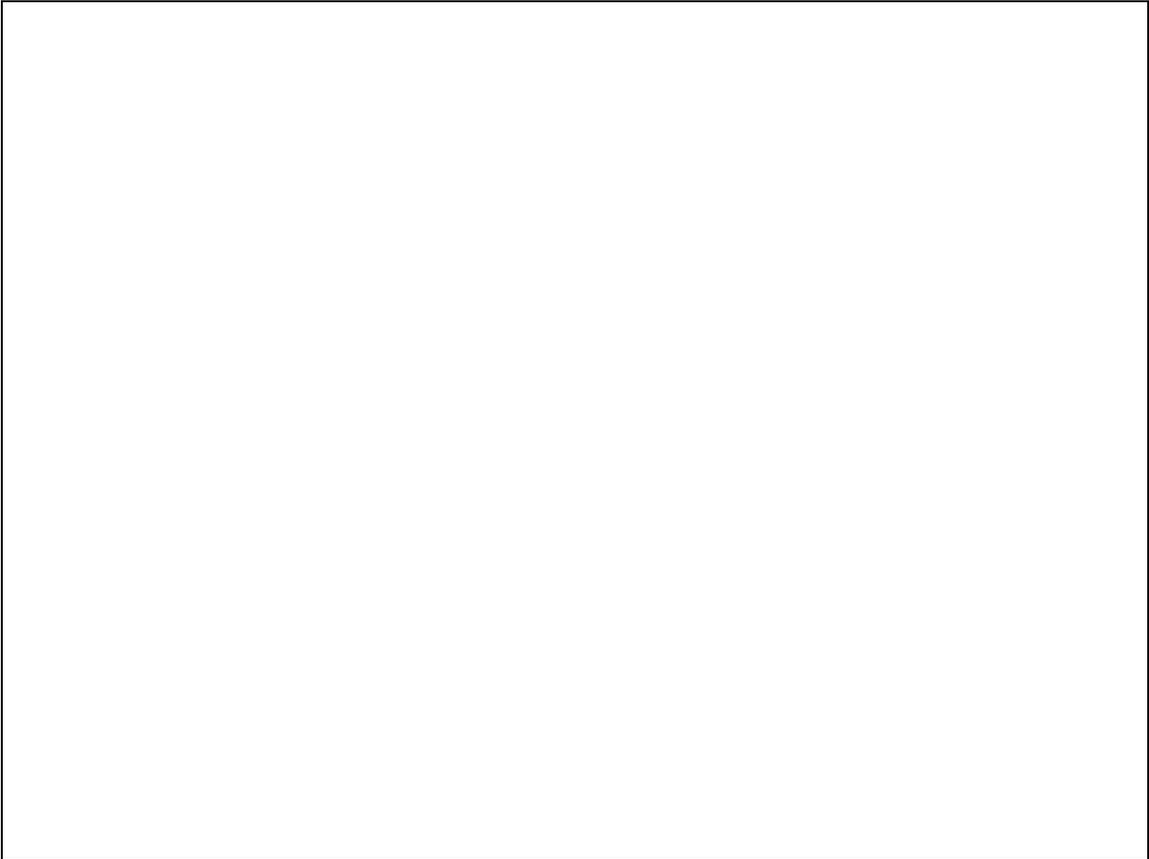


**Mythology and Us
Loudon Fall 2011**

Week II





Where does mythology come from? Lets start with the end of the **Paleolithic Period**. An array of Neolithic artifacts, including bracelets, axe heads, chisels, and polishing tools.

End of the Paleolithic Age or Era. Covers 99% of human technological history. Introduction **stone tools** by hominids i.e. Homo habilis 2.5 or 2.6 million years ago to the introduction of agriculture 12,000 years ago (10,000 BCE). Hunting and gathering societies.

The transition from hunting and gathering communities and bands to agricultural settlement **started independently in at least seven or eight sites around the world**. The **earliest know forms** of domestication of plants and animals took place in the Middle East around **10,000 BC** or earlier.

Agricultural production of plants and animals useful to humans including **15 crops that account for 80% of the food emerged**. **Raising crops, breeding and managing livestock and preparing and preserving plant and animal products gradually changed mankind**.

With the **start of human civilization as we now think of it, settled societies slowly emerged along with systems of government, religion, social class, labor and record keeping**.

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Small and mobile groups of hunter-gathers transformed into **sedentary societies based on built-up villages and towns** increasingly geared to specialized food-crop cultivation (e.g., irrigation and food storage technology) that allowed **surplus food production**. These developments over thousands of years provided the basis for **concentrated high population densities and settlements, specialized and complex labor diversification, trading economies**, the development of non-portable art, architecture and culture, centralized administrations and political structures, hierarchical ideologies and depersonalized systems of knowledge (e.g., property regimes and writing).

The first full-blown manifestation of the entire Neolithic complex is seen in the Middle East Sumerian cities (c. 3500 BC), whose emergence also inaugurates the end of the prehistoric Neolithic period.

Agricultural Revolutions:

The shift from nomadic life to settled communities was influenced by the species of plants and animals available and by local cultures. In some parts of the world, such as the Arctic regions, hunting still dominates since plant-based agriculture is not a viable option. A simplified list of agricultural revolutions follows:

Middle East 6000–500 BCE with active areas up to 10,000 BCE. Wheat (later barley), peas, and lentils. Domestication of sheep, goats, cattle.

Egypt 3000–30 BCE

China 1766 BCE forward but starting around 8000 BCE. Rice, millet, gourds.

Domestication of goats, sheep, cattle, chickens and pigs.

Mesoamerica 1200 BCE forward, corn, beans and squash, 8000 forward Peru chili beans, potatoes and peppers and by 4500 BCE domestication of alpacas and llamas.

Native Americans 2500 BCE sunflowers, sump weed and goosefoot.

