Fitting the Mold:

Morphology of Yombe and Navajo Folktales

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Every group bound together... by common interests and purposes, whether educated or uneducated, rural or urban, possesses a body of traditions which may be called its folklore. Into these traditions enter many elements, individual, popular, and even "literary", but all are absorbed and assimilated through repetition and variation into a pattern which has value and continuity for the group as a whole.

Ben Botkin New York Folklorist (1938)

At the heart of each culture with any sense of identity are a collection of traditions which link these people; these traditions have various names but no singular definition nor definite origin and are disseminated through the generations by way of oral traditions or behavioral examples. The word “folklore” was first coined by William J. Thoms in 1846; he sought to replace the various terminologies so as to better discuss the concept. Folklore is an expression of an identity from a common past. However, this common past is unique to each civilization. In the words of Joseph L. Mbele, professor of folklore at St. Olaf College, “We can only assume, however, there was an individual or a group of individuals who created the initial version, the rudiments of a tale, and other people then modified and elaborated on it as they told and retold it, adding more episodes to it” (Mbele 2001: 122). I agree with Mbele that these origins of folktales are convoluted, for every culture has its own traditions and history and folktales are merely a reflection. In Morphology of the Folktale, Vladimir Propp (1895-1970) studies the narrative structure of Russian folk tales and asserts folktales may be studied and compared by examining their most
basic plot components. By stripping down fairy tales to their core components, Propp argued all fairy
tales are made of certain plot elements, or functions, and that all characters fall into eight character
archetypes. According to Propp, “function is understood as an act of a character, defined from the point of
view of its significance for the course of the action” (Propp 1975: 21), the functions of the dramatis
personae are elemental components of the tale and must be defined. Propp defines a function as, “any
development proceeding from villainy or lack, through intermediary functions to marriage, or to other
functions employed as a denouement” (Propp 1968: 92). Folktales tend to mimic each other across
cultures. For example, each culture worldwide has its own ideas about the origin of how life began. Why
is this? Joseph L. Mbele has two theories. The first is that of a process known as diffusion, or the
spreading of tales from place to place. His second theory conjectures polygenesis or multiple origins, i.e.,
humanity has the same capacity of imagination or have similar experiences (Mbele 2001: 124-5). Under
this proposition, it is impossible to create new tale plots. According to Mbele, the tales currently told are
merely reiterations of the old tales. No matter the form the tale may take, i.e., novel, movie, play, etc., the
same conflicts, themes, and character types continue to appear in tales that have been around since time
immemorial (Mbele 2001: 124). I wish to focus on the functions performed by the dramatis personae
using Propp’s model as a means to do a systematic description of the structure of tales. I am skeptical
Propp’s functions, which were solely applied to Russian fairy tales, are universal and applicable to
Navajo and Yombe tales.

