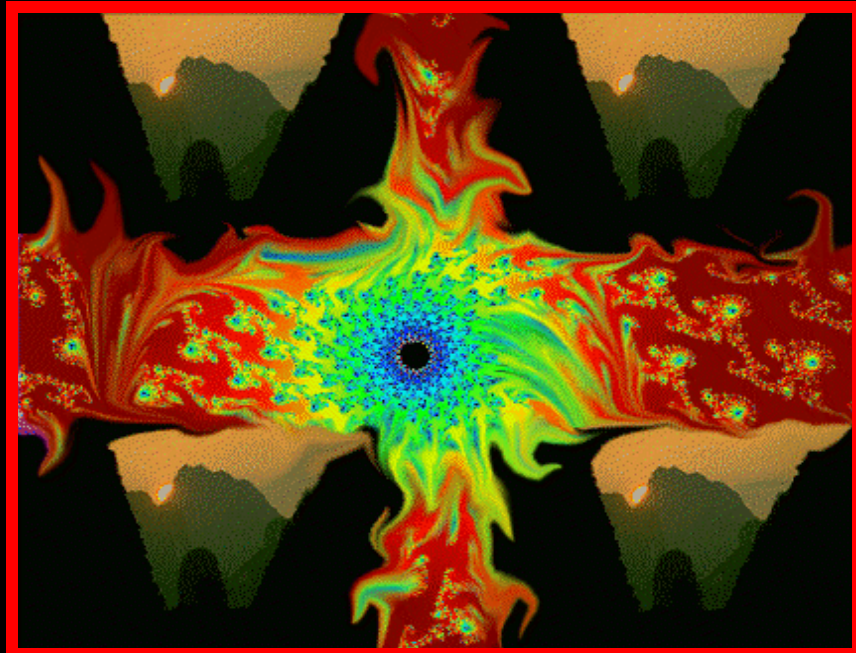


# GLOSSARY: EARLY MYTH AND THE GODDESS IN ANCIENT CHINA



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"When man created language with wisdom,  
As if winnowing cornflower through a sieve,  
Friends acknowledged the signs of friendship,  
And their speech retained its touch." Rg Veda 10.71

"Whatever is happening is happening for good...."  
Krsna to Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita

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## A

**Ahab** - The son and successor of Omri, King of Israel (c.859 - 850 B.C.). Ahab's queen was Jezebel who was the daughter of Ethbaal King of Tyre. Ahab's rule promoted strong and stable government and he successfully defended Israel against the Aramean kingdom of Damascus. He was also the first king of Israel to do battle against the Assyrian empire and in 853 B.C., he put 2,000 chariots and 10,000 soldiers in the field against Shalmaneser III at Qarqar. The Bible focuses upon Ahab's encounter with the prophets and judges him rather harshly, most likely because he allowed Jezebel to follow the cult of Baal.

**ancestor worship** - The worship and veneration of family ancestors so as to pay respects to the elderly and the wisest members of the clan is only one aspect of ancestor worship. In China and elsewhere, ancestors could exert a powerful influence on the events of this world time and so were supplicated and prayed to both in private moments and structured rituals. Such ancestors were not accorded the status of deities, however. They were in effect, powerful but human immortals living on an invisible plane. Ancestor worship so dominated Chinese ritual from the Chou Dynasty onwards that it had the extraordinary effect, in conjunction with Confucianism, of reducing myth and the world of the gods to a realm of secondary and lesser importance. See the discussion in the text.

**Annals of Master Lu** - *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu* was compiled by Master Lü who died in 235 B.C.. There is a Han Dynasty commentary upon it written by Kao Yu in 205-212 A.D..

**Anyang Period** - Late in the Shang Dynasty, the capital was moved to Anyang which is northeast of the modern city of that name. Excavations have uncovered a palace and temple complex, housing for the aristocracy and commoners, and workshops. There is also a royal cemetery of shaft tombs and sacrificial burials, approximately 1200 of which are human. The Anyang Period lasted from c.1200 to c.1040 B.C. and encompassed the rule of eight or nine kings. The vast majority of the inscribed oracle bones of the Shang Dynasty come from this period. The ritual activities of Shang rulers are unusual in the extraordinary reliance that seems to have been placed upon divination through oracle bones which were most often made from the plastrons of turtles. See divination and oracle/oracle bones below. Although the Shang aristocracy wrote with a pictographic script whose characters are the precursors of those in modern Chinese, the only surviving examples of their writing are the divinations inscribed on the oracle bones. There is no evidence of a literature of any kind, be it mythic history or poetry, nor of the more prosaic business records which provide so many examples of early scripts and writing in the Near East. As discussed extensively in the book text, Shang myth has only recently been tentatively reconstructed by a process of backward extrapolation from Chou and Han Dynasty texts as tested against descriptions recorded on the oracle bones.

**Aristotle** - The extraordinary genius of Aristotle needs no introduction. He was born in 384 B.C., the son of a physician, and died in 322 B.C.. At the age of 17 he entered Plato's Academy in Athens and remained there until Plato's death in 347 B.C.. He then journeyed first to Assos and then to Mytilene on the island of Lesbos, made famous by the 7-6th century B.C. poetess Sappho. From 343 to 340 B.C., Aristotle tutored a young Alexander (soon to be called "The Great") at the invitation of his father Philip of Macedon. In 335 he returned from Macedonia to Athens and founded a school outside the city in a grove sacred to Apollo Lyceus and the Muses. He collected manuscripts and maps and organized research in all the sciences, history and religion. Aristotle's reputation rests upon his surviving works in philosophy and religion which were not published until 84 B.C. by Sulla in Rome.

**Atad** - Atad is derived from the Akkadian *etidu* and means 'thorns' or 'bramble'. In *Genesis* it is the name of the threshing floor east of the Jordan where Jacob's family mourned his death. Atad may have an obscure but important ritual significance: see the text.

**axis mundi** - A cosmic pillar, or *axis mundi*, is a connection between 'earth' and 'heaven' and therefore between secular and sacred time. The cosmic pillar may exist in this 'world' and be a symbolic object constructed by humans; or it may reside in supranatural dimensions and be forever 'invisible and 'mythical'.