Greece 800 BCE–150 AD

Rome 500 BCE--455 AD

India 320 BCE forward

Asia 8000--7000 BCE forward widespread, some earlier

Melanesia 8000 BCE possible starting date

Sub-Saharan Africa 2500 BCE forward

Africa Ethiopian highlands coffee, shale sorghum and pearl millet

West Africa: African rice, yams and oil palm

Horse domesticated many old world sites 6000 BCE forward



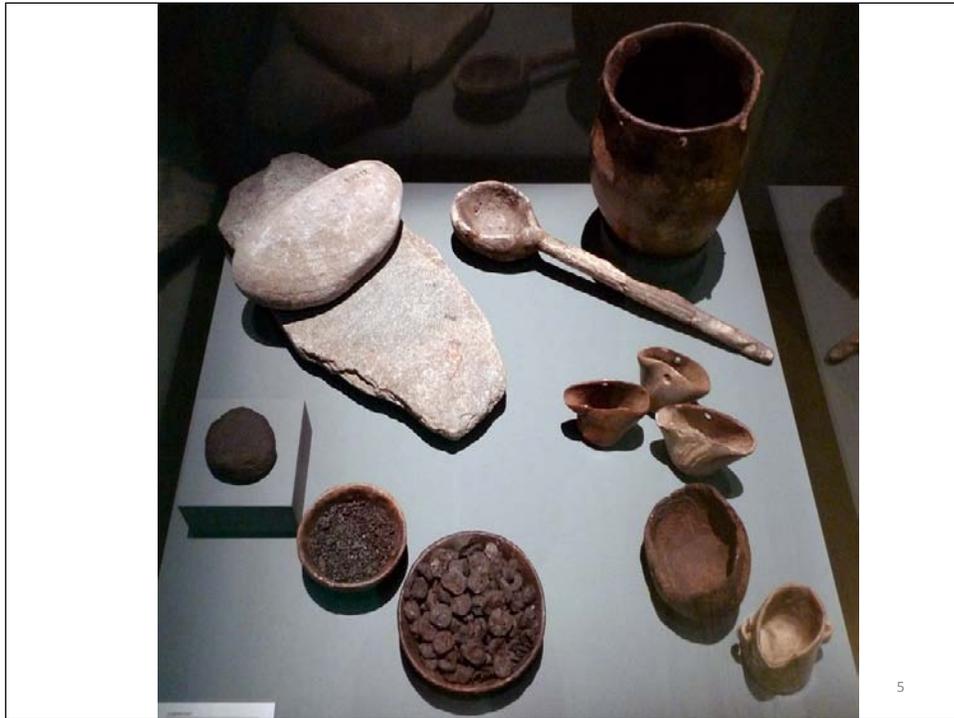
[Skara Brae](#), Scotland. Evidence of home furnishings (shelves). Large stone built Neolithic settlement, located on the west coast of Mainland, Orkney, Scotland. **Ten houses occupied from roughly 3180-2500 BCE. Europe's most complete Neolithic Village, older than Stonehenge and the Great Pyramids. Pastoralists who raised cattle and sheep. Some evidence of seed grains of barley. Also fish bones.**

Animal domestication was an important part of the change to agriculture. To bring animals into settlements or control production factors such as size, temperament, diet, mating patterns and life span were important in domesticating animals.

Milk producers, cows and goats were valuable. The use of animals for plowing or towing as well as for a food source or as a source of leather, wool, hides and fertilizer were also important. Animals were also useful as a portable source of food for periods of shortage.

The Neolithic Revolutions likely came about due to hunger, shortages of wild game and population growth that may have resulted in periods of famine and starvation. There is good evidence that average height and longevity declined with the shift to farming and herding. It took until the 20th century for average human height to come back to the pre-Neolithic Revolution levels.

However, food surpluses made possible a denser population and the development of a social elite who were not otherwise engaged in agriculture, industry or commerce, but dominated their communities by other means and monopolized decision-making.



Food and cooking items retrieved at a European Neolithic site: [millstones](#), charred bread, grains and small apples, a clay cooking pot, and containers made of antlers and wood.



Russian postcard photo 1908, Turkio Khakas ethnicity, female shaman
Shaman: Evenki (Tungusic language of Siberia) 1. a priest or priestess who uses magic for the purpose of curing the sick, divining the hidden and controlling events.

Shamanism: a religion practiced by indigenous peoples of far northern Europe and Siberia that is **characterized by belief in an unseen world of gods, demons and ancestral spirits responsible only to shamans;** also, any similar religions.

The Evenki people currently number about 30,000. The name means “he who runs swifter than a reindeer.” Evenki is the largest of the group of Tungusic languages and is spoken by Evenks in Russia, Mongolia, and the People’s Republic of China. The language is generally considered endangered.



Urarina shaman 1988 Peruvian Amazon basin, may administer Ayahuasca ritual to medically cleanse body.

Mythology, Religion, Paganism: The shamans, gurus, elders, sages, chiefs and sheiks with hunter-gather societies and with agricultural societies had the important role of guiding tribes and communities. Their knowledge of the patterns of the seasons, the nature and habits of animals, the growing, harvest and storage of crops aided in the success and welfare of the tribe. The practicality of predicting the seasons, knowing the habits of game and how to successfully produce food and survive was essential to the communities.

Successful advice, and the invention of appropriate rituals and practices to guarantee desirable outcomes were rewarded with special benefits and powers. Bad outcomes had to be explained via a lack of effort or not performing rituals. Explanations and stories had to be offered regarding the needs to appease or gain the favor of unknown powers, gods, demons and other supernatural beings evolved.

The ability of pass along knowledge and guarantee performance in the future was critical to the survival of the tribe and to the welfare of the shamans. Unsuccessful rituals and stories that were not relevant were discarded or modified as conditions warranted.

Over years, centuries and generations the oral histories of the tribe evolved and became the mythologies, spiritual or religious practices, and what we might consider “paganism” today.

All this “Once Upon a Time.”



Judith Kalki, Amma bhagavan **Indian guru's** founders of the spiritual movement Oneness University.

Guru: 2a. a teacher and especially intellectual guide in matters of fundamental concern b. one who is an acknowledged leader or chief proponent c. a person of knowledge or expertise: expert.

Also, definition 1. a personal religious teacher and spiritual guide in Hinduism.

As an adjective, heavy, venerable 3a. **calling forth respect through age, character and attainments; broadly, conveying an impression of aged goodness and benevolence b. impressive by reason of age.**

In **Sanskrit gu means darkness and ru means light.** As a principle for the **development of consciousness, it leads the creation from unreality to reality, from darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge.**

Widely used in modern terminology as **“teacher.”**



Native Brazilian chiefs.

Neolithic Period: The Mythology of Farmers: Armstrong indicates that with the switch to agriculture, **farming became sacramental**. The **earth seemed to sustain all creatures—plants, animals, humans—as a living womb**. **Rituals were designed less this power exhaust itself**. So the **first seeds were “thrown away”** as offerings, the **first fruits of the harvest were left unpicked**, as a way of recycling sacred energies. There was **evidence that in South America, parts of Africa, the Pacific Islands and Dravidian (southern) India human beings were offered in sacrifice**.

You could not expect something for nothing.

Gods, human beings, animals and plants all shared the same nature and invigorate and replenish one another.

Human sexuality was a divine force that fructified the earth. The soil was female, the seeds divine semen and rain the congress of heaven and earth. It was common for men and women to engage in ritual sex when they planted their crops.

Some of the **early creation myths in Europe and North America** imagined the **first humans emerging from the earth like plants**; like seeds their lives began in the underworld



Two local elders, years of wisdom.

Elder: 1. one living in an earlier period 2. one who is older 3. **one having authority by virtue of age and experience.**

Note: The term is frequently used in describing shamans and other Neolithic leaders but did not appear to be a common archaic term.

