



## Culture Bearers

Mircea Eliade has shown that in most mythologies there is a central myth that describes the beginnings of the world and that this cosmogonic myth is accompanied by a sequence of myths that recount the origin of plants, fire, medicine, animals, and human institutions (1984, 140–41). This was the primordial era of divine beings, mythical ancestors, and culture heroes. Eliade also notes that “all the important acts of life were revealed *ab origine* by gods or heroes” (1971, 32). He points out that their value lay not in their cultural benefit per se but in the fact that the cultural benefit was first discovered by a god and revealed to humans by a god (*ibid.*, 30, 31). The rich variety of Greek first-finders is matched by their Chinese parallels: Prometheus and the Fire Driller brought fire, Cadmus and Fu Hsi brought writing, Triptolemus and Hou Chi brought grain, Demeter (or Ceres) and the Farmer God brought agriculture, Athena brought horsemanship while Po Yi brought domestication of animals and fowl, and Athena and Ch’ih Yu brought war and arms. But the surface equations of the divine functions of the Greek and Chinese traditions are immediately diminished when their myths are compared, for beyond simplistic similarities lies a great wealth of particular differentiation.

In most mythological accounts of culture bearers or first-finders, importance is attached to the concern the gods feel for the physical well-

being and nourishment of humans and to the great care they take to teach and show humans how to perform the cultural act, such as sowing, weaving, hunting, or producing fire. Thus the myths deal not so much with the first plant or the first animal as with the first teachings of the techniques and arts of culture and civilization. This is not to say that the gods are not jealous of their gifts, as Prometheus discovered when he stole the sacred fire, or Tantalus when he stole the food of the gods, the food of immortality, and as Kun in the Chinese tradition knew when he stole the divine soil from God in order to save humans from the flood. Similarly, the beneficent role of the gods does not exclude their visiting upon humans disaster, plague, and war. This jealous, punitive aspect of divinity is examined in chapter 3.

In his recent study of mythological motifs, Bruce Lincoln focuses on the nature and origin of food, for which he has devised the neologism *sitiogony*, from the Greek *sitos* 'food, bread, grain' (1986, 65). Certainly, in Chinese mythology the origin and production of food and the cultivation, reclamation, and nurture of the land are major mythological themes. Another theme having to do with the physical well-being of humans is the search for the drug of immortality and the art of healing. But the dominant motif is water, its management and control, its resources, its gods, its abundance and scarcity, and its power for good or evil. It is with this motif that the readings begin.

### The River God Chü Ling

The myth of the river god, Chü Ling, contains several important themes. It recounts the beneficial act of the river god in easing the flow of water for the good of humans. It describes the colossal strength and awesome energy of the elemental deity. The text does not specify which river Chü Ling presides over, but the word *Ho* in this and other texts usually denotes the Yellow River in North China. The name Chü Ling means Giant Deity, or Divine Colossus. The god is also known as Chü Ling Hu.

The first reading below contains two terms from philosophical Taoism: the Tao, or Way, and Yuan, or Prime Cause. This terminology reflects the Taoist nature of the source that preserved the myth, *A Chart of The Magic Art of Being Invisible*, an anonymous work probably dating from the Latter Han period, which is extant only in fragments. It is a compendium of the techniques of Taoist adepts. The second reading is from *A Record of Researches into Spirits*, a collection of myth, fable, legend,

and folklore compiled by Kan Pao in the fourth century A.D. Its narratives incorporate supernatural phenomena, such as portents, the links among gods, humans, and spirits, strange creatures, metamorphoses, magic, miracles, and divine retribution (K. S. Y. Kao 1985, 4-11). Although the text is of late provenance, it contains a great deal of pre-Han mythological material. This reading illustrates how a pristine myth, such as that of Chü Ling, is reworked to suit the postclassical idiom, with its appeal to tourism and its antiquarian interest in ancient monuments. Both texts exemplify the mythological tenet that although mythologists rely on the earliest texts for source material, they must also explore the vast range of later eclectic writings in order to discover vestiges of myth which might otherwise be overlooked. In the case of the Chü Ling myth, although it has been overlaid with philosophical or antiquarian elements, it can be stripped down to its original base of the river god utilizing his primeval force for the benefit of humankind.

There was one Chü Ling. He chanced to obtain the Way of Divine Prime Cause, and he could create mountains and rivers and send forth rivers and water courses. (*Tun chia k'ai shan t'u*, *Shuo-fu* 5/43.1a)

The hills of the two Hua mountains were originally one mountain that looked down on the river. As the river passed it, it took a winding course. The river god, Chü Ling, split the mountaintop open with his hand and rent it below with his foot, dividing it in two down the middle in order to ease the river's flow. Today one may view the print of his hand on Hua Peak—the outline of his fingers and palm is still there. His footprint is on Shou-yang Mountain and still survives to this day. (*Sou shen chi*, TSCC 13.87)

### The Fire Driller

The first-finder myth of the Fire Driller, Sui-jen, deals with the discovery of fire and cooking. The Fire Driller may be classified as a mesocosmic mythological figure in the sense that he is not a god, nor yet quite a human being, but a being somewhere in between. The account in the reading relates that he predates Pao Hsi, another name for Fu Hsi, who is one of the major culture bearers in the primeval pantheon. It also relates that the Fire Driller was a sage who was able to traverse the cosmos. The moral function of gods and culture heroes is a repeated motif, and it is clearly stated here: "He provided food to save all living creatures."

The name Sui-jen, Fire Driller, is based on a pun. The myth is linked to a strange dark land of beings who never die called Sui-ming Country, and in this land grows a Sui-wood tree. Both Sui-ming Country and Sui-wood have the same written form for *Sui*, but the *Sui* of *Sui-jen* is a homophone of the *Sui* of *Sui-ming* and *Sui-wood* and is written differently, not surprisingly with the fire indicator. *Sui-jen* may be translated as 'Fire Producer' or 'Fire Driller' and is phonetically linked to the igneous Sui-wood and thereby to Sui-ming Country.

An interesting feature of the Fire Driller myth is that the first-finder learns from a bird how to produce fire from an igneous tree and then teaches humankind the art of fire making and cooking. Mimesis recurs in mythology worldwide, as does the motif of the bird's creative role. The best known is the myth of the earth-diver bird, which is widespread in the North American continent (Rooth 1984, 168-70).

Other myths in the Chinese tradition relate the discovery of fire. One tells how the Yellow Emperor used the friction method (as opposed to drilling) and then taught humans how to cook to avoid food poisoning. Another relates that it was the god Fu Hsi who gained knowledge of the origin of fire by observing the natural phenomenon of fire arising from lightning strikes (Yuan K'o 1957, 54 n. 37, n. 51).

