

# How Two Friends Danced To Create the World

A short summary of the creation story based on Shintoism in Japan

by Dunja Sharbat Dar

The story draws upon aspects from the Shinto myth of the creation of the world as told in Japan.

Different generations of gods and goddesses had already created the sun, the moon, and the stars. Through music and dance, the goddesses and gods were able to create worlds. But planet earth was still missing, and it was the final celestial body that needed to be made. The gods and goddesses chose Izanami (girl) and Izanagi (boy), two friends who loved playing, dancing and singing together, to create the earth. They were young and creative. The older generations of gods knew that they were the perfect choice.

They were given a special tool for that: The spear of the heavens, full of jewels, shining in the colours of the rainbow that would help create the earth. An older god summoned it and gave it to them.

After they received the spear, they were told how to hold it. They went to the Milky Way, swirled it around and the hazy dust became clearer and clearer, and turned into water. They lifted the spear up and from its end some droplets fell down into the dark depth of the universe. And then from the water droplets an island was formed. Izanami and Izanagi brought the spear back to the gods.

Now they ran and jumped off the Milky Way and onto their island. There was a palace made of silver and gold. There were two heavenly columns. Aside from that, the island was empty. Izanami and Izanagi wanted to create plants, animals and humans. So they collected ideas and started to sing and dance to create living creatures.

They started to dance for the earth, the waters, they stomped and sang, they called into being high mountains and deep valley. Then, a thunder-like noise came upon them, and everything started to shake. They were scared, but once the shaking stopped and they opened their eyes, they saw that mountains, green meadows and the ocean with islands in it.

The next step now was to make plants, animals and people. So they danced another dance and sang that plants, trees, bushes, animals like birds, fish and giraffes, lions and horses shall be made. And then from all the directions, humans shall come into existence at all different places on the earth. At that moment they knelt down and held hands.

Then they stood up and bowed. Animals and plants were made. And humans started to live, but they couldn't see them. The people lived all over the world. Izanami and Izanagi invited them for a feast and all brought different kinds of foods from where they lived. The relationship between humans and gods of the heaven strengthened. The gods in the universe were happy: Now the universe was complete. Izanami and Izanagi had created a beautiful planet.

# How the Old Master was Reborn Again and Again

A Daoist Creation Story

by Licia Di Giacinto

We are back in China 2200 years ago, where people liked to dance with dragons.

In China, there once was a God who was born several times. Even as he was born for the first time, he already had white hair, which is why he was called Laozi, the old master. Every time he came to the world, he saw that the people needed his help and each time he created wonderful things.

In the beginning, the universe was made of steam and air, nothing else. It was dark and there only lived one woman, who was called Jade. She dearly wanted a child and one day her wish came true. She became mother of a child, which looked old and was immediately able to talk. He said that he was Laozi, the god of the universe, which he would create.

Suddenly, the space of nothingness began to fill with steam and air, from which Laozi formed the sky, earth, sun and moon, the people and hills. The first people were to live in peace.

Afterwards, he had to rest and returned to the place before birth. There, he had another mother named Li, who took care of him. Laozi sang for her many years and holy books were created from his songs.

After 81 years he returned to earth and saw that humankind was very unhappy and quarreled all the time. The land looked desolate, so that Laozi became so sad that he left China on the back of an ox.

He rode to the hills between China and India and met Yin Xi, who was guardian of the mountain pass. They became friends and together they rode further West until they arrived in a beautiful golden city with lush gardens. Yet the people were also fighting a lot. Yin Xi and Laozi hid in the courtyard of a palace and saw the queen Maya while she was sleeping. The Old Master turned into a bird (a great titmouse) and flew around the queen.

When the queen Maya awoke she realized that she was pregnant and gave birth to a child, which was as smart as Laozi and able to walk right after birth. This child was Buddha, and he said: "There is no one as smart as me, neither in heaven nor on earth. Everywhere, the people are unhappy – I will show them how to become happy again."

Since then, the people in India practiced Buddhism. After that, nothing is known about Laozi, except that he returned again to the earth and met Confucius, the prince of the thinkers.

Confucius was a famous teacher and very wise, who believed in the good of the people. Together, Laozi and Confucius talked about the universe and nature. After their conversation, Confucius said to his pupils: "I know that birds can fly, fish can swim, and beasts can run. ... But dragons—I do not know how they ride on wind and cloud into the sky. After meeting Laozi, I find him as unfathomable as a dragon!"

