

The Zuni Creation Story

Before the beginning of the new-making, Áwonawilona (the Maker and Container of All, the All-father Father), solely had being. There was nothing else whatsoever throughout the great space of the ages save everywhere black darkness in it, and everywhere void desolation.

In the beginning of the new-made, Áwonawilona conceived within himself and thought outward in space, whereby mists of increase, steams potent of growth, were evolved and uplifted. Thus, by means of his innate knowledge, the All-container made himself in person and form of the Sun whom we hold to be our father and who thus came to exist and appear. With his appearanee came the brightening of the spaces with light, and with the brightening of the spaces the great mist-clouds were thickened together and fell, whereby evolved water in water and the world-holding sea.

With his substance of flesh outdrawn from the surface of his person, the Sun-father formed the seed-stuff of two worlds, impregnating the great waters, and behold! in the heat of his light these waters of the sea grew green and scums rose upon them, growing wide and weighty until, behold! they became Áwitelin Tsíta, the "Four-fold Containing Mother-earth," and Ápoyan Tã'Chu, the "All-covering Father-sky."

From the lying together of these two upon the great world waters, so life-giving, terrestrial life was conceived; whence began all beings of earth, men and the creatures, in the Four-fold womb of the World (*Áwi_ten Téhu'hlnakwi*).

Thereupon the Earth-mother rejected the Sky-father, growing big and sinking deep into the embrace of the waters below, thus separating from the Sky-father in the embrace of the waters above. As a woman forebodes evil for her first-born before it is born, even so did the Earth mother forebode, long withholding from birth her myriad progeny and meantime seeking counsel with the Sky-father. "How," said they to one another, "shall our children, when brought forth, know one place from another, even by the white light of the Sun-father?"

Now like all the surpassing beings (*píkwaíyin áháí*) the Earth-mother and the Sky-father were *'hlímna* (changeable), even as smoke in the wind; transmutable at thought, manifesting themselves in any form at will, like as dancers may by mask-making.

Thus, as a man and woman they spoke, one to the other. "Behold!" said the Earth-mother as a great terraced bowl appeared at hand and within it water, "this is as upon me the homes of my tiny children shall be. On the rim of each world-country they wander in, terraced mountains shall stand, making in one region many, whereby country shall be known from country, and within each, place from place. Behold, again!" said she as she spat on the water and rapidly smote and stirred it with her fingers. Foam formed, gathering about the terraced rim, mounting higher and higher. "Yes," she said, "and from my bosom they shall draw nourishment, for in such as this shall they find the substance of life from which we were ourselves sustained, for see!" Then with her warm breath she

blew across the terraces; white flecks of the foam broke away, and, floating over above the water were shattered by the cold breath of the attending Sky-father, and then shed downward in abundantly fine mist and spray! "Even so, shall white clouds float up from the great waters at the borders of the world, and clustering about the mountain terraces of the horizons be carried aloft and abroad by the breaths of the surpassing of soul-beings, and of the children, and shall hardened and broken be by your cold, shedding downward, in rain-spray, the water of life, even into the hollow places of my lap! For chiefly therein shall nestle our children, mankind and creature-kind, for warmth in your coldness."

Even the trees on high mountains near the clouds and the Sky father crouch low toward the Earth-mother for warmth and protection! Warm is the Earth-mother, cold the Sky-father, even as woman is the warm, man the cold being!

"Even so!" said the Sky-father; "Yet not alone shall you be helpful to our children, for behold!" and he spread his hand abroad with the palm downward and into all the wrinkles and crevices thereof he set the semblance of shining yellow corn-grains; in the dark of the early world-dawn they gleamed like sparks of fire, and moved as his hand was moved over the bowl, shining up from and also moving in the depths of the water therein. "See!" he said, pointing to the seven grains grasped by his thumb and four fingers, "by such shall our children be guided; for behold, when the Sun-father is not near, and your terraces are as the dark itself (being all hidden therein), then shall our children be guided by lights like these lights of all the six regions turning around the center one—as in and around the midmost place, where these our children shall live, lie all the other regions of space! And even as these grains gleam up from the water, so shall seed-grains like to them, yet numberless, spring up from your bosom when touched by my waters, to nourish our children." Thus and in many other ways they devised for their offspring.

