer of Lamaism'. He re-introduced the old prohibition of intoxicating liquors, and he insisted on the strict observation of celibacy for the priesthood--two points in which the practices of the Dge-lugs-pa differed most strikingly from those of Rnying-ma-pa sect.\textsuperscript{419}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{415} Stein, n.297, p.80.
\textsuperscript{416} Stein, n.297, p.181.
\textsuperscript{417} See n.415.
\textsuperscript{418} Das, n.331, p.146.
\textsuperscript{419} Hoffmann, n.296, p.166.
\end{flushleft}
Tsongkha-pa, at his death, put his religious sect under the protection of Yama.\textsuperscript{420} He is believed to be sitting beside the future Buddha, Maitreya in the Tushita heaven.\textsuperscript{421}

\textbf{Thang-stong rgyal-po (1385-1464)}

Various parts of Tibet have been occupied by different ethnic tribes in the course of history. To a certain extent they remain there till today. The Glo aborigines of the Kongpo district in southeastern Tibet, controlled the roads to Tsari and the iron mines in that district during the 15th century.\textsuperscript{422} The great saint of the Rnying-ma-pa sect, Thang-stong rgyal-po opened the route to the Glo aborigines of Kongpo, and from them he obtained supplies of iron and rights of passage for Tibetan pilgrims wishing to visit the holy places of Tsari.\textsuperscript{423} He converted the Glo aborigines to Buddhism.\textsuperscript{424}

Thang-stong rgyal-po was an engineer who is celebrated for having built eight iron-chain suspension-bridges over the great river of central Tibet, the Tsang-po.\textsuperscript{425}

Regarding his image in the cathedral of Lhasa, the sacristan related the following legend to Sarat Chandra Das: Thang-stong feared the miseries of this world very much, having inhabited it in former existences. Accordingly he contrived to remain sixty years in his mother's womb. There he sat in profound meditation, concentrating his mind most

\textsuperscript{420} Yama (Chn. Yanluowang; Tib. Gshin-rje) is the Hindu god of death. In Tibetan Buddhism, Yama is a Dharmapala with the rank of Bodhisattva, and hence called by another name Chos-rgyal (king of the religion).

\textsuperscript{421} Getty, n.355, p.177. Tushita (Tib. dga-ldan) or "Joyful Place", is the paradise of the Bodhisattvas prior to their final descent to the human world as Buddhas. Maitreya, the coming Buddha, dwells at present in this heaven, as explained by Waddell, n.308, p.86.

\textsuperscript{422} Stein, n.297, p.27.

\textsuperscript{423} See n.415.

\textsuperscript{424} See n.422.

\textsuperscript{425} Waddell, n.308, p.385.
earnestly on the well-being of all living creatures. At the end of sixty years, he began to realise that, while meditating for the good of others, he was neglecting the rather prolonged sufferings of his mother. So he forthwith quitted the womb, and came into the world already provided with grey hair, and straightaway commenced preaching.426

Thang-stong rgyal-po is worshipped as the god of drama at the centre of the stage—an erected altar surrounded by trees. There, plays are enacted which are purely recreational but with edifying and religious subjects. Thang-stong rgyal-po is said to be the originator of theatrical performances, because of the curious way he subdued a demon locked up inside a stone, by giving a display of pranks.427 In fact, he instituted theatrical performances of Buddhist legends known as the ache-lhamo plays which enjoyed wide popularity even in modern times.428

Śādhanā (Tib. drubt'ab), literally 'means for attainment', that is, the central practices of Tantra, involve the evocation of a Tantric deity (yidam), usually along with his or her entourage. It is through this evocation that the process of spiritual transformation is accomplished.429 The short and influential śādhanā on Avalokiteśvara by Thang-stong rgyal-po played a major role in the growth of the popular cult of Avalokiteśvara. He was a folk hero who demonstrated the close links between the Buddhist shamanic tradition and the common people of Tibet.430

2.4 TIBETAN POPULAR FOLK DEITIES: INTERPRETATION

Ancient Bon deities:

Lha: The energetic aspect in the divine, which is primarily vengeful in character and

426. Waddell, n.308, p.385 (n.2).
430. See n.428.
communicates directly with man, is represented by the principle gsas. He is the one the Bon worshipper calls lha(god). Gsas is seen as a powerful warrior. In ancient times the capital of Tibet took the name Lhasa (sa means 'place'). Thus the seat of the king was identified with the seat of God.\textsuperscript{431}

The tall flags inscribed with pious sentences, charms, and prayers, which flutter picturesquely around every Lamaist settlement, are the prayer-flags used by the Lamas as luck-commanding talismans. The commonest of the prayer-flags is the 'wind horse' (rlung-rta).\textsuperscript{432} At every pass crossed by a trail, the traveller finds a big heap of stones, white ones for preference. Sticks are set in them bearing cords stretched to a tree or rock: on these are hung rags or pieces of paper bearing formulae or the 'wind horse'.\textsuperscript{433}

The white colour of the lha is basically a symbol of purity. However, this it seems, is an Indian interpretation. But Robert Paul\textsuperscript{434} points out that it is a triumph of the white milk of human kindness over selfhood, hunger, and aggression, agentic aspects of the conditioned world. Thubten Norbu says that white is associated with peace.\textsuperscript{435} Nevertheless, the class of lha is a combination of benign and wrathful gods of the sky. They are not simply all-virtuous divinities.

Klu: The gods of the subsoil or the klu play a multi-purpose role in the life of the Tibetans. The subterranean world which was unknown to the early man created an illusory image of the klu in human mind. It is rather poetic to say that the apparel of klu is made of feathers and silk. In the cold heights of Tibet, mists gather above the rivers and lakes, the mountain streams flow with swift current, and the cool breeze caresses the crystal-clear lakes. All such aspects have been combined to create the image of the klu.

\textsuperscript{431} Trungpa, n.303, p.300.
\textsuperscript{432} Waddell, n.308, pp.408-411.
\textsuperscript{433} Stein, n.297, p.204.
\textsuperscript{434} Paul, n.359, pp.137-138.
\textsuperscript{435} Norbu & Turnbull, n.299, p.205. Paul, n.359, p.72.
The blue colour of the klu is associated with the watery subsoil. Robert Paul, however, says that the dark blue or black colour stands for the underworld, one of the "three worlds" of the cosmos. The representatives of the chthonic zones are black that symbolizes the fierce\textsuperscript{436}.

The offerings of the three whites are actually curd, milk and butter; and the three sweets are brown sugar or molasses, crystal sugar, and honey.\textsuperscript{437} Paul, however, states that these are sugar, honey, and cane syrup\textsuperscript{438}.

The pollution of water or construction of barrages, that seriously harm the ecological balance, are such acts which the ancient religious preachers dissuaded the people from by means of formulated taboos. The basic sense of health and hygiene is so poor among the common people that it was utterly necessary to impose health consciousness by creating fear psychosis: punishment awaits the defilers. The idea of probable consequences acted as a deterrent.

The spirits that appear in the form of insects, can exert malignant influences when aroused. To guard against these influences the old Bon devised spirit traps. These, known as \textit{mdos}, were actually crossed pieces of wood around which a whole network of coloured threads was spun, forming very definite and complicated patterns. These were thought to attract the spirits and at the same time trap them\textsuperscript{439}. When in the opinion of the priests evil spirits have been caught in these \textit{mdos}, the latter are burnt\textsuperscript{440}.

Precious stones and medicines were asked to throw into the mill because these

\textsuperscript{436} Paul, n.359, pp. 72-73.
\textsuperscript{437} Trungpa, n.303, p.301.
\textsuperscript{438} Paul, n.359, p.135.
\textsuperscript{439} Norbu & Turnbull, n.299, p.123.
\textsuperscript{440} Hoffmann, n.296, p.21.
were specific offerings for the klu or snakes. Precious stones actually symbolize the subterranean treasures protected by the klu. Medicine was of course to heel the 'wounds' of the klu. The operation of water-mills not only pollutes water, but also irritates the divinities of the subsoil, and makes them sick. Hence attempt has been made not to defile any such places that might earn the wrath of the venomous reptiles—the klu.