None of the three myths expresses the themes of theft, guilt, and punishment which are central to the myth of the theft of fire by the Titan, Prometheus. Where the two traditions of Greece and China converge is in the theme of the demigod or culture hero bringing humans the gift of fire, which benefits their lives. The distinctively Chinese characteristic of the fire myth lies in the keen observation of nature, which may be viewed as a prototype of natural science, and the application of acquired knowledge to create technology. The Fire Driller reading is from *Researches into Lost Records*, compiled by Wang Chia, circa the fourth century A.D. This extract does not appear in the extant edition of *Researches*, but it is preserved in chapter 869 of a major Sung dynasty encyclopedia. In general, *Researches* is a valuable source of early myth, especially for mythological geography.

Ten thousand miles from the capital of the Shen-mi Kingdom there is Sui-ming Country. It knows nothing of the four seasons, or day or night. Its people never die. When they get tired of life, they live in Heaven. There is a fire tree called Sui-wood. Twisted and gnarled, it spreads over ten thousand hectares. Clouds and fog drift out of it. If twigs broke from it and rubbed together, they produced fire. After

many generations there was a sage who traveled beyond the sun and moon. He provided food to save all living creatures. He came to Nan-ch'ui. He looked at the tree and saw a bird like an owl, and when it pecked the tree with its beak, fire shot out in a blaze. The sage realized what had happened, so he took a small twig to drill for fire, and he was called Sui-jen, the Fire Driller. This was before Pao-hsi, and roasted food cooked by a fire came from that. (*T'ai-p'ing yü-lan*, citing *Shih yi chi*, SPTK 869.2a)

### Fu Hsi's Inventions and Discoveries

Of seven important classical sources from the Chou period which in various textual contexts place the primeval gods in a sequence, indicating a rudimentary chronology and pantheon, four sources list Fu Hsi as the earliest god in the archaic pantheon. Yet these same texts also frequently mention the names of faded gods who are only shadowy figures in the mythological tradition but may in their pristine form have been mighty gods who predated even Fu Hsi. Fu Hsi is also mentioned in these texts as the earliest of a series of three major cosmogonic gods, Fu Hsi, the Farmer God (Shen Nung), and the Yellow Emperor (Huang Ti). Although these texts imply that Fu Hsi is a major mythical figure, he in fact plays only a minor role in ancient mythology and was made famous in the Han era through such arcane texts as "Appended Texts" to the *Chou Change*, or *The Classic of Change*, the earliest sections of which date from the middle Chou period, circa 800 B.C. Curiously, Fu Hsi does not feature in that storehouse of early myths, *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*.

In the mythic narratives, Fu Hsi is a multifaceted god who brought many benefits to humankind. Among his many functions are the invention of nets for hunting and fishing, the discovery of melody and music, the invention of musical instruments, the invention of divination through the Eight Trigrams (*Pa kua*), the invention of knotted cord for calculating time and measuring distance, and, according to one version of the fire myth, the discovery of fire.

In the Latter Han era, Fu Hsi was given the courtesy name T'ai Hao, as is evidenced by the "Chart of Personages Ancient and Modern" in the *History of the Han* by Pan Ku (A.D. 32-92). But in pre-Han sources, T'ai Hao appears as an independent divinity, and although he is a shadowy figure in these early texts, he is never identified there with Fu Hsi (Karlgrén 1946, 230). *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* identifies T'ai Hao

as the founder of the Pa people (modern Szechwan). *T'ai* means 'Great' or 'Supreme', *Hao* means 'Brilliant Light'.

Unlike the names of most other gods, Fu Hsi's name is not fixed but occurs in at least six variations. The most common is Fu Hsi, which may mean Prostrate Breath. There are also Fu Hsi, or Silent Sacrificial Victim; P'ao Hsi, or Kitchen Sacrificial Victim; Pao Hsi, or Embracing Breath; Pao Hsi, or Embracing the Victim; P'ao Hsi, or Roasted Sacrificial Victim; and Fu Hsi, or Hidden Play; in which Fu, Hsi, Pao, and so forth are written with different characters. The common denominator in most of these names is sitiogonic and sacrificial, and the variants may have to do with regional phonetic variations of the god's name.

In the Han dynasty the multifunctional figure of Fu Hsi frequently became associated with the goddess Nü Kua. The two deities are represented in Han iconography as two human figures linked by serpentine lower bodies, Fu Hsi holding a carpenter's square, Nü Kua a pair of compasses, and both deities holding a length of knotted cord. Thus the primordial and independent goddess of cosmogonic myth is domesticated by Han mythographers and made to serve as the exemplar of the human institution of marriage. The same systematizing impulse in the late Chou and Han periods resulted in the designation of Fu Hsi as the god who reigns over the east and controls the season of spring, having the tree god, Kou Mang, as his lesser god.

The first of the following readings is from the "Appended Texts," written in the Han dynasty, attached to *The Classic of Change*, which dates from circa 800-100 B.C. According to tradition, Fu Hsi is believed to have written the "Eight Trigrams" section of this *Classic*, King Wen of the Chou the "Appended Texts," and Confucius the "Ten Wings" to the *Classic*. The last two date from the Han era, according to modern textual scholarship. In the reading from "Appended Texts," Fu Hsi's name appears as Pao Hsi, Embracing the Victim. The text is a mimetic paradigm: the god observes and imitates the natural order of things and teaches his knowledge to humans.

The second reading also dates from the Han period. It is by the author Wang Yi (A.D. 89-158), who came from the region of ancient Ch'u and was the compiler and editor of the earliest extant edition of *Songs of Ch'u*, which includes a piece in nine parts by him. Wang Yi was the first commentator of *Songs of Ch'u*. In this extract he seeks to explain the divine origin of Ch'u music.

The third reading is from *Researches into Lost Records* by Wang Chia (4th century A.D.). Here Fu Hsi's role as culture bearer is recorded, but,

more importantly, he is shown as a god who is a divine king come down to earth and enthroned on an earthly altar. In ancient mythic geography the cosmos was believed to be a square earth vaulted by a round sky and surrounded by four seas. The text is interesting since it reiterates Wang Yi's designation of Fu Hsi as an ancient king. Clearly, by the late Han and post-Han eras, the process of demythologization was beginning to take effect, and Fu Hsi the god was being rationalized as a partly human king of the remote archaic past. The fourth reading is by Ko Hung (A.D. 254-334). Again the narrative accentuates the mimetic function of the culture bearer. It also illustrates how in the post-Han era the identification of T'ai Hao with Fu Hsi had become a convention. Ko Hung, whose text goes by his sobriquet, the Master Embracing-Simplicity, was a Taoist philosopher, alchemist, and pharmacist.

Although the term *euhemerization* has often been used in Chinese studies to define the process of rationalizing gods into humans, in fact it means the exact opposite. The original term signifies the rationalization of human hero kings into gods. The Greek writer Euhemerus, of the late fourth century B.C., wrote a travel novel entitled *Sacred Scripture*, which survives only in quoted fragments. In this he explained that Uranus, Cronus, and Zeus had originally been great kings but were later the objects of worship by a grateful people (Rose 1970, 414-15). This misunderstanding and misuse of the term by Sinologists has recently been discussed critically by William G. Boltz: "euhemerism . . . *more sinico* is technically the precise opposite of euhemerism in its proper Greek usage" (1981, 141).