Soon after in the lowermost of the four cave-wombs of the world, the seed of men and the creatures took form and increased; even as within eggs in warm places worms speedily appear, which growing, presently burst their shells and become as may happen: birds, tadpoles or serpents. So did men and all creatures grow in their variety and multiply in many kinds. Thus the lowermost womb or cave-world, which was Ánosin téhuli (the womb of sooty depth or of growth-generation, because it was the place of first formation and black as a chimney at night time, and as foul the internals of the belly), thus did it become overfilled with being. Everywhere were unfinished creatures, crawling like reptiles one over another in filth and black darkness, crowding thickly together and treading all over each other, one spitting on another or doing other indecency, so much so that their murmurings and laments grew so loud that many among them sought to escape, growing wiser and more manlike.

Then came among men and the creatures, it is said, the wisest of wise men and the foremost, the all-sacred master, Póshaiyank'ya, he who appeared in the waters below, even as did the Sun-father in the wastes above, and who arose from the lowermost sea, and pitying men, won upward, gaining by virtue of his (innate) wisdom-knowledge issuance from that first world-womb through ways so dark and narrow that those who, seeing somewhat, crowded after, could not follow, so eager were they and so mightily did

they strive with one another! Alone, then, he fared upward from one womb (cave) to another out into the great breadth of daylight. There, the earth lay like a vast island in the midst of the great waters, wet and unstable. And alone he traveled forward to the daylight, seeking the Sun-father and begging him to deliver mankind and the creatures there below.

Then did the Sun-father take counsel within himself, and casting his glance downward saw on the great waters a Foam-cap near to the Earth-mother. With his beam he impregnated and with his heat he incubated the Foam-cap, whereupon she gave birth to Úanam Achi Píahkoa, the Beloved Two who descended; first, Úanam Éhkona, the Beloved Preceder, then Úanam Yáluna, the Beloved Follower, Twin brothers of Light, yet Elder and Younger, the Right and the Left, like to question and answer in deciding and doing. To them the Sun-father imparted control-thought and his own knowledge-wisdom even as to the offspring of wise parents their knowingness is imparted and as to his right hand and his left hand a skillful man gives craft freely yet does not surrender his knowledge. He gave them, of himself and their mother the Foam-cap, the great cloud-bow, and for arrows the thunderbolts of the four quarters (two to each one), and for protection the fog-making shield, which, spun of the floating clouds and spray and woven, as of cotton we spin and weave, supports as on wind, yet hides, as a shadow hides, its bearer, defending also. And of men and all creatures he gave them the fathership and dominion, also as a man gives over the control of his work to the management of his servants. Well instructed of the Sun-father, they lifted the Sky-father with their great cloud-bow into the vault of the high zenith, that the earth might become warm and thus fitter for their children, men and the creatures. Then along the trail of the sun-seeking Póshaiyank'ya, they sped backward swiftly on their floating fog-shield, westward to the Mountain of Generation. With their magic knives of the thunderbolt they spread open the uncleft depths of the mountain, and still on their cloudshield—even as a spider in her web descends—so they unerringly descended into the dark of the under-world. There they lived with men and the creatures, attending them, coming to know them, and becoming known of them as masters and fathers, thus seeking the ways for leading them forth.

Now there were growing things in the depths, like grasses and crawling vines. So now the Beloved Twins breathed on the stems of these grasses (growing tall as grass is accustomed to do toward the light, under the opening they had cleft and whereby they had descended), causing them to increase vastly and rapidly by grasping and walking round and round them, twisting them upward until they reached forth all the way into the light. And where wherever they grasped the stems, ridges were formed and thumb-marks from which sprang branching leaf-stems. In this way the two formed a great ladder whereon men and the creatures might ascend to the second cave-floor, and thus not be violently ejected in after-time by the throes of the Earth-mother, and thereby be made demonic and deformed.