After this meeting Laozi vanished again and only returned several centuries later in China, when there was once again chaos and anger amongst people. So Laozi found a smart man

called Zhang, so that he would make the world right again. He called him the reborn Old Master, who should reign over China in Laozi's name.

After Laozi's appearance, Zhang went to the palace, to tell the king about the message of the Old Master. He founded a city, in which everyone would again lead a happy and honest life and honor the Old Master, who once travelled to India and helped with the creation of the Buddha and who met Confucius once and now would reign over China.

# How People Lived As Giants

A Creation Story from Jainism in India

by Patrick Krüger

This story is based on the traditional Jain compendium *Trīṣaṣṭīśalākāpuruṣacharitra* by Hemacandra, who lived in India in the 11th/12th century. Jainism is an ascetic religion whose roots go back to the middle of the first pre-Christian millennium. It is still practiced in India today.

Long ago, in a distant land, there lived a king named Sidarta. He was very rich and lived in a palace of gold and gems. Sidarta had a son called Wardamana. Wardamana was a happy boy. He knew no fears and no worries. His father cared for his happiness and his mother, Queen Trishala, fulfilled all his wishes. Every day Wardamana played with his friends in the gardens of the palace. As he grew older, he went to school with the other children. And when he finally grew up, his father said to him, "Wardamana, you are a man now. Soon we will leave you and go to the gods in heaven. Then you will be the king!" Wardamana was frightened, because he loved his parents very much. For the first time in his life, he was sad when he thought that his father and mother would no longer be with him. But after a while Wardamana forgot what his father had told him and was happy again.

One day, however, Wardamana's parents left the palace and went to heaven to the gods. Wardamana was very sad. The other people who lived in the palace were also sad. When Wardamana saw the crying people, he thought, "Why do people have to be sad at all? It would be much better if everyone could always be happy! I don't want to be king as long as there are people who are sad!"

He left the castle and began his wanderings. For many years he wandered around and thought about why people were sad so often. And finally he grew old. One day he sat under a tree and thought again. Why can't people always be happy and joyful? he asked himself. And then - all of a sudden - he knew why people were so often sad and unhappy! And he knew much more. There was nothing more he didn't know - he suddenly knew everything that one could possibly know!

Soon the news spread that Wardamana now knew everything. He became a great teacher and got a new name: Mahawira, which means "great hero" for he had conquered ignorance. When the people in the villages and cities heard about it, they came rushing to learn from him. But not only the people came, also the animals came out of the forest to listen to Mahawira.

The people and animals had many questions for Mahawira. An old woman, who had come from a faraway village, bowed before Mahawira. Then she said, "Great teacher, in my village there is often great sadness. The people do not have enough to eat and they cry because they are hungry. Please tell me, have people always been sad?"

Mahawira replied, "My dear lady, people are sometimes sad and sometimes happy. And the animals are also sometimes sad and sometimes happy. But a long, long time ago it was different. At that time all people and all animals were always happy. There was no sadness among the people and animals, no one cried."

When the old woman heard this, she thought: "That must have been a very long time ago. And so she asked Mahawira, "Great Teacher, tell me again, how old is the world?"

And Mahawira replied, "The world is eternally old. It has always been there. And it will always be there."

Now a little girl standing next to the old woman said, "But has no one made the world?"

"No, little girl," Mahawira replied friendly, "the world was not made. It was just always there."

The little girl was reflecting.

"Great teacher, have there always been humans and animals in the world?" she finally asked.

Mahawira smiled. Then he said, "The people and animals have lived in the world for ages. But the people did not always look like they do today." Mahawira looked at the people and animals who stood around him and listened. Again he smiled and said, "I want to tell you: Long, long ago, people lived in happiness and peace in the world. Everyone had enough to eat and no one had to starve. There was no poverty and no wealth. Everything was fairly distributed. The people never got sick and they became very, very old. But above all, they were much bigger than today. They were as big as giants. And imagine: The children were always born as twins! It was a very happy time."

"And what happened then?" asked the little girl, "How did the sadness come into the world?"