## B

**Baal** - Baal was a Near Eastern thunder-sky god with lightning as his weapon who was cast from the typical Indo-European mold. As a weather god, the windows in his palace were openings through which rain flowed and he was therefore a god of fertility essential to agricultural prosperity. Ugaritic literature preserves his myth cycle and tells of his battles against the Leviathan Lotan, Yamm (Sea) and Mot (Death). Baal's cult was widespread in Syria and Palestine during the times of the Old Testament and his consort was Asherah and/or Astarte. The Israelites who followed their own thunder-sky god Yahweh saw themselves as waging constant battle against the followers of Baal as is narrated in both *Kings* and *Judges*. Although Yahweh and Baal were nearly identical in their primary roles as thunder-sky gods, reconciliation was not possible because Baal's cult practice included erotic sexual rituals that deeply offended the Israelites. Baal was a powerful nature god while the Israelite Yahweh was ultimately transcendent and visionary.



## C

**Ch'ang-hsi** - The Mother of the Twelve Moons (Chang Xi) is the consort of the God of Heaven Ti Chün and plays a major role in the Mulberry Tree Myth of the Shang Dynasty. She washed each moon after their nighttime journey. See the text.

**Ch'ia** - The active force of the center is a complex philosophical concept central to Taoism. *Ch'ia* is an emptiness that links the 'two' into a form equivalent to the original state of unity. This is a paradise condition of total harmony which orders the interaction and synthesis of the dual principles *yin* and *yang*. *Yin* and *yang* cycle through a continued process of going out (rising, swelling, expansion) and returning (contraction, coagulation, lowering) which is mediated by the 'emptiness' of the center. In earliest Taoist thought, *ch'ia* is the primordial principle that continually connects all phenomenal forms with the Mother and thereby reveals the presence of a Mother Goddess in early (?Shang) myth which is now almost beyond reconstruction (Giradot 1983: 61). The practicing Taoist hopes to embrace Tao so as to be renewed by experiencing the condition of 'three' - dualities informed by *ch'ia*.

**Ch'ing Dynasty** - The Ch'ing Dynasty was founded in 1644 by the Manchu and lasted until 1911 when it was succeeded by the ill-fated Republic. The Manchu people of China are descendants of the nomadic Jurchens, who had both male and female shamans. The Manchu first impact the recorded history of China when they conquered portions of the northeast and established the Jin Dynasty in 1115 A.D. During the Ch'ing Dynasty the Manchu were at the height of their power as they had conquered and ruled a unified China.

**Chang O** - Chang O was married to Yi the Archer and she stole the elixir of immortality from the Queen Mother of the West. She ascended to the moon and was transformed into a toad, which explains the unusual association of the toad with both the moon and immortality.

**Chin Dynasty** - This short-lived dynamic dynasty (221 - 206 B.C.) witnessed the first unification of China and the establishment of an empire by its founder Emperor Shin-huang. During this period the Great Wall was built and in 213 B.C., there was a terrible intellectual cleansing of history which saw an attempt to burn all history and literature books and scrolls that were unrelated to Chin.

**Chiu ko** - The *Nine Hymns* are a collection of eleven (!) religious poems for ceremonies in which sorceresses address various deities and they reveal important detail about rituals. They were written by Yüan of Ch'ü (c.350 - c.285 B.C) who is considered one of China's greatest poets.

**Chou Dynasty** - About 1040 B.C., the Shang were overthrown by the Chou and the change was revolutionary: a complete realignment of the political

and mythic landscape took place. The Chou originated in an area of the present-day north China province of Honan, which was geographically different from that of the Shang people: see the map in the text. As discussed at great length in the book, the Chou replaced the central Shang myth of the Mulberry Tree and reduced the number of suns from ten to one, as the tale of Yi the Archer relates. Their ethnicity and mytho-poetics were very different from the Shang. The Chou produced China's first recorded literature, philosophy, myth and poetry, some of which preserved fragments of Shang thought. Their first king was Wu Wang and he established the Western Chou Dynasty which lasted until 771 B.C. and had several capitals, the most important of which was Hao. Wu Wang conquered the crown prince of the Shang, Wu Keng, and his successor Ch'eng Wang unified Shang and Chou territories into a single empire. Repeated incursions by nomads in the northwest forced the capital to be moved to Lo-yang in the east in 771 B.C. and this event initiated the Eastern Chou Dynasty which lasted until 221 B.C.. The number of walled city-states greatly increased as provincial feudal lords became powerful and independent. The Chou established China's longest lived dynasty and the first to rule most of what is now present-day China.

**Chuang Tzu** - The *Chuang Tzu* is a very important early Taoist book that is a valuable source for early myth. Although it bears the name of the great Taoist philosopher Chuang Tzu (c.369-286 B.C.), it is a composite work representing several authors of divergent views working in different centuries. Giradot (1983) finds that a unified structure underlies the first seven chapters and the earliest material may date from the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C..

**Classic of History** - The *Shu ching* is also known as the *Shang shu* or 'Ancient History'. It is a compilation whose sections were written between the late Chou Dynasty and the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. and it was regarded as the record of the government and institutions of the Sage Kings, which was to be used as model for all occupants of the 'dragon throne'. A twenty chapter commentary was written in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. by K'ung An-kuo and a second commentary was authored by K'ung Ying-ta (574-648 A.D.). The section entitled "Documents of the Shang Dynasty", which had been required study for the official government examinations for centuries, was shown by Yen Jo-chü (1636-1704) to be a forgery.

**Classic of Mountains and Seas** - The *Shan hai ching* (*Shanhaijing*) is a compilation of late Chou and Han Dynasty natural history and myth written between the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. and the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D., which exists in several versions and is considered a primary reference for historians. It supposedly is a record of the speeches and acts of the Sage Kings and other important figures of the legendary Golden Age of the remote past. According to Birrell (1993), the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* provides numerous examples of the transformation of myth into 'supposedly real' history.

**Confucius** - Details of Confucius's life are difficult to determine with precision. His proper name is K'ung Ch'iu and he was born about the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. at Tsou, a small fortified provincial town of which his father was governor. His family claimed descent from the Dukes of Sung, the ancient Sage Kings. His father had married at seventy and the family

was very poor. We know nothing about the childhood or education of Confucius. In the last years of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, he attached himself to a young nobleman who attempted to usurp the position of the Prime Minister of Chi, one of the three great states of China at this time. The attempt failed and Confucius then acquired a position with the Prime Minister whose family had held this hereditary position. He became a trusted administrator of an important Chi city, Chung-tu. In 492 B.C. a new Prime Minister did not show him favor and he was forced to resign his posts and leave the court. Confucius, with several followers, then wandered from one state to another and he began to develop his philosophy of government, which was a look backward to the assumed morality and filial piety of the Sage Kings. Because of the favor accorded an important disciple, he was able to return to Chi and he organized a formal school in the capital. There are no writings from Confucius himself which have survived, indeed it is not clear if he ever set down his ideas in writing: that task was apparently left to his disciples. He accepted all students even if they could not pay his full fee.