Gnyan: In Tibet, where forest-fire and landslides or even avalanches occur regularly and take their toll, worship of trees and rocks is very obvious, especially by those who frequent hill-tops and passes. The uncertainty with which people venture out into forests for livelihood, has definitely caused a sense of insecurity among them and hence indirectly urged them to place their faith on a spiritual being, that is, gnyan. During thunderstorms the ones taking shelter under tall trees have perished; people have sometimes tumbled down into deep gorges while passing along precipitous cliffs. Man laid in submission to the forces of nature. At the stupendous heights of the mountains where oxygen is rare and the air is often filled with gases off toxic nature, lighting fire might bring unprecedented hazards to human life by diminishing the share of oxygen required for respiration. The trees, which prevent soil erosion, are certainly the protectors of the ecological balance.

The ones defying the laws of nature by cutting trees, it is said, would suffer from plague. The plague, which is known in Tibet as gnyan, is a scourge attributed to them in particular.

Sa-bdag: Building or excavation involve digging of soil. Such activities naturally destroy vegetation. Perhaps that is why taboos were formulated. However, agriculture, which is essential for human existence, seems impossible because ploughing would anyhow cause 'injury' to the soil and earn the wrath of sa-bdag.

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441. Pestilential diseases like leprosy and small pox, epidemic, infectious sickness, plague -- all come under the term gnyan according to Das, n.307, p.490.

442. Hoffmann, n.296, p.18.
The sa-bdag, the klu and the gnyan are all concerned with the natural elements on earth. They are the spirits who are supposed to be jealously guarding the natural surroundings. That is why, in an expiatory poem of the Bonpo⁴⁴³, the poet tells us:

"...Scorpions with long stings,
Ants with notched waists,
Golden frogs,
Turquoise-coloured tadpoles,
Mussel-white butterflles.
These are their company."

**Bdud:** In the old days the bdud were heavenly spirits, but under Lamaism they were degraded to devils, and their leader was identified with Māra, the tempter of Buddha.⁴⁴⁴ These devils, all male, black in colour, and most malignant, are the ghosts of the persecutors of Lamaism, and cannot be appeased without the sacrifice of a pig⁴⁴⁵. Bdud is depicted thus because he represents the evil principle. Black colour, which is generally connected with warfare⁴⁴⁶, also symbolizes the evil and the fierce⁴⁴⁷. The vicious objective of the bdud is in conformity with his vicious appearance.

**Btsan:** The btsan are usually the vindictive ghosts of Lamas, discontented priests. They especially haunt temples ⁴⁴⁸. However, Trungpa says that the btsan is the god of fire. If btsan is the god of fire, he derives his red colour from the fire he presides over. But on the other hand we find Me-lha as the god of fire. Interestingly, only Trungpa maintains that btsan is the fire-god. Yet in other versions the btsan is said to be an inhabitant of the

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⁴⁴³. See n.442.
⁴⁴⁸. See n.445.
rocks, and also of the air. The spirits of the heretic are identified with btsan. Therefore, it is a bit queer how the spirits of such monks have been later considered as protectors of temples. However, a thorough conversion back to the right path is not unlikely altogether. Btsan, in any case, is an ill-defined class of deities.

Ma-mo: This class of divinities is an ill-defined one. It encompasses many she-devils. Through this category of ma-mo a message is communicated that nature will take its revenge if attempt is made to alter any of its components.

Mimayin: The word mimayin literally means one that is not a human being, but a spirit. Sarat Chandra Das reports that mimayin are the ghosts of the graveyard, but not the souls of the dead. Milarepa in his mgur hbum says mimayin are the ghosts that move in the air. He also terms them as the apparitions of ghosts. Thubten Norbu says that it does not matter whether these mimayin exist though its existence is popularly accepted. What is important is that through these stories of supernaturals, the Tibetans have come to believe that there is some power that is greater than human beings.

Thehu-rang: Mankind, since time immemorial, has been engaged in battles. Formerly battles were fought with catapults; state policies were taken over games of dice. The hope for success in games and battles were all bestowed upon a divinity named Thehu-rang. Fever and dizziness, which are associated with him, were generally noticed among soldiers who fought for days and nights. Thehu-rang can also be called a god of destruction since he is embodied in ashes.

Gza': The Tibetans, fond of mysticism, tried to find the roots of human mind in storm and lightning. Thereby a relationship between mind, energy and natural elements was forged. Such complicated phenomenon was epitomized in the grotesque image of gza'. His eighteen-headed, six-armed figure, holding dangerous objects of assault, his terrifying

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450. Norbu & Turnbull, n.299, p.29.
vehicle — all these reflect the shamanic tradition of the Bon. The mental faculties of human beings are diverse. This diversity has been projected through innumerable eyes in the body of gza'.

**Thab-lha:** Any neglect of his fire, thab-lha punishes remorselessly with sickness and other misfortune. If butter is sacrificed to him it gives him pleasure, but woe betide the offender if a hair, an old rag, or dog's dirt finds its way into the fire, or if a pot boils over and dirties the hearth.⁴⁵¹ All these, in fact, tell us to maintain cleanliness, to stop pollution. The message, in general, is to adopt hygienic measure. Burning of hair, rags, milk broth or dirt emits pungent smell that easily spoils the flavour of food. Why dog's dirt is mentioned in particular, is probably the fact that the dogs which take shelter in human dwellings, generally find the warm hearth very cosy in winter. These dogs might act as defilers of the hearth.

The reason behind considering the finding of a living larva inside a lump of earth as an act of success, has been narrated by Sarat Chandra Das.⁴⁵² The larva or grub is the incorporation of the demon of pollution. It is destroyed immediately. If no trace of any living being is found in the lump of earth then the demon has obviously made good his escape. Then the owner of the defiled hearth must prepare himself for the advent of misfortune.⁴⁵³ It is notable that only the Bonpos claimed to possess the magical formula of appeasing thab-lha. Stein points out that the Bonpos tamed the demons below; above they worshipped the gods of the ancients (rgan-lha or ancestors); and in the middle they purified the hearth in the event of pollution.⁴⁵⁴

**Pho-lha and Mo-lha, and some other deities:** The very ancient idea of the 'Man's God' (pho-lha), probably an ancestral spirit, and of the 'Warrior God' (dgra-lha), is of

⁴⁵¹ Hoffmann, n.296, p.20.
⁴⁵² See n.331.
⁴⁵³ See n.451.
⁴⁵⁴ Stein, n.297, p.233.
particular interest for the study of Bon animism. Two such spirits take up their habitation in every human being, and are to be regarded as a sort of guardian angel to ward off demoniacal influences. The dgra-lha is thus not to be regarded as the embodiment of evil in man, but on the contrary, as an effective helping spirit. These dgra-lha appear as armed warriors. Should they for any reason have to leave the body of the human being in question, then that person is in great danger from the attacks of evilly-inclined demons. In consequence he can fall victim to sicknesses and other misfortunes, and unless some experienced priest is called in to conjure the missing spirits back into their human habitat, the person concerned must surely die in the end. Such was the case with King Gri-gum btsan-po.\textsuperscript{455}

Pho-lha, mo-lha, zhang-lha, srog-lha, dgra-lha and yul-lha—all these gods relate man to his group in space and time: in space, because identical with those controlling the physical environment, house or country; in time, because they preside over the fortunes of the line, from ancestors to descendants. For man himself, in whom these relationships intersect, his gods guarantee—if all goes well—life-force, power, longevity and success.\textsuperscript{456}

Yul-lha and dgra-lha are found as much in natural environments as in the human body. They are often regarded as kings, heroes and warriors of the past whose soul, exalted by their exploits, lives on and becomes a protecting deity.\textsuperscript{457} The mythical precedent of the heap of stones is that of the world’s creation. Assimilated to Sumeru, it is said to be the yul-lha, surrounded on the four sides by four symbolic animals: the white lioness in the east, the blue dragon in the south, the tiger in the west, and the wild yak in the north. With one difference (garuda instead of yak), these animals also appear at the four corners of the picture of the 'wind horse', customarily fastened to heaps of stones and

\textsuperscript{455} Hoffmann, n.296, pp.20-21.

\textsuperscript{456} Stein, n.297, p.222.