"Well," Mahawira said, "it was the luck that was diminishing. First there was endless happiness and people were always happy. But as time went by, happiness became less. People had used it up. And finally, misfortune came into the world and people came to know sadness. Now the people were no longer giants either. They slowly became smaller, until finally they were only as big as we are now."

The little girl had listened intently. Now she remembered the words of the old woman who had told about the hunger in her village. And so she asked: "Great teacher, when people were giants, did they never go hungry?"

"No," Mahawira replied, "because in those days, the wish-fulfilling trees provided for the people."

The girl was surprised. "Wish-fulfilling trees," she asked in surprise, "What are wish-fulfilling trees?"

"At that time there were many trees and plants in the world. The earth shimmered like a magnificent gemstone and the air smelled of colorful flowers. People did not need to work. They lived happily and contentedly. There was no quarrel among them. This was due to the trees of desire. From them, people received everything they needed to live. There were trees that bore delicious fruits. Others gave the people clothes and precious jewelry. Still others gave happiness and cheerfulness. There were trees that gave a house to a family and others whose leaves made music. Some trees gave people colorful wreaths to wear around their neck. And then there were the trees that lit up the world with their splendor."

"Like the sun and moon?" asked the girl.

"Yes," Mahawira replied, "these trees shone like the sun and moon."

"But where are the trees?" the little girl continued, "what happened to them?"

Mahawira smiled again and said, "As the luck in the world diminished, so did the wish-fulfilling trees. At first their gifts became fewer. Then people became afraid that the trees' gifts would no longer be enough for all people. They became envious and greedy. There was a quarrel and finally one tree after the other disappeared. And at some point, there were no more wish-fulfilling trees."

"And what did the people do then?" asked the girl, "How could they live without the trees?"

"When the last wish-fulfilling tree disappeared, it started to rain for the first time. New plants began to grow and people started harvesting vegetables and herbs from the fields. But when they noticed that no more wish-fulfilling trees were growing, people became very sad. They thought of all the gifts they had received from the trees. But now there were no more gifts. Without the help of the wish-fulfilling trees, people had to learn to take care of themselves".

"How could they learn?" asked the girl, "Did they have a teacher?"

"There were many teachers," Mahawira said, "Wise men and women came to the people. They showed them how to build houses and roads. They taught them how to make clothes and how to cook food. Now the people had to learn everything. Until the world was as it is today.

The little girl thought for a moment. "But why do people have to be sad today?" she asked.

Mahawira smiled. Then he said, "They do not have to be sad. They can learn how to be happy."

"But from whom can they learn?" asked the girl.

Mahawira replied, "When the world had become the way it is today, other wise men and women came to the people. They show people how to overcome sadness. There are many of these great teachers who know all there is to know."

"Like you?" asked the girl.

"Yes, like me," Mahawira replied and smiled again.

# How the Cow came to be on the Moon

A Zoroastrian Creation Story

By Kianoosh Rezaia

We are back 2000 years in Iran, where people loved dogs with very pronounced eyebrows.

When there was nothing on earth yet, no sky, moon or sun, there were already two spirits: a good one and a bad one. The good spirit was called Hormos, who was smart and knew everything. He was light and lived in light. The evil spirit was called Ahriman, who was dumb and knew nothing; he lived in darkness. In between these spirits there was nothing and Ahriman didn't know that Hormos lived in the light above him.

One day, the evil spirit Ahriman was bored and suddenly saw Hormos' light. He got angry at the light of Hormos, so Hormos tried to make peace between them. He said: "Please do not fight and continue to live in darkness, the way you like it.

But Ahriman wanted to destroy the light and in a conversation between the two, Ahriman finally said that they could fight if he wanted to, but not forever - only about 9000 years. Since this was not long for a spirit Ahriman agreed.

Ahriman created soldiers in the dark and Hormos made Ahriman fall asleep with a magical song so he could also create his helpers.

First, Hormos created the sky to protect the future living beings from Ahriman. He then added a sun, a moon and the stars. Then, Hormos created a great sea so that his creatures wouldn't get thirsty. Then he created the earth like a round plate, which swam in the sea like an island. Then he created a big strong tree in the middle of the earth. Then Hormos created a cow, which was as white as the moon and standing next to the tree. Then he created a human being, whom he called Kayumars and put him next to the cow and the tree.

Lastly, he created fire, which was as bright as he was himself. He liked his creation immensely and his creations were there for 3000 years while Ahriman still slept in darkness.