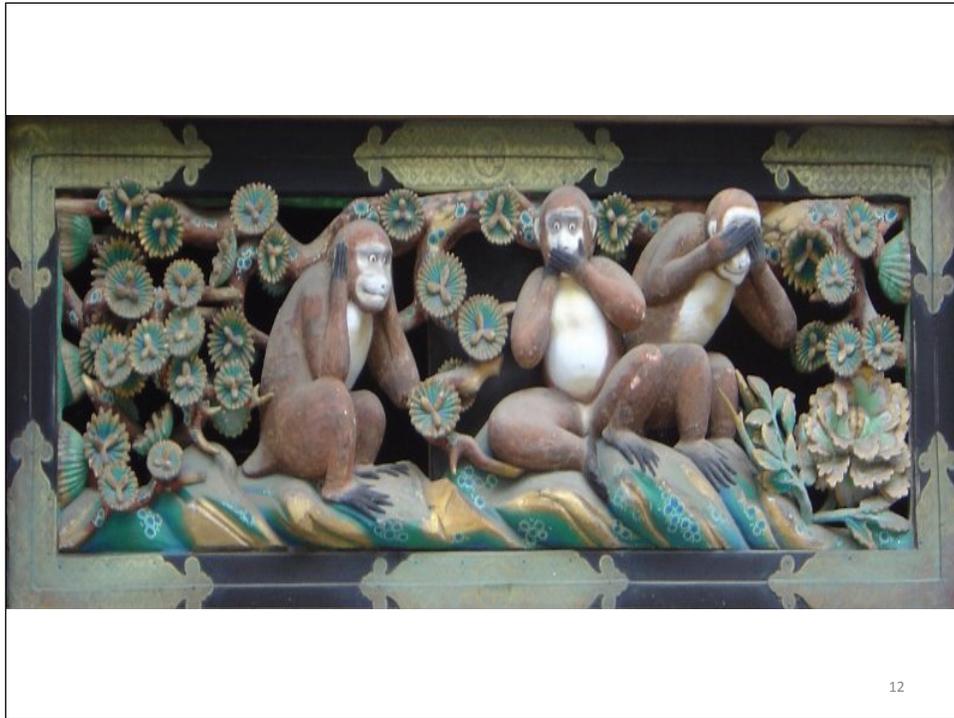
Sage: a mentor in spiritual and philosophical topics who is renowned for profound wisdom.

Sheikh: is a word or honorific term in the Arabic language that literally means “elder.” It is commonly used to designate an elder of a tribe, a revered wise man or an Islamic scholar. Although the title generally refers to a male, a very small number of female sheikhs have also existed in history.

Chief: noun A tribal chief or king is the leader of a tribal society or chiefdom. Tribal societies with social stratification under a single (or dual) leader emerged in the Neolithic period from earlier tribal structures with little stratification. They remain prevalent throughout the Iron Age after the Neolithic period that ends around 3500 BCE or later.

OTHER TRADITIONS AND STORIES

- Folklore and Folktales
- Legends
- Fables
- Fairy Tales



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Websters: **Folklore** 1: traditional customs, tales, sayings, dances or art forms preserved among a people. 3: an often unsupported notion, story, or saying that is widely circulated.

Folktale: A characteristically anonymous, timeless and placeless tale circulated orally among a people. Wikipedia: ...they are not considered true or sacred events by the societies that tell them.

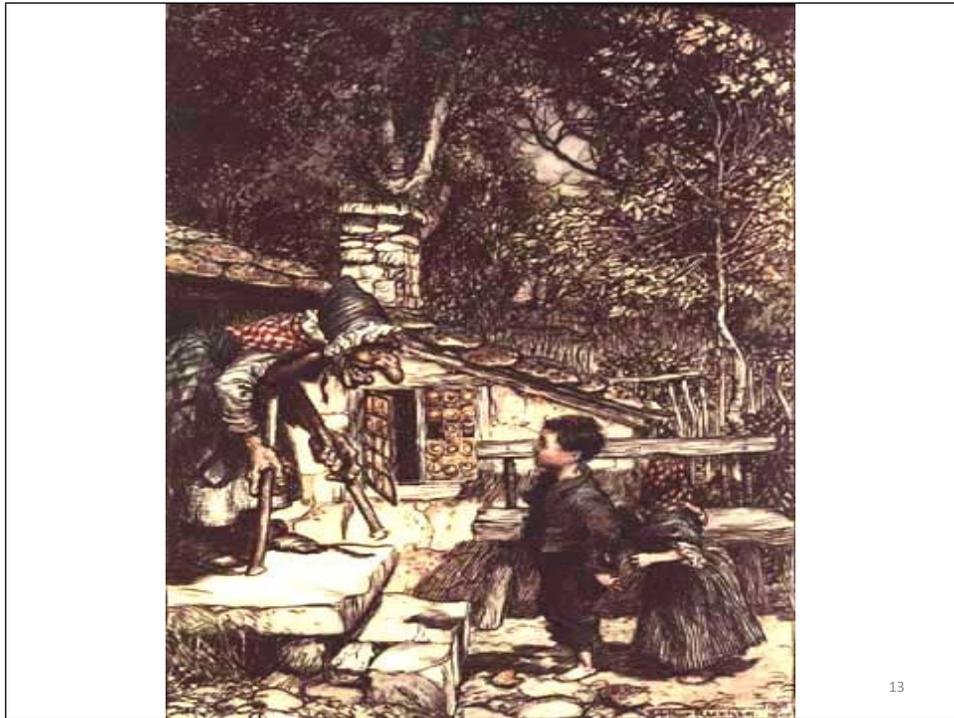
The telling of stories appears to be a cultural universal, common to basic and complex societies alike. **Even the forms folktales take are certainly similar from culture to culture.**

Hear no evil, speak no evil, see no evil. The three wise monkeys over the Tosho-gu shrine in Nikko, Japan (does it mean being of good mind, speech and action or does it refer to those who deal with impropriety by looking the other way, refusing to acknowledge it or looking the other way)

Too-too-moo and the Giant, a tale of Indonesia. Parallels with “The Inch Boy” Japan, African children rescued from the belly of an elephant or giant caterpillar, and in Western culture, Little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother taken from the stomach of the wolf.

Brer Rabbit, Paul Bunyan, Pecos Bill, Hansel and Gretel, for example.