\textsuperscript{457} Stein, n.297, p.228.
high places.\textsuperscript{458}

In the story of Gri-gum, there is mention of the dmu rope. But what is dmu? The first seven legendary kings of Tibet could be described as gods, exercising an earthly function: living on earth by day, but returning to their celestial abode each night. The final return was at their 'death', which always took place as soon as their son had learnt to ride a horse (at thirteen as a rule). The ascent was performed with the aid of a rope; and the name applied to this rope, dmu, was also used both for the sky, i.e., heaven, and for the king's maternal family (whose home it was). His body dissolved into the rope, which resembled a kind of rainbow extending from his head to the sky. The period is thus distinguished by the absence of earthly burial places or, by 'dmu-style tombs'—tombs in the sky.\textsuperscript{459} The ladder or rope connecting sky to earth—to the head of a man—takes its name dmu from that of a class of deities who live on one of the storeys of the sky.\textsuperscript{460} It was King Gri-gum btsan-po who, by his own folly, cut the dmu rope. Thus he deprived himself and his posterity from the ascent of heaven. This is how the kings beginning from Gri-gum found their burials on earth. The yul-lha, according to Nebesky-Wojkowitz,\textsuperscript{461} resides at the crown of the head. So it was yul-lha who gained significance so far as it was his seat which was connected with the sky by the dmu rope till the time of King Gri-gum.

\textbf{Dgra-lha}: A divinity holding various instruments of war actually ensures the proper usage of weapons. The creatures emitting from different parts of his body, symbolize the qualities essential for a warrior in any battle. The ferocity of a tiger, steadiness of a bear, shrewdness and tactfulness of a jackal, and precision and swiftness of a hawk and eagle are those qualities which are embodied in dgra-lha. Among the sacred animals, the white yak probably is the embodiment of the Bon god Yar-lha sham-po. The horse is an age-old

\textsuperscript{458}. Stein, n.297, p.209.
\textsuperscript{459}. Stein, n.297, p.48.
\textsuperscript{460}. Stein, n.297, p.211.
\textsuperscript{461}. Samuel, n.300, p.187.
friend of man in wars. The raven probably is something to do with omen or the auspicious hours calculated by astrologers in the former times.

**Phyug-lha:** The word 'phyugs' means all beasts that can be domesticated or subjugated by man: camel, horse, yak, cow, sheep, goat, etc., generally translated as "cattle". This wealth (phyug) might very well mean—rich in cattle, or cattle-wealth. In such a case, phyug-lha differs sharply with nor-lha. Again, business in cattle can usher monetary wealth. That is why, phyug-lha's outfit is all in golden colour, symbolizing monetary wealth.

**Me-lha:** Sacrificial offerings were made by putting food items into the fire. Things perished in fire. Hence the Bon identified fire as the mouth of gods. Das informs us that me-lha has a wife: me-lhahi chung-ma; and a horse: me-lhahi-rta.

The description of the miracles performed by the Bon priests is nothing short of magic and sorcery. The roots of the worship of me-lha can probably be found in the culture of Persia, India and some countries of Central Asia.

**Chu-lha:** The message conveyed through the forms of punishment given by chu-lha to the defilers is to keep up with hygienic measures. The water, used by the general public, might cause incurable diseases by contamination. The punitive measures were intended to teach the people of the gravity of defiling water and its usage in a hygienic manner.

**Stag-lha me-'bar:** In ancient times, the populace was under the general impression that the incoming year would be always better and brighter than the old year. Human life is always ridden with multifarious problems or even misfortunes that sometimes break the morale of human beings. Such mishaps were often identified with demons. Attempts to appease these

demons were made by means of human sacrifice. The Tiger God of Flaming Fire epitomized the concept of bidding farewell to the old year with its evil spirits and ushering the new year with apparently brighter prospects by the help of the flaming fire. This fire plays a double role: firstly, driving out the vicious demons of ill-luck or rather exterminating them; and secondly, welcoming the protective gods of war and guardian angels for a happy future.

The Bodhisattvas:

Tārā: Tārā very naturally plays the role of a saviouress since the medium of her miraculous conception is the outcome of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara’s tears of compassion. Moreover, Tārā, who was herself a creation of Avalokiteśvara, later became the consort of her creator to procreate the Tibetan race. (See Figure 6)

**Figure 6 : The Creation of Tārā**

Misery of the World  
(cause)  

Avalokiteśvara’s tears of compassion  
(effect)  

↓  

Lake  

↓  

Lotus flower  

↓  

Tārā + Avalokiteśvara  

↓  

Tibetan Race

Tārā is one of the most widely venerated deities in Tibetan religion. The cult of Tārā originated in India, but the Tibetans incorporated her in their myth describing how
the Tibetan race arose. Above all, she did not become the exclusive property of any of the different schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Tárá is the saviouress, who protects her people: they can turn to her with all their sorrows and joys, and she readily helps those in need. Tárá is venerated by men and women alike, but it is women who have special relation to her.\textsuperscript{465}

Tárá has two forms: white and green. So the way Tárá is said to have been conceived, differs from that where Tárá has reached biformity. Here too, the White Tárá became the consort of her creator and the Green Tárá his šakti. Universal compassion is thus wedded with perfect purity, and is venerated in pair with divine energy.(See Figure 7)

\textbf{Figure 7 : The Creation of White Tárá and Green Tárá}

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
    \node (cause) {Misery of the World} ;
    \node (effect) at (cause |- cause) { (cause) } ;
    \node (cause2) at (cause -| cause) { (effect) } ;

    \node (Avalokiteśvara) at (cause -| effect) {Avalokiteśvara's right eye} ;
    \node (tear) at (Avalokiteśvara -| effect) {tear} ;
    \node (lake) at (tear -| effect) {lake} ;
    \node (lotus) at (lake -| effect) {lotus} ;
    \node (White Tárá) at (lotus -| effect) {White Tárá (Perfect Purity) consort of Avalokiteśvara} ;
    \node (Princess Wencheng) at (White Tárá -| effect) {Princess Wencheng} ;

    \node (Avalokiteśvaram) at (cause2 -| effect) {Avalokiteśvara's left eye} ;
    \node (tear2) at (Avalokiteśvaram -| effect) {tear} ;
    \node (lake2) at (tear2 -| effect) {lake} ;
    \node (lotus2) at (lake2 -| effect) {lotus} ;
    \node (Green Tárá) at (lotus2 -| effect) {Green Tárá (Divine Energy) šakti of Avalokiteśvara} ;
    \node (Princess Bhrikuti) at (Green Tárá -| effect) {Princess Bhrikuti} ;

    \draw [->] (cause) -- (cause2) ;
    \draw [->] (cause) -- (Avalokiteśvara) ;
    \draw [->] (Avalokiteśvara) -- (tear) ;
    \draw [->] (tear) -- (lake) ;
    \draw [->] (lake) -- (lotus) ;
    \draw [->] (lotus) -- (White Tárá) ;
    \draw [->] (White Tárá) -- (Princess Wencheng) ;
    \draw [->] (cause) -- (Avalokiteśvaram) ;
    \draw [->] (Avalokiteśvaram) -- (tear2) ;
    \draw [->] (tear2) -- (lake2) ;
    \draw [->] (lake2) -- (lotus2) ;
    \draw [->] (lotus2) -- (Green Tárá) ;
    \draw [->] (Green Tárá) -- (Princess Bhrikuti) ;
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

The lamas believed that Tārā was incarnate in all good women, and in the 7th century they declared the two pious wives of the Tibetan Buddhist king, Srong-btsan-sgam-po, incarnations of Tārā. She was then given two distinct forms: the white and the green. But interestingly, the Green Tārā who is considered by the Tibetans to be the original Tārā (ngon means 'original'), has been confused by the ignorant lamas with sngo, meaning 'green'. So the epithet 'green' has become inseparable from this form of Tārā. The eight dangers from which the Green Tārā saves mankind, have both mundane and spiritual referents as put by the Dalai Lama. These dangers are (1) lions and pride, (2) wild elephants and delusions, (3) forest fires and hatred, (4) snakes and envy, (5) robbers and fanatical views, (6) prisons and avarice, (7) floods and lust, and (8) demons and doubts.