Hormos asked his creatures if they wanted to fight against the force of darkness and they agreed. Everyone glowed with the gladness to be alive, a glow that Hormos had created in the end so that they all would carry light within them.

Ahrimans soldiers were not doing anything in these 3000 years but when they finally saw Hormos' creations, they tried to wake up Ahriman. A cunning female soldier told him that she wanted to destroy Kayumars and the white cow. Ahriman heard her and woke up, he kissed her and told her that she could wish for something.

When she finally wanted to make her wish, Hormos let a frog appear in front of her, which looked like a strong young man. When the female soldier saw this, she wished for a happy life with this man. At that, Ahriman got angry and told his soldiers to fight Hormos and his creations.

They couldn't get through the stone sky, so they drilled a hole in it and entered the world. Ahriman darkened the sky and made the water dark as well. Then he tried to get rid of the

happy creations, because he hated happiness. He poisoned the tree, wounded the cow and the only human, Kayumars. Hormos put Kayumars to sleep, so that he wouldn't have to suffer.

Ahriman also mixed the bright fire with darkness and thought he defeated everyone, but Hormos' creatures finally started to fight back: the sky watched the soldier so they couldn't escape, the water made it rain so they might wash away and the earth caused an earth quake and the soldiers of Ahriman were suddenly caught in a high hill and couldn't escape. The tree distributed seeds on the earth and the water caused the plants to grow so that Ahriman and his soldiers had no way of destroying the jungle and continue to fight.

The cow also wanted to fight, but she was wounded and didn't survive. Her light went up to the moon and two animals sprang from there: a bull and a cow. They came back to earth and became parents to all animals on earth.

Kayumars also started to fight, since he was rested again. He fought until he fell and from his body two rhubarb stems emerged. They turned into man and woman, Maschi and Maschiyana and they created so many humans, that Ahriman couldn't defeat them. The fire also fought against evil and shone so bright that there was no hiding place for the darkness anymore.

When the fight against the darkness was won, the sun, moon and stars twirled in the sky. They remind us how the darkness was defeated and it became night for the first time.



# How Ea and Marduk Chased Away the Mud Gang

(Enūma elish, newly interpreted)

By Rosel Pientka-Hinz

Enuma elish "When above (the sky was not yet named)" is the beginning and thus the name of the Babylonian creation story. The poetry retold by Rosel Pientka-Hinz was written down on seven clay tablets with cuneiform writing and originated in the ancient Near Eastern cultural region of Mesopotamia (predominantly today's Iraq and Syria) in the 1st millennium BC.

Once upon a time, long ago, heaven had no name, nor did earth have a name. The only two creatures that already existed were two water dragons: a fat one, who always liked to eat sweets, and a slightly smaller one, who was often in a bad mood, a real grouch. The fat dragon was a dragoness, her name was Tiamat. The smaller dragon was a dragon man, his name was Apsu. They loved to swim for a living and there was plenty of water at the time - a little more in some places, a little less in others. Tiamat preferred to swim in the sea, Apsu liked to splash around in streams, ponds and puddles.

One day the two went swimming together, first in the sea and then in the puddles. When the dragons took each other's hands and both jumped into a particularly large puddle together, quite a lot of water sloshed out.

"Look," Tiamat called out, pointing to the spot where the big puddle had just been. "It gets all muddy everywhere!"

"That's odd," Apsu grumbled, frowning.

"The sea has changed, too!" exclaimed Tiamat. "It's gotten smaller and I see lots of sand! Come, let's build a castle!"

But Apsu had no desire to build a sandcastle, he continued to stare into his favorite puddle, which now had hardly any water in it.

However, the new sandy beaches were quite practical, because now there was much more space. The great gods were also happy about this. They came from far away and built beautiful houses out of sand. One god was different from the others, he was quite old and had a long white beard - he dwelt in heaven from now on. This particular God also had a child. And this child (a daughter), little Ea, actually moved into one of the last puddles left. Apsu did not like that at all. He wanted the puddles to himself!

But little Ea didn't want to have anything to do with Apsu either, because he was always in a bad mood anyway. Ea was small, but incredibly smart. She decided to drive the dragon man away. One night, when Apsu was fast asleep in his favorite muddy puddle, she tiptoed towards him and - poof - she just pulled out his 'dragon plug'. Apsu then disappeared into the ground with all his 'dragon water'.