The Mysterious Origins of Folklore

Each culture with any sense of an identity has a collection of traditions which link these people, these
traditions are unique to each culture, but the nature and origin of these traditions are ambiguous and
difficult to ascertain. These traditions are disseminated through the generations by way of oral traditions
or behavioral example. Consider Richerson and Boyd’s definition of culture, i.e., “information capable of
affecting individuals’ behavior that they acquire from other members of their species through teaching,
imitation, and other forms of social transmission. By information, we mean any kind of mental state, conscious or not, that is acquired or modified by social learning, and affects behavior." (Richerson et al., 2005: 5-6). I interpret this as oral traditions which affect a civilization. And let us consider a civilization the entities who are affected by the oral these traditions. More importantly, I interpret these oral traditions as folklore. Allow me to define this term for it is a contentious subject as to what constitutes as folklore. The word “folklore” was first coined by William J. Thoms in 1846 (Athenaeum, 1846). He sought to simplify and replace the various terminology used at the time so as to better discuss the concept. With Thoms’ coinage came the ability to group and therefore study folklore. Thom’s term also brought much controversy as to what constitutes as folklore. Remember, I am basing my interpretation of folklore as oral traditions which affect a civilization, which is based off of Richerson et al.’s definition of culture. Folklore, folktales, folk arts, fairy tales, and more recently folk-life are words used to describe what I believe are humanity’s method of self-preservation—as these tales circulate through the generations of a culture, so are the traditions (e.g. planting practices), art forms (e.g. masks), way of life (e.g. worldview), beliefs, (e.g. spirit guides) and culture of a civilization. Folk traditions are exchanged informally on an intimate basis, whether they are told one-on-one or performed to a small group, and, as previously stated, these traditions are oral, and it is worth emphasizing the act of transmission as being performative and sometimes meant to entertain as well as instruct. These tales are active and expressive in nature, with storytellers wholeheartedly assuming the roles of the dramatis personae through voice and body imitations. Folklore is an expression of an identity from a common past. However, this common past is unique to each group. What I mean to say is there seems to be no singular origin to folklore since it is unique to each culture. And each culture has its own tales, ways of life, and traditions. Under this understanding, I would also argue that each family has its own set of folklore. Folklore encompasses a large and significant aspect of culture; therefore, it follows that each folklorist should have his or her own definition on the topic. Below I have cited a few folklorists’ opinions on folklore in order to not only paint a clearer picture of the term but also to illustrate the variations in definition and controversy previously mentioned:

Folklore is many things, and it’s almost impossible to define succinctly. It’s both what folklorists study and the name of the discipline they work within. Yes, folklore is folk songs and legends. It’s also quilts, Boy Scout badges, high school marching band initiations, jokes, chian [sic] letters, nicknames, holiday food... and many other things you might or might not expect. Folklore exists in cities, suburbs and rural villages, in families, work groups and dormitories. Folklore is present in many kinds of informal communication, whether verbal (oral and written texts), customary (behaviors, rituals) or material (physical objects). It involves values, traditions, ways of thinking and behaving. It’s about art. It’s about people and the way people learn. It helps us learn who we are and how to make meaning in the world around us. [Pages 1-2]


'Folklore' has four basic meanings. First, it denotes oral narration, rituals, crafts, and other forms of vernacular expressive culture. Second, folklore, or ‘folkloristics,’ names an academic discipline devoted to the study of such phenomena. Third, in everyday usage, folklore sometimes describes colorful ‘folkloric’ phenomena linked to the music, tourist, and fashion industries. Fourth, like myth, folklore can mean falsehood. [P. 5711]


Surely no other discipline is more concerned with linking us to the cultural heritage from the past than is folklore; no other discipline is more concerned with revealing the interrelationships of different cultural expressions than is folklore; and no other discipline is so concerned ...with discovering what it is to be human. It is this attempt to discover the basis of our common humanity,
the imperatives of our human existence that puts folklore study at the very center of humanistic study.