Long ago, when Pao Hsi ruled the world, he looked upward and meditated on the images in the skies, and he looked downward and meditated on the patterns on the ground. He meditated on the markings of birds and beasts and the favorable lie of the land. He drew directly from his own person, and indirectly he drew upon external objects. And so it was that he created the Eight Trigrams in order to communicate with the virtue of divine intelligence and to classify the phenomena of all living things. He made knotted cord for nets and fishing pots in hunting and fishing. He probably took these ideas from the hexagram "Clinging." (*Chou yi, Hsi tz'u, 2, Chuan, SPPY 8.3a*)

Fu Hsi was an ancient king. He ordered the creation of the zither instrument. The "Chia pien" and "Lao shang" are the names of tunes. It is said that Fu Hsi made the zither and composed the "Chia pien"

tune. Someone from Ch'u state composed the "Lao shang," based on the "Lao shang" tune. They are divine pieces of music, a delight to listen to. Some people say that the "Fu Hsi" and the "Chia pien" are divine song tunes. (Wang Yi's commentary on *Ch'u Tz'u*, *Ta chao*, SPTK 10.6a)

Fu Hsi was enthroned on a square altar. He listened to the breath of the eight winds and then designed the Eight Trigrams. (*T'ai-p'ing yü-lan*, citing *Shih yi chi*, SPTK 9.5b)

T'ai Hao imitated the spider and wove nets. (*Pao-p'u Tzu*, *Nei p'ien*, *Tui su*, SPTK 3.5a)

### The Farmer God Thrashes Herbs

The Farmer God (Shen Nung) is the culture bearer who taught humans the methods of agriculture and pharmacopoeia. The etiological myth of the Farmer God underscores several motifs: divine intervention to aid human beings, a god who teaches humans how to manage complex techniques, and the soteriological aspect of a god who suffers for the sake of humans.

Of seven major pre-Han sources, four rank the Farmer God after Fu Hsi in the cosmogonic chronology, and one ranks him as the first of the primeval gods (Karlgren 1946, 207). Like Fu Hsi, the Farmer God was a mythical figure who played a minor role in the early texts but became famous through the mythographers of the Han period, especially in the "Appended Texts" of the Han, added to the Chou *Classic of Change*. Also like Fu Hsi, the Farmer God shares some functions with other deities, for example, agriculture, by which the god Hou Chi is identified. And in the same way as the god Fu Hsi was mistakenly identified with T'ai Hao, so the Farmer God came to be identified with Yen Ti, the Flame Emperor. But the separate identities of the Farmer God and Yen Ti are consistently attested in the pre-Han sources, which recount their individual roles, functions, and attributes.

The first reading below, from the *Huai-nan Tzu*, underscores the themes of godly self-sacrifice, medical help for suffering humans, and agricultural knowledge. The second, from *The Classic of Change*, focuses on the invention of the plow and how to utilize it and survive in a hostile world. The third reading, from Kan Pao, recounts how the Farmer God whipped the kernel and seed box of every known plant and its foliage to release its essence, which he himself tasted for its toxic or non-





Figure 2. a, the Farmer God, Shen Nung, with his plow; inscription reads, "The Farmer God taught agriculture based on land use; he opened up the land and planted millet to encourage the myriad people"; b, the Yellow Emperor, Huang Ti; inscription reads, "The Yellow Emperor created and changed a great many things; he invented weapons and the wells and fields system; he devised upper and lower garments, and established palaces and houses"; c, the God Chuan Hsu; inscription reads, "The God Chuan Hsu, Kao Yang, was the grandson of the Yellow Emperor and the son of Ch'ang Yi"; d, the God K'u, Ti K'u; inscription reads, "The God K'u, Kao Hsin, was the great grandson of the Yellow Emperor." Funerary stone bas-relief, Wu Liang Shrine, Chia-hsiang county, Shantung province, A.D. 151. From Feng and Feng, *Research on Stone Carving* (1821) 1934, chap. 3.

toxic qualities. The method of discovery is one of trial and error, or a rudimentary experimentation, leading to a protoscientific system of botanical classification. Rémi Mathieu suggests that the motif of the whip signifies regeneration, as with the ancient Roman Lupercalian fertility rites (1989, 68 n. 1). The color motif of the god's whip is significant: the word for the rust color, *che*, derives from the root word *ch'ih* 'scarlet red,' which is a recurring emblematic color in Chinese mythology. The color *che* 'rust' came to be used for prisoners' uniforms and as an emblematic color of banishment; thus the motif appears to denote punishment. It is also worth noting that the color resembles dried blood.

The fourth reading is from *A Record of Accounts of Marvels*, attributed to Jen Fang (A.D. 460–508). It is a late text that cites early myths, and several of its passages are written in the antiquarian and touristic mode. Arising from the myth of the Farmer God's experiments with plant substances is his later association with medicine. Several pharmacological works, such as *The Classical Pharmacopoeia of the Farmer God*, written by Wu P'u in the third century A.D., bear his name.

In ancient times the people ate plants and drank from rivers, and they picked fruit from trees and ate the flesh of shellfish or crickets. At that time there was much suffering due to illness and injury from poisoning. So the Farmer God taught the people for the first time how to sow the five grains and about the quality of the soil—which soils were prone to be arid or wetland, which were fertile or barren, which were highland and lowland. He tasted the flavor of every single plant and determined which rivers and springs were sweet or brackish, and he let the people know how to avoid certain things. At that time he himself suffered from poisoning seventy times in one day. (*Huainan Tzu*, *Hsiu wu*, SPPY 19.1a)

After the Pao Hsi clan had died out, the clan of the Farmer God emerged. He split wood to make a plowshare and molded wood to make a plowhandle. With the plow he dug the soil and taught the benefit of this to the world. He probably took this from the hexagram "Advantage." (*Chou yi*, *Hsi tz'u*, 2, *Chuan*, SPPY 8.3a)

The Farmer God thrashed every single plant with a rust-colored whip. In the end he learned their characteristics—the bland, the toxic, the cool, and the hot, taking their smell and taste as a guide. He sowed the hundred grains. And so all under Heaven called him the Farmer God. (*Sou shen chi*, TSCC 1.1)

On Holy Metal Ridge in the Central Plain there still exists the tripod the Farmer God used for thrashing herbs. On Ch'eng-yang Mountain is the spot where the Farmer God thrashed the herbs. One name for it is Farmer God Plain, or Thrashed Herbs Mountain. On its summit is Purple Yang Lookout. Tradition has it that the Farmer God distinguished every single herb, and for over a thousand years one of these herbs, Dragon Brain, still grows there. (*Shu yi chi*, HWTS 2.5a)

### Ch'ih Yu Invents Metallurgy and Weapons

The god Ch'ih Yu was a culture bearer who invented metallurgy and metal weapons. He is also known as the god of war, and as such he shares many attributes and functions with Indra, Thōrr, and Mars. The martial function of Ch'ih Yu is attested by three major late Chou accounts, including the *Kuan Tzu*, attributed to Kuan Chung (d. 645 B.C.), from which the first reading below is taken. This text relates that the Yellow Emperor opened up the mountain and that Ch'ih Yu was the first to work metal from there. Several early texts also recount that Ch'ih Yu fought the Yellow Emperor for supremacy but lost. A tradition deriving from *The Classic of History* casts Ch'ih Yu in the role of the first rebel. This might suggest that the god Ch'ih Yu resembles Lucifer in the biblical tradition, except that in later myth he is treated sympathetically as a hero and became the object of local worship in the Shantung region. In addition to his being a violent warrior and an inventor of weapons, Ch'ih Yu's other attribute is a bull-like appearance with horns and hooves.