The story of recitation of the correct text and the disappearance of Tārā reflect the reality that deep concentration of mind and dedication of one's inner soul are the main factors which help attain one's objective, and not through ritualistic incantations.

Avalokiteśvara: The All-Pitying One is the most popular divinity in the Mahāyāna Buddhist pantheon, and the object of much veneration in Tibet. His worship was introduced into Tibet in the middle of the 7th century, when he was proclaimed by the Buddhist priests incarnate in the king Srong-btsan-sgam-po. He was soon considered as a representative of Buddha. Another reason for the popularity of Avalokiteśvara is that he is believed to have created the fourth world, which is the actual universe, and he is therefore our creator.
There are some discrepancies between the accounts relating the conception of Avalokiteśvara in the versions of Das and Getty. Though Mani-bka'-bum has been quoted in both the cases, but confusion prevails over the fact whether Avalokiteśvara was born from the right eye or the left eye of Amitābha.

Avalokiteśvara is worshipped in a triad with Mañjuśrī and Vajrapāṇi. That means, the god of compassion is venerated along with the god of wisdom (Mañjuśrī) and the god of power (Vajrapāṇi). Compassion, wisdom and power are the three virtues which can be interpreted as triratna or three precious jewels of the Buddhist doctrine.

Avalokiteśvara is Tibet's patron bodhisattva. Tibet, being a theocratic, or, to be precise, an ecclesiastical state, found him incarnated in each succeeding Dalai Lama. Prior to this, he had been incarnated in king Srong-btsan-sgam-po, who at his death dissolved and melted into the statue of Avalokiteśvara which stands in Lhasa. However, the Dalai Lama was the incarnation of his historical predecessor and not directly of Avalokiteśvara. Klong-rdol bla-ma Ngag-dbang blo-bzang (1719-1805) in his works gsung-'bum reminds us that in the beginning Avalokiteśvara made a vow to be reborn many times for the good of Tibet.

Culture Heroes:

Atisa: He was a scholar of great learning who wanted to rid Buddhism of its degenerative elements. Though not fully successful in bringing a radical transformation, he managed to put ideas into the Tibetan psyche so that in the later period new sects emerged. The core of his theories was assimilated and later new dimensions were given to it. His clear understanding of the teachings of Mahāyāna and the Tantra earned him a prominent place in the minds of the Tibetans. Atisa became to be venerated as a Buddhist deity to whom

473. Stein, n.297, pp.138-139.
the Tibetans owed a lot, particularly the spiritual culture.

Atisa is held to be an incarnation of Mañjuśrī, the Celestial Bodhisattva of Wisdom; though this seems merely a pious way of stating that Atisa was the Mañjuśrī of Tibet, or the most learned in scholastic and astrological lore of all the monks who had previously visited Tibet.

Atisa, through his literary works, wanted to teach the basic requirement of becoming a true Buddhist: renunciation. Through severe discipline he wanted to tame the disorderly minds of the practitioners and eradicate the unhealthy tendencies of the monastic code of conduct.

Padmasambhava:

This eighth-century monk is said to have subjugated the powerful Bon gods who were propitiated prior to the advent of Buddhism to Tibet. In fact, these were either powerful chieftains of various clans who practised cannibalism and who were later vanquished in duels and converted to the sacred doctrine, or by such depiction the Buddhists have tried to project their superiority over the pre-existent divinities of the Bon. In order to make an appeal among the common people in Tibet, Padmasambhava incorporated several Bon deities into the Buddhist pantheon. These deities, in turn, were asked to defend the doctrine heart and soul and not to obstruct its propagation in nooks and corners of Tibet. This was actually the taming of the clan-heads marking a transition from savagery to sainthood.

Padmasambhava made use of his tantric knowledge and resorted to magic and sorcery with the sole aim of coming into terms with evilly-inclined inhabitants of those regions he had trodden. The impassable passes, which got frozen in winter and impeded people to maintain contacts with adjacent areas, were often selfishly guarded by petty rulers. These rulers were subdued by Padmasambhava and brought into the folds of

474. Waddell, n.308, p.35 (n.4).
Buddhism. Yar-lha sham-po or Thang-lha were not just snowy mountains as they seem at the first instance, they were the despotic rulers of those regions.

Padmasambhava was invited by king Khri-srong lde-btsan at the request of another Indian pundit Santa Rakshita since the latter failed to overcome the evil spirits and to ensure the safety of Buddhism.\textsuperscript{475} The faith in Padmasambhava, his success in subjugating the demons, and Santa Rakshita's failure in doing the same—all these reflect the degree of influence that the Bon exercised over Buddhism at that time. It was magic and sorcery which appealed more to the Tibetans than mere introduction of the observance of the "ten virtues" by Santa Rakshita. Moreover, Padmasambhava was viewed in the light of Buddha. His miraculous conception tell us that he not only stood on a par with Buddha but he also symbolized a powerful factor in spreading the doctrine in Tibet. He was not merely a magician as it apparently seems.

\textbf{Mi-la-ras-pa}: The story of Mi-la-ras-pa is the story of a Tantric master who moved from a state of ignorance and karmic wrong-doing to a state of enlightenment. The uncle and aunt, who reduced Mi-la and his mother to a state of abject poverty, personify human greed and ignorance. Mi-la-ras-pa chose to yield to his desire for revenge, but he only brought further harm to himself and others. This has been illustrated by the irony of the aunt and uncle escaping destruction while other innocent people suffer and die. Buddhism counsels against revenge. The cycle of action and counter-action causing everyone involved to commit evil acts will lead to concordant sufferings in the future. In Buddhist karmic theory, every action leads to an opposite and equal reaction. Marpa gives Mi-la a series of difficult, frustrating and dispiriting tasks, which are designed to both ameliorate his past karma and to train him in the spiritual strength and determination which he will need to fulfil his religious quest and reach enlightenment.\textsuperscript{476}

\textsuperscript{475} Cf. Das, n.331, pp.73-74.

The law of karma requires a reciprocity between actions and their results. Since Mi-la-ras-pa's main crime was bringing down a house and killing people, Marpa ordered him to build structures and then tear them down and begin again. Later Mi-la feels a strong desire to be reunited with his mother and sister. This desire symbolizes the opposition between the spiritual life and the demands of the world. But Marpa asks him to avoid the temptations of cyclic existence ('khor ba, samsara), the alluring but perilous round of birth, death, and rebirth that attracts sentient beings with its delights, but in which they ultimately repeatedly suffer and die.

Mi-la-ras-pa is pulled by two opposing forces, ignorance and enlightenment. The story exhibits a contrast between the form and content of the biography: on the surface, it is a story of a man who overcomes obstacles and reaches his goal, but on a deeper level it can be seen as an explanation and resolution of basic conflicts and contradictions felt by Tibetan Buddhists. The story recognizes the intuitive appeal of the world and its pleasures. At the same time it shows that final enlightenment can be attained by freeing oneself from all the cares and sufferings of the world.477

Mi-la-ras-pa in person symbolized a unique combination of perseverance, sincerity and love for nature. His sufferings, effort and eventual triumph made him realize the dual aspects of life: revenge and forgiveness; conventionality and unconventionality; artificiality and naturalism; rejection and acceptance; ignorance and pure knowledge and enlightenment; simplicity and complexity.

A singer of illuminating songs, Mi-la-ras-pa is believed to be the first ordinary Tibetan to have attained complete enlightenment in a single lifetime. He is famous for rejecting conventional modes of behaviour.478 The concept of impermanence (Skt. anitya) taught him the very transient nature of all objects in the universe. The splendidly colourful

478. Rhie & Thurman, n.367, passim.
nature, on the other hand, inspired him to compose songs not only depicting its multiformity, but also expressing the poet's philosophy: the disillusionment with mundane affairs, and compassion for the ones who live in the dark.

**Sákya Pandita:** He was not only a scholar of the highest level but also a good diplomat so far as his far-sightedness is concerned regarding the spreading of the doctrine among the Mongols. He was a man from the province of Tsang in southern Tibet. That is why the Mongols, who also ruled China, came to know Tibet for the first time by the name 'Tsang'; and later by the name 'Hsi-tsang' (western Tsang), perhaps because Tibet lies to the west of China. This is the name by which Tibet is now known to the Chinese.