Confucius is often portrayed in our times as a cerebral, intellectual philosopher but such was hardly the case. He believed that the Duke of Chou, brother of the legendary King Wen spoke to him in dreams and conveyed to him the wisdom of the Sage Kings. He claimed to transmit ancient tradition, not create a new philosophy. He taught ancient books, ritual and politics. Individuality was of no concern to Confucius. The Virtue of the emperor, which derived from the Mandate of Heaven, determined the balance of good and evil in the people and therefore the emperor was directly responsible for the behavior and conduct of his people. Yet, every man could improve himself and change by studying the ancient texts and acting with a superior morality and altruism. The ancient rites hold the key to this program of self improvement and the system was aristocratic to the core. The ultimate goal was to have a superior man acquire a high position in government and thereby be able to influence the people-at-large.

**cosmic snake** - The earliest mythic snake, as it appears in the Paleolithic and continues throughout the Neolithic, was not a symbol of evil but a creature of 1) eternal renewal and immortality as exemplified by the sloughing off of its skin during each molt; and 2) a representative of dynamic, endlessly creative life energy. The compressed spiral assumed by a coiled snake is an archetypal symbol of powerful, latent energy about to be released. When the Goddess became anthropomorphized during the evolution of Neolithic societies, one of her major epiphanies was that of the Snake Goddess who combined these symbols into a powerful metaphor. Snake Gods are nonexistent in the Neolithic cultures of Old Europe and very rare elsewhere. (Oriental dragons are not snakes, although some scholars believe their ancestry includes input from the India *naga* serpent.) The authors of *Genesis*, rewrote the character of the Snake Deity in a manner which has had a profound impact on Western myth, ritual and psychology ever since. As the ancient Israelites became a dominant political and military power in the region, the Snake Goddess of the Near East, became subservient to an Indo-European thunder sky god called Yawheh. The Snake Goddess performed a last act of spiteful betrayal against her master which was to have enormous consequences. The snake in the Garden of Eden manipulates Eve into eating the apple of the Tree of Knowledge and she in turn seduces Adam to do the same. In the past, gnosis brought forth a state of sublime spiritual grace and great understanding. However, Yawheh

is a jealous, defensive and powerful god who wishes to reserve ultimate Understanding for himself. He does not tolerate the achievement of true insight by human beings. Rather than reward Adam and Eve, as would have been done in non-Christian myth and religious philosophy, they are punished for both desiring an attribute of the gods and actually acquiring a bit of it. The Snake Goddess has performed her mission as in eons past but She is now cursed by Yawheh to forever crawl in the dust on her belly. Her acolytes suffer terribly from the bestowal of her grace, as they acquire a knowledge of good and evil. They will be forever plagued by sin and guilt, as their behavior is labeled arrogant and deserving of a complete fall from Yawheh's favor. Yawheh has established his dominance in the opening chapters of the Old Testament, not by understanding or compassion, but by rewarding what in former times would have been taken as an important spiritual change with a cruel punishment, a punishment that will be repeated again and again as Israelite history of the first millennium B.C. unfolds. That legacy, in turn, was transmitted to Christianity.

**cosmology** - Cosmology is the science of ultimate beginnings, the search for the First Cause, and how it catalyzed the evolution of the universe and the 'world'. Prior to the European 'Enlightenment' and 'Scientific Revolution', cosmology was a deep concern of all religious philosophy and most creation myths begin with a tale of first beginnings. Today Cosmology research is conducted with the tools of modern astrophysics, indeed has become a formal branch of scientific academic study, as the mechanisms underlying the origins of the physical universe are intensely studied.



## D

**Daedalus** - Daedalus is a Greek god whose biography contains Cretan, Dorian and Attic elements. He was a legendary craftsman, the inventor of carpentry and its tools, as well as ship masts and rigging. Among his craft accomplishments are the labyrinth for the Minotaur on Crete, which he built for King Minos, and the sacred thread of Ariadne. He was a skilled metalworker and built wooden statues that walked. Enraged by the aid Daedalus gave Pasiphae, King Minos imprisoned him and his son Icarus. Daedalus constructed two pairs of wings for himself and his son. They escaped from King Minos but when Icarus flew too near the sun, the wax in his wings melted and he plunged to his death.

**Dark Lady** - The obscure Chinese Goddess of War who taught the Yellow Emperor military strategy.

**Dawenkou Culture** - A Neolithic culture of China's east coast which pre-dates the Shang and produced pottery vessels whose legs are sculpted to resemble female breasts. See the text. Burials with rich grave goods speak to the emergence of an aristocracy who partook of the benefits of a far flung trading network.

**divination** - The primary definition of 'divination' in the American Heritage Dictionary is "the art of foretelling future events or revealing occult knowledge by means of augury or an alleged supernatural agency." 'To divine' is to determine the will of the gods and such rituals were widespread throughout the world in many cultures in both the aristocratic lower classes. Nancy Reagan, wife of the American President Ronald Reagan, consulted astrologers on a regular basis. The Tibetan government has always had a state oracle, who is consulted on all important events. State oracles advising a ruler were common throughout the world in many non-Christian cultures. (It should be self evident why one would want to know the desires of the gods in advance of actual events.)

In ancient China, and to a lesser extent in Japan as well, divination was performed using animal bones. These bones were subjected to intense heat from a flaming branch after a question addressing an important concern had been inscribed upon them by the diviner. The pattern of cracks which then emerged after intense heat was interpreted by the diviner who was the only functionary trained to do so.

The Shang ruling families and court were obsessed with divination and they used buffalo scapula and the plastrons (ventral half of the 'shell') of turtles as the medium for contacting the gods. More than 100,000 such oracle bones have been found and catalogued. Their inscriptions are about ritual propositions and the proper offerings to be made to ancestors and nature spirits in order to influence important events. The goal of the divination was to ascertain whether or not the king had obtained the favor of the spirits or High Lord. The problems addressed reveal much about the Shang state and politics of the time. Much less is revealed about myth but that which is recorded is of great importance: see the text.



## E

**E Huang** - The third wife of Ti Chün is E Huang who gave birth to the Tribe of the Three Bodied People. She is also named as wife of the Sage King Shun: see text.