Wikipedia indicates folklore can be divided into four areas of interest:: artifact (such as voodoo dolls), oral tradition, culture and behavior (rituals). **Folklore can contain mythic or religious elements; it equally concerns itself with the sometimes mundane traditions of everyday life.**

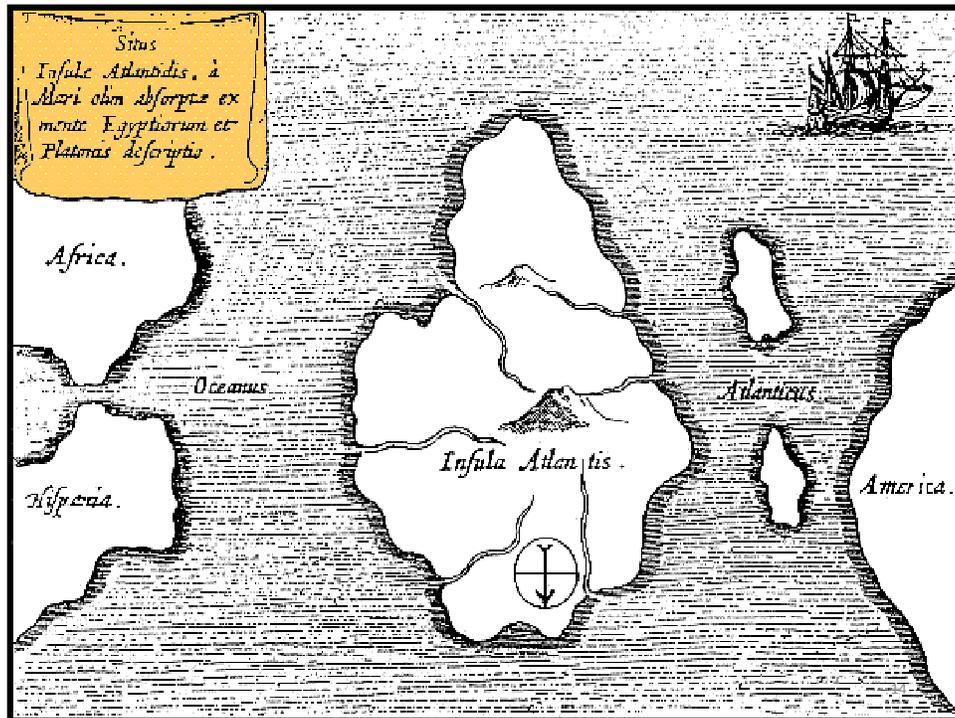


Hansel and Gretel. Artwork by Arthur Rackham, 1909

Folktales may or may not emerge from a mythological or religious tradition, but be a figurative narrative and speak to deep psychological issues.

The purpose of the relatively recent Germanic *Hansel and Gretel* may primarily be one of mundane instruction regarding **forest safety**, or secondarily, a cautionary tale about the **dangers of famine** to large families, but its latent meaning may evoke a strong emotional response due to widely understood themes and motifs such as **a terrible mother, death**, etc.

So there can be a moral and psychological scope to a folktale, as well as entertainment value, depending on the nature of the teller, the style of the telling, the ages of the audience members and the overall context of the performance.



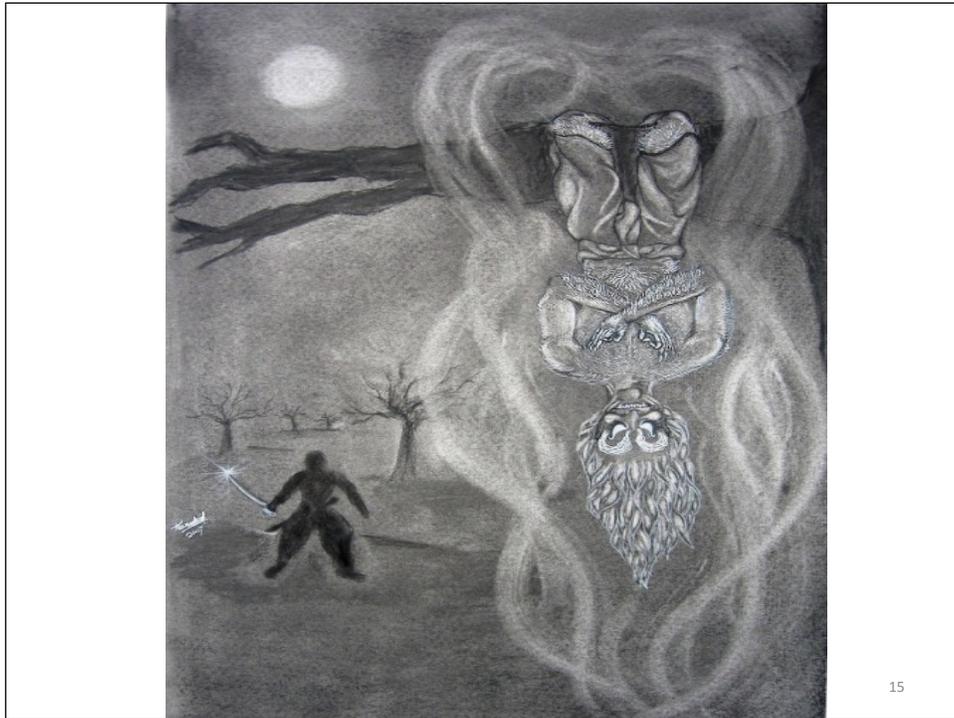
LEGENDS: Athanasius Kircher's map of Atlantis, in the middle of the [Atlantic Ocean](#). From *Mundus Subterraneus* 1669, published in Amsterdam. The map is oriented with south at the top. In Plato's account, Atlantis was a naval power lying "in front of the Pillars of Hercules" that conquered many parts of Western Europe and Africa 9000 years ago before the time of Solon.

Wikipedia: Like myths, **legends (Latin, *legenda*, "things to read")** are stories that are **traditionally considered true; however, they are set in a more recent time, when the world was much as it is "today."** Also, legends generally feature humans as their main characters, whereas myths generally focus on superhuman characters. The Brothers Grimm defined **legend** as **folktale historically grounded**.

Webster's indicates **1a. a story...esp. one regarded as historical but not verifiable** c. a popular myth of recent origin d. a person or thing that inspires legends.

In oral traditions, **storytellers learned their stock in trade generally from older storytellers.** Legends apply structures that reveal a moral definition to events, providing meaning that lifts them above the repetitions and constraints of average human lives and giving them a universality that makes them worth repeating through many generations.

Wikipedia examples of famous legends includes *Beowulf*, *Fountain of Youth*, *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table*, *Robin Hood*, *Shangri-La* and *William Tell*. Once a legend is retold as fiction its authentic legendary qualities begin to fade and recede. *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* is a case in point.

