

TALES FROM CHINA

Chinese mythology is a term used to describe the varied folk tales and legend of China that have been passed down from generation to generation and that still influence Chinese society today.

Animal Magic

- Animals are very important in Chinese mythology. In particular, there are four sacred animals. Three are mythical—the dragon, unicorn, and the phoenix. The fourth is the tortoise. Many of the gods of Chinese tales have mixtures of animal and human features, and often possess the best, or worst, qualities of both.

Mythical Characters

- **Ba Sin** – The eight Immortals of Daoist belief. These are the eight Chinese people who lived at different times. By completing various tasks, they managed to become immortal, and each look after a different thing on Earth, such as healing, music, and nature. They are symbolic of good luck in China and represent particular states in life: poverty, wealth, youth, old age, masculinity, femininity, noble people, and ordinary people.
 - **Dou Mou** – She is the goddess of the North Star, who the Daoists believe has the power to lengthen life. This is because she looks after the book of life and death. She is also known as Star Mother, and has nine children, the Jen Huang, who were the first humans to rule on Earth.
 - **Lung Mo** – Known as the Dragon Mother, Lung Mo found a dragon's egg and raised the dragon. It brought Lung Mo and her village good luck. When she died, she was made into a goddess.
 - **Monkey** – A very mischievous character, Monkey was born from a stone egg. He is also known as the Great Sage, Equal of Heaven. Because he was scared of death he learned the secret of living forever. Monkey went to heaven but caused so much trouble that he was punished by Buddha. Eventually, he was sent on a quest by Guan Yin, and he finally learned how to behave himself.
 - **Pan Gu** – Pan Gu created the universe. Before anything else existed, there was only darkness and a huge egg in which the giant Pan Gu slept and grew bigger. Eventually, he became so big that he burst from the egg. The lighter part of the egg, known as Yang, made the heavens, while the heavier parts, Yin, made the Earth. Pan Gu held heaven up to stop the two from coming together again. When he died, his body formed all parts of the world – the land, sea, weather, stars, moon and humans.
 - **Wen Chang** – The Daoist god of Chinese books, literature, and writing, Wen Chang was a wise man who could predict the future. When he died, he was made into a god. He also watches over students, anybody taking exams, and all those who love books.
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Further Reading

- [Land of the Dragon: Chinese Myth](#) by Tony Allan and Charles Phillips
- [Chinese Mythology: An Introduction](#) by Anne Birrell
- [Chinese Mythology](#) by Anthony Christie
- [Myths & Legends of China](#) by Edward Theodore Chalmers

Shone, Rob. [Chinese Mythology](#). Illus Claudia Saraceni. New York: Rosen Pub Group, 2006.