**Elijah** - The Biblical description of Elijah suggests that he came from a family of shepherds in Transjordan. He was an important Israelite prophet who lived during the reigns of the kings Ahab and Ahaziah in the first half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century B.C.. He fought vigorously against the Tyrian cult of Baal which had been imported into Israel by Ahab's wife Jezebel. As related in *1 Kings 16*, in order to establish Yahweh's supremacy, he called forth a drought as a direct challenge to Baal as a fertility god and to punish Israel for its idolatry. The drought occurred and Yahweh won this power contest; the priests of Baal were killed. He survived a pursuit by Jezebel to continue his confrontation with the cult of Baal.

**epiphany** - The manifestation of a deity in symbolic form, as distinct from the direct appearance of a god or goddess in their primary anthropomorphic form, is an epiphany. The Bird Goddess often manifests as a swan: the swan is her epiphany. The Goddess of Death often manifests as a vulture: the vulture is her epiphany. The appearance of the Great Goddess with the form of a human female would not be considered an epiphany; there is little, if any, symbolism to interpret in this case. The anthropomorphic deity indicates that 'what you see is, in fact, what is'. Nonetheless, the absence of an epiphany does not indicate an absence of metaphor, merely that such metaphor cannot be easily perceived in the outward physical form of the deity.

**Esau** - The oldest son of Isaac and Rebekah, he forfeited the primary birthright and blessing of his family either because of his own foolishness or Jacob's trickery. He was the rejected son displaced by the younger Jacob and tradition portrays him as the gracious older brother. In later writings, Esau is linked with Edom which was Israel's rival and thus becomes focus for hostility and political conflict.



## F

**Feng Su T'ung** - *The Explanation of Social Customs* was compiled by Ying Shao who lived from c.140 to c.206 A.D..

**Fu Hao** - The most extraordinary woman of ancient China known to us by name is Fu Hao, the consort of Wu Ting the fourth Shang king to rule at Anyang. Her royal tomb was discovered intact and undisturbed in 1976. Fu Hao was a woman of extraordinary character and strength. She led military expeditions on behalf of Wu Ting and occasionally presided at state sacrifices. A number of Shang oracle bones are inscribed with divinations that were undertaken on her behalf. Questions were asked about child birth, rituals and her military expeditions. Some of the inscriptions refer to her as royal consort or feudal vassal but others describe her as a military commander with the title of general.

**Fu-hsi** - He is the consort of the goddess Nü-kua and male half of the primeval divine couple, Fu Hsi is depicted on Shang bronzes as a snake deity, his lower body, as is that of Nü-kua, is serpentine. He emerges in early myth as a culture hero, the inventor of hunting, fishing nets, the Eight Trigrams, cooking and is often depicted holding a carpenter's square and knotted rope.

**Fu Sang Tree** - The sacred Mulberry Tree of the central Shang myth is the Fu Sang Tree. It grows in the East and at its foot is the Valley of the Sun which contains a pool of water in which the Ten Suns bathe. The 'Yellow Spring',

which ran everywhere beneath the earth, came to the surface at the feet of the Fu Sang and its counterpart in the West, the Ruo Tree. The Ten Suns which bathed in a pool of water at the foot of the Fu Sang and dwelt on its branches were birds. This is an extremely complex myth whose explication is very concise: see the discussion in the text.



## G

***Goddess of Salt River*** - Defeated by the Lord of the Granary in a myth recorded from a Han Dynasty text, this petulant Sun Goddess revealed a wanton destructive nature that endangered the 'world'.



## H

***Han Dynasty*** - The Han continued the legacy of their short-lived predecessors, the Chin. They established a strong central government and empire that lasted for more than four centuries, from 202 B.C. to 220 A.D., and sought to soften the brutal exercise of power wielded by the Chin. The government itself believed that it had a duty to investigate the workings of the universe and Han intellectuals spent enormous energy in classifying phenomena into a hierarchical system so that all might be understood. This obsession with the creation of a single comprehensive science recalls the conviction that grew out of the Scientific Revolution in the West that the practitioners of reductionist, quantifiable, analytic science were journeying upon the only path that could lead to complete a understanding of the universe. Nonetheless, Confucian philosophy of the Han Dynasty rested upon lofty, yet pragmatic principles. Heaven, earth and man formed a divine trinity. It was the duty of humankind to understand the laws of Heaven in both the religious and scientific sense. Economic welfare, which had its foundation in attention to the earth and agriculture, was deemed the basis of morality. Moral defects in the common people reflected moral deficiencies in the emperor who had been unable to create the conditions that would allow people to be virtuous. The path to profit and virtue must be identical because the masses desire and deserve material wealth and cannot be expected to adopt the lifestyles of enlightened scholars who deliberately choose poverty to enhance their spirituality. Peace and prosperity are the foundation of the society. Moral training and education are accomplished through rituals and rites, music and the study of literature. The ultimate product of this system is the sage who because of

his immense learning had developed the most acute and refined moral sense possible. The proper role of the sage is not to teach or retire in contemplation to the wilderness but to engage in government service and to advise the emperor. Thereby will his influence be most profound and affect the greatest number of people. This short summary outlines the Confucian philosophy which dominated the Han era and ironically, its elitist tone permeated a dynastic era whose founder Liu Chi was of common origins (see de Bary 1960: 145-149).

**Hesychius** - A lexicographer of the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D., his major work is known only from a badly preserved 15<sup>th</sup> century copy. What remains, however, is invaluable for the close textual study of Greek dialects, inscriptions and poetry.

**Hou-t'u** - Empress Earth is a shadowy primeval deity in China about whom little is known but her existence serves to establish the presence of an earth goddess in the Neolithic. She was the grandmother of K'ua-fu, who with extreme hubris, challenged the sun to a race against light and time thereby cause her own death from thirst. In later Chinese myth and philosophy, the Earth is divine and sacred but of indeterminate sex. Confucianism's relentless pursuit of the pragmatic, demythologized the sacred and produced abstract conceptions of deity that at first glance appear to be primitive. This 'primitiveness' is an illusion and 'degenerate' would be a more appropriate description as they are the product of an overwrought intellectual distillation.

**Hsi-Ho** - She (Xihe) is the Mother of the Ten Suns and consort of the God in Heaven, Ti Chün. See the extensive discussion in the text. Hsi Ho is also the name of the charioteer of the sun who in some traditions is explicitly female. Hsi and Ho are also the names of the oldest sons of two families whose duties were to calculate the celestial motion of the sun.