"This dragon will no longer annoy us with his bad temper," Ea said aloud to the great gods the next morning. And then it suddenly struck her that there were no children at all except for her. So she felt quite lonely.

"Oh, if only I had a playmate," she sighed, "then we could jump around in the puddles together. That would be fun."

When the great gods heard that Ea was lonely, they looked everywhere for a friend for her. At the very end of the big sandy beach, they finally found a little boy who was just looking for shells. Marduk was his name.

"Oh if only I had a girlfriend, then I could give her these shells," he said and threw a particularly beautiful shell back into the sea.

Then the great gods brought Marduk to Ea. The two quickly became close friends.

Marduk was slightly larger than Ea and quite strong. No wonder, because his star sign was Leo. He had bright blue eyes and funny sticky-out ears. Ea always pulled him by these, so that soon it looked as if Marduk had not only two, but four ears. With that, he could actually hear much better than anyone else. He was just a very special boy. Together they built toys, huts and even a wind machine.

The fat dragoness Tiamat also wanted friends. She was upset that Ea had pulled out the other dragon's plug and it (the dragon) had disappeared into the ground. And so, she began to form her own playmates out of the puddle mud.

"*Pitsh patsh, mush whoosh*, the first one is a mud snake."

That had become strange friend. The snake had colorful eyes and really big teeth and had also grown much too big in other ways as well.

"*Pitsh patsh, mush roar*, the second one is a mud lion."

Whoops, he had red eyes and had also grown way too big! And on it went:

"*Pitsh patsh, mush-woof*, the third is a giant dog."

"*Pitsh patsh mush-prick*, the next is a giant scorpion."

The dragoness couldn't stop forming new friends out of the mud. And so, another mud giant fish, a mud giant cow, and in the end also two mud giant boys were created. One of them waved his arms around wildly - so wildly that the hair of the second mud giant boy got all messed up. That's why the two got such long names, namely Fidgety-mud-Philip and Curly-mud-Head.

Only one thing was not good at all about this gang of mud friends: Together they felt so strong that they decided to chase all others off the earth - the great gods, little Ea and also her new friend Marduk.

When Ea and Marduk heard about this, they thought about what they could do.

"I'm not afraid of Tiamat and her goofy mud friends!" said Marduk. "Me neither!" exclaimed little Ea.

And so they sat down with the great gods to make a plan. They ate date cake and drank pomegranate soda while they were at it. When Ea saw the bubbles in her glass, she suddenly had a very, very good idea.

Meanwhile, Marduk had eaten six pieces of cake and felt even stronger than before. And so clever Ea and brave Marduk ran to the dragoness and her mean mud friends - with it was Marduk's favorite toy, the wind machine.

"*Whoa, whoa, whoa*," hummed the wind machine.

Tiamat snapped her dragon mouth open to scold the children. But just as her mouth was wide open, Marduk took the wind machine and blew four strong winds through the dragon's mouth and into the dragon's belly.

"*Whoa, whoa, whoa*" - Tiamat swallowed the winds and rolled her eyes. Her belly was now even bigger than it already was. It looked like she was about to burst. Bubbles came out of her mouth, like the pomegranate soda.

"What's the matter, *bubble*, what's the matter, *bubble bubble*, with my belly, *bubble*?"

That was the moment when Ea secretly crawled under Tiamat's belly.

"Where is it? Where is it?" she murmured.

And then she saw it - the dragon's belly button. It looked like the plug on a swim ring.

Ea pulled on it as hard as she could. And all at once it slipped open and all the air came out of Tiamat.

"*Whoosh whoosh*" it went and it sounded so funny that Ea had to laugh.

And because there had been so much air in the dragon's belly - four winds! - the dragoness hissed upward into the sky like a giant balloon and on and on until she was only a very small dragon balloon.

And then Tiamat was gone altogether.

The mud friends, however, got scared and quickly ran away.

"Yeah, you go ahead and run, you dumb mud dudes," Marduk and Ea shouted after them.

"So, what do we do now?" little Ea then asked her friend Marduk, smiling broadly at him.

"Now we shape the world to our liking," Marduk replied.

And so it happened.