The second reading, from Jen Fang's *Record of Accounts of Marvels*, recounts these attributes of the god from an antiquarian perspective, accentuating the metallurgical substance of iron ore in the description of Ch'ih Yu and his brothers as having "bronze heads and iron brows, and they ate stone pebbles." A further attribute of the god, as befits the god of war, is the color motif of brilliant red. Several texts relate that at his execution, Ch'ih Yu's fetters turned into maple trees, significant for their red foliage. (These and other motifs are discussed in chap. II, "Metamorphoses.")

This second reading is an important document since it summarizes the antiquarian, legendary, ethnographic, and religious aspects of the god which had accumulated by the fifth century. Jen Fang's presentation of Ch'ih Yu bears some resemblance to the Norse Odinic warriors



Figure 3. The God of War, Ch'ih Yu, inventor of metal weapons. Funerary stone bas-relief, Wu Liang Shrine, Chia-hsiang county, Shantung province, A.D. 151. From Feng and Feng, *Research on Stone Carving* (1821) 1934, chap. 3.

described by the Old Icelandic writer Snorri Sturluson (A.D. 1178–1241). Snorri recounts that Odin's warriors "bit their shields, and were as strong as bears or bulls. They slew men, and neither fire nor iron bit on them. This is called going berserk" (paraphrased by Puhvel 1987, 196). The motifs of biting metal and bull-like features are close parallels.

Jen Fang also mentions the local musical game of head butting (*chiao-ti*) with horns, called "Ch'ih Yu's Game," which he traces back to the Han era. In his monograph on early Chinese poetry, Jean-Pierre Diény contests the connection between the "Ch'ih Yu Game" and the head-butting game of the Han (1968, 58). Derk Bodde notes that the first mention of the horn butting game occurs in 208 B.C. but that not much is known about it. He suggests that human head-butting contests in the Han were a vestige of or a humanization of actual bullfights

(1975, 206). The name Hsien-yuan in Jen Fang's account is a pseudo-name of the Yellow Emperor and belongs to that category of names borrowed from faded mythical figures which has been noted in the case of Fu Hsi/T'ai Hao and the Farmer God/Yen Ti.

In his discussion of the Ch'ih Yu myth, Mark E. Lewis examines attributes of the god from the standpoint of his thesis of "sanctioned violence" (1990, 156-211). The head-butting aspect of later legend is discussed by Michael Loewe (1990, 140-57).

Then Ko-lu Mountain burst open and there came out water, and metal followed it. Ch'ih Yu gathered it up and fashioned it into swords, armor, spears, and lances. That year he brought under his power nine lords. Then Yung-hu Mountain burst open and there came out water, and metal followed it. Ch'ih Yu gathered it up and fashioned it into the lances of Yung-hu and the dagger-axes of Jui. That year he brought under his power twelve lords. (*Kuan Tzu, Ti shu*, SPTK 23.1b)

When Hsien-yuan first came to the throne, there were Ch'ih Yu and his brothers, seventy-two in all. They had bronze heads and iron brows, and they ate stone pebbles. Hsien-yuan executed them in the wilderness of Cho-lu. Ch'ih Yu was able to stir up a dense fog. Cho-lu is now in Chi Province. The spirit of Ch'ih Yu is there. People say that it has a human body, the hooves of an ox, four eyes, and six hands. Recently the people of Chi Province unearthed a skull that looked like bronze and iron, and it turned out to be the bones of Ch'ih Yu. And now there is Ch'ih Yu's tooth, which is two inches long and so hard that it is unbreakable. During the Ch'in and Han eras it was said that Ch'ih Yu's ears and temples were like swords and spears and that his head had horns. It was also said that when he fought against Hsien-yuan, he butted people with his horns and no one could stand up to him. Nowadays there is a piece of music from Chi Province called "Ch'ih Yu's Game." The local people form into twos and threes and wear horns on their heads and butt each other. The horn-butting game that was devised in the Han period was probably based on this tradition. In the villages and in the countryside of T'ai-yuan, horned heads do not feature in the sacrifice to Ch'ih Yu's spirit. In modern Chi Province there is the Ch'ih Yu River, which is in the wilderness of Cho-lu. In the reign of Emperor Wu of the Han, Ch'ih Yu's spirit was visible in daylight. He had tortoise feet and a serpent's head. When [textual lacuna] a plague broke

out, the local people had the custom of setting up a spontaneous shrine to him. (*Shu yi chi*, HWTS 1.2a -b)

### Ti K'u Makes Musical Instruments

Ti K'u, also known as Kao Hsin, figures in the late Chou cosmogonic chronology as a deity coming after the Yellow Emperor and before the three demigod heroes Yao, Shun, and Yü. The first reading in this section traces Ti K'u's magnificent but spurious descent from the Yellow Emperor. The text comes from the first history of China by the Han historian Su-ma Ch'ien (ca. 145-ca. 86 B.C.). The history charts the development of Chinese civilization from the beginning of time to the historian's own day, ending circa 100 B.C. The first chapter opens with accounts of the gods whom the historian considered to be the primary deities of the old pantheon, but his list is a distortion of early myth mingled with legendary and fictional Han material.

The second reading also reflects the rationalizing trend of the Han. It is from a text dating three centuries later by Huang-fu Mi (A.D. 215-282). His divine genealogies are essentially a reworking of early mythical accounts to make arcane passages, lacunae, inconsistencies, and old-fashioned ideas more comprehensible and more amenable to third-century A.D. readers.

Like other early gods, such as Fu Hsi and Ch'i, the son of the demigod Yü, Ti K'u is the god of music. Like them, too, he is particularly associated with specific music titles, such as "Nine Summons," "Six Ranks," and "Six Blooms." Ti K'u is also identified with the invention of six percussion instruments (drums, chimes, and bells), and four wind instruments. In this function the god is linked to the mythical Yu Ch'ui, also known as Ch'iao Ch'ui, the divinely gifted inventor and craftsman.