A linguist himself, Sákya Pandita created a set of alphabet for the Mongolians on the basis of the script which is in use amongst the Uighurs of Xinjiang (Eastern Turkestan). This script pattern has some element typical of Tibetan; but writing the characters vertically instead of the horizontal seen in Tibetan. The nephew of Sákya Pandita, the famous Lama 'Phags-pa (1235-80), completed the works of his uncle. That is why the Mongolian script is named after him: 'Phags-pa. It was the credit of both Sákya Pandita and his nephew that the Sa-skya Lamas succeeded in obtaining the unconditional recognition of their secular dominance over the whole of Tibet. 479

The collection of moral precepts by Sákya Pandita is accompanied by a commentary giving in detail the tales and anecdotes to which the stanzas make only a brief allusion. Sákya Pandita was more a scholar than a poet, thoroughly imbued with Indian tradition. This work is widespread and much quoted in Tibet. 480

**Tsongkha-pa:** One of the greatest Tibetan lamas, Tsongkha-pa is believed to be the third great incarnation of Mañjuśrī to have blessed Tibet with a major intellectual opus. He set the curriculum for the vastly expanded monastic institution that "industrialized" Tibet's

479. Cf. Hoffmann, n.296, p.137.
production of enlightened persons from the renaissance of the 15th century.\(^{481}\)

Tsongkha-pa, as the founder of the Dge-lugs-pa sect did everything possible to restrict the practice of magic and the use of the Tantras, and reduce them to their proper canonical proportion. However, he did not succeed in this without having to compromise, for the practices were very deeply rooted.\(^{482}\) He pointed out that the gradual way to moral purification is also binding on the followers of the Tantra system. The avowed intention was to cleanse Tantrism as practised in Tibet, and to prevent evil men from exploiting the study of the Tantras in order to satisfy their base instincts.\(^{483}\)

Tsongkha-pa himself never left Tibet, though he is said at one time to have harboured an intention of visiting the holy places in India, but finally decided not to in consequence of a revelation from Mañjuśrī, who ordered him to remain in Tibet and purify religion there. In any case, a journey to India could no longer have borne fruit even in 1200 in the period of the great Sa-skya Lamas, because since then Buddhism had lost ground in its homeland as a result of the Mohammedan persecutions.\(^{484}\)

The Dge-ldan monastery, which was also a Tushita Heaven on Earth, became the chief monastery of the Dge-lugs-pa sect. And Tsongkha-pa was its first abbot.\(^{485}\) One of his prominent pupils, Dge-legs dpal-bzang-po, commonly known as Mkhas-grub-rje, is said to have seen a vision of his teacher who had come down from Tushita Heaven after his death. This famous vision established a veritable cult in memory of the departed teacher and master. Every year since then the Dge-lugs-pa has solemnly marked the anniversary of the death of Tsongkha-pa by reciting hymns devoted to his glorification\(^ {486}\).

481. See n.367.
482. Hoffmann, n.296, p.167.
483. Hoffmann, n.296, p.164.
484. Hoffmann, n.296, p.165.
485. See n.484.
486. See n.482.
Thang-stong rgyal-po: Even as late as in the 15th century, when half of the world was 'civilized', the 'uncivilized' aborigines of Kongpo guarded the iron reserves. Thang-stong rgyal-po had to negotiate with these people; and finally he succeeded to get an access to the iron mines after converting them to Buddhism. He took the iron ore and made iron bridges with excellent skill.

Bridge-building is not as unusual an activity for a Tibetan lama as it might seem at first sight. The biographies of many Tibetan lamas recount their role in promoting public works of various kinds, mediating disputes, setting aside game-reserves to protect animals, and the like. These are evidently part of the role of the lama, especially in a small village gompa (temple where local lay practitioners do occasional rituals) rather than a large monastic centre.487

Thang-stong rgyal-po was not only a culture hero in the spiritual sense, as we have seen with other personages, he was also a popular character with great understanding in the field of metallurgy, architectural science, and performing arts. The story of his miraculous birth after residing more than half of his life in his mother's womb, was part of the deification done by the people who venerated him for his profound knowledge: both spiritual and material, and his philanthropic deeds.

2.5 CHINESE AND TIBETAN FOLK DEITIES: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The system of Chinese practices is not an assemblage of superstitious rules, each of them being deliberately used to obtain a particular advantage. The Chinese seems oriented to an almost secular ideal. In a world that is created by the criss-crossing of sacred forces the Chinese live without apparent religious preoccupations. Their existence is none the less governed by sentiments.488

487. See n.428.
Almost all the deities in the Chinese pantheon, especially those related with human life and society, reflect the utilitarian outlook of the Chinese. An agrarian society is more attached to the soil where from it gets its nourishment. Hence the worship of soil. Then comes the city, with further civilization of the society, that gives certain protection to man. Then comes the door through which, the Chinese believe that evil spirits would enter to inflict harm on man. So they adopted a series of measures to stop the entry of such spirits into their dwellings. The most important is the food which man strives for, and that is prepared on hearth. So a complete infrastructure was made for human existence. After all, man is a social being. He aspires to live in a social organization, and that aspiration is fulfilled by uniting persons in holy matrimony. Next comes the wish to procreate and thereby hand down every possible knowledge to the coming generations. In a class-divided society, man felt the need to prosper by exploiting others, and for that he required an economic basic. Money became the index for judging man's status in society. Happiness followed with the accumulation of wealth and the rapid growth of the family-tree. When fortune had been made, man cherished the sincere hope that he may live a long life right up to his ripe old age: 'sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.'

The Chinese found it convenient, through observance of age-old conventions, to keep themselves secure from undefined risks. They succeeded in eliminating all mystical care from daily preoccupations by routine performance of a host of small acts which were purely practical in nature.\footnote{Cf. Granet, \textit{n.488}, \textit{p.148}.}

For the Tibetans, the land itself became their ruler. Living in a world with unpredictable nature, it is difficult not to become dominated by it. When the Tibetans were defenceless in the face of natural power, they lay in submission to the forces around them. The forces of nature became gods (\textit{la}); mountains and rivers, rocks, springs and trees all...
alike became the dwelling places for these gods. High mountain passes, paths crossing the faces of cliffs, insignificant mounds of rocks all became the object, not exactly of worship, but of respect. They were full of potential for good or ill. All the ancient rites, prescribed by the early shamans of the Bon religion, were a recognition of some power beyond human control and an attempt to come to terms with that power.\textsuperscript{490}

The Tibetans believe in the existence of the demon of ill-health which invades the human body. When they fall ill, they ask a priest for fortune-telling, and then worshipping gods and Buddhas, they offer a prayer to remove the illness. The objects of their worship are not limited to the Buddha Śākyamuni and Amitābha, but inclusive of all the other Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in various worlds of ten directions, as well as the gods in heaven and on earth, demons and serpents. The gods and demons in the Tibetan pantheon are mostly of Bon origin. As the Tibetans absorbed Buddhism, these deities came to be regarded as the protectors of Buddhism. Buddhism was accepted by the Tibetans only to the degree that it adapts itself to the Tibetan ways of thinking.\textsuperscript{491}

The Chinese have never troubled much to discuss the nature of their gods. Philosophers and poets turned their attention to other more immediate and accessible problems. They had no general name for the gods but bracketed together in one term the two words for ghosts and spirits, gui-shen, or two others, spirits of heaven and earth, qi-shen. Popular belief seems to have seen these quite simply as ordinary human beings, more powerful no doubt yet not all-powerful, with an understanding that was limited, though superior to ours. Their essential nature was not so very different, as they could be wounded or even put to death. As Yi wounded the Counts of the River and the Wind with his arrows. In other ways too they were similar to human beings: quick to take offence and often vindictive.\textsuperscript{492}

\textsuperscript{490} Norbu & Turnbull, n.299, pp.120-121.
\textsuperscript{491} Nakamura, n.298, pp.613-614.
\textsuperscript{492} Maspero, n.216, p.94.
The Bon elaborated a system of mild and wrathful gods. These did not and still do not imply that they are good and evil gods. Tibetan Buddhists regard these gods, which they freely adopted from Hinduism as well as from Bon beliefs, merely as devices that can help the process of meditation. The Bon tenets developed much closer to the early animist beliefs, though, in which these gods were very real, however intangible. Even so, they were still neither good nor evil. They were powerful, and that power could, from a human point of view, either help or harm. It was common for a single deity to have two aspects: beneficent and malignant. Appropriate ritual could ensure the help of both aspects; in his beneficent aspect a god could help the human supplicant; in his malignant aspect the same god could continue to help that supplicant by the destruction of harmful forces\textsuperscript{493}.