Ea and Marduk finished building the earth with a lot of imagination. With colored pens they drew stars in the sky. They blew clouds of soap bubbles into it. Mountains and trees they formed from clay. Forests and meadows, fields and paths, flowers of all colors were created.

"I have another really great idea," said Ea. Marduk looked at her curiously, and Ea whispered something in his strange ear.

Then the two went to one of the last puddles and profusely spat into it. Giggling, they began to form something new out of this puddle mud with the spit.

They created from it the first real animals on earth and these were no strange giant animals like the mud friends of Tiamat: There were rabbits and parrots and earthworms and goldfish and all the animals we know today. And they were given a name and a playmate. And they were allowed to choose where they wanted to live. Some lived from now on in the meadows, others in the rivers, and still others in the trees. And some even lived in the puddles.

If you want to know which animals still live in the puddles today, you just have to look closely and wait a bit. Quietly! And with a little luck you might even see little Ea pulling Marduk's ears again.

# **An Ancient Egyptian guide to becoming King of the World**

A Creation myth from ancient Egypt

By Camilla Di Biase-Dyson

In the beginning, the universe was a dark, watery place, not comfortable at all for people to live in. In fact, no one lived there but four gods and four goddesses, who were as uninviting as the place itself: there were Nun and Nunet, who were wet, Heh and Hehet, who had no beginning and no end, Kek and Keket, who were dark, and Amun and Amunet, who were hidden. These gods lived together in the cold, wet darkness for millions of years, but one day the world as they knew it changed forever.

First, a mound started to emerge from the watery expanse of Nun, the way that land emerges when a flood starts to recede. This mound was called Benben.

Then, out of the darkness, the sun god started to emerge, bringing light to the world. The god's name, Re-Atum, means 'the Complete One', because the whole universe was about to explode out of the body of this god: males and females, humans, plants and animals, water, mountains and plains.

Shining up there above the mound all by himself, Re-Atum started to feel quite lonely, so he decided to make some children to keep him company. From his body he brought forth the god of air Schu and the goddess of moisture Tefnut. These two gods then came together to make children of their own: the earth god Geb and the sky goddess Nut.

These two young gods liked each other so much that they wanted to hug all the time, but this mingling between earth and sky was not good for the world at all! To this day, their father Schu, the air, has to stand between them, holding Nut, the sky, far above Geb, the earth.

So poor Nut's arms and legs were stretched out, touching the four corners of the earth, with her belly lifted far above it, and her body held the sun, the moon and all of the stars. Every day, the sun god would travel along Nut's body from east to west, and every night, the sun god was swallowed by Nut, so he could travel through the darkness of her body before being born again the next morning.

Because they were always being kept far apart by their mean father, Geb and Nut had to hatch a plan to spend some time together in private. They asked Thot, the god of time, to give them five extra days in the year and on these days, the very last of the year, they made four children, the gods Osiris and Seth and the goddesses Isis and Nephthys.

The eldest son Osiris was given the kingship over all the world, which made his younger brother Seth very jealous. He wanted to be the king of the world! So, Seth hatched a clever plot to kill his brother and become king himself.

Seth had a beautiful wooden chest secretly made to Osiris' measurements then threw a big party. He declared that whomever would fit inside the chest could have it as a gift. When his

brother climbed in, Seth slammed the chest shut and threw it into the Nile river, leaving his poor brother to drown. Once Osiris was dead, Seth cut his body up into little pieces and hid the pieces all over the land of Egypt, so that he could never be put together again.

However, Osiris' sister, the goddess Isis, found out about her husband's death and fell deep into mourning. But one day, she stopped crying and formed a clever plan of her own. She needed to find her husband and put him back together!

She went on a long search all over Egypt, collecting Osiris' limbs one by one. Lucky for her husband, Isis was the goddess of magic and other tricks, and she was able to use magical spells to put him back together. However, the magic was not long lasting. Osiris could only stay alive long enough to give Isis a baby, the little god Horus. After this, Osiris happily went off to rule another part of the world: the underworld.

Isis knew that she would need to protect her sweet baby from his jealous uncle Seth, who might come and kill Horus if he knew that an heir to the throne was alive. So she took him up to the marshes in the north of Egypt to nurse him until he was old enough to challenge his uncle Seth and avenge his father.

Baby Horus would sometimes get sick in the marshes, but his clever mother Isis would always nurse him back to health with her magical spells.