Notice, Sims and Stephen view on folkloristics highlights the vastness of the category. They also talk about the varying degrees of intimacy in which folklore exists including, but not limited to, a family which is consistent with what I had previously argued. Barbara Klein mentions oral traditions and even coins a new term *folkloristics* as to better describe the study of folklore. She too mentions how folklore is unique and how it changes from cultural sphere to cultural sphere. But I believe William A. Wilson’s quote encapsulates my central argument, that is, the human collective narrative or history, which I will explain in further detail later. From these interpretations from various folklorists, what folklore encompasses becomes clearer even though the category seems to broaden. However, the question of origin still lingers. There is no clear answer to the question as to where these tales come from. In the words of Joseph L. Mbele, folklorist and professor of folklore at St. Olaf College, “We can only assume, however, there was an individual or a group of individuals who created the initial version, the rudiments of a tale, and then other people modified and elaborated on it as they told and retold it, adding more episodes to it” (Mbele 2001 122). I agree with Mbele that these origins of folktales are obscure, for every culture has its own traditions, history, and folktales are an aspect of this phenomenon. For example, most documented cultures have distinct ideas about the origin of life. Granted, these stories differ greatly in content. I will give examples shortly. Joseph L. Mbele has two theories. The first is that of a process known as diffusion, or the spreading of tales from place to place. But this does not necessarily explain how the *Kojiki, the Holy Bible, and the Torah/Pentateuch* contain the same content if we assume that the Japanese and Judeo-Christian cultures, being very distant from each, never managed to collide. However, Mbele’s second theory conjectures polygenesis or multiple origins, i.e., humanity has the same capacity of imagination or has similar experiences (Mbele 2001 124-5). Under this proposition, it is impossible to create new tale plots. According to Mbele, the tales currently told are merely reiterations of the old tales. No matter the form the tale may take, i.e., novel, movie, play, etc., the same conflicts, themes, and
character types continue to appear in tales that have been around since time immemorial (Mbele 2001 124). I find this theory to be compelling, especially in the case of the previously mentioned cultures, since these two myths were documented at around the same time. Neither theory has more precedence over the other, for they are both valid theories for an issue that is not yet fully understood. It is circumstantial which theory finds itself attributed to a particular culture. Take for example the Judeo-Christian creation myth found in Genesis 1 and 2, which depicts the process by which a perfect and omnipotent deity creates the cosmos and humankind in six days. Additionally, consider the Japanese most accepted version of the creation myth from the Kojiki, which illustrates that the cosmos and Earth arose from the resolution of chaos, that is, the settling of heavier particles to form the Earth and lighter particles floating to the top form the heaven from a mass of particles and with this came the creation of deities with human-like flaws. Both these tales are conjectured to have been chronicled between the 7th and 8th century but had been retold by word-of-mouth for some time before, and both these tales deal with the creation of the universe as mankind knows it today. These are two distinct traditions which arose in two separate locations at more or less the same time with the same general notion of the creation of the world, more or less. It would seem a plausible explanation for comparing these tales would be polygenesis since these two cultures are disparate, and have no documented historical contact. In my opinion, this argument also supports Wilson’s opinion on folklore, or the human collective history. That is, the set of experiences attached to a culture, and how these experiences mold said culture. It would seem that humanity, through these myths, looks for a method in which to orient itself in the expanse of the universe. Rather, these myths and other folktales reflect a society’s worldview, answer deep questions, but most of all, create an identity.

Folktales and Russian Formalism

Russian formalism was a school of literary critical analysis during the early 20th century which included works of influential Soviet scholars most pertinent to the subject at hand being folklorist Vladimir Propp. Propp and his contemporaries emphasized the constituent parts of literary works. The Russian formalist school addressed “actual works of imaginative literature which ought to be the subject
of literary scholarship and not a means to some extraneous studies” (Erlich 1998: 172). What this entails is that words should be taken at face value rather than a proxy for denoted objects or emotions, “Words, their arrangement, their meaning, their outward and inward forms acquire weight and value of their own” (Erlich 1998: 183). Formalists wanted to solve the fundamental problems of literary theory with modern linguistics and semiotics, rather than seeking meaning, these scholars preferred a functional characterization of the literary object. Tynyanov’s redefinition of the literary work as a system laid the foundation for Propp’s method of morphological analysis which then lent itself to be applied to a typology of stories.

In *Morphology of the Folktale*, Vladimir Propp studies the narrative structure of Russian folk tales and asserts folktales may be studied and compared by examining their most basic plot components, hence the term morphology. By stripping down fairy tales to their core components, Propp argued all fairy tales are made of certain plot elements, or functions. According to Propp, “function is understood as an act of a character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action” (Propp 1975: 21), the functions of the dramatis personae are elemental components of the tale and must be defined. Propp defines a function as “any development proceeding from villainy or lack, through intermediary functions to marriage, or to other functions employed as a denouement” (Propp 1975: 92). Propp warns that the actions cannot be defined apart from its place in the course of a narration; therefore, the meaning that a given function has during a narration must be considered because a single act may have various meanings. These functions are constant and constitute the fundamental components of the tale; furthermore, these functions are finite in number.

