

World mythology

Literature



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Creation Myths of the Inca and Zulu All creation myths share certain elements. The Inca and Zulu creation myths share similarities such as creation from nothing and filling up of emptiness. They differ in the role nature, gods and gender played in their culture's respective creation myths. Two common themes in creation myths are the creation of something out of nothing or the filling up of something that already exists but is empty. The creation myths of the Zulu in Southern Africa and the Inca in South America hold true to these two themes. They both hold to traditional themes even though they are very different stories in essence (Murtaugh).

The stories differ from the very beginning. In the Inca creation myth, the god of the sun orchestrates the creation of the earth and all that is in it.

Pachacamac, the sun needed to create everything in the celestial sphere as well as the terrestrial world. The moon, Pachacmama, became Pachacamac's wife and they ruled over the world that had been created (Inca...).

In contrast, the Zulu creation myth features no celestial beings as the crafters of the world. The beginning is an empty earth and one enormous seed. The seed sinks into the earth and produces reeds. These reeds form in to the first man, Unkulunkulu. All of the other men, women and animals that inhabit the earth grew out of these reeds as well. He then made everything else in the world that we see. Though they differ, they both show that elements such as soil, water, sky and sun are essential for creation and sustenance of life.

Another interesting difference between these two cultures and creation myths concerns the genders of the creators. It is true that in both instances, males played a primary role in the creative process initially. But as creation progresses for the Inca, women come to take on a role that is equal to that of men. The sun and moon deities ruled over creation as partners. But their

children take the egalitarian notions of their parents to a new level. Working in tandem, they teach the people of the earth that have been carved from stone how to take care of themselves. They are in this sense, the first parents. They taught them to grow food, write, weave and cook. They then went their separate ways to establish equally important cities, one in the north and one in the south. The contributions of both man and woman are recognized by dividing all of their cities into northern and southern sections in recognition of the important roles men and women play in the family and society. In sharp contrast, the male creator in the Zulu creation myth acts without consultation or help from a woman.

The filling up of the earth in the Zulu legend is very different than the creation legend of the Inca. For the Inca, sentient beings begat sentient beings. Cosmic bodies such as the sun and the moon were thinking and feeling entities. For the Zulu, the earth was void and sentient life sprang from a single seedpod, not from a god or goddess (Zulu...). In the Zulu telling, everything progresses at a very natural pace, including the introduction of death into the world. There appears to be no guiding hand other than the forces of nature that cause germination of seeds and the harvesting of mature crops. In the Inca legend, however, sentient beings must do all of the work. They carve, teach, place and mold.

The Zulu and Inca creation myths share the same themes of creation from nothing and the filling of voids. But in regards to the nature of deity, gender roles of humans and the interaction of cosmic forces, these two civilizations have very different ideas about creation.

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