Once he had grown up, Horus left the marshes and went south to challenge his uncle Seth for the throne of the world. Seth was amazed – he couldn't believe that his brother had managed to make a son after he was dead! Seth was also furious. He was not going to give up all of his power without a fight.

He came up with a series of scary and dangerous challenges, which the young Horus would have to complete to prove he was strong enough to rule the world as king. The other gods were called on to be judges. Even when Horus won the challenges they still didn't know what to do. Some gods thought that Horus was still too young to be the king, but other gods argued that his age didn't matter. Horus was the son of Osiris and therefore the rightful king.

Seth was very disappointed, but his incredible strength had impressed the sun god, Re, who asked him if he would use his strength from now on to steer the sun god in his boat every day across the sky and use his thunder to ward off the sun god's enemies. Seth was proud of his new position and didn't want to be king any more.

And what about us humans? These Egyptian gods seem to have been concerned only with themselves and their families, as well as with having power over the world!

But in fact the gods of Egypt also got around to creating people too.

When the sun god, Re, was living on earth, he got lonely all by himself and started to cry. Out of these tears mankind came into existence. This is why the word for 'people' (*remetch*) is similar to the word for 'crying' (*remi*). At first, Re was very happy with his people, who worshipped him as a king and made delicious offerings to him every day.

But over time, people became lazy. They stopped caring about their god. They started fighting with each other, which made the sun god very angry. He didn't want to spend time

with people any more, so he withdrew to the sky to live for ever on the back of the sky goddess Nut.

He decided to punish humans by sending his fiery eye out of his body towards earth, which took the form of the lion goddess Sachmet.

This mighty goddess was so ferocious that she wanted to attack every human she saw. The other gods started to get worried. They said to each other: 'Who will keep our cults alive, who will tend to our temples, if all people are dead? We must stop her!' So they came up with a cunning plan.

The gods coloured beer with red ochre to look like blood and poured it all over the landscape. When Sachmet woke up she saw that the land was flooded and was so bloodthirsty that she drank up the liquid and became drunk on all that beer! In this happy state she turned into the docile lion goddess Hathor and left the human beings alone.

Ever since that day, humans have celebrated the goddess by pouring out beer for her every feast day, to keep her happy for ever.

# How a Family Dispute Led To The Emergence Of The World And The Gods

A Creation Story from Greek Mythology

by Thomas Jurczyk

This myth is based on Hesiod's *Theogony* from the eighth century B.C. The *Theogony* includes the earliest and most important creation myth handed down to us from Greco-Roman antiquity. However, it is not the only one that exists.

## Summary:

The story of the creation of the world in Hesiod's *Theogony* begins with Hesiod himself, a farmer and shepherd who lived nearly three thousand years ago near the mountain Helikon in what is nowadays Greece. When Hesiod watched over his humble farm's flocks on the green slopes of Helikon, the muses appeared in front of him and told him the story of how the world was created.

The women sang that in the beginning, the earth, together with night and day, was born from a great abyss called chaos. The earth was a woman and her name was Gaia. Gaia brought forth the sky, who was called Uranos. With Uranos as her husband, the earth gave birth to the mighty Titans. Among the Titans were the two siblings Kronos and Rhea.

The time came when Gaia was constantly threatened by her husband Uranos, and both were continually fighting with each other. Thus, Gaia asked her powerful Titan son Kronos for help, who agreed to assist his mother and ambushed his own father, Uranos.

Like their parents Uranos and Gaia, the two Titans, Kronos and Rhea, also created other deities, including the great Zeus, the most powerful deity among his siblings. Just as there had been discord between Kronos and his father Uranos, there was also a great quarrel between Kronos and his children, especially Zeus. Since Kronos was afraid of his children's beauty and strength, he decided to eat them up after they were born!

This, of course, did not please his wife and sister Rhea. In order to protect him, Rhea hid her son Zeus in a mountain on an island called Crete so that Kronos could not find and devour him. When Zeus had grown up, he finally freed his siblings from the belly of Kronos. Zeus and his siblings were very angry about Kronos' deed and feared his power, which they had so painfully experienced. Consequently, they decided to fight against the Titans, to which their father Kronos also belonged. Finally, they were able to defeat them and imprisoned their ancestors in a land deep below the earth.