A vital aspect of the tale is its organization, or the sequence of a tale’s functions. No tale contains all functions and though a tale may be missing a function this does not alter the sequence of subsequent functions. According to Propp, “insofar as the tale is concerned, it has its own entirely particular and specific laws” (Propp 1968: 22). This means that there is limited variation in the sequence of a folktale; they tend to be uniform and identical. Folktales that have identical functions are said to belong to one type
with various different combinations of functions resulting in subtypes. These types are based on structural features rather than thematic features.

There is a separation between the functions of the dramatis personae and the attributes of the characters, i.e. their external qualities: age, sex, appearance, etc. In regards to morphology of the folktale, these attributes are extraneous matter. But in regards to the performative nature of the tale these attributes are what give the tale richness but make analysis difficult. Propp concedes that the tale is diverse. But he argues that tales, through the analysis of the tale’s components, inevitably possess one characteristic. That is, their components are transferrable among themselves without having to make alterations to the functions to ensure they fit; this is known as the law of transference (Propp 1968: 7). Propp strips the tale of its extraneous attributes and focuses soles on the functions of the dramatis personae, and it is they that are transferrable.

This leads to me to consider that there are innate similarities in tales, and these similarities are perhaps universal and may be found in tales of documented cultures. Propp continues, “The tale at its core preserves traces of very ancient paganism, of ancient customs and rituals” (Propp 1968: 87-8). It seems that Propp also agrees that folktales are a form of self-preservation for mankind. But he also seems to make the point that these tales perpetuate social mores and values that have been ingrained since antiquity. Propp speaks of various influences such as neighboring peoples and local beliefs causing the tale to transform—both attributive elements and functions undergo this metamorphosis. There exist international (Indic, Germanic, Arabic), national, and provincial (Novgorod, Perm, Siberia) patterns as well as forms which arise from different social categories: soldier, laborer, semi-urban (Propp 1968: 88-9). Once again, it seems Propp’s ideas support that of Joseph Mbele’s theory of diffusion. He seems to say these functions, and by extrapolation folktales, are susceptible to outside influences, and they cause the story to change. Furthermore, Propp’s acknowledges that these forms are unique to each subculture as well. But most importantly Propp states:

If we are incapable of breaking the tale into its components, we will not be to make a correct comparison. And if we do not know how to compare, then how can we throw light upon, for instance, Indo-Egyptian relationships…if we cannot compare one tale with another, then how can we compare the
tale to religion or myths? Finally…all questions relating to the study of tales lead to the solution of the highly important and as yet unresolved problem of the similarity of tales throughout the world…when the contact of peoples cannot be proven historically? This resemblance cannot be explained if we have wrong conceptions of its character…We see, then, that very much depends upon the study of forms (Propp 1968: 15-6).

Here, Propp explicitly states that similarities in folktales can be found in cultures that may not have had documented contact with one another. And by analyzing the morphology of a folktale then, we can accurately make correlations and comparisons between these two tales and begin to understand their origin and development.