Chinese mythology has a great number of sacred beasts and birds, some of which have recognizable shapes, such as felines, eagles, owls, and so forth, while others are multimorphic or fantastic hybrids. Few of these, however, are connected with individual gods, as the eagle is with Zeus, the cow and peacock with Hera, the owl with Athena, the wolf and woodpecker with Mars, the swan with Apollo, and the sparrow with Aphrodite. These creatures of the Greco-Roman mythological tradition, moreover, have a symbolic meaning, such as the owl's wisdom and the sparrow's lust (Rose 1970, 65, 169). The birds in the Ti K'u myth narrated in the third reading, from the late Chou text *Annals of Master Lü*, feature the birds of paradise, the phoenix and the sky-

pheasant. Yet these are not emblematic of Ti K'u himself but are part of the divine sphere. Here they function as divine messengers visiting a lesser god as a mark of divine favor. This reading underscores Ti Ku's function as a divine king endowed with the harmonious gift of power. Thus the birds of paradise serve as a motif of harmony in the idealized image of Ti K'u's divine rule.

Ti K'u, Kao Hsin, was the Yellow Emperor's great-grandson. (*Shih chi, Wu ti pen chi*, SPPY 1.7b)

When Ti K'u was born, there was a divine miracle: he uttered his own name, "Ch'ün." (*Ti wang shih chi*, TSCC 3701.8)

Ti K'u commanded Hsien Hei to compose the music and songs "Nine Summons," "Six Ranks," and "Six Blooms." He ordered Yu Ch'ui to create the small war drum, drum, bell, chime, panpipe, pipe, clay ocarina, flute, hand drum, and hammer bell. Ti K'u then ordered people to play them. Some drummed on the drum and war drum, some blew the panpipe, some performed on the pipe and flute so that they made the phoenix and sky-pheasant dance to it. Ti K'u was very pleased, and serene in his regal power. (*Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu, Ku yueh*, SPTK 5.9b)

### Hou Chi Teaches How to Sow Grain

The functions of the Farmer God and the god Hou Chi overlap. But whereas the Farmer God has several functions, Hou Chi has two: he is the god of agriculture and the founder of the Chou people. Nothing is known of the birth and career of the Farmer God, but for Hou Chi a considerable amount of biographical material appears in one of the earliest sources of the mythological tradition, *The Classic of Poetry*, compiled circa 600 B.C. Among its 305 poems are long dynastic hymns that praise the founding gods of the Chou and their predecessors the Shang. Poem 245, the first of the readings below, is a hymn that honors the founding god of the Chou. It is written from the point of view of a Chou noble house and recounts the myth of Hou Chi from his miraculous conception to his inauguration of the sacrifice to his name, which sacrifice is performed and described in the closing stanzas of the hymn. The poem combines the themes of commemoration of the founder god Hou Chi, praise to the ancestors of the living members of the household, propitiation for a good harvest, and the continuity of

the family line descended from the god. The narrative fits the pattern of the first-finder and links this motif to two foundation myths, the founding of the Chou and the founding of the first Chou sacrifice to the god of agriculture.

The second reading is a prose account of the Hou Chi myth from the "Basic Annals of the Chou" by Ssu-ma Ch'ien. Although it was written some five centuries after the poem's compilation date, it follows the early version with remarkable fidelity. But halfway through his narrative the Han historian grafts on another, late mythologem of Yao and Shun derived from *The Classic of History*. According to the author of *The Classic of History*, time began with Yao. Thus the primeval gods of the traditional pantheon are subsumed under the figures of Yao and his successor Shun and made to serve subordinate roles. (The mythical figure Ch'ih Yu is the only exception to this rule.) By the Han era, *The Classic of History* had acquired the status of orthodoxy, constituting the true version of historical events and also the ideal model for the writing of ancient history. Many writers, including Ssu-ma Ch'ien, therefore, sought to give the subjects of their biographies the seal of approval by linking them to the sage-rulers of the Golden Age of Antiquity, Yao, Shun, and Yü. Consequently in Ssu-ma Ch'ien's biography of Hou Chi, the primeval god is subordinated to Yao and Shun and is demoted from god of agriculture to a mere minister of agriculture in their administration. It is possible to hypothesize that in using the paradigm of Yao and Shun in *The Classic of History*, Ssu-ma Ch'ien intended to demonstrate that the gods of the Chou were desacralized when the sociopolitical structure of the Chou dynasty had been dismantled by the Ch'in and Han conquerors.

The designation Hou in the name Hou Chi is the subject of considerable debate. Many Sinologists translate it as the title of a male deity, rendering it as Lord Millet. Yet the title is of ambiguous gender. The deity Hou t'u, for example, is rendered as Lord Earth or as Empress Earth or Earth Goddess. The rendition of Hou-t'u as a female sovereign divinity is followed by Edouard Chavannes (1910, 521-25) and more recently by Rémi Mathieu (1989, 195). If the title of Hou Chi were rendered in the feminine, as Empress Millet or Goddess Millet, this mythical figure would find a parallel with the general pattern of female cereal deities, of whom Demeter (Ceres) is the foremost example. In the readings below the name Hou Chi is rendered as Lord Millet.



She who first gave birth to our people  
 Was Chiang Yuan.  
 And how did she give birth to our people?  
 She performed the Yin and Ssu sacrifices well  
 So that she might not be without child.  
 She trod in the big toe of God's footprint  
 And was filled with joy and was enriched;  
 She felt a movement and it soon came to pass  
 That she gave birth and suckled  
 The one who was Hou Chi.  
 She fulfilled her due months  
 And her firstborn came forth,  
 With no rending or tearing,  
 Without injury or harm.  
 And this revealed the miraculous,  
 For did not God give her an easy birth,  
 Was he not well pleased with her sacrifice?  
 And so she bore her child with comfort.  
 She laid it in a narrow alley  
 But ox and sheep suckled it.  
 She laid it in a wood on the plain  
 But it was found by woodcutters on the plain.  
 She laid it on chill ice  
 But birds covered it with their wings.  
 Then the birds went away  
 And Hou Chi wailed,  
 Really loud and strong;  
 The sound was truly great.  
 Then he crawled in truth;  
 He straddled and strode upright  
 To look for food for his mouth.  
 He planted large beans,  
 And the large beans grew thick on the vine;  
 His ears of grain were heavy, heavy;  
 His hemp and wheat grew thick;  
 The gourd stems were laden with fruit.  
 Hou Chi's gardening  
 Was the way of the natural plant.  
 He cleared the rank grass

And planted a yellow crop there,  
Growing even and rich,  
Well planted and well eared;  
It was firm and it was good,  
The ears well ripened, the grain well thickened.  
Then he made his home in T'ai.