From this moment on, the world was ruled by Zeus and his siblings and successors, among them Poseidon, Athena, Dionysos, and many more, of which Hesiod and other ancient authors tell us myths that are popular until today.



# How the World Was Created From a Drop

A Creation Myth from Germanic Mythology

by Knut Martin Stünkel

Imagine: In the beginning, there was nothing but a vast gorge. The gorge was called *Ginnungagap*: the yawning abyss. From one side, there streamed a fiery river, from the other side, there ran a stream of ice. They met where there was nothing before. There, the fire melted the ice to drops and the ice caught the fire in drops. From those drops, there emerged gradually a huge being. That drop-made being of fire and ice was gigantic, it was as big as the whole world. But besides the being, there was no space left for the beautiful world with its wonderful things.

There was no sand, no glistening lake and no cool waves; there was no earth, no moon, no bright sun and no high sky. There was no air and no clouds. And there were no animals and no plants. Nothing green could be seen, no leaf and no blade of grass.

And the being of fire and ice was vicious as it did not want to provide space for those beautiful things. Once, it got tired and fell asleep. And there, it began to sweat. Perhaps it slept too close to the fiery river. From the sweat under his left arm, there emerged a man and a woman. And as it rubbed its huge feet together, there emerged another man. These were giants, and they were big and dangerous.

The gigantic being was hungry. Then, another piece of ice melted and a cow without horns emerged. The cow's name was Audumla. From its udder came four streams of milk and the gigantic being drank this milk greedily. But the cow Audumla was hungry as well and she licked desperately on a block of ice from the stream of ice. Then, something strange happened. On the first day Audumla licked the block, some hair was seen. On the second day, one could see the head of a man. On the third day, there was a whole man.

The man was called Buri. He was big and strong, and he had a son called Borr. Borr married a daughter of the giants whose name was Bestla. Borr and Bestla had three sons who were called Odin, Wili, and We. These were the gods.

Odin, Wili and We were very brave. They wanted to create something beautiful, too. "We have many ideas for beautiful things," they said, "but the gigantic being is everywhere and denies space for our ideas. It is so mean." They plucked up their courage, fought the gigantic being and killed it. Now there was enough space for the world. Odin, Wili, and We built the whole world from the being's body of fire and ice and all things in it. Its blood became water: the streams, rivers, lakes and the sea. In the sea, all dangerous giants drowned except a man and his wife who had a boat and escaped. Odin, Wili, and We continued building. The being's flesh became the earth, the huge bones became big mountains. Its teeth became stones, its hairs became trees. The first tree to grow was a giant ash-tree called *Yggdrasil*. It was bigger than any other tree in the world.

After that, Odin, Wili, and We placed earth in the middle of the sea. The being's skull became the sky. But the sky was dark. "How to make light?" they thought. They had an idea. They took sparks from the fiery river and put them in the sky. These are the stars, the moon, and the sun. The sun shone upon earth and caused the grass to grow. They formed the clouds from the

being's brain, and threw them into the sky. Then they placed the sky with its stars and clouds on four firm corners and put the sky on the earth like a roof. "We need guardians for the roof!," they said. So, they formed the dwarves of the maggots in the body of the gigantic being. They put a dwarf in each corner of the sky. These dwarves were Ostri, Westri, Nordri and Sudri.

"The world is completed!" said Odin, Wili, and We joyfully. "Now we will build homes!" They shaped the earth circular with the deep ocean all around. They themselves dwelt in the middle of the earth. The giants lived at the shore. This was dangerous. But Odin, Wili, and We built a powerful stronghold out of the being's eyebrows. It was called *Midgard*.

One day, Odin, Wili, and We strolled along the shore. They saw two trees. They took those trees and formed human beings. Odin, Wili, and We liked humans and gave presents to them: one gave them life and mind, the other wisdom and movement, the third gave them an individual face and taught them how to speak, to hear and to see. They also gave them clothing and a name of their own. The man was called *Ask*, the woman was called *Embla*.

*Ask* and *Embla* lived in *Midgard*. All other human beings hail from them. Odin, Wili, and We built another stronghold in the middle of the world, directly above *Midgard*. This is *Asgard*. *Asgard* and *Midgard* are connected by a rainbow bridge called *Bifrost*. The gods guard *Asgard* and *Midgard*. From his throne in *Asgard*, Odin sees the whole world and all things, and he knows about every human being.