Having set the foundation for my analysis, I should clarify that mine is not the study of the cultural values or origins of the tales nor to compare all the folktales of various cultures. Rather, I wish to focus on the functions performed by the dramatis personae. I will adopt Justin S. Niati’s method of analysis in Narrative Strategies in African Folktales: Revisiting The Russian Formalism Theory (2010) and use Propp’s model as a means to do a systematic description of the structure of tales among two groups: The Navajo, a tribe located in the southwestern region of the United States located in northwestern New Mexico, southeastern Utah, and northeastern Arizona, and Yombe tales from the Mayombe, which is the western part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the Province of the Bas-Congo. I will give examples from both cultures and the functions performed by the characters. I am skeptical that Vladimir Propp’s functions, which were derived solely from Russian fairy tales, are applicable to both Navajo and Yombe tales. Now, in order to support my hypothesis, I would need to study hundreds of tales from each culture to be able to verily assert that all thirty-one of Propp’s functions are indeed present or absent. Propp studied one-hundred folktales, but he states that it is possible to limit oneself to a small body of material. Consequently, I will only examine five tales from each culture, in the hope that I might be able to fit Propp’s model onto the tales of the Navajo and the Yombe without having to make too many alterations. I plan to paraphrase the folktales at hand, and then I will encode these summaries in accordance with Propp’s functions. However, I am not looking for a perfect fit. What I wish to ascertain is how well these functions fit. What I mean to say is I wish to evaluate whether these
functions have definitive boundaries, how those boundaries correspond to folktales of different cultures,
and whether or not there are gaps, then I will try to explain these gaps. By definitive boundaries, I mean
to explore Propp’s notion that one action in the plotline corresponds to only one function of the dramatis
personae. It may very well be possible that a function may have a dual role in a tale. But I wish to take
this information one step further. If you recall that Mbele has two theories about the origins of folklore,
i.e. diffusion and polygenesis, or folktales spread as mankind migrated from place to place and that
mankind has a limited capacity for creativity and that these origins appeared and were cultivated as the
civilization grew. I argue that both these theories are valid, which leads me to explain why I chose these
two civilizations, briefly. These two cultures are documented to have appeared in two different continents,
at two different times, with no known historical contact, yet they both seem to have similar contents in
their folktales. This aligns well with Mbele’s theory of polygenesis. I also chose these tribes because they
were agrarian-based civilizations that migrated and settled in different areas of their respective continents;
this is also concurrent with the theory of polygenesis. Now, I would like to take these theories one step
further and say that before laws there were folktales, and they acted as a set of guidelines or precursors to
law on which humanity needed to capitalize and value in order to survive and build a community, that is
that folktales diffuse social norms and morals as they are disseminated in a culture.

Structural Analysis

Now, let us look at the different functions performed by the dramatis personae from Propp’s
model. A tale normally begins with an initial situation via the introduction of the dramatis personae; it is
not a function, but it is an important morphological element denoted by Greek symbol α. These
designations will be used to find patterns and relationships among tales so as to make comparisons and
generalizations as found in Wagner et al.’s edited and revised edition of Morphology of the Folktale
(Propp 1968: 26-65).

1. Absentation (β). In this function, either the hero or one of the members of the family in the
story leaves home. Death of a family member is a form of Absentation, younger generations
absent themselves to perform tasks or for divertissement. Apart from the initial situation, tales tend to introduce Absentation first.

2. Interdiction (γ). An interdiction is addressed to the hero. The hero is given a command, a request, or piece of advice. Interdictions may be introduced without being connected to an Absentation.

3. Violation of Interdiction (δ). The interdiction is violated. The villain enters the tale. In general, this is a bad move as the villain may try to attack the family while the hero is away. Functions 2 and 3 (Interdiction and Violation) form a paired element; however the latter may exist without the first.

4. Reconnaissances (ε). The villain makes an attempt at the reconnaissance. One form of the reconnaissance is aimed at finding out the location of children or sometimes of precious objects. The intended victim may also question the villain. In return, the villain (often in disguise) makes an active attempt at seeking information. The villain may speak with a victim who unwillingly divulges information.

5. Delivery (ζ). The villain receives information about the victim, or about some action, or change.

6. Trickery (η). The villain attempts to deceive the victim in order to take possession of his/her belongings. Here, the villain may disguise himself, use persuasion, magical means, or other means of deception or coercion, such as, capturing the victim, getting the hero to give the villain something or persuading them that the villain is in fact a friend and thereby allowing for collaboration.

7. Complicity (θ). The victim submits to deception and thereby unwittingly helps the enemy. Both the victim and the enemy take partnership in the deception. The hero may agree to the villain’s persuasions or he may mechanically react to the use of magic or other means.
8. Villainy or Lack (A). The villain causes harm or injury to a member of a family. This function is very important because it marks the real creation of the tale. The forms of this function are varied: abduct of a person and take away the magical agent; pillage or spoil the crops; plunder in other forms; demand or entice his/her victim; expel someone or commit murder. A lack may be something one family member lacks or desires. The object of seizure does not determine the structure of the tale and neither does the object which is lacking.