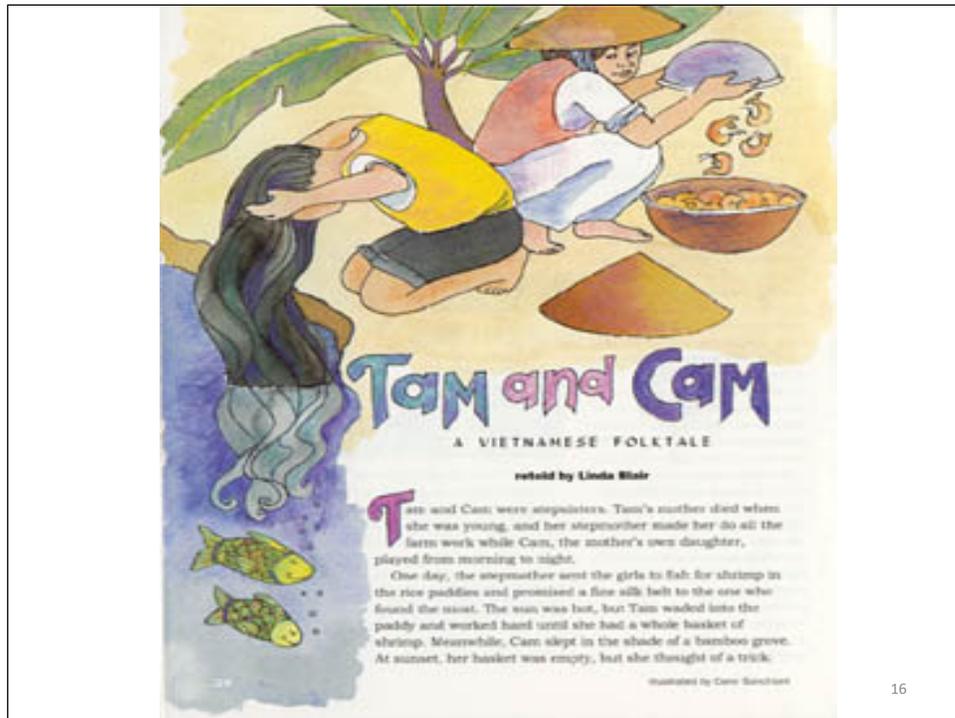


A picture of Vetala hanging by a tree and Vikram in the background.

Fable (Latin derived from “fari” (“to speak”) with the “ula” suffix that signifies “little,” a little story. Wikipedia: a succinct story in prose or verse that **features animals, mythical creatures, plants, inanimate objects, or forces of nature which are anthropomorphized** (given human qualities), and that **illustrates a “moral” lesson**, which may at the end be expressed explicitly in a pithy maxim. For example, *Aesop’s Fables*, James Thurber and Dr. Seuss. Hundreds of fables were composed in ancient India during the first millennium BC. From the Middle East came *The Thousand and One Nights*, also known as the *Arabian Nights*. More modern examples include *Bambi*, and in adult satire, George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* with reference to Stalinist communism in particular and totalitarianism in general.

An example is “*Twenty five tales of Baital*,” a collection of tales and legends within a frame story from India. The legendary King Vikram, identified as Vikramaditya (c. 1st century BC), promises a vamachara (a tantric sorcerer) that he will capture a *vetala* (or *Baital*), a vampire spirit who hangs from a tree and inhabits and animates dead bodies. Not an easy task, since each story ends with a riddle; the cycle of catching and the release of the vampire continues twenty-four times.

In a pejorative sense, a “fable” may be a deliberately invented or falsified account of an event or circumstances.



Tam and Cam

The fairy tale, **told orally**, is a subclass of the folktale.

Short narratives (as for children) involving **fantastic forces and beings** as **fairies, goblins, elves, trolls, giants or gnomes, and usually magic enchantments**. Often the story will involve a far-fetched sequence of events designed to mislead. Sometimes they are blessed with unusual happiness, as in a fairy tale romance. **Only a few** of the stories involve fairies.

Colloquially a “fairy tale” can also mean a far-fetched story or tall tale. Unlike legends, they do not contain more than superficial references to actual places, people and events. They take place **“once upon a time.”**

Fairy tales are found in oral and literary form but evidence of literary works indicates they have existed for thousands of years and in multiple cultures around the world. Earlier fairy tales were intended for an audience of adults as well as children.

Thompson, *The Folktale*, 1977: “...In this never-never land, humble heroes kill adversaries, succeed to kingdoms and marry princesses.” The characters and motifs of fairy tales are simple and archetypal: princesses and goose girls; youngest sons and gallant princes; ogres, giants, dragons and trolls; wicked stepmothers and false heroes; fairy godmothers and other magical helpers; often talking horses, or foxes, or birds; glass mountains; and prohibitions and breaking of prohibitions.

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Literary fairy tales show considerable reworking from the oral form. Older forms include *Panchatantra* (India animal tales in verse, 3rd century BCE), *Pentamerone* (Italian), *Brothers Grimm*, *The Tale of Two Brothers* (Egypt c. 1300 BC) and many others. Fairy tales abound in Western cultures across Europe and around the world, including China, Japan, Africa, Australia and the Americas.

Fairy tales tend to take on the color of their location, through the choice of motifs, the style in which they are told, the depiction of character and local color. They can spring from common human experience and therefore can appear separately in many different origins.

For example, *Cinderella*, the classical persecuted heroine whose attributes are unrecognized, or one who unexpectedly achieves recognition or success after a period of obscurity and neglect, represents a common identifying feature of fairy tales around the world. Some such tales are *The Wonderful Birch* (Russian), *Aschenputtel* (German), *Katie Woodencloak* (Norwegian), *The Story of Tam and Cam* (Vietnamese), *Ye Xian* (Chinese), *Cap O' Rushes* (English), *Catskin* (English), *Brown and Trembling* (Celtic), *Finette Cendron* (French), *Allerleirauh* (German) and *Tattercoats* (English).

MYTHOLOGY

All know cultures have had some form of mythology. Each and every one of them developed distinct mythological styles and their own system of gods and goddesses.

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Anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss views myths as abstract constructions. The structure of all human minds is identical. Myths are identical products from identical minds so around the world possess a common structure. They reveal the conflict between opposing forces—such as life and death, or nature and culture. The structure reveals tensions in social relations or economic problems. The analysis of myths proves human beings, no matter how primitive their technology, are not mentally inferior. They all demonstrate that they possess the intellectual capacity to understand the world in which they live.

Anthropologist Paul Radin views myths from an economic perspective. The individuals actual struggle for survival in the face of economic uncertainty, caused by an insufficient food supply and poor technology, creates fears that life will be unhappy and short. Religious leaders manipulate these fears for their own material benefits, often in concert with the political leaders of the community.



Artist Albert Namatjira was a Western Arrernta (Arunta) man. Central Australia, Alice Springs area.

Value of Primitive Mythologies: When the missionary and ethnologist C. Strehlow asked the Australian Arunta why they performed certain ceremonies, the answer always was: **“Because the ancestors so commanded it.”**

The Kai of New Guinea refused to change their way of living and working and they explained: **“It was thus that the Nemu (the Mythical Ancestors) did, and thus we do likewise.”**

Asked the reason for a particular detail in a ceremony, a Navaho chanter answered: “Because the Holy People did it that way in the first place.”