**Hsia (Xia) Dynasty** - The dynasty which preceded the Shang is known as the Hsia and it most likely encompassed the time span c.2010 - 1324 B.C.. The Hsia lived in southern Shansi and northwest Honan, which is the area of the earliest Shang civilization. A royal genealogy is known from fragments of pre-Chin texts and was also organized in the *Shih chi*. Some archeologists identify the lowest level of the excavation at Erh-li-t'ou as remnants of the Hsia Dynasty and it dates to 2010 to 1781 B.C.. Above this level is what most archeologists agree is the site of Po, the capital city established by King T'ang who founded the Shang Dynasty in 1766 B.C. according to traditional chronology although modern archeology assigns his reign to 1460-1441 B.C.. Keightley (1983) sees all levels at Erh li-t'ou as properly belonging to the Hsia. Clay phalli point to the worship of male ancestors and divination with bovid scapula was practiced. The Hsia also manufactured the first bronze vessels in China and under the Shang that technology produced some of the world's greatest art. Whether or not the Hsia were a truly distinct dynastic lineage or the earliest phase of the Shang is a question still debated by some archeologists, although the evidence seems to favor its distinct identity.

**Huai-nan Tzu** - This classical text presents the views of several philosophical schools, mostly those of Taoism. It was compiled and partly

written c.139 B.C. by Liu An, a member of the Han royal family. The title of the book comes from his title, King of Huai-nan. The *Huai-nan Tzu* contains valuable mythological writings among which are several versions of early Chinese cosmology.

**Huang O** - The Son of the White Emperor successfully courted the goddess Huang O as told in a 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. text. Their child was the god Shao Hao, one of whose other names was Ch'ung Sang or Exhausted Mulberry. The reference to the Shang world tree of the east, the Fu Sang or sacred Mulberry, is unmistakable. His other names are Phoenix Bird and Metal Sky and although the latter refers to the west, Shao Hao ruled over the east and his tomb is believed to be in Shantung, the birthplace of Confucius.

**hun-ch'eng** - Tao is the primordial source principle, or 'thing' which controls the creation of heaven and earth first, then the primordial world. It was a perfect, total or complete fusion of all things: a cosmic totality. Cosmic totality is *hun-ch'eng*, which may be a corruption of an interpolation for *hun-tun*, 'Primal Chaos Creatress'! Therefore in the etymology of *hun-ch'eng*, there is a wisp of evidence that a primal Creatrix existed in Chinese mythology during the Neolithic. Other evidence points to the same conclusion as discussed in the text.

**hun-tun** - Giradot (1983: 64) believes that in Chapter 42 of the *Tao te Ching*, "*Hun-tun* must be identified with the symbolism of a female creatress, perhaps the diving bird in Shan Hai-Ching and also with her offspring (embryo, egg, seed, gourd, drum, cocoon, sack, bellows)". The practicing Taoist is hoping to embrace Tao so as to be renewed by experiencing the condition of 'three' dualities informed by *ch'ia*. He is feeding from the primal Mother of All Things. The condition achieved is childlike or womb-like (Giradot 1983: 74). The Taoist wishes to return to the Primal Chaos Creatrix and so reintegrate with cosmic totality.

**hunter/gatherer** - The economy of nonagricultural tribal peoples involves some combination of hunting animals and gathering plant foods.



**I Ching** - The *Book of Changes* is one of the most famous books in all history. It was first written in the last centuries of the Shang Dynasty and the early part of the Chou Dynasty. The *I Ching* is a manual of divination based upon a belief in the synchronicity of the universe; all events occurring at a particular time are interrelated by both vertical and horizontal causality. Traditionally, yarrow stalks or coins were thrown to construct each of the 64 hexagrams. As with Tarot and Astrology, in the crudest of hands the *I Ching* becomes a superstitious child's plaything or adult parlor game with which to foretell the future. Wielded by a subtle, educated and refined creative intuition, it becomes a valuable device with which to

contemplate the past, present and future. Within the interpretation of the hexagrams lies important aspects of *yin-yang* philosophy as well as some of the most esoteric Taoist teachings.

Authorship of the *I Ching* is attributed to four individuals: Fu Hsi, one of the legendary Sage Kings of the Neolithic; King Wen and his son, the Duke of Chou, who were active in the 11<sup>th</sup> century B.C.; and Confucius. Except for Fu Hsi, whose historical existence cannot be confirmed, each of these individuals likely had important input into the text. King Wen and his son wrote important interpretative text for each of the 64 hexagrams and for each of the six lines which comprise each hexagram. Confucius is known to have edited the *I Ching*, and wrote an important commentary which is now incorporated into the body of the text. He is reported to have wished for fifty more years of life in order to further his study of the *Book of Changes*.

**iconography and icons** - Icons are images created for religious contemplation and often have active use in ritual; the former connotation has come to predominate. Iconography refers to a coordinated 'library' of such images which can be identified within the artistic products of a culturally delineated religious system.



**Jacob** - Jacob, whose name in Hebrew means 'heel grabber' or 'supplanter' is an Old Testament patriarch who is the brother of Esau and the son of Isaac and Rebekah. Jacob may be a shortened form of Jacob-el, 'may God supplant'. He is the father of Dinah and twelve sons, each of whom founded one of the famous twelve tribes of Israel. Jacob's name was later changed by Yahweh to 'Israel' and he embodies the nation. He carries many attributes, that of a trickster figure, reverent worshipper, penitent brother and benevolent father. Tradition locates Jacob in northern Israel and Transjordan and the historic Jacob may date to c.1720-1570 B.C. or the early Iron Age c.1200-900 B.C.. Like Abraham and Isaac, Jacob receives a divine promise of land and plentiful children.



## L

**Lao Tzu** - *The Classic of the Way and the Power* is attributed to Lao Tzu of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. a legendary philosopher whose historical identity has yet to be pinpointed. *The Classic of the Way and the Power* is a philosophy of government and guide for a life of high principle for the aristocracy, yet it is based upon the Tao and is rich in Taoist doctrine. Much of the text discusses The Way (Tao) as the unknowable first principle which, if followed, produces a life devoid of strife, desire and coercion and filled with spontaneous, effortless and inexhaustible action. The ideal emperor would be a Taoist sage who would guide the people back to the primeval state of innocence, simplicity and harmony with the Tao. Compare this view of government with that of the Confucianists as summarized under the Han Dynasty above: there seems to be little in common.

**Lord of the Granary** - The Lord of the Granary and the Goddess of Salt engage in a mythic power contest between complementary forces as their myth discussed in the text explains. He is the victor over a petulant and wantonly destructive sun goddess whose anger at being rejected threatens the all living things in the 'world'.