Related to the polarity of peaceful or benign (zhi-ba) and angry or wrathful (khro-bo), is the system of aspects, according to which rituals can be performed in any of four modes. These are peaceful (zhi-ba); prospering (rgyas-pa); powerful (dbang-po); and fierce (drag-po). The words zhi-ba and khro-bo, combined -- zhi-khro--refers to the forty-two tranquil and fifty-eight wrathful divinities.\textsuperscript{494}

Horse-dragon or Long-ma is one of the four mythic animals of China, and it is the symbol for grandeur. It is represented as a dragon-headed horse, carrying on its back the civilizing Book of Law. This is practically the same figure as of the Lamaist flag--the 'wind horse'. The conversion of the "Horse-dragon" of the Chinese into the Wind-horse of the Tibetans is easily accounted for by a confusion of homonyms. In Chinese long=dragon, and ma=horse. The word long was unintelligible in Tibet, and the symbolic animal is used almost solely for fluttering in the wind, the "long" would naturally become changed after a time into rlung or "wind". In order to give it some meaning, in Waddell's opinion\textsuperscript{495}, arose the word rlung-rta or 'wind-horse'; rta being the

\textsuperscript{493} Norbu & Turnbull, n.299, pp.126-127.
\textsuperscript{494} Paul, n.359, pp.72, 79.
\textsuperscript{495} Waddell, n.308, pp.411-413.
Tibetan equivalent for 'horse'. On the animal's back, in place of the Chinese Book of Law, the lamas have substituted the Buddhist emblem of the civilizing Three Gems, which include the Buddhist Law. The Tibetans view the horse with the mystic jewel, norbu on its back as a symbol of good luck. It is notable that in Hindu mythology the gods of wealth, Kuvera or Vaisravana, are all horse-faced.

In the process of civilization either in the Chinese or in the Tibetan society, we would find the important role played by the cereals which were introduced by the usherers of civilization. Human societies have advanced with improving food habits which greatly depend on the variety of cereals. Shen Nong in the Chinese context, and Avalokiteśvara's incarnation—the monkey in the Tibetan context are perhaps the earliest agriculturists who were very much thoughtful of the well-being of their progeny.

In the story of Huangdi (Yellow Emperor) we come across Xuannu, the progenitor of the legendary Shang tribe (c.16th century BC.-c.1066 BC.), that is believed to have ruled the central plains of China prior to the Zhou. In this context, we are reminded of Shaohao, the emperor of the west, who had varieties of birds as his ministers and officials. This was known as the Kingdom of Birds. When swallow, shrike, speckled quail and golden pheasant used to preside over each of the four seasons, the phoenix used to play the role of a manager. These five types of birds used to look after the state affairs. 496

There is somewhat parallel instance in the Tibetan legends. The Bonpo tradition of the progenitor's descent from the celestial lha was based upon the concept of a tripartite cosmos, Heaven—Earth—Underworld (gnam—bar or sa—'og), the existence-media of Birds—Meat-Eater—Fishes (bya—sa-zan—ña), whose principal exponents were the celestial lha, the btsan or the principal divine powers upon Earth, and the klu of the Underworld. The progenitor of the legendary Yarlung dynasty was bya or the bird. As we see from above, gnam, bya and lha are all correlated. The connection between the king and the lha

is expressed through the title lha-sras, Son of the lha.\textsuperscript{497} The Bird-Clan that ruled Yarlung is clearly the family of the kings 'sent by the heaven'.

Shaohao is said to be residing in the west. And Yarlung was situated to the southwest of the Chinese territory of the Shang. Was the Bird-kingdom of Shaohao actually the land of Tibet? Haarh does not give a detailed account of the Bird Clan. Nor do we find material on the Bird-ancestress of the Shang. After all, legends are not always history. It may be a coincidence where we find the bird-factor in both the cases.

The leader of the bdud, 'Merciless Blood-Head', it is said, dwells in a nine-storeyed castle. Qu Yuan in his poem "Tianwen" said, "The sky-lid has got nine layers".\textsuperscript{498} It is relevant to mention here that according to the Taoists there are nine divisions of the celestial sphere (jiuchong), that is, the four cardinal points, the four intermediate points, and the centre. The heaven of the Taoists or the highest heaven is 'Jiutian' (lit. ninth heaven)\textsuperscript{499}. The bdud-leader's nine-storeyed castle is probably the nine-vaulted heaven.

It is notable that some Bon deities are associated with crows and ravens. Bdud is associated with crow, whereas gza' and dgra-lha are connected with raven. A raven's head gets prominence over those of the dragons in gza'. He has six arms. In Chinese mythology we find the three-legged sun-ravens\textsuperscript{500} who were shot down by Yi the archer. The ten suns, occupied by ten ravens, were the sons of a mythical emperor. The ravens were related with the sun-god. But they were punished for scorching the earth. Difference lies

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{498} Yuan Ke, n.128, p.65.
  \item \textsuperscript{500} According to Yuan Ke (Ed.),n.4, p.21, the three-legged sun-ravens were either the life-essence of the suns, or the charioteers of the suns.
\end{itemize}
in the possession of bows and arrows. Gza' is armed with bows and arrows, whereas the shooter of the sun-ravens possessed the weapon. Gza' is an all-powerful deity, whereas the sun-ravens were vulnerable to punishment by man for their arrogance and misdeeds.

In the chapter "Haiwaixijing" of Shanhaijing, there is the story of Xingtian\textsuperscript{501} who contended for divine supremacy by challenging Tiandi (Lord of Heaven). In the ensuing battle, Tiandi chopped off Xingtian's head whereupon the latter made his nipples for his eyes, and his navel for his mouth. The belly of gza' with a large mouth and his body covered with eyes remind us of Xingtian. The difference is gza' is in a commanding position whereas Xingtian is not.

Thehu-rang is said to be associated with rain. He wears a goatskin and that bellows and hammer are in his possession. In the tales of Leigong we see Huangdi making a drum out of the skin of a mythical creature Kui, or the Thunder Beast. Hammer is often seen in the hands of the Thunder God. The rumbling of thunder is believed to be produced by this hammer. Thehu-rang's guidance in catapulting boulders can probably be likened to the concept of striking with the thunderbolt. The question remains whether Thehu-rang can be called the god of rain and thunder.

The local gods or the country gods (yul-lha) in Tibet can be compared with Chenghuang (City God) of the Chinese tales. The stories of Dorje Ngangk'ar, the regional deity of Gonjo, tell us how he looked after the interest of the people of Gonjo. He is said to have averted surrender by the Tibetan men of Gonjo who were defeated by the Chinese. Another story narrates how he punished a lama for misusing a man's property and not keeping to his words. In another story, Dorje Dragtsen, the regional deity of Powo, had foreseen the coming of the Chinese and taken measures to stop them from advancing by asking a lama to write prayer for him.\textsuperscript{502} These stories have parallels in

\textsuperscript{501} Cf. Yuan Ke (simplified by), Shanhaijing Jiaoyi (Shanhaijing Made Easy), Shanghai : Shanghai Classics Press, 1985, pp.191-192.

\textsuperscript{502} Samuel, n.300, pp.181-182.
China where we see how Chenghuang of a particular town provided protection to the inhabitants. The difference is that the Tibetan yul-lha could take human form in order to test the sincerity of lamas and monks, or to guide the people of certain localities to fight invaders. But in the case of the Chinese, a man could be deified for his uprightness, honesty, perseverance and philanthropy. Chenghuang was not necessarily an all-powerful divinity. He rather often found himself replaced by a man of sincerity and honesty because of his own malpractices. Yul-lha, essentially a god, used to come down on earth to salvage his people often through the medium of a lama.

