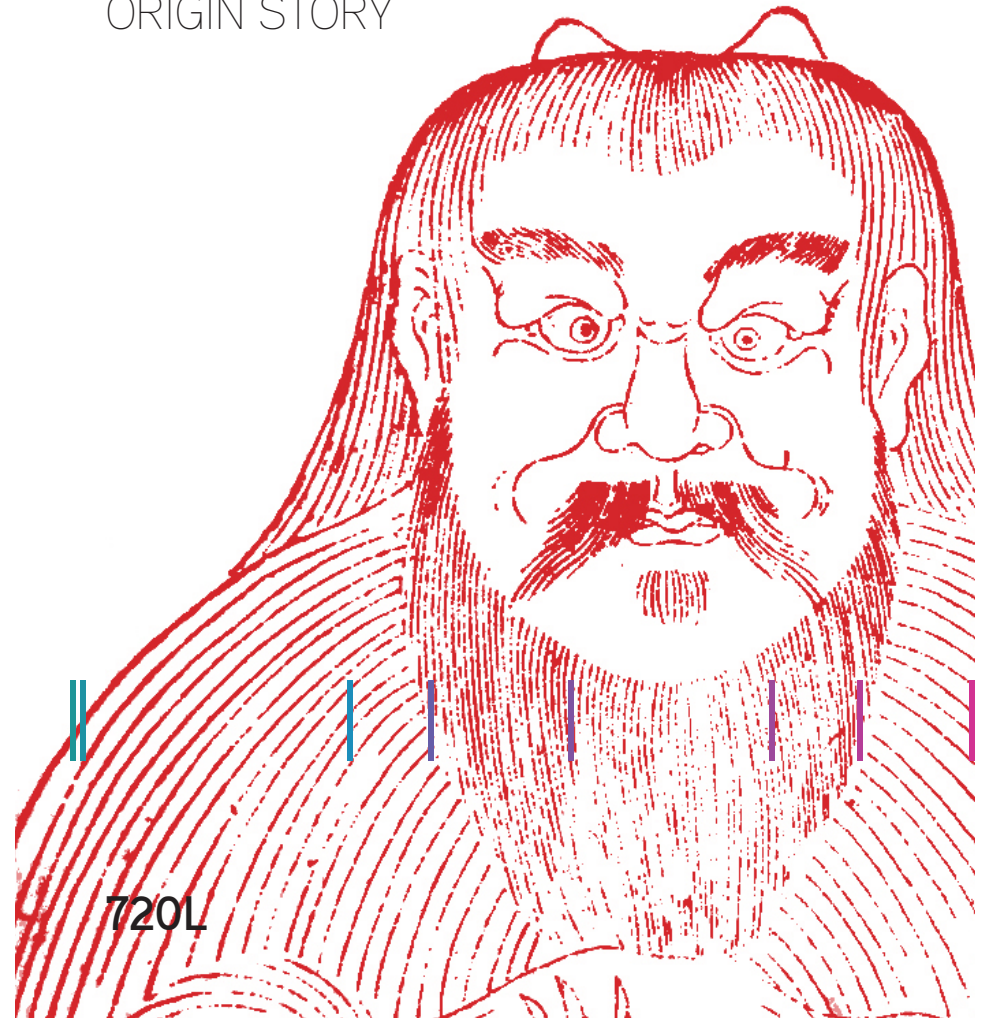


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# CHINESE

ORIGIN STORY



BIG HISTORY PROJECT

720L

# CHINESE

PAN GU AND THE EGG  
OF THE WORLD

Compiled by Cynthia Stokes Brown, adapted by Newsela

First written down about 1,760 years ago, this story of how the Universe began was told orally long before that.



*This origin story comes from China. It was first written down about 1,760 years ago, roughly 220 – 265 CE. Yet, it must have passed along as a spoken story long before that.*

In the beginning was a huge egg containing chaos, a mixture of opposites. These opposing forces are found everywhere in all nature – female-male, cold-hot, dark-light, and wet-dry. Within this yin and yang was Pan Gu, the first living thing. He lay asleep in the egg for 18,000 years. Then he awoke, breaking forth from the egg as a hairy giant. Pan Gu set about creating the world. He separated chaos into the many opposites, including Earth and sky.

Pan Gu stood in the middle to keep them separate. His head touched the sky, his feet were planted on Earth.

The heavens and the Earth began to grow by 10 feet a day. Pan Gu grew along with them. Each day he grew by 10 feet. Another 18,000 years passed. The sky had grown higher and the Earth was thicker. Pan Gu was now 30,000 miles in height. He stood between the sky and earth like a pillar so they would never again join.

When Pan Gu died, parts of his gigantic body formed the Universe. His skull became the top of the sky, his breath became the wind and clouds, his voice the rolling thunder. One eye became the Sun. His other eye became the Moon. His body and limbs turned into five big mountains, and his blood formed the roaring water. His veins became roads and his muscles turned into rich soil good for growing food. The countless stars in the sky came from his hair and beard. Flowers and trees came from his skin. The marrow in his bones turned to jade and pearls. His sweat turned into rain. Some people say that the fleas and the lice on his body became the ancestors of humans.

# Sources

David Leeming and Margaret Leeming, *A Dictionary of Creation Myths* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 47 – 50.

# Image credits

An illustration of Pan Gu from the *Sancai Tuhui*, public domain

*Cassia-Tree Moon*

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