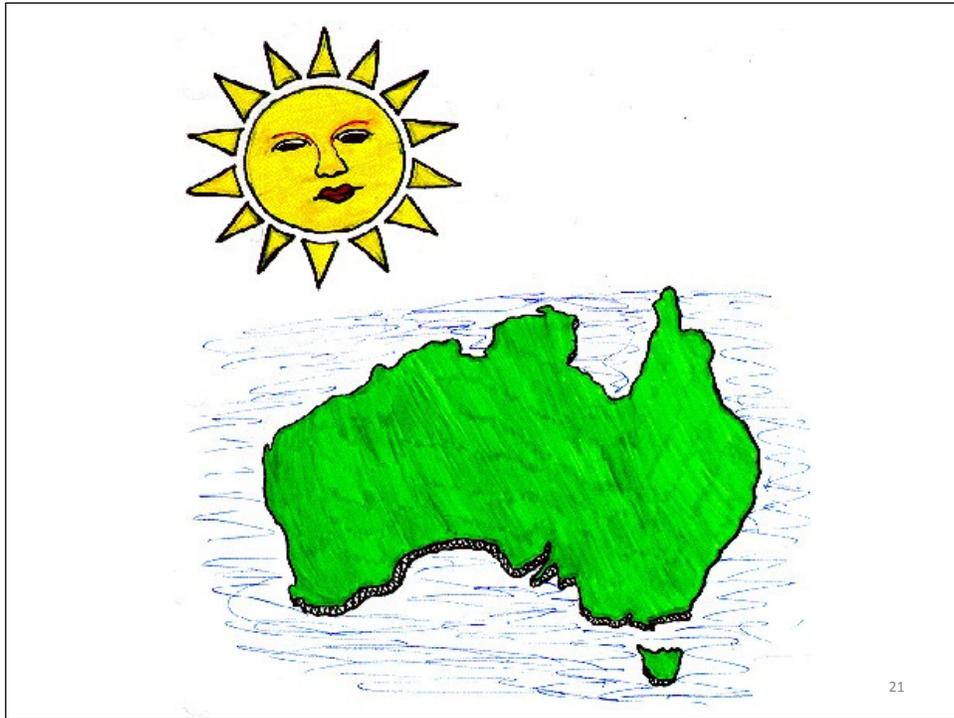
Tibetan ritual: “As our ancestors in ancient times did—so we do now.”

Hindu theologians and ritualists: “We must do what the gods did in the beginning” (*Satapatha Brahmana*, VII, 2, 1, 4).

Hopefully our review of mythology will reflect this spirit.



Creation: The Origin of Life and Intelligent Design; Salt Cay in the Turks in Caicos.
West Indies SE of the Bahamas and North of Hispanola



Australian Aborigine Creation Myth: One of many.

There was a time when everything was still. All the spirits of the earth were asleep - or almost all. The great Father of All Spirits was the only one awake. Gently he awoke the Sun Mother. As she opened her eyes a warm ray of light spread out towards the sleeping earth. The Father of All Spirits said to the Sun Mother, "Mother, I have work for you. Go down to the Earth and awake the sleeping spirits. Give them forms."

The Sun Mother glided down to Earth, which was bare at the time and began to walk in all directions and everywhere she walked plants grew. After returning to the field where she had begun her work the Mother rested, well pleased with herself.

The Father of All Spirits came and saw her work, but instructed her to go into the caves and wake the spirits. This time she ventured into the dark caves on the mountainsides. The bright light that radiated from her awoke the spirits and after she left insects of all kinds flew out of the caves. The Sun Mother sat down and watched the glorious sight of her insects mingling with her flowers.

However once again the Father urged her on. The Mother ventured into a very deep cave, spreading her light around her. Her heat melted the ice and the rivers and streams of the world were created. Then she created fish and small snakes, lizards and frogs.

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Next she awoke the spirits of the birds and animals and they burst into the sunshine in a glorious array of colors. Seeing this the Father of All Spirits was pleased with the Sun Mother's work. She called all her creatures to her and instructed them to enjoy the wealth of the earth and to live peacefully with one another. Then she rose into the sky and became the sun.

The living creatures watched the Sun in awe as she crept across the sky, towards the west. However when she finally sunk beneath the horizon they were panic-stricken, thinking she had deserted them. All night they stood frozen in their places, thinking that the end of time had come. After what seemed to them like a lifetime the Sun Mother peeked her head above the horizon in the East. The earth's children learned to expect her coming and going and were no longer afraid.

At first the children lived together peacefully, but eventually envy crept into their hearts. They began to argue. The Sun Mother was forced to come down from her home in the sky to mediate their bickering. She gave each creature the power to change their form to whatever they chose. However she was not pleased with the end result. The rats she had made had changed into bats; there were giant lizards and fish with blue tongues and feet. However the oddest of the new animals was an animal with a bill like a duck, teeth for chewing, a tail like a beavers and the ability to lay egg. It was called the platypus.

The Sun Mother looked down upon the Earth and thought to herself that she must create new creatures less the Father of All Spirits be angered by what she now saw. She gave birth to two children. The god was the Morning Star and the goddess was the moon. Two children were born to them and these she sent to Earth. They became our ancestors. She made them superior to the animals because they had part of her mind and would never want to change their shape.



Australian aboriginal Rainbow Serpent, stories vary according to environmental differences. Monsoonal vs desert.

Common motif in the art and mythology of Aboriginal Australia. Named for the snake-like meandering of water across a landscape. Seen as the inhabitant of permanent waterholes and is in control of life's most precious resource.



Dreamtime Rainbow Serpent Australian Carpet Python. Many names depending on region. Ties to the Milky Way, also to the rising of sea level with end of last Ice Age. A great serpent associated with the rainbow is held responsible for the flood.

Dreamtime stories tell of the great spirits and totems during creation. In animal and human form they molded the barren and featureless earth. Serpent stories vary according to environmental differences.



A heron's call is the cry of the sacred Benu-bird (shown at left) that announced the beginning of time in an ancient Egyptian creation myth. The Benu-bird was associated with the Egyptian calendar and the idea of cyclical renewal. A heron hieroglyph represents the sun-god Ra.

In Egyptian myth the primordial act of creation was the raising of a mound of land out of a watery abyss called Nun. The Benu bird was said to have flown over the waters of the Nun and came to rest on a rock from which its cry broke the primeval silence; this determined what was and what was not to be in the unfolding creation.

CREATION: The riddle of how the world came to be is a central problem for all mythologies.

Sometimes the beginning of all things is described as a **total emptiness or void, or alternatively, as a limitless expanse of water and undifferentiated waste clothed in darkness** – an idea common to mythical narratives of the Middle East, the Khoisan peoples of southern Africa and many traditions of North America and Southeast Asia.

Despite the enormous diversity of cultures in North America, there are relatively few types of myths about the creation of the world. Most Native American peoples attribute the conception, if not the making, to a supreme deity of "**Great Spirit.**" The actual deities often include animal figures, i.e., the Spider in the West, an **Earth Diver** (often a lowly creature) that goes to the bottom of the primeval sea and retrieves mud.