## M

**maimed king** - Widely dispersed in time and space throughout the Neolithic were kingdoms and states that required their king to be ritually maimed, usually by a severe injury to the foot or thigh. This ritual, which strikes us as barbaric, is discussed at length in the text. The rationale behind such a seemingly brutal act was to make visible to the people, with imagery that could not be misunderstood, that the price demanded of those who wield absolute power was terrible indeed. Such permanent injuries were a mark of divinity, an unmistakable sign that the Goddess had chosen her consort and therefore her beneficence was available to the people. An additional motive may also have been to impress upon the ruler in the strongest terms possible, the awesome nature of his responsibility which could not be born without consequences. Imagine today's politics if we required a serious physical sacrifice from our leaders that somehow confirmed the power and responsibility of office with integrity. A willingness to submit to exhausting work schedules and media humiliation hardly suffices in mythic terms.

**Manchu** - The Manchu people of China are descendants of the nomadic Jurchens, who had both male and female shamans. They first impact the recorded history of China when they conquered portions of the northeast and established the Jin Dynasty in 1115 A.D.. During the Ch'ing Dynasty (1644-1911), the Manchu were at the height of their power, for they

conquered and ruled a unified China. By this time, their royal houses had nearly lost their original culture and were acculturated according to the timeless Han paradigm. They sought to strengthen imperial power by promoting the official worship of a supreme deity and the Han Chinese "Mandate of Heaven" concept that vested power in the emperor. Today, remote Manchu communities in northeastern China retain some of their original culture.

**Mesolithic** - This is the cultural stage that followed the Upper Paleolithic and is distinguished by the absence of agriculture and a great diversity of food acquiring economies. Big game hunting as a priority occupation for many peoples was no longer available as the great herds of megafauna had decreased and retreated northward with the shrinking ice sheets and glaciers.

**metaphor** - See symbol vs. metaphor.

**Mother of the Ten Suns** - See Hsi-Ho.

**Mulberry Tree Myth** - See Fu Sang Tree.

**mytho-poetics** - This term emphasizes the poetic nature of mythic constructs. Robert Graves believes that poetry first arose to sing the praises of the gods, worship the Muse (Goddess) and to express divine rapture. There is much evidence to support this theory; poetry in the service of personal feelings without any reference to 'heaven' is decidedly rare in the ancient world, with only a handful of examples extant from Sumer and Egypt. Those cultivated sensibilities that rode the crest of the intellectual tidal wave in Greece and Rome more easily portrayed their private worlds, but then they were the products of cultures in which consciousness arose in the breakdown of the bicameral mind. The same may be said of the great poets of classical China. Indeed Confucianism, and to a lesser extent Taoism, can be seen to have promoted in East Asia what is described by Julian Jaynes in the *Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*. Read Julian Jaynes (1976) if you have not yet done so. His work is one of the great insights of this century and if you take your myth and poesy seriously, your thinking about them will never be the same after reading this work.



## N

**Neolithic** - The archeological/cultural era that follows the Mesolithic is termed the Neolithic. The reference to 'lithic' - stone tools - is a carryover from 19<sup>th</sup> century archeology. Many of the most extraordinary developments of human history began during this period: the Agricultural Revolution; incipient urbanism with large towns; hierarchical and class structured societies; large scale, highly organized warfare; the rise and fall

of Old European Goddess culture and the appearance and rapid spread of the Indo-Europeans.

**node** - A node is a point or region of minimum (zero) amplitude in a periodic system. It is also either of two diametrically opposite points at which the orbit of a planet intersects the ecliptic, or the two points at which the orbit of a satellite intersects the orbital plane of its planet. Astronomers in ancient China and elsewhere were aware that the phases of the moon were amplitude variations in a periodic system. The awareness of such astronomical knowledge as genuine science did not prevent its incorporation into the fundamental mechanisms of astrology; in fact, it enhanced and legitimized astrology.

**Nu-kua** - The transformative primeval Goddess in ancient China was the Creatrix of humankind and savior of the cosmos. As was her consort Fu Hsi, she was first depicted as a theriomorph with a serpentine lower body. In later myth she married her brother and this act establishes the paradigm of marriage. Her life and times, myths and deeds, are discussed extensively in the text.



**oracle bones** - See divination.

**Origin of Hereditary Families** - The author of the Han era *Shi pen* is unknown. There is an extensive commentary written by Sung Chung in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> or early 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D..



**P'an Ku** - P'an Ku is a great titan who appears in Chinese myth several centuries after the earliest records of Nü-kua. He was born when sky and earth were separated at creation: *P'an* means coiled and *Ku* means antiquity. On his death, his body parts gave rise to the different parts and inhabitants of the universe: his body lice became humans. The myth of a great god or titan whose body parts give rise to the 'ten thousand things' is archetypal and found in many cultures world wide. Birrell (1993) believes this myth originated in southwest Asia among a non-Chinese people.

**Paleolithic** - Paleolithic means Stone Age and is an archeological designation applied to the first stages of human culture wherein there was an extensive use of stone for making tools. The Upper Paleolithic is the last of three Paleolithic stages and make its first appearance in the archeological record in Eurasia, c.100,000 B.C., approximately coincident with the beginning of the last great ice age. The last part of the Upper Paleolithic which started c.35,000 B.C. saw the appearance and spread of *Homo sapiens sapiens* - anatomically modern humans indistinguishable from ourselves. These people created the most elaborate culture of the Upper Paleolithic and their art and sculpture bears witness to a complex mythology and religion which I have discussed elsewhere (Blumenberg 1993, 2006). A global warming, which began about 12,000 B.C., brought an end to the rapid succession of ice sheet advance and retreat, and catalyzed a rapid dwindling of the great herds of megafauna. Upper Paleolithic culture had come to an end, dependent as it was upon the hunting of big game, and the Mesolithic era began.

**Pliny** - Gaius Plinius, known as Pliny The Elder (c.23 - 79 A.D.), was born at Comum and educated at Rome. He spent twelve years in the Roman cavalry mostly in Germania. He disliked Nero's rule but found Vespasian congenial and, toward the end of his life, was a counselor to both Vespasian and Titus. He was appointed commander of the fleet at Misenum and when observing the eruption of Vesuvius from a boat offshore he was overcome by the volcanic fumes and died. Seven major writing projects of his are known but only his 37 volume *Naturalis Historia*, which set a new standard for comprehensiveness, has survived.