He sent down cereals truly blessed,  
Both black millet and double-kernel millet,  
Pink-sprouting millet and white;  
Black and double-kernel millet spread all over,  
And he reaped many an acre.  
Pink-sprouting and white millet spread all over,  
Carried on his back, carried over his shoulder.  
He brought them home and inaugurated the sacrifice.

Our sacrifice, what is it like?  
Some pound, some bale,  
Some sift, some tread.  
We wash it soaking, soaking wet;  
We steam it piping, piping hot.  
Then we plan with thoughtful care:  
Gathering southern-wood, offering rich fat,  
We take a ram to make the Wayside Sacrifice,  
Roasting and broiling,  
To usher in the New Year.

The bronze pots filled to the brim,  
The bronze pots and cauldrons.  
As soon as their aroma rises up,  
God on high enjoys it with pleasure.  
The rich fragrance is right and proper,  
For Hou Chi inaugurated the sacrifice;  
With no fault or blemish his people  
Have continued it to the present day.

(*Shih ching*, 245, *Sheng min*, SPPY 17.1.1a-12a)

Hou Chi of the Chou was named Ch'i, the Abandoned. His mother, the daughter of the Yu-t'ai clan, was called Chiang Yuan. Chiang Yuan was Ti K'u's first consort. . . . When Ch'i was a child, he looked imposing, as if he had the bold spirit of a giant. When he went out to play, he liked planting hemp and beans, and his hemp and beans were very fine. When he became an adult, he also grew very skilled

at plowing and farming. He would study the proper use of the land, and where valleys were suitable he planted and he reaped. Everyone went out and imitated him. Emperor Yao heard about him and promoted Ch'i to master of agriculture, so that the whole world would benefit from him and have the same success. Emperor Shun said, "Ch'i, the black-haired people are beginning to starve. You are the Lord Millet [Hou Chi]. Plant the seedlings in equal measure throughout the hundred valleys." He gave Ch'i the fiefdom of T'ai with the title of Lord Millet, and he took another surname from the Chi clan. (*Shih chi, Chou pen chi, SPPY 4.1a-b*)

### Po Yi Tames Birds and Beasts

One of the confusing aspects in the study of myth is the phenomenon of names. Either one mythical figure has a multiplicity of names, or a variety of figures have the same name. Both aspects come into play with the name of the mythical figure Po Yi. In the first reading below one Po Yi, originally named Ta Fei, is said to be the ancestor of the Ch'in people, an assistant of Yü in the task of controlling the flood, besides being a minister of Shun and domesticator of birds and beasts. The passage is by Ssu-ma Ch'ien, who relates the myth of the ancestor of the Ch'in people, who gained supremacy in the ancient world and conquered the mighty Chou. The same technique the historian used in the myth of Hou Chi of linking the mythical figure to the sage-rulers Yao and Shun is evident here, in addition to the historian's convention of adducing a divine genealogy for his biographical subject.

The second reading refers to another mythical Po Yi, the name Yi written with a different character. In the early tradition this Po Yi is a separate figure, although both share the function of the domestication of beasts. By the Han period, however, the Po Yi who was ancestor of the Ch'in and the Po Yi who was the legendary domesticator of animals had coalesced into one and the same figure. A third Po Yi, written with yet another graph for Yi, is the ancestor of the Chiang clan. A fourth, with his brother Shu Ch'i, was a hero of the Shang Dynasty (chap. 13).

Another characteristic of mythology is the impulse toward creating lines of descent from a god to the ancestor of a clan or individual. In chapter 5 of his history "Basic Annals of the Ch'in Dynasty" Ssu-ma Ch'ien provides the line of Po Yi with divine descent from the god Chuan Hsu and with a miraculous birth. Such genealogies do not, on the whole, occur in mythic narratives in the late Chou tradition, and

they are to be judged as fallacious concoctions to flatter a royal line. Their very tidiness when compared with the often inchoate matter of early mythic narratives makes them particularly suspect.

The mythic narrative of Po Yi in *The Classic of History* contains designations of animal names which have been taken to imply the practice of animal totemism in archaic China. Although such passages as this may have as their underlying pattern a correlation with the bear cult of the Ainu tribe of Japan and other animal cults, it is salutary to be mindful of the dangers of superficial parallels and hasty judgments. In his discussion of the pitfalls of what he termed the "totemic illusion," the anthropologist Michael A. A. Goldenweiser noted that there is not necessarily a totemic link among the three factors of clan organization; clan appropriation of animal, bird, or plant emblems; and a belief in a kinship or genealogical relationship between clan or clan member and such an emblem (cited in Mendelson 1968, 127). Since the second reading, from *The Classic of History*, clearly indicates the appropriation of animal emblems but fails to show either totemic descent of humans from those emblems or the cult of the animal totem by those humans, the passage must be ruled out as textual evidence for totemism in archaic China.

The ancestor of the Ch'in people was a descendant of the god Chuan Hsu. His granddaughter was called Nü-hsiu. When Nü-hsiu was weaving, a black bird dropped an egg. Nü-hsiu swallowed it and gave birth to Ta Yeh. Ta Yeh took the daughter of the Shao-tien as his wife, and her name was Nü-hua. Nü-hua gave birth to Ta Fei, who controlled the inundated earth with Yü. Once he had completed this work . . . he aided Shun in taming birds and beasts. A great number of birds and beasts were tamed, and that is why he became known as Po Yi. (*Shih chi, Ch'in pen chi*, SPPY 5.1a-b)

Emperor [Shun] said, "Who will control the plants and trees, the birds in the highlands and lowlands?" Everyone said, "Yi is the one." The Emperor said, "Excellent! Now, Yi, you will do the work that has been giving me cause for concern." Yi bowed and kowtowed, and he assigned tasks to Scarlet, Tiger, Bear, and P'i-bear. The emperor said, "Excellent! Set out, then. They will go with you." (*Shang shu, Shun tien*, SPPY 3.14b-15a)

## K'ung Chia Rears Dragons

By traditional accounts, K'ung Chia was the thirteenth king of the legendary dynasty of the Hsia, and the fourth last dynastic king of the Hsia. It is worth noting at this juncture that although writers of the Chou dynasty believed in the existence of a Hsia dynasty, preceding the Shang dynasty, which the Chou had overthrown, and although many Sinologists accept that the Hsia dynasty existed, it is prudent to adopt the cautious approach, exemplified by Morton H. Fried, to the lack of historical evidence for the Hsia: "Of course, the existence of the Hsia is not yet verified; much less is anything known of its political structure" (1983, 488).

