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WELCOME TO THE RETOLD ASIAN MYTHS AND FOLKTALES

Imagine a story that is so interesting that it's retold for thousands of years! Visualize children sitting around a storyteller and listening to this tale. Then visualize those same listeners as adults retelling the story to other children. This is how the oral tradition of storytelling keeps myths and folktales alive in Asia and other continents around the globe.

Not only are these stories entertaining to the audience, they are educational as well. Listeners can learn such things as how to behave, how to treat others, and how the Milky Way was formed.

The stories in this book are from several Asian countries. Asia is the largest continent in the world. It is as rich in history as it is dense with people. Over sixty percent of the world's population live in mainland Asia and its islands. As the map shows, Asian countries include China, India, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Japan, Korea, and the Philippine Islands. With so many people spread over such a large area, it's easy to understand why Asia is a rainbow of cultures and races.

Asia is also a mixture of religions. The major religions are Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism. You'll read myths in this book that reflect the beliefs of these religions and others.

From reading myths, we can learn a lot about people and their cultures. Myths provide insights into parts of a culture that a textbook can't cover.

*In the
beginning,
the earth
consisted
only of
rocks and
dirt. One
day the god
of the land
was lonely,
so he
decided to
make
humans.
Only it
wasn't as
simple as
he'd
thought.*

The Tree of Life

In the beginning, there were three gods in the universe: the god of the land, the god of the oceans and seas, and the god of the sky. But oddly enough, each god thought that he was the only one who existed.

Bathala, the god of the land, was a mighty giant. He looked just like you and me, except that he was much larger.

One day Bathala said to himself, "It is a fine thing to be the ruler of the universe, but for some reason I am not happy. Maybe it is because I am all alone. Life would be more interesting if only I had some beings as smart and