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The **turtle** plays an important part in Cheyenne accounts. Maheo, "All Spirit," created the Great Water together with water creatures and birds. The birds grew tired of flying and took turns to dive and look for land. They failed until the coot tried. When he returned, the coot dropped a little ball of mud from his beak into Maheo's hand. As Maheo rolled the mud in his palms it expanded and soon there was so much only old Grandmother Turtle could carry it. On her back the mud continued to grow; in this way the first land was created.

Wikipedia indicates a creation myth is a symbolic narrative of a culture, tradition or people that describes their earliest beginnings, how the world they know began and how they came into it. They are also commonly considered sacred accounts and can be found in nearly all traditions.

Charles Long, (1963) *Alpha: The Myths of Creation*, is credited with describing five basic types of stories.

Creation *ex nihilo* in which the creation is through thought, word, dream or bodily secretions of a divine being.

Earth diver creation in which a diver, usually a bird or amphibian sent by a creator, plunges into the seabed through a primordial ocean to bring up sand or mud which develops into a terrestrial world.

Emergence myths in which progenitors pass through a series of worlds and metamorphoses until reaching the present world.

Creation by the dismemberment of a primordial being.

Creation by the splitting or ordering of a primordial unity, such as the cracking of a cosmic egg or a bringing into form from chaos.



Orphic Egg. Jacob Bryant 1774

The most widely distributed creation image depicts the primal universe in the form of an egg, containing the potentiality of everything within its all-enveloping shell.

The usual pattern is for some sort of action to occur imitating a process of change and development.

For the Dogon people of West Africa, a vibration set up by Amma, the creator god, burst the confines of the cosmic egg and liberated the opposed divinities of order and chaos.

Life Out of Death: The cosmic giant Pan Gu gives up his life to bring the world into being. In the darkness of a primordial egg, Pan Gu, said to be the first living thing and said to be the offspring of Yin and Yang, the two vital forces in the universe, grew for 18,000 years until the egg split open. The light and clear parts of the egg floated up to create the heavens and the heavy and opaque parts sank to form the earth. Pan Gu stood up. To prevent the fluid earth and the sky from coming together again, he grew taller, forcing the ground and the heavens apart by ten feet a day.

After another 18,000 years, the earth and the sky solidified in their present positions and Pan Gu wearily laid down to rest. He died and his breath became wind and cloud, his voice thunder, his left eye the sun, his right eye the moon, and his hair and whiskers the stars in the sky. The other parts of his body became the elements that make up the earth, including mountains, rivers, plants, trees, metals, gems and rocks. His sweat was transformed into the rain and dew.

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In other Pan Gu versions many opposites in nature, male and female, wet and dry and light and dark were formed in the egg. While Pan Gu grew he also created the first humans. Pan Gu died from the effort of creation and from his body all the natural features of the earth arose. In later versions the alternation of the night and day is explained by the opening and shutting of Pan Gu's eyes.

Finnish mythology

In the *Kalevala*, the Finnish national epic, there is a myth of the world being created from the fragments of an egg laid by a diving duck on the knee of Ilmatar, goddess of the air:

*One egg's lower half transformed
And became the earth below,
And its upper half transmuted
And became the sky above;
From the yolk the sun was made,
Light of day to shine upon us;
From the white the moon was formed,
Light of night to gleam above us;
All the colored brighter bits
Rose to be the stars of heaven
And the darker crumbs changed into
Clouds and cloudlets in the sky.*

The ***Kalevala*** (IPA: [ˈkɑlɛvɑlɑ]) is a 19th century work of epic poetry compiled by Elias Lönnrot from Finnish and Karelian oral folklore and mythology.^[1]

World egg or cosmic egg mythological motif of many cultures.

Greek: In the beginning a period of Chaos, when air water and matter were combined in a formless mixture. On this floated a Cosmic Egg, from which rose Gaea (Earth) and Uranus (sky). These deities created the earth and its creatures and the Sun, Moon and Stars.

Sanskrit scriptures: The earliest ideas of "Egg-shaped Cosmos or Brahmanda (Brahm means "Cosmos" or expanding, Anda means "Egg")

Chinese myth of Pangu

Egyptian Ogdoad

The most widely distributed creation image depicts the primal universe in the form of an egg, containing the potentiality of everything within its all-enveloping shell.



Yin and Yang: The two vital forces in the Universe who gave rise to Pan Gu

In [Asian philosophy](#), the concept of **yin yang** ([simplified Chinese](#): 阴阳; [traditional Chinese](#): 陰陽; [pinyin](#): *yīnyáng*), which is often referred to in the West as "yin and yang", is used to describe how polar opposites or seemingly contrary forces are interconnected and interdependent in the natural world, and how they give rise to each other in turn. Opposites thus only exist in relation to each other. The concept lies at the origins of many branches of classical Chinese science and philosophy, as well as being a primary guideline of [traditional Chinese medicine](#),^[1] and a central principle of different forms of [Chinese martial arts](#) and exercise, such as [baguazhang](#), [taijiquan](#) (tai chi), and [qigong](#) (Chi Kung) and of [I Ching](#) divination. Many natural dualities—e.g. dark and light, female and male, low and high, cold and hot— are thought of as manifestations of yin and yang (respectively). Ancient fractal set, $D_f=1.1$. [\[2\]](#) [\[3\]](#) [\[4\]](#)[\[5\]](#)[\[6\]](#)[\[7\]](#)

Yin yang are complementary opposites that interact within a greater whole, as part of a dynamic system. Everything has both yin and yang aspects, but either of these aspects may manifest more strongly in particular objects, and may ebb or flow over time. The concept of yin and yang is often symbolized by various forms of the [Taijitu](#) symbol, for which it is probably best known in western cultures.

There is a perception (especially in the West) that yin and yang correspond to evil and good. However, Taoist philosophy generally discounts good/bad distinctions and other dichotomous moral judgments, in preference to the idea of balance.

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Confucianism (most notably the philosophy of Dong Zhongshu, c. the 2nd century BCE) did attach a moral dimension to the idea of yin and yang, but the modern sense of the term largely stems from Buddhist adaptations of Taoist philosophy.^[8]

Religious and philosophical

The Taijitu and concept of the Zhou period reach into family and gender relations. Yin is female and yang is male. They fit together as two parts of a whole.

Practitioners of Zen Yoga, a system of exercise created in 2007, see yin-yang as a flow.

The Taijitu is one of the oldest and best-known life symbols in the world, but few understand its full meaning. It represents one of the most fundamental and profound theories of ancient Taoist philosophy. At its heart are the two poles of existence, which are opposite but complementary. The light, white Yang moving up blends into the dark, black Yin moving down. Yin and Yang are dependent opposing forces that flow in a natural cycle, always seeking balance. Though they are opposing, they are not in opposition to one another. As part of the Tao, they are merely two aspects of a single reality. Each contains the seed of the other, which is why we see a black spot of Yin in the white Yang and vice versa. They do not merely replace each other but actually become each other through the constant flow of the universe.^[17]



Portrait of Pangu from [Sancai Tuhui](#) Primitive hairy giant with horns on head, clad in furs.