Perhaps because the reign of K'ung Chia came so close to the end of a dynasty made glorious by its supposed founder, the demigod Yü the Great, and because K'ung Chia was the great-grandfather of the infamous Chieh, the tyrannical last ruler of the Hsia, he is given a bad press in mythological accounts. Both of the readings that follow exemplify this unfavorable portrayal. Ssu-ma Ch'ien and the later author of *Biographies of Immortals* list the king's crimes of sacrilege, depravity, misrule, and murder, and other authors even embroidered their accounts of his villainy. Both readings have as the main theme the rearing of divine dragons by human kings and their ennobled keepers. The first reading is from Ssu-ma Ch'ien's "Basic Annals of the Hsia Dynasty," and it is concerned with the tradition of the noble office of dragon tamer from the time of Yao (known as the T'ao T'ang era) to the era of the Hsia king K'ung Chia. Some of the names of dragon tamers appear to be professional titles, such as the Master Who Rears Dragons. The second reading is from a fanciful compendium of biographies of seventy-one immortals compiled between the third and fifth centuries A.D.

A few dragons in mythology themselves have distinctive names, such as Chu Lung or Torch Dragon and Ying Lung or Responding Dragon. The former controls the powers of darkness and light, the latter the powers of water and drought. The *lung* dragon possesses an elemental energy, and although it is often fallacious to seek to give myths a symbolic interpretation, some dragon myths may be said to deal with the problem of how to harness and utilize colossal physical force and elemental energy.

When Emperor K'ung Chia acceded to the throne, he enjoyed imitating the behavior of spirits and gods, and he became befuddled with depravity. When the power of the Hsia lord declined, his nobles

rebelled against him. Heaven sent a pair of dragons down to earth, one male and one female. K'ung Chia could not make them eat because he had not yet received the expertise of Huan-lung. When the T'ao T'ang era declined, there was Liu Lei, who descended from that time, and he had learned how to tame dragons from Huan-lung. He came to serve K'ung Chia. K'ung Chia granted him the name Yü-lung and permitted him to receive the lordship of the descendants of Shih-wei. When one of the dragons died, Liu Lei presented it to K'ung Chia, the Hsia lord, to eat. The Hsia lord sent an official to find out what had happened. Liu Lei panicked, and fled to another part of the world. (*Shih chi*, *Hsia pen chi*, SPPY 2.20a)

Shih-men was the disciple of Hsiao-fu. He, too, had the ability to create fire. He ate from peach and plum trees and flowers. He became the dragon trainer of K'ung Chia of the Hsia. But K'ung Chia could not make Shih-men abide by his wishes, so he murdered him and buried him in outlying fields. One morning a storm blew up there and when it was over the mountain forest was completely on fire. K'ung Chia offered sacrifice to Shih-men and prayed to him, but on the way home he fell down dead. (*Lieh hsien chuan*, TSCC 1.12)

### Ts'an Ts'ung Encourages Sericulture

Ts'an Ts'ung is the first-finder who taught the techniques of sericulture to humans. Ts'an means 'a silkworm', and Ts'ung means 'a cluster', indicating that the divine silkworm was a prolific producer. The first historically verifiable sacrificial ceremony to the god of sericulture, made to the name of Hsien Ts'an, Ancestral Ts'an, or First Sericulturalist, occurred in the Latter Han era (Bodde 1975, 263-72). It seems that Hsien Ts'an and Ts'an Ts'ung are identical, and the different names may indicate local variants of the same etiological myth. Sericulture itself was probably first practiced in Neolithic times in China. The earliest record of the discovery of a cocoon is at an archeological site in Shansi, dating 2600-2300 B.C. (Li 1983, 36-37). Remnants of woven patterned silk from the Shang era (trad. 1766-1123 B.C.) have been discovered, and by the Chou era (1123-256 B.C.) silk was relatively plentiful.

The first of the passages that follow is from *Basic Annals of the Kings of Shu*, which may date from the middle Han era, and is attributed, probably erroneously, to the famous author Yang Hsiung (53 B.C.-A.D. 18), who came from Ch'eng-tu city in ancient Shu (modern Szechwan).

The text states that the Shu kings were descended from the god Ts'an Ts'ung, the bringer of sericulture. Yuan K'o proposes the theory that the ancient graph for Shu is similar to the graph for silkworm (1980.2, 283). Such a cultural origin has yet to be proved by archeological and historical evidence. The second reading, from the same work, affirms this descent with some added ethnographic data. The third reading is cited in the compendium *A Continuation of "The Origin of Things"* by the T'ang author Feng Chien, which has survived only in fragments cited in various works. The citation is from *Supplementary Material to "Biographies of Immortals"* and to *"Biographies of Holy Immortals"* by the Former Shu author Tu Kuang-t'ing of the tenth century A.D. *Biographies of Immortals* is attributed to Liu Hsiang (79-8 B.C.) of the Former Han period, and *Biographies of Holy Immortals* is attributed to Ko Hung (A.D. 254-334). It is clear that Tu Kuang-t'ing has added fictional color to the earlier myth.

The fourth reading is from an anonymous popular work of the Yuan dynasty, edited circa A.D. 1592, *A Compendium of Information on the Gods of the Three Religions* (that is, Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism). This late account of the god Ts'an Ts'ung adds several motifs: color symbolism (green being the color of spring silkworms), the god teaching humans the technique of sericulture, miraculous cure, local worship, and touristic data.

The first ancestor of the Shu kings was called Ts'an Ts'ung. In the next era his descendant was called Po Huo, and in the era after that his descendant was called Yü Fu. Each of these three eras lasted several hundred years. In each era they became gods and did not die. Their people followed their kings, taking another shape and vanishing like them. (*T'ai-p'ing yü-lan*, citing *Shu wang pen chi*, SPTK 888.2b)

The king of Shu's ancestor was called Ts'an Ts'ung. The first ancestors of Shu with the title of king were Ts'an Ts'ung, Po Huo, and Yü Fu. In the K'ai-ming reign people used to pile their hair up, and they wore their collar on the left. They did not understand writing and they did not yet have ritual or music. From the K'ai-ming reign back to Ts'an Ts'ung was an aeon of 34,000 years. (*Ch'üan Shang ku*, *Ch'üan Han wen*, citing *Shu wang pen chi*, 53.5a)

Ts'an Ts'ung set himself up as king of Shu. According to tradition, he taught the people about silkworms and mulberry. He made several thousand golden silkworms. At the start of each year, he took the

golden silkworms and gave the people one silkworm each. The silkworms the people raised always multiplied prolifically, so that in the end they could return the gift to the king. When he went on a royal tour of his realm, wherever he stopped on his journey, the people created a market town. Because of his legacy people in Shu hold a silkworm market every spring. (*Hsu shih shih*, citing *Hsien chuan shih yi*, *Shuo-fu* 10.45a)

The god in the green clothes is Ts'an Ts'ung. According to tradition, Ts'an Ts'ung began as the lord of Shu and later took the title of king of Shu. He always wore green clothes. When he conducted a royal tour of the city limits and countryside, he taught his people the management of silkworms. The countryfolk appreciated his kindness, and so they set up a temple to sacrifice to him. Shrines to his name spread all over the western region, and they proved without exception to have miraculous powers. He was generally called the god in the green clothes, and that is how Green-God County got its name. (*San chiao sou-shen ta ch'üan*, *Lien-ching* 316)

### Master Yen Presents His Invention

The narrative of Master Yen's invention recalls the myth of Daedalus and Icarus in the sense that both inventions went disastrously wrong. But whereas the Daedalus myth is recounted in the tragic mode, the story of Master Yen is told in the comic mode. The narrative of Master Yen, though it is set in archaic times, is from the late source of the *Lieh Tzu*. This problematic text was traditionally believed to date from the fourth century B.C., after the shadowy figure of an early Taoist philosopher named Lieh Yü-k'ou, or Lieh Tzu, who was made famous by Chuang Tzu. The text is now thought to be a fourth-century forgery by Chang Chan (fl. A.D. 370).

