

lateness and literariness of its composition. The text also differs from those preceding in its presentation of an anthropogonic account of cosmogony, in which P'an Ku, Coiled Antiquity, is the firstborn semi-divine human who takes his place in the universe as an equal in the cosmic trinity of Heaven, earth, and human. This tripartition was not new with Hsu Cheng but was derived from early Han philosophers such as Tung Chung-shu (179-104 B.C.), a Confucian scholar and putative author of the sociopolitical philosophical work *Heavy Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals*. His school of thought sought to prove a line of reciprocal interaction among Heaven, earth, and human, the reigning Han emperor mediating among the three spheres as the archetypal human (Fung Yu-lan 1953, 2:16-87).

A further difference between the organismic cosmogony of "Questions of Heaven" and the *Huai-nan Tzu* and the anthropogonic account of the P'an Ku myth is the clear, but as yet unelaborated, narrative of the myth of the separation of sky and earth. It relates that at creation the sky rose higher with the light elements and the earth sank deeper with the heavy matter, and in the mesocosm between sky and earth P'an Ku was born. This myth of the separation between sky and earth receives a more elaborate treatment in narratives presented in chapter 4, from much earlier sources of the late Chou era.

The last reading tells of the transformation of P'an Ku's body into the various parts of the universe. It is from *A Chronicle of the Five Cycles of Time*, a work also attributed to Hsu Cheng, of the third century A.D., which again is extant only in fragments. The narrative presents the motif of the cosmological human body, in which the microcosm of the human body of P'an Ku becomes the macrocosm of the physical world. It is important to note that this is also a myth of the dying god: P'an Ku is the firstborn, not quite a god nor yet fully human; he is a giant who shares the cosmic powers of Heaven and earth. He is also the first dead, and the creation of the world results from the metamorphosis of his dying body. In a recent study, Bruce Lincoln compiled a list of the characteristics of the Indo-European myths of the cosmological human body, epitomized by the Norse creation story of Ymir. The features of the P'an Ku myth fit Lincoln's general pattern for the most part. The most striking similarities occur in what Lincoln terms homologic allomorphs, or homologous set. That is, the physical world was made from various parts of the body, natural forms corresponding in a logical way to bodily parts (Lincoln 1986, 2-3, 5-20). In the P'an Ku myth there are sixteen such allomorphs, as against nine typical Indo-European allo-

forms, and they conform in such aspects as flesh becoming earth, hair becoming plants, and so forth. The P'an Ku narrative is expressed with lyricism and elegance. Just as the simile of the chicken's egg for primordial chaos denoted a literary rather than an authentically mythological genesis, so too does the P'an Ku transformation narrative. It is possible to conclude that this myth did not originate from the native Chinese tradition, for two reasons. First, it does not appear in the early mythic texts of classical China but emerges only in late sources of the third century A.D. Second, the myth shares so many features with the Indo-European mythologem of the cosmological human body that it seems likely that it was borrowed at a late date, perhaps through Hsu Cheng himself, from Central Asian sources reaching China. The specialist Jaan Puhvel suggests that it is traceable to the traditions of the ancient Near East (1987, 285).

It says: At the beginning of remote antiquity, who was there to pass down the tale of what happened? And before the upper and lower worlds were formed, how could they be explored? Since darkness and light were hidden and closed, who could fathom them? In the formless expanse when there were only images, how could anyone know what they were? When were brightness and gloom created? Yin and Yang commingled three times; what was their original form and how were they transformed? The round sphere and its ninefold gates, who planned and measured them? Whose achievement was this? Who first created them? How are Dipper's Ladle and the Cord fastened, and how were the poles of the sky linked? Why do the eight pillars lean to the southeast and why is there a fault? Where are the ends of the Nine Skies situated and where do they join up? Their corners and edges are so many that who knows what they number? How do the heavens coordinate their twelve divisions? How are the sun and moon connected? How are the settled stars arranged? (*Ch'u Tzu*, T'ien wen, SPTK 3.1b-4a)

In the beginning of the eternal past
When all was the ultimate sameness in vast empty space,
Empty and the same, all was one,
One eternally at rest,
Moist-wet and murky-dim,
Before there were darkness and light.

