Presentation 1

No conjunctions

Today I will be retelling the Chinese creation myth and giving a small analysis on it.

In the beginning there was an enormous egg containing chaos

On the inside the chaos raged on and on

Both yin and yang were mixed together

All the opposites were writhing together; male and female, cold and hot, wet and dry, dark and light

Finally the egg burst open and out leapt the giant dragon Pan-gu

Yin and Yang swirled around him and he pushed the two shell halves apart

Everyday for 18,000 years Pan-gu grew ten feet

Thus the sky was raised a little higher every day

Once the sky was 30, 000 miles above the ground

Pan-gu stopped and began to hammer out the mountains

and fill the valley with water to form great oceans

He created rivers with his fingers

Stamped the earth down to create flat lands

He gathered raw light and tossed them into the sky to become stars

After 18,000 years, Pan-gu had grown old and tired

He had made the world with his hands

And formed basic principles of yin and yang

He wanted to lay down forever

Sleep forever

When pan-gu died his body formed huge mountains

His skull formed the top of the sky

His hair formed all flowers and plants

His bones turned to jade and pearl

And His arms and legs the four directions

His blood became the rivers

His breath turned into the wind

And his voice to thunder

One eye became the sun and the other the moon

For many years the world was a very beautiful place but also lonely

There were no people

The half dragon goddess Nuwa was born after pan-gu died

From part of the mixture of yin and yang that he had separated

She decided to create humans to have some other beings to talk to

And share ideas with, but mostly just to love

Nuwa went down to the edge of the yellow river where there were vast soft mud banks

She decided that it would be much more practical for her creations to have legs instead of a dragon tail

Thus her humans were not made in her image

No sooner did she set the first little mud man on the ground did he start to jump and dance and sing

Nuwa was delighted and began making more and more humans

She made hundreds and hundreds of mud humans but soon realized that it would take centuries for her to make enough people to fill the vast earth completely

Nuwa grabbed hold of a muddy stick and flung drops of mud across the land

Some say that these humans were the less intelligent ones

Those formed by Nuwa’s own hands became great leaders

She told them to go and populate the earth

As they grew she loved them and protected them and was revered as the mother of all humans

1. What does it tell us about the culture that produced it
2. What cultural norms does it suggest are important
3. What do you find personally compelling about your myth
4. Why did you select this myth to recite

I chose this myth because, its one that I’ve never really heard and not one that seems to be talked about a lot. It was also one where I’ve never seen creation start out with an egg, which takes did the chicken or the egg come first to a new level.

I specifically chose this version of the myth because it portrayed Pangu as a dragon whereas in most version that I could find Pangu was a man. In Chinese cultures dragons were powerful and benevolent symbols. While there are other gods in Chinese myths and in other myths gods do create the earth, I found it more befitting that in this version you can credit a dragon with having created the earth thus showing how powerful they are.

Another reason why I chose this version is that also in Chinese culture emperors were identified as sons of dragons. Since the men, NuWa created from her own hands were said to go on as emperors and leaders, it ties the culture and story together better than if Pangu was a man.

There are more things that this story tells us about Chinese culture. For example, right at the beginning, the egg helps us visual a popular theory and idea that shows up in many aspects of Chinese culture, that of Yin and Yang. Yin is suppose to represent the earth, dark and in old Chinese culture for family structure, it was the female side which represented the submissiveness to their partner and domestic matters. Yang the opposite; was heaven, bright and male, and in the family structure was dominant and aggressive. This was the basic family structure at the time of this myth.

Yin and Yang was the basic idea for Confucianism and had its part in Taoism. For Confucianism, yin and yang were a way of explaining the universe and everything had its own counterpart. For Taoism, the approach to life was bipolar. Cyclic processes such as night and day indicated two factors, or having yin and yang. You needed both yin and yang to form a whole so it was thought that one couldn’t exist without the other. The idea of good and evil also came from Yin and Yang as mentioned from the story, the egg contained all opposites.

Yin and Yang also influenced the way people treated their environment. Because the earth was formed by the body parts of pan-gu, you could say it was living thus the people wanted to take proper care of it as to maintain balance.

Another important thing in Chinese culture is jade. The story shows its importance by having it be something that is created from the bones of Pangu’s body. Jade is considered to be lucky and “The stone of Heaven”. Culturally its meant to represent the heart and symbolize the five virtues of humanity. Jade comes in many colors, though green is the traditional one, and each color gives a little extra meaning and represents a different direction in religious ceremonies. Another gemstone created from pangu’s bones is pearls. A lot of times you see dragons depicted as chasing or holding a pearl. This is suppose to represent it’s eternal pursuit of wisdom, spiritual energy, and enlightenment. It’s also been said that pearls will protect you from fire and fire breathing dragons. Pearls can be seen in numerous pieces of art and was a major item sold in China. The fact that its included in their creation story explains why pearls can be found in abundance there.

Thanks for listening to my analysis and retelling of the beginning of the Chinese creation myth. Have a great day.

Extra Sources use:

Yin and Yang: <https://scholar.valpo.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=core_reader#:~:text=Therefore%2C%20the%20Chinese%20creation%20myth,well%20define%20the%20Chinese%20culture>.

Retold Creation myth: <https://youtu.be/B7OkVVjzP7s>

Jade: <https://blog.shoplc.com/chinese-jade/#:~:text=Chinese%20culture%20considers%20jade%20to,%2C%20longevity%2C%20and%20even%20immortality>.