A significant feature of the story of Dorje Dragtsen is the reciprocity between god and lama. It is only through the help of a lama's prayer that the god has the strength to inspire a man to attack the Chinese.\textsuperscript{503}

The Bon deity Stag-lha me-hbar has much in common with the Chinese door-god. He is said to be instrumental in expelling demons of the old year. So do we find the story of Nian,\textsuperscript{504} the harmful demon who is only scared by the sound of crackers. The word 'nian' which literally means 'year', is used in the meaning of old year full of misfortune. Shen Tu and Yu Lei are said to have given the harmful ghosts to the tiger for consumption. That is why people paste the pictures of tiger on their doors. The tigers drive the evil demons and spirits away from human habitats. The word 'qunian' in Chinese means 'last year' or 'the past year'. In fact this word originated in the concept of exorcising the demon Nian because the homophone 'qu' also means 'to expel'. Both Stag-lha me-hbar and Menshen played an identical role with the difference that good luck was secured with the former by human sacrifice, whereas in the latter case, symbolic pasting of pictures and bursting of crackers serve the purpose. The latter is more of an

\textsuperscript{503} Samuel, n.300, p.181.

age-old practice than a religious ritual. The Tiger God himself has the element fire that acts as a symbol of destruction of all evil. The tiger in the Chinese case is more or less a symbolic representation of that concept, not by means of fire but by physical extermination of evilly-inclined gods and spirits.

Sarat Das informs us that the god of fire is not alone but with a wife (Tib: me-lhahi chung-ma) and he also has a horse (Tib: me-lhahi rta). This situation puts Me-lha to some extent similar in position to the Hearth God of China. Zaojun is propitiated along with his wife Zaomu. Zaoma or 'the horse of the hearth' is the cockroach that infests kitchen and the hearth. But otherwise, Zaojun exactly resembles Thab-lha, the Tibetan hearth-god. The Tibetans called a Bon priest to appease the wrath of Thab-lha in case of defilement, whereas the Chinese resorted to 'bribery' by offering sweet dishes to the god who was to lodge complaints to Heaven. In the latter case the god used to commit such immoral acts as accepting bribes, which was justified and systematized by the Chinese in the course of their long history of bureaucracy.

Sarat Das says if a universal Chu-lha is ever mentioned in books, it must be a mere phrase of the author's fancy. Indeed there is no general god of water. As we have seen in the case of Hebo -- the god of the Yellow River, or the goddess of the Yarlung, so is the case with all other rivers. Even mountains have their respective deities. The term "Wuyue Sidu" signifies the distinctiveness of the five sacred mountains and four rivers of China. The Taishan Mountain in the east, the Hengshan Mountain in the south, the Huashan Mountain in the west, the Hengshan Mountain in the north, and the Songshan Mountain at the centre; and the rivers of Yangzi, Huanghe (the Yellow River), Huai and Ji--all have their respective divinities. It is just like the Yar-lha sham-po and the Thang-lha mountains, which cannot be merely combined together and termed as being presided over by a single mountain god. In this context we can say that the five sacred mountains of

505. See n. 464.
506. See n. 351.
China are comparable with the four deified mountains of Tibet: Thang-lha on the north, Ha-bo-gangs-bzang or Gnod-sbyin-gang-bza on the west, Yar-lha sham-po on the east, and Sku-la kha-ri on the south. But Mount Everest, called by the Tibetans Lap-chi-gang, is not included here.

Klu, after being assimilated by the Buddhist pantheon, played the role of a rain-bringer, wind-controller and a guardian of subterranean treasures. Here, klu is exactly identical with the dragon (Chn.long) which is believed to have roots in the Indian nága. Serpent is perhaps the first creature on earth that found temples built for its propitiation. Originally a deity merely of the subsoil, klu changed its easily vindictive attitude when it became a part of the sacred doctrine. The Chinese dragon, on the other hand, were thought to be friendly with mankind. Dragons even attained divinity and that is why many royal families summoned it to induce pregnancy among sterile women.

The greatest of the 'protecting gods' ('go-ba'i lha') of the Tibetans is the 'enemy-defeating god' or the 'warrior god' (dgra-lha), who resembles in many ways the Chinese god of war and patron of the dynasty--Guandi, an apotheosized hero. Guandi can also be identified with the Tibetan epic hero Gesar. Guandi is known, down through the ages, as a man fighting for justice. There was a man who was a drunkard and a gambler--ceaselessly beat and berated his mother. Once just as she was entering the temple of the war-god, he caught her by her hair and dragged her out. At that the clay statue of the war god in the temple suddenly rose from its seat, strode out through the door and cut off the man's head with his knife. Such was Guandi's sense of justice. So was that of Gesar. It is said that Gesar was to come back at the head of an army from the

510. See n.276.
mythical land of Sambhala, in the north, when Buddhism and Tibet were faring badly. Sarat Das says that Gesar was a powerful king ruling in Shanxi in China, who on account of his martial valour was deified and raised to the position of the God of War. The people of Kham in Tibet own him for their national war-god, while the Mongolians say that Gesar was a king of Mongolia. According to some authors, he lived in the 7th century AD. According to the collection of heroic songs called the Rgyal-drung, King Gesar lived in the 8th century AD. His origin is, however, lost in myth.

The quasi-historical accounts on Guandi, and the Tibetan epic of Gesar—both project these two personages as civilizing heroes, bringers of justice, and the ultimate restorers of peace. Though they are termed as war-gods, yet they usually played the role of preventing war. However, for Gesar, it was a holy battle the savages, and spreading of the sacred doctrine among them.

In the story of the Yellow Emperor, we have come across the emperors of the four cardinal points: Taihao of the east, Yandi of the south, Shao Hao of the west and Zhuanxu of the north. These four emperors control the four seasons: Taihao controls spring, Yandi controls summer, Shao Hao autumn, and Zhuanxu winter. Taihao commands a compass, Yandi commands the beam of a steelyard, Shao Hao commands carpenter's square, and Zhuanxu commands the weight of a steelyard. All these tools are associated with mathematical calculation, and are used as measuring instrument. This reveals the Chinese involvement in mathematical and astronomical research, and also their labour-oriented outlook for the well-being of society. These emperors have been depicted as civilizing personages rather than despotic monarchs.

The four Chinese gods of seasons actually belong to a group of five including Huangdi, the Yellow Emperor. This group is also mentioned in combination with five

colours: Taihao of the east is the azure emperor; Yandi of the south is the red emperor; Shaohao of the west is the white emperor; Zhuanxu of the north is the black emperor; and Huangdi of the central domain is the yellow emperor. (See Figure 8)

Since both emperors and dragons were divine, they were at times synonymous. That is why the five emperors are also called 'Wulongshen' or the Five Dragon Deities. The symbolism of five can also be observed in the Tibetan Buddhist pantheon: the Five Transcendent (Dhyāni) Buddhas. They have much in common with the Five Dragon Deities. Akshobhya, literally, Unshakable, occupies the east, his colour is white; Amitābha, literally, Infinite Rays of Light, occupies the west, his colour is ruby or red; Amoghasiddhi, literally, Unfailingly Accomplished, occupies the north, his colour is emerald or green; Ratnasambhava, literally, Buddha of Precious Birth, occupies the south.

his colour is gold or yellow; and Vairochana, literally, Shining One, occupies the centre. His colour is blue. (See Figure 9)

The Dhyāni Buddhas are said to represent the transmutation of five chief emotions or five poisons of hate, delusion, pride, greed, and envy into five wisdoms. They are the primary lords of the five Buddha clans or five initiation families (rigs, Skt: kūla): vajra, tathāgata, padma, ratna and karma.

Moreover, the five elements have been shown in association with the Five Dhyāni Buddhas so far as the composition of Lamaist Stupas are concerned. (See Table 2) The elemental structure of Lamaist Stupas becomes an architectural model for man's path; from earth-bound and deluded stages to higher stages of existential awareness of the

514. See n.367.
515. Stein, n.297, p.179.
spiritual which has cast off all material fetters. It is just like the physically heaviest element of earth at the bottom, and the structural elements rise in clear symbolism towards the transcendental sphere. 516

### Table 2: Tibetan Buddhist Cosmology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbols</th>
<th>Colours</th>
<th>Elements</th>
<th>Dhyāni Buddhas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>Ether</td>
<td>Vairochana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Air</td>
<td>Amoghasiddhi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>Amitābha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Akshobhya</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>Earth</td>
<td>Ratnasambhava</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Detlef Ingo Lauf, p.139.