9. Mediation (B). Misfortune or lack is made known. If the hero has not already been introduced this function brings the hero into the tale. Later in the story, the hero is approached with a request, a command, or cry for help. The victimized hero is sent away, dispatched or freed from imprisonment. The hero now discovers the act of villainy/lack or the misfortune is announced.

10. Beginning of counter-action (C). The seeker agrees to, or decides upon counter-action. The hero now makes the decision to act in a way that will resolve the lack, for example finding a needed magical item, rescuing those who are captured or otherwise defeating the villain. This is a defining moment for the hero as this is the decision that sets the course of future actions and by which as previous ordinary person takes on the mantle of heroism.

11. Departure (↑). The hero leaves home. The hero’s departure can have different goals: search or beginning of a journey without search. A new character may emerge in the course of either the search or the journey. Propp calls this new character a donor or provider who is usually encountered accidentally. Elements ABC ↑ represent the complication with the course of action developing later on.

12. First function of the donor (D). The hero is tested, interrogated, or attacked. This situation prepares the way for the hero to receive either a magical agent or a helper.
13. Hero’s Reaction (E). The hero reacts to the actions of the future donor. This reaction may be positive or negative, and it has different aspects (e.g. withstands a test or bestows mercy). The hero may also free a captive.

14. Receipt of a magical agent (F). The hero acquires the use of a magical agent.

15. Guidance (G). The hero is transferred, delivered, or guided to the whereabouts of an object of search. Function G may be a continuation of ↑.

16. Struggle (H). The hero and the villain have direct altercation or combat. In most cases, the struggle often ends with the humiliation or death of the villain.

17. Branding (J). The hero is wounded or marked. He may also receive a ring, or a scarf.

18. Victory (I). The victim is defeated at the end of the struggle and the hero is triumphant and proud that he or she is victorious.

19. Liquidation (K). Initial misfortune or lack is resolved. According to Propp, the narrative reaches its peak in this function (Propp 1975: 53). At the beginning of some tales, there is a lack (a void) that has to be “corrected”. It is in this function [lack liquidated] that the object of lack or misfortune is obtained. The hero, the parents, the family, or the village acquire what is lacking. The desire is satisfied. This function is paired with Villainy (A).

20. Return (↓). The hero returns. After the lack has been liquidated, the hero returns to where he or she was before.

21. Pursuit or chase (Pr). The pursuers chase the hero or attempt to kill the hero; in other instances, the pursuer erodes a tree under which the hero is taking refuge. In the end, the hero manages to return to his village or parents.

22. Rescue (Rs). The hero is rescued from pursuit (obstacles may be delayed, the hero hides or is hidden. He may also be in disguise and become unrecognizable).

23. Unrecognized Arrival (o). The hero, unrecognized, arrives home or in another country.

24. Unfounded Claims (L). The false hero presents unfounded claims.
25. Difficult task (M). A difficult task is proposed to the hero. The hero can be subjected to difficult test such as endurance or poison. Another kind of difficult task is the task of supply.

26. Solution (N). The task is resolved.

27. Recognition (Q). The hero is recognized by mark, brand, or by something given to him or her.

28. Exposure (Ex). The false hero or the villain is exposed. The false hero, when exposed, is generally humiliated or killed.

29. Transfiguration (T). The hero is given a new appearance. He or she may be made whole, handsome, or given new garments.