Up this ladder, into the second cave-world, men and the beings crowded, following closely the Two Little but Mighty Ones. Yet many fell back and, lost in the darkness, peopled the under-world, from which they were delivered in after-time amid terrible earth

shakings, becoming the monsters and fearfully strange beings of ancient times. In this second womb it was dark as is the night of a stormy season, but larger of space and higher than had been the first, because it was nearer the navel of the Earth-mother, hence named K'ólin tehuli (the Umbilical-womb, or the Place of Gestation). Here again men and the beings increased and the clamor of their complainings grew loud and beseeching. Again the Two, augmenting the growth of the great ladder, guided them upward, this time not all at once, but in successive bands to become in time the fathers of the six kinds of men (the yellow, the tawny gray, the red, the white, the mingled, and the black races), and with them the gods and creatures of them all. Yet this time also, as before, multitudes were lost or left behind. The third great cave-world, where men and the creatures had now ascended, being larger than the second and higher, was lighter, like a valley in starlight, and hamed Áwisho tehuli—the Vaginal-womb, or the Place of Sex-generation or Gestation. For here the various peoples and beings began to multiply apart in kind one from another; and as the nations and tribes of men and the creatures thus increased in numbers as before, here, too, it became overfilled. As before, generations of nations now were led out successively (yet many lost, also as before) into the next and last world-cave, Tépahaian tehuli, the Ultimate-uncoverable, or the Womb of Parturition.

Here it was light like the dawning, and men began to perceive and to learn variously according to their natures, which is why the Twins taught them to seek first of all our Sun-father, who would, they said, reveal to them wisdom and knowledge of the ways of life—in this they were instructing them as we do little children. Yet like the other caveworlds, this too became after a long time filled with progeny; and finally, in stages, the Two led forth the nations of men and the kinds of being into this great upper world, which is called Ték'ohaian úlahnane, or the World of Disseminated Light and Knowledge or Seei

Eight years made the span of four days and four nights when the world was new. It was while yet such days and nights continued that men were led forth, first in the night, that it might be well. For even when they saw the great star (móyachun 'hlána), which since then is spoken of as the lying star (mókwanosona), they thought it was the Sun himself because it burned their eyeballs so! Men and the creatures were more alike then than now: black were our fathers the late born of creation, like the caves from which they came forth; cold and scaly their skins like those of mud-creatures; goggled their eyes like those of an owl; membranous their ears like those of cave-bats; webbed their feet like those of walkers in wet and soft places; and according as they were older or younger, they had tails, longer or shorter. They crouched when they walked, often crawling along the ground like toads, lizards and newts; like infants who still fear to walk straight, they crouched, as before-time they had in their cave-worlds so that they might not stumble and fall or come to hurt themselves in the uncertain light. And when the morning star rose they blinked excessively as they saw its brightness and cried out that surely now the Father was coming; but it was only the elder of the Bright Ones, gone before with elder nations and with his shield of flame, heralding from afar (as we herald with wet shell scales or crystals) the approach of the Sun-fatHer! And when, low down in the east the Sun-father himself appeared, even though he was shrouded in the middle of the great world waters, they were so blinded and heated by his light and glory that they cried out to

one another in anguish and fell down wallowing and covering their eyes with their bare hands and arms. Yet they kept looking to the light and kept struggling toward the sun as moths and other night creatures seek the light of a camp fire and even though they're burned keep seeking that light!

Thus before long they became used to the light and to this high world they had entered. When they arose and no longer walked bended over, it was then that they first looked full upon one another and in horror of their filthier parts strove to hide these, even from one another, with girdles of bark and rushes; and when by thus walking only upon their back feet the same became bruised and sore, they sought to protect them with woven sandals of yucca fiber.