**Plutarch** - L.(?) Mestrius Plutarchus of Chaeronea, the famous philosopher and biographer, was born c. 50 A.D. and died c. 120 A.D.. He visited Egypt and Italy and taught in Rome. He was scholar of antiquities and for the last 30 years of his life served as a priest at Delphi. A catalog of Plutarch's works lists 227 items, many of which have survived thanks to Byzantine scholars. Plutarch's writings and histories had a profound influence on the Renaissance.



## Q

**Queen Mother of the West** - She (Xi Mu) was a wild and unkempt Goddess who appears in early Chinese mythology. She rules a mountain kingdom in the West and she bears a strong resemblance to the Greek Artemis. The Queen Mother of the West has a panther's tail and tiger's fangs. Wild beasts and birds bring her messages and food. Her sacred mountain range is K'un-lun which is an *axis mundi*, a sacred nodal place that links Heaven and Earth. It is a paradise where mortals who are favored become immortal and can communicate with the gods. Like Artemis, she is an avenging Goddess and can bring the plague; in this latter aspect she resembles the Goddess of Disease in India and Tibet.



## R

**Record of Immortals** - The *Yung-ch'eng chi hsien lü* was compiled in Yung-ch'eng by Tu Kuang-t'ing (850-933 A.D.).

**Researches of Lost Records** - The *Shih yi chi* is attributed to Wang Tzu-nien who was active c.335 to 386 A.D.. The text was reconstructed by Hsiao Ch'i in the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D..



## S

**Sage King** - Sage King is a title given to six male culture heroes of the Chinese Neolithic, who may or may not have been entirely mythical. The traditional dates assigned to them all fall in the latter centuries of the Yang-shao culture which precedes the first 'dynasty' in Chinese history. See the introductory table and its footnotes in the text.

**shamanism** - Shamanism is not a religion per se, although it is frequently mistakenly categorized as such. Shamanism is often found in conjunction with animism and tribal goddess culture. It is a suite of 'techniques of ecstasy' of great difficulty and those who have mastered the methodology are shamans. The techniques facilitate soul journeys to 'other worlds', often the underworld or the Dreamtime, in order to communicate with spirits and deities of varying degrees of significance. Shamans are obligated by their very residence within the community, and their unusual skill in these matters, to communicate the fruits of such experiences to all members of the clan. Such communication ensures that their extraordinary insights are available to all. Therefore, everyone may derive benefit from the knowledge gained from supradimensions and then, within the limit of one's ability, integrate it in a personal manner and grow spiritually. Such knowledge is powerful and shamans have a particular role in healing. Depending upon the culture, the profession is either hereditary or one is 'called to it' by virtue of natural inclination. Although its origins are in the dim mists of the Paleolithic, shamanism survives today both in rural and city environments and is central to the cultural re-awakening of the indigenous peoples in the Americas and Australia.

**Shang Dynasty** - The Shang people established dynastic rule from a base in southern Shansi and northwest Honan, c.1460 to 1040 B.C., and their

culture is the first in China for which we have a great deal of information besides archeology. During their later period, their rulers became obsessed with divination using oracle bones: see divination and Anyang above. The earliest Chinese mythology that we can reconstruct in detail comes from the Shang, and its substance and interpretation are discussed extensively in the text.

**Shih chi** - The *Records of the Historian* or *Historical Records* was the first comprehensive history of the Chinese nation and comprised 130 chapters. It was written by Ssu-ma Ch'ien (c.145 - 86 B.C.). Extensive commentaries were written by P'ei Yin in the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Ssu-ma Chen in 730 A.D. and Chang Shou-chieh who was active from 725 to 737 A.D..

**Shuo-wen chieh tzu** - *An Explication of Written Characters (Showen)* was written by Hsu Shen c. 100 A.D. and edited by Hsu Hsuan in 986 A.D..

**Son of Heaven** - During the Chou Dynasty the emperor was deemed the Son of Heaven, empowered to rule by the great Lord in Heaven, Ti Chün. This appellation continued to be applied to emperors until the fall of the last Chinese dynasty, that of the Manchu, in 1912 A.D.. As with many ancient mytho-poetics, Confucian values dictated that the emperors physical health and morality would direct the well being and behavior of his subjects. This relationship defines one of the great gulfs between East and West. In the Old European cultures of pre-Indo-European Eurasia, the king was the semi-divine consort of the Goddess and empowered to rule by Her. Public inauguration ceremonies established this state of being with rituals that indelibly impressed the king with his semi-divine status, separation from the usual human persona, and his awesome responsibilities where the good and the true could only flow from the king's being. The imagery in these empowerment rituals was extremely powerful and designed to be impossible to forget by participants and onlookers alike.

**Songs for Suburban Sacrifice, in 19 Parts** - The set of hymns we have from the reign of the Han Emperor Wu is called *Songs for Suburban Sacrifice, in 19 Parts*. Some of the songs praise deities associated with the seasonal cycle and others celebrate contemporary 'historical' miracles. Emperor Wu (141-87 B.C.) was a long lived, powerful ruler with a deep interest in the arts and religion. He personally intervened at the highest policy levels to impose his taste upon literary, musical and liturgical forms. In 113 B.C. he established devotion to T'ai-i, Great Unity during the winter solstice of 113 B.C. and also the honoring of a Spirit Mistress in the imperial park. He founded and introduced many cults and rituals during these two years and personally attended worship at major ceremonies. Hymns for religious rituals were put into a framework of contemporary music and dance.

**Songs of Ch'u** - The *Ch'u Tz'u (Chuci)* is a treasure trove of early history and mythology. It was compiled with a commentary during the Han Dynasty by Wang Yi (89-158 A.D.).

***Songs to Set the World at Ease, for Private Performance*** - These 'songs' are a set of hymns from the reign of the founder of the Han Dynasty Emperor Kao-tsu (c.200 B.C.). They had been set to music by a consort of Emperor Kao-tsu, Lady T'ang, who was skilled in Ch'u music. The 17 hymns recited the ethical values of Confucianism and were performed at both rites of worship for the imperial ancestors and court banquets.

***symbol vs. metaphor*** - Symbols are codes for the actual thing. They are the simple elements out of which complicated metaphors are constructed and their interpretation is usually linear. Red denotes warmth or blood; white often stands for purity and goodness; black can connote coldness and death (for Indo-Europeans), etc. Metaphors are complicated multilayered icons or narratives in which symbols interact and combine to make a deep, textural statement. The legend of King Arthur may be read as a metaphor for the wise, compassionate, but old society of *any timeless time*, fighting to survive the onslaught of an aggressive invader who lacks the wisdom and insight of the established order.