30. Punishment (U). The villain is punished, banished, or vanquished.

31. Wedding (W). The hero marries. He or she may then be rewarded or promoted.

Summary of Folktales

The following summary shows the thirty-one functions present in the both Yombe and Navajo stories. Before I made my selection of the tales at hand, I tried to find correlations among the two sources. That is, out of the 25 Yombe tales and 16 Navajo tales, I tried to find stories that had the same content, e.g. creation myths, flood, famine, etc. Luckily, both cultures did have creation myths, but it was difficult to find any further similarities so for the sake of the argument, I analyzed the subsequent four tales in the sources. The words in italic within stories and the number in the parentheses indicate the actions performed by the dramatis personae followed by the description of the function at the end of each story. Remember, I am paraphrasing these works because the original works in their entirety are rather long, and I am encoding these functions based on my interpretation of these folktales and Propp’s model. I give a few sentences introduction to the tale, but I then begin to paraphrase the tale paragraph-by-paragraph. And from these paraphrases, I then assign a function according to the action or resultant actions contained therein. These texts have been recorded and translated from their corresponding original languages. There is no clear indication as to where each of these tales originated or how these tales managed to enter into common knowledge.
The Yombe history begins with a southward migration from the Mbenza clan in present-day Gabon around the 15th century to an area near the Congo River. It is interesting to note that there are oral traditions that link the Yombe people to the Mayomba Kingdom and furthermore during the 16th and 17th centuries saw an integration and assimilation of two more migratory clans; the Manyanga and Bwende people (Art and Life in Africa). The current Yombe population is estimated at around 350,000.

Analysis of Yombe Folktales

All tales from He Ate the Yam and the Child Justin Niati

Translated from L’homme qui mangea le placenta de sa femme et autres contes du Mayoombé en RDC

Justin Niati and Alexandre Th. Khonde

Story 1: Why Tsumbi the Monkey does not have a Tail

Nzambi Phungu, the All-Powerful God created everything. He also created man and the animals. While man had half a head, half a torso, one arm and one leg, woman on the other hand had all her limbs whole.

God gave this order,

-“Now that I have created you, beget only half men and women. The penalty for bearing a child with all of its limbs is death.”(1) The half-men said:

-“Agreed, chief, we understand.”…Everybody went back to the village that God had indicated to them.

The name of this land was the land of equality.

Functions

1. Interdiction. Nzambi Phungu forbids any male child born with all its limbs

2. Violation. Mbende gives birth to a male who has all its limbs.

3. Mediation. As an announcement of Mbende’s misfortune, she risks the death penalty for bearing a child with all its limbs.

4. Liquidation. Mbende gives the boy to a Kikhanda (monkey) named Tsumbi to care for the boy.

5. False claim. Mbende presents Nzambi Phungu with a Toad claiming it to be her begotten son.

God is not fooled. She must present the true child at the summoning.
6. Reconnaissance. God asks Mbende to present the child. She asks God for a servant, and God gives her Nsuma, the great Antelope (character role: the helper). God, perceived here to be a villain, wants to find Mbende’s child.

7. Exposure. Different actors [different animals] as false heroes are given the task of bringing the child to Nzambi.

8. Difficult task. Impossible task of bringing the child too frightening to behold before God.

9. Liquidation. Nkila-Nkila with a hundred tails is the only animal brave enough to bring Nzambi the child.

10. Solution. Nkila-Nkila persuades Nzambi to spare the child. All the animals except monkeys and toads get tails. Mbende begets humanity.

11. Punishment. Because of their tardiness, Tsumbi and Toad do not get tails.

Pattern: α-γ-δ-B-K-L-ε-Ex-M-K-N-U

Story 2: The Fooled Leopard

One day, Lord Leopard arrived in the village of the Gazelle. He found the Gazelle in her house in the middle of eating a plate of corn. The Gazelle invited Lord Leopard to share her meal—an invitation that Lord Leopard accepted with pleasure. After having eaten, Lord Leopard spoke to the Gazelle,

“Where did you grow this corn?” Never in my life have I eaten such succulent corn. (1)

Functions

1. Mediation. Lord Leopard wants succulent corn, and Gazelle is the only one who knows where to find it.

2. False claim. Gazelle lies to Lord Leopard telling him that the corn is none other than her mother’s boiled teeth. Gazelle says that if Lord