(*Tao yuan*, from Jan Yün-hua, TP 63, 1978: 75,
Chinese text, English trans. emended)

Long ago, before Heaven and earth existed, there were only images but no forms, and all was dark and obscure, a vast desolation, a misty expanse, and nothing knew where its own portals were. There were two gods born out of chaos who wove the skies and designed the earth. So profound were they that no one knew their lowest deeps, and so exalted were they that no one knew where they came to rest. Then they divided into Yin and Yang and separated into the Eight Poles. The hard and the soft formed, and the myriad living things took shape. The dense cloudy vapor became insects, and the pure vapor became humans. (*Huai-nan Tzu*, *Ching shen*, SPPY 7.1a)

Before Heaven and earth had formed, there was a shapeless, dark expanse, a gaping mass; thus it was called the Great Glory. The Way [Tao] first came from vacant space, vacant space gave birth to the cosmos, the cosmos gave birth to the Breath, and the Breath had its limits. The limpid light [Yang] rose mistily and became the sky, the heavy turbidness congealed and became earth. Because rare limpidity easily condensed but heavy turbidity congealed with difficulty, the sky was the first to form, and earth settled into shape later. The double essence of sky and earth became Yin and Yang, the complex essence of Yin and Yang became the four seasons, the diffuse essence of the four seasons became the ten thousand things in nature. The hot Breath of concentrated Yang gave birth to fire, the essence of the fiery Breath became the sun, and the cold Breath of concentrated Yin became water, the essence of watery Breath became the moon. The excess from sun and moon became the stars. The sky received the sun, moon, and stars, and the earth received rivers and rain water, and dust and silt. . . .

Heaven is round; earth is square. (*Huai-nan Tzu*, *T'ien wen*, SPPY 3.1a, 3.9b)

Heaven and earth were in chaos like a chicken's egg, and P'an Ku was born in the middle of it. In eighteen thousand years Heaven and earth opened and unfolded. The limpid that was Yang became the heavens, the turbid that was Yin became the earth. P'an Ku lived within them, and in one day he went through nine transformations, becoming more divine than Heaven and wiser than earth. Each day the heavens rose ten feet higher, each day the earth grew ten feet thicker, and each day P'an Ku grew ten feet taller. And so it was that in eighteen thousand years the heavens reached their fullest height, earth reached its lowest depth, and P'an Ku became fully grown.

Afterward, there were the Three Sovereign Divinities. Numbers began with one, were established with three, perfected by five, multiplied with seven, and fixed with nine. That is why Heaven is ninety thousand leagues from earth. (*San Wu li chi*, cited in *Yi-wen lei-chü*, CH 1.2a)

When the firstborn, P'an Ku, was approaching death, his body was transformed. His breath became the wind and clouds; his voice became peals of thunder. His left eye became the sun; his right eye became the moon. His four limbs and five extremities became the four cardinal points and the five peaks. His blood and semen became water and rivers. His muscles and veins became the earth's arteries; his flesh became fields and land. His hair and beard became the stars; his bodily hair became plants and trees. His teeth and bones became metal and rock; his vital marrow became pearls and jade. His sweat and bodily fluids became streaming rain. All the nites on his body were touched by the wind and were turned into the black-haired people. (*Wu yun li-nien chi*, cited in *Yi shih*, PCTP 1.2a)

The Goddess Nü Kua Creates Human Beings

The mythical figure of Nü Kua appears early in the tradition, as the brief reference to her in "Questions of Heaven," the first reading below, dating from circa the fourth century B.C., attests. Another short passage in *Huai-nan Tzu* describes Nü Kua's creative role: "Nü Kua made seventy transformations," which the commentator, Hsu Shen (ca. A.D. 100) interpreted to mean Nü Kua's creative power. Clearly, Nü Kua predates P'an Ku in classical mythology by six centuries. The second reading is from a compendium of explanations of the origins of social customs compiled by the Latter Han author, Ying Shao (ca. A.D. 140–ca. 206). The reading opens with the words "People say that," referring to beliefs held to be true in the late Han era about the primeval goddess. This text recounts an etiological myth about the origins of the human race, and it constitutes the fourth different account among our readings. It predates both P'an Ku myths of the firstborn human and of the body nites that became humans when P'an Ku died. But it postdates the *Huai-nan Tzu* myth that humans were created from "pure vapor." Thus Ying Shao's narrative of Nü Kua the creatrix is about a century earlier than that of the male creator of humans (from P'an Ku's body) in the Chinese tradition.