The Pangu legend

In the beginning there was nothing in the [universe](#) except a formless chaos. However this chaos coalesced into a [cosmic egg](#) for about 18,000 years. Within it, the perfectly opposed principles of [Yin and Yang](#) became balanced and Pangu emerged (or woke up) from the egg. Pangu is usually depicted as a primitive, hairy [giant](#) with horns on his head and clad in furs. Pangu set about the task of creating the world: he separated Yin from Yang with a swing of his giant axe, creating the [Earth](#) (murky *Yin*) and the [Sky](#) (clear *Yang*). To keep them separated, Pangu stood between them and pushed up the Sky. This task took 18,000 years; with each day the sky grew ten feet (3 meters) higher, the Earth ten feet wider, and Pangu ten feet taller. In some versions of the story, Pangu is aided in this task by the four most prominent beasts, namely the [Turtle](#), the [Qilin](#), the [Phoenix](#), and the [Dragon](#).

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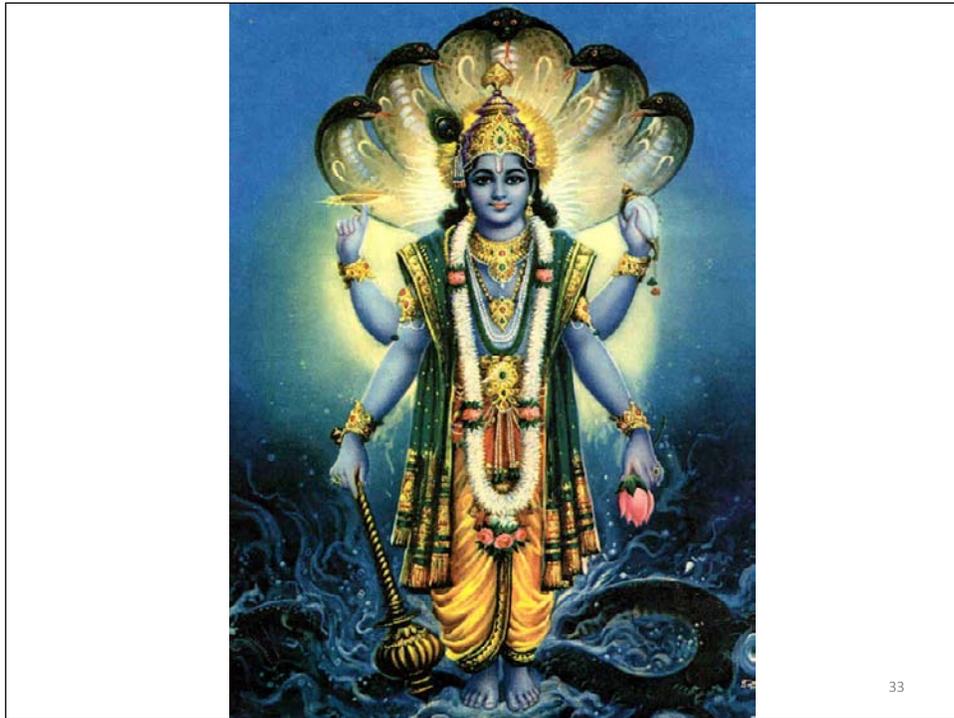
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After the 18,000 years had elapsed, Pangu was laid to rest. His breath became the wind; his voice the thunder; left eye the sun and right eye the moon; his body became the mountains and extremes of the world; his blood formed rivers; his muscles the fertile lands; his facial hair the stars and milky way; his fur the bushes and forests; his bones the valuable minerals; his bone marrows sacred diamonds; his sweat fell as rain; and the fleas on his fur carried by the wind became the fish and animals throughout the land. Nüwa the Goddess then used the mud of the water bed to form the shape of humans. These humans were very smart since they were individually crafted. Nüwa then became bored of individually making every human so she started putting a rope in the water bed and letting the drops of mud that fell from it become new humans. These small drops became new humans, not as smart as the first. The first writer to record the myth of Pangu was Xu Zheng (徐整) during the Three Kingdoms (三國) period.

[edit] Origin of the myth

Life Out of Death. In Saharan Africa the world was originally made from the numerous segments of the sacrificed cosmic serpent Minia, god's first creation – an event remembered in animal sacrifice in the region to this day. Her head is the sky and her tail is the waters that lie beneath the earth.

In Norse mythology the three creator gods slaughter the bisexual primeval giant Ymir, forming the earth from his flesh, the sea from his blood, the mountains from his bones, the trees from his hair and the sky or vault of heavens from his skull.



Vishnu, blue skin, standing on lotus shell, cosmic oceans hands holding conch shell, wheel, mace, and a lotus

The most philosophically elaborate creation cyclical mythology is perhaps that of **Hindu India**. **The great god Vishnu, resting on the coils of the cosmic serpent Ananta in the waters of chaos, emits a lotus from his navel, which opens to reveal the creator god Brahma**. From Brahma's meditation the world is created, lasting an immense amount of time before dissolving back into chaos, from which a new universe eventually emerges in exactly the same way. **Each of four successive eras within a world cycle** is inferior to the previous one.

In Hindu religious text, the Puranas, Vishnu is described as having the divine color of water-filled clouds, four-armed, holding a lotus, mace, conch and chakra (wheel). The blue color indicates his all pervasive nature, **blue being the color of the infinite space and the infinite ocean**. A crown should adorn his head to symbolize his supreme authority. **He rests on Ananta: the immortal and infinite snake**. The conch shell or *Shanka*, named "Panchajanya," represents his power to create and maintain the universe. The chakra (wheel) symbolizes the purified spiritualized mind. The mace or *Gada* symbolizes his divine power as the source of all spiritual, mental and physical strength. It also symbolizes the power to destroy materialistic or demonic tendencies. **The lotus flower represents spiritual liberation, divine perfection, purity and the unfolding of spiritual consciousness** within the individual. Some mythologies formalize the struggle between creative order and destructive chaos in terms of a **perpetual cycle of creation** and destruction, by which worlds are unendingly brought into existence, destroyed and remade.

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Vishnu lying on Ananta

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In North America the myth-making imagination of the Hopi people portrays a **series of worlds, the first of which is destroyed by fire, the second by freezing, the third by flood; we are now in the fourth world which is also due to come to an end soon.**

A similar mythology is that of the Aztecs of Central America, who tell of the successive creation and destruction of four worlds or “Suns” previous to the present universe. These earlier worlds and their inhabitants had been created, then destroyed by the catastrophic action of various deity figures. The present world is the fifth sun and the **Aztecs saw themselves as the “People of the Sun” whose divine duty it is to wage cosmic war in order to provide the sun with his *tlaxcaltiliztli* (“nourishment”).** Without it the sun would disappear in the heavens. Thus, the welfare and the very survival of the universe depends upon the offerings of blood and hearts to the sun.