## T

***Taliesin*** - An early and important Welsh bard (or druid?) who was active c.540 A.D.. Several poems survive that are attributed to him.

***Talus*** - Talus was the son of a sister of Daedalus and the inventor of the saw, compass and other mechanical instruments. His uncle became jealous of his fame and either murdered him or threw him down from the citadel of Athens. The gods then changed Talus into a partridge.

***Tao*** - The primordial source principle, or 'thing' which first controlled the creation of heaven and earth, then the primordial world. Tao is a perfect, total or complete fusion of all things: a cosmic totality - "a chaotically complete one body" (Shao Po-wen 1057-1134 A.D.). See *ch'ia* and Lao-Tzu.

***Tao Te Ching*** - *The Classic of the Way and Power* is most likely not the product of a single author such as Lao Tzu but "the result of a period of oral composition that lasted ... from circa 650 B.C. to approximately 350 B.C.. During this period, it was common for philosophers to travel from state to state within the disintegrating Chinese [Chou] empire, looking for a king who would put their ideas into practice. Initially their doctrines were formulated orally and transmitted in the same fashion from generation to generation among their followers. Finally one of the adherents would take it upon himself to record the teachings of his philosophical school or master in short, pithy, classical Chinese statements. Still later, others might make additions or corrections" (Mair 1990: 120).

**Ti Chun** - The earliest personification of the high Lord in Heaven is Ti Chün. He is the consort of both the Sun Goddess Hsi-Ho and the Moon Goddess Ch'ang-hsi in Shang Dynasty myth. He is favored by the bird of paradise. Ti Chün gave Yi The Archer the bow and arrows with which to shoot down the Ten Suns when they all rose at once from the branches of the sacred Mulberry Tree. He also ordered Yi to go down to earth and save mankind.

**Treatise on Extraordinary and Strange Things** - The *Tu yi chih* was compiled by Li Jung who lived during the Tang Dynasty c.846-874.

**Treatise on Research into Nature** - The *Po wu chih* is attributed to Chang Hua (232-300 A.D.) but may be an anonymous work written during the Six Dynasties.



## V

**vessel types: bi, hu, li, jue, kuang, yu and zun** - These are some of the types of bronze and/or pottery vessels, with and without legs, that were manufactured from the Shang Dynasty onwards. Consult Chang (1977) or Lawton (1991) for illustrations.



## W

**water symbolism** - Water symbolism, such as parallel wavy lines or rectangular areas filled with dots, permeates the iconography of Neolithic Old Europe and is found in the Neolithic cultures of Asia as well. Water was viewed as an endless source of divine creativity and a wellspring of all life. To the extent that a Great Goddess lived in an ancient culture as the primal creatrix, she would be closely associated with cosmic water. Water symbolism also merges with that of the cosmic snake (see above) whose sinuous form is also a symbol for cosmic water.

**wattle and daub** - An ancient technique of lightweight building construction in which an interlaced wall of sticks and twigs (wattle) is covered with plaster or clay (daub).

**Woman Ch'ou** - There are two myths of Woman Ch'ou in the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* which are quite important because they suggest that female shamans during the Shang and Chou Dynasties in China may have

undergone a ritual mutilation with fire during a ritual that called forth rain to counter the effects of a life threatening drought. It is known that male shamans were tortured and killed to bring relief from such natural calamities.



## Y

**Yang Shao Culture** - The Yang Shao is one of the earliest farming cultures of the Chinese Neolithic. It dominated the Huang Ho Valley and persisted for a very long time (~5700 to 2100 B.C.). The traditional dates assigned to the legendary Sage Kings place them in the last centuries of the Yang Shao. The Huang Ho Valley was also the location of the first three historic dynasties: Hsia, Shang and Chou. Villages were characterized by a communal house at the center of a plaza surrounded by small houses whose doors faced the center. A pottery making center was located outside the village proper as was a village cemetery. Female symbols and those of cosmic water and cosmic snake are common on Yang Shao pottery, which suggests that the early Neolithic goddess was present in China.

**Yaodian or 'Annals of Yao'** - The *Yaodian (Annals of Yao)* is the first chapter of the *Shang shu (Classic of History)* and is written in an archaic language. It dates from the Chou Dynasty but whether c.800 B.C. or c.300 B.C. is the correct date is at this time an unresolved problem. In the *Yaodian* the second section concerns the heavens and the calendar and is important to the attempt to reconstruct early myth.

**Yellow Emperor** - The Yellow Emperor is named Chi, was born of Shao Tien and is the half brother of the Flame Emperor whom he defeated in a contest for the world. Using the elemental weapon of water he also defeated the God of War, Ch'ih Yu, and then proceeded to conquer a number of deities. In later mythic tradition, the Yellow Emperor is portrayed as a culture hero who carried with him knowledge of boats, oars, agriculture, the fire drill and musical instruments. He was taught the secrets of the cosmos and supernatural beings by the Beast of White Marsh and the military arts of war by the Dark Lady. The Yellow Emperor is the third of the six legendary Sage Kings of late Yang Shao times and he became the supreme deity of Taoism.

**Yi The Archer** - In Chou mythology, Yi was given a divine bow and arrows by the Lord of Heaven Ti Chün and ordered to save the people of earth by shooting nine of the Ten Suns when they rose in the east from the branches of the sacred Mulberry Tree. Exactly why such a mysterious act should be viewed as saving humankind is a complicated matter. This myth, which is examined in detail in the text, tells of the supplanting of the central Shang myth - that of the sacred Mulberry and its ten suns - by the mytho-poetics

of the Chou who conquered them and believed in only one sun. Yi also received the elixir of immortality from the Queen Mother of the West but it was stolen by his wife who ascended to the moon and metamorphosed into a toad. He was later killed by his rival Feng Meng.

*yin-yang* - The subtlety of Taoist *yin-yang* philosophy has been mangled in the West by the familiar list of opposites joined in pairs: male-female, hot-cold, dark-light, etc. Nonetheless, there is a grain of realism in enumerating such pairs because *yin-yang* refers to the union of complementary forces without which there can be no true unity, no complete wholeness. The union of such complements is a melding in which the identities of the individual components are not lost even while they have formed a new completeness. Taoists thus speak of  $1 + 1 = 3$ ; i.e. the two individual components have not been lost even while they have combined. *Yin* plus *yang* plus the new unified creation equal three 'things'. See *ch'ia* above.



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