It was thus, by much devising of ways, that men began to grow knowing in many things and were instructed by what they saw; in this way they became wiser and better able to receive the words and gifts of their fathers and elder brothers, the gods, the Twins and others, and priests. For already masters-to-be were among them. Even in the dark of the under-worlds such had come to be; as had, indeed, the various kinds of creatures-to-be, so these. And according to their natures they had found and cherished things, and had been granted gifts by the gods; but as yet they did not know the meaning of their own powers and possessions, even as children do not know the meanings and right uses of the precious or needful things given them or even the functions of their own body parts! Now in the light of the Sun-father, persons became known from persons, and these things from other things; and thus the people came to know their many fathers among men, to know them by themselves or by the possessions they had.

Now the first and most perfect of all these fathers among men after Póshaiyank'ya was Yanáuluha, who brought up from the under-world water of the inner ocean, and seeds of life-production and growing things; in gourds he brought these up, and also things containing the "of-doing-powers."

The Beloved Twins and priest-fathers gathered in council for the naming and selection of man-groups and creature-kinds (tánawa), spaces, and things. They thus determined that the creatures and things of summer and the southern space pertained to the Southern people, or Children of the Producing Earth-mother; and those of winter and northern space, to the Winter people, or Children of the Forcing or Quickening Sky-father.

Of the Children of Summer, some loved and understood most the Sun and so became the fathers of the Sun people (Yä'tok'ya-kwe). Some loved more the water, and became the Toad people (Ták'ya-w e), Turtle people (Étâa-kwe), or Frog people (Ták'yaiuna-kwe), who love the water so much. Others loved the seeds of earth and became the People of Seed (Tâatém'hlanah-kwe), such as those of the First-growing grass (Pétâa-kwe, now Aíyaho-kwe), and of the Tobacco (Ána-kwe). Yet still others loved the warmth and became the Fire or Badger people (Tónashi-kwe). According, then, to their natures and inclinations or their gifts from below or from the Masters of Life, they chose or were chosen for their totems.

Thus, too, it was with the People of Winter or the North. They chose, or were chosen and named, according to their resemblances or aptitudes; some as the Bear people (Aínshi-kwe), Coyote people (Súki-kwe), or Deer people (Shóhoita-kwe); others as the Crane people (Kâ'lokta-kwe), Turkey people (Tóna-kwe) or Grouse people (Póyi-kwe). In this way it came to pass that the Áshiwe were divided of old in the same way that their children are today, into ánotiwe (clans or kinties) of brothers and sisters who may not marry one another, but from one to another of kin. As the Earth-mother had increased and kept within herself all beings, cherishing them apart from their father even after they came forth, so were these our brothers and sisters made the keepers of the kin-names and of the seed thereof; nor may the children of each be cherished by any others of kin.

Now the Beloved Foremost Ones (Úan Éhkon Áteona) of these clans were prepared by instruction of the gods and the fathers of the house of houses and by being breathed of them, whereby they became áshiwani or priests also, but only the priests of possession, master keepers of sacred things and mysteries (tikitlapon ámosi), each according to his nature of kinship. It was thus that the warmth-wanting Badger-people were given the great shell (tsúlikéinan 'hlana), the heart or navel of which is potent or sensitive of fire, as of the earthquake and the inner fire is the coiled navel of the Earth-mother. On the sunny sides of hills burrow the badgers, finding and dwelling among the dry roots where there is fire. Thus the "Two Badgers" were made keepers of the sacred heart-shell (súti k'ili achi), makers and wardens of fire. So, too, were the Bear, Crane, and Grouse people given the múetone, or the contained seed-substance of hail, snow and new soil (for the bear sleeps, no longer guarding when winter comes, and with the returning crane, in the wake of the duck, comes winter in the trail of the white growing grouse). So, to the Toad and other water people, descended to them from Yanáuluha the k'yáetone, or the contained seed-substance of water; and to the Átâa-kwe, or All-seed-people, especially to the First-growing-grass people and the Tobacco people, was given from him the chúetone, or the contained seed-substance of corn grains.