According to the *Lieh Tzu*, the legendary inventor Master Yen lived in the reign of King Mu of Chou of the tenth century B.C. But King Mu is himself a figure who attracted a great deal of lore and legend, and so any associated narrative would be likely to be a late fiction. If indeed the dating of Master Yen to the reign of King Mu were correct, then Master Yen would come midway between the mythical figure of Ch'iao Ch'ui, or Yu Ch'ui, who is credited with the invention of miscellaneous instruments such as the compass, plow, hunting bow, measuring rope, boats, and bells, and inventors such as Master Shu Pan of Lu state of the sixth



century B.C. and Mo Tzu of the fourth century B.C., one of whose inventions was the kite. But the *Lieh Tzu*, itself of dubious authenticity, especially cannot be relied on for its dating in this case, for the reason that none of the late Chou texts mentions a Master Yen, but they frequently refer to Ch'iao Ch'ui, Master Shu Pan, Mo Tzu, and other ingenious inventors, both mythical and historical.

This long narrative from the *Lieh Tzu* contrasts strongly with the typical mythological narrative of the late Chou era, which is usually brief, elliptical, disjointed, and lacking in informative links. The prose style of the *Lieh Tzu* narrative is sophisticated in its portrayal of the inventor, its dramatic denouement, and its humorous asides. Its punch line, moreover, contravenes the norm of mythic accounts since the author speaks in the voice of a modern man of the post-Han era seeking to demythologize the divine nature of creation: "Such human ingenuity can be judged to be just as worthy as the Creator!" Master Yen's invention itself, a realistic automaton, was a product of the post-Han era and may have originated in Central Asia. As such, the *Lieh Tzu* text belongs to legendary rather than mythological literature.

King Mu of Chou went on a royal tour to his western dominions. He crossed the K'un-lun mountains, descended Mount Yen, and then made his return journey. Before he had reached China, he met someone on the way who presented an artisan to him called Master Yen. King Mu received him and asked him, "What special talent have you?" Master Yen said, "Your humble servant will try whatever you command, sir, but I have already made something that I would like Your Majesty to be the first to see." King Mu said, "Bring it with you another day and we will view it together." The next day, Master Yen requested an audience with the king. The king received him and said, "Whatever sort of a person is that you've brought with you?" He replied, "The object your humble servant has made can entertain you." King Mu looked at it in amazement. Then he hurried forward and looked it up and down, and it was a real human being. What a marvel it was! Master Yen lowered its jaw and it began to sing in tune to the music. He lifted its hands and it danced in time to the rhythm. A thousand and one different things it did, as fast as you thought of it. The king was sure it was a real person, and he examined it with the First Palace Lady and the court attendants. When the entertainment was almost over, the singer winked and beckoned to the court ladies on each side of the king. The king was furious. He stood up and was

about to have Master Yen executed. Master Yen was terrified. He stood up and tore the singer apart to show the king—it consisted entirely of leather, wood, gum, lacquer, and the colors white, black, red, and blue. The king examined the materials. Its insides, that is, its liver, gall bladder, heart, lungs, spleen, abdomen, and stomach, and its exterior, that is, its muscle and bone, limbs and joints, skin and bodily hair, and its teeth and head hair—everything was what you would expect to find, except that it was all artificial. When it was put together again, it was just as it had first appeared. The king tried removing its heart, but then its mouth could not speak. He tried moving its liver, but then its eyes could not see. He tried moving its testicles, but then its feet could not walk. Only then did the king show his delight. He sighed, “Such human ingenuity can be judged to be just as worthy as the Creator!” Then he ordered a fine carriage to be made ready to take them back with the royal entourage to the capital. (*Lieh Tzu, T'ang wen*, SPPY 5.16b-17b)

### Minor Culture Bearer Traditions

The last chapter of *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* contains numerous references to culture bearers descended from the gods. Since their creations and inventions coincide in this chapter of the *Classic*, they are presented sequentially here. It should be noted that this last chapter is much later than the earlier chapters and probably dates from the first century A.D., although the material is no doubt prior to that. The intrinsic interest of these mythic narratives is augmented by the fact that in some cases they constitute different traditions from the main mythic tradition presented earlier in this chapter on culture bearers. Some musical instruments, in particular, have several divine claimants for their creation. In the following readings the god Ti Chün predominates, and he is a major deity in this *Classic*. The recurring motif of divine genealogy indicates the lateness of this version compared with mythic narratives of the Chou period.

Po Ling, the grandson of the Flame emperor [Yen Ti], shared Wu Ch'üan's wife, A-nü Yuan-fu. Yuan-fu was pregnant for three years, and then she gave birth to Ku, Yen, and Shu, the first to create the rank of marquis [Hou]. Ku and Yen were the first to create bell instruments and musical airs. (*Shan hai ching, Hai nei ching*, SPPY 18.7a)

Ti Chün gave birth to Yü Hao, Yü Hao gave birth to Yin Liang, Yin Liang gave birth to Fan Yü, who was the first to create boats. Fan Yü gave birth to Hsi Chung, Hsi Chung gave birth to Chi Kuang, and Chi Kuang was the first to use wood to make carriages. (*Shan hai ching, Hai nei ching*, SPPY 18.7a)

Shao Hao gave birth to Pan, and Pan was the first to create bows and arrows. (*Shan hai ching, Hai nei ching*, SPPY 18.7a)

Ti Chün gave birth to Yen Lung. It was Yen Lung who created the lute and the zither. (*Shan hai ching, Hai nei ching*, SPPY 18.7b)

Ti Chün had eight sons. They were the first to create song and dance. (*Shan hai ching, Hai nei ching*, SPPY 18.7b)

Ti Chün gave birth to San Shen [Three-Body]. San Shen gave birth to Yi Chün. Yi Chün was the first to create Ch'iao Ch'ui [Skilled Artisan], who was the first to bring down to the people here below the hundred skilled crafts. Hou Chi was the one who sowed the hundred grains, and Chi's grandson was called Shu Chün, who was the first to make the ox-drawn plow. The Ta Pi Ch'ih Yin were the first to create a kingdom [*kuo*]. Yü and Kun were the first to distribute the land, and to define equally the Nine Provinces. (*Shan hai ching, Hai nei ching*, SPPY 18.7b-8a)