All these symbolisms reflect the highly spiritual and complex nature of the Tibetan ethos. The Tibetan symbolic world is full of mystic connotations. The Chinese symbolism is, however, very simplistic and down-to-earth with almost no deeper connotation. The total lack of spiritual introspection failed to enrich the Chinese symbolic sphere. However, the humanistic and socially relevant outlook of the Chinese can be seen in their five virtues: benevolence, justice, propriety, knowledge and truth. These were basically

Confucian ideas which found much in common with the Buddhist teachings. It is interesting that the Five Transcendental Buddhas, corresponding to the five elements, have found some commonness with the cardinal points and the five emperors presiding over the five elements. (See Table 3) But these five elements of the Chinese pantheon are not identical with those of the Tibetan one. Instead of air and ether of the Tibetan cosmos, it is wood and metal in the Chinese construction. The Tibetan elements are, no doubt, borrowed directly from India.

**Table 3: Mythical Emperors and their Relation to Agrarian Society**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cardinal Points</th>
<th>Colours</th>
<th>Elements</th>
<th>Emperors</th>
<th>Assistants</th>
<th>Tools of Control</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Seasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>Azure</td>
<td>Wood</td>
<td>Taihao</td>
<td>Goumang</td>
<td>Compass</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>Yandi</td>
<td>Zhurong</td>
<td>Beam of Steel-yard</td>
<td>Summer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>Soil</td>
<td>Huangdi</td>
<td>Hou Tu</td>
<td>Rope</td>
<td>Four sides</td>
<td>Autumn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Metal</td>
<td>Shaohao</td>
<td>Rushou</td>
<td>Carpenter's Square</td>
<td>Autumn</td>
<td>Winter of Steel-yard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Zhuanxu</td>
<td>Xuanming</td>
<td>Weight</td>
<td>Winter of Steel-yard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Tibetan chronological system, which Atisa systematized and simplified, was most probably taken from the Chinese system of time computation. In the Chinese system a cycle of sixty years is made by means of combining each of the ten Heavenly Stems (tiangan) and twelve Earthly Branches (dizhi). The Chinese too have the cycle of twelve animals (shengxiao) which corresponds to the twelve Earthly Branches. These animals with some astrological and horoscopic significance are used to symbolize the year in which a person is born. It is believed that the peculiarities of persons can be found out through the characteristics of animals to which they belong by birth.

Time and again it has been maintained that Tárá (Sgrol-ma) of the Tibetans corresponds to the goddess of mercy and queen of heaven—Guanyin of the Chinese. But how? Originally in the Buddhist teaching in India, a very powerful stream of
wisdom-compassion energy was embodied for meditational purposes in the form of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, a male divinity, often depicted as having a thousand eyes with which to perceive the miseries of sentient beings and a thousand arms wherewith to succour them. One of the further emanations of this wisdom-compassion energy was embodied in the form of Tárá, a female divinity from whom in turn twenty-one substreams of that same energy emanate. When Buddhism was carried to Tibet by Padmasambhava (Tib. Guru Rimpoche) and others, it entered in its pure Indian form. The Tibetans were taught to contemplate the power of compassion as embodied in the male celestial Bodhisattva, Avalokiteśvara, and also in the female emanation, Tárá. But knowledge of the special meditations centred on Tárá did not become widespread when Buddhism entered China.517

In China, beginning with the Tang dynasty, a delicately slender, white-clad female figure became the dominant portrait of Avalokiteśvara. This "Goddess of Mercy" became the patroness of women who wanted children and of sailors who wished to have her protection from calamities at sea.518 This female form was suitable to human concept of compassion, but this form remained quite unknown in Tibet.519 The origin of the female Bodhisattva Guanyin or Guanshiyin (Hearer of the Cries of the World) is usually associated with the introduction of Buddhist texts into China, during the Tang dynasty. When Guanyin emerged as a female celestial Bodhisattva in China, the Buddhist pantheon which included White Tárá, the female consort to Avalokiteśvara, had been well established in India and had been introduced into Tibet. This White Tárá, according to several scholars, had become assimilated with Avalokiteśvara by Chinese Buddhists who superimposed Tárá's qualities onto Guanyin, perhaps believing that the White Tárá was a

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lower stage manifestation of Avalokiteśvara. The Chinese, seeing no need to
differentiate between two forms of the wisdom-compassion energy, either deliberately or
otherwise merged Tārā and Avalokiteśvara together, keeping the latter's name (since many
sacred writings refer to him), but choosing the former's lovely female form as being better
suited to the concept to compassion. Thus Guanyin is Avalokiteśvara and Tārā in one.

Other scholars have attributed the female representation of Guanyin to the fusion between
Avalokiteśvara and the Taoist Queen Mother of the West--Xiwangmu.

The 'revolutionary figure' of Maitreya among the discontented peasants, hoping for
a change in the Mandate of Heaven (tianming), is a thoroughly sinicized version of the
original Maitreya Buddha. Maitreya virtually became the symbol of anti-status quo in
China. The Tibetan version of Maitreya is more or less close to the Indian form, and of
course with a religious connotation. It is not surprising for the Chinese to seek some
advantage from the worship of Maitreya, who acts as a messenger of better prospects in
future. The Chinese are always optimistic, toiling in the present world with an eye towards
long-term benefit in future. The rebellious mind of the Chinese masses was invigorated by
the egalitarian outlook of Buddhism. The Buddhist dialectics inspired them to assimilate
the Buddhist deities in a way so that they firstly suit the Chinese mind, and secondly serve
the general interest of the populace.

Absolute submission to a religiously charismatic individual is what we see with the
Tibetans. Disciples are requested to pay homage first to Lama, then to Buddha, Dharma
and Sangha, not only as a matter of concept, but also in actual practices. Instead of the
usual 'Three Jewels' (triratna), the Tibetan Buddhists worship 'Four Jewels'. In a further
developed form of this concept, Lama is regarded as the synthesis of the Triple Jewel.
Lama is the substratum of all the virtues, the basis of all the paths, and the root of all

520. See n.518.
521. See n.519.
522. See n.518.
merits. So the deities are seen no higher than the Lama, who is believed to be the manifestation of wisdom, compassion and power. It was the Lamaist interpretation which was thought infallible and absolute, and hence accepted by the people wholeheartedly. That is why there is lack of development of popular thinking or even formation of ideas independent of the Lamaist influence. The destiny of every person is carved out according to his karma. The Tibetans gave deep thought to rebirth and incarnation. Their entire thought-process revolves round the stage of after-life. Hence the invention of Bar-do, the intermediate state between death and rebirth. Literally, 'bar' means between and 'do' means two, that is, between the two. So the present life is a state of Bar-do inasmuch as it lies between the past and future existences.

The Chinese attached more importance to ancestor worship rather than venerating 'gods of fantasy'. Since gods were considered as invention of man, the former were expected to oblige the latter in all his daily activities. Otherwise the gods and goddesses were subjected to ridicule or even total banishment. Such an idea is depicted in a two-part allegorical saying--"a clay Bodhisattva fording a river--hardly able to save oneself (let alone assist anyone else)." Beside this, almost all the folk deities underwent mockery at various point of time because of their apparent entente with the exploiting class of people. Even though an unpleasant equation existed between the serfs and serf-owners in Tibet, such ridicule of gods did not occur as the former found themselves bound by the Wheel of Karma which was virtually unalterable. When the reality of life, for the Chinese means confrontation, contradiction, struggle, suffering and ultimate triumph over the evil forces, the Tibetans, through their Lamaist teachings, have sought and taught to renounce the world of suffering -- a series of action that often embodies meditation in isolation. Such meditation in isolation, which is believed to be productive for the universal well-being, is spiritual, metaphysical, non-rational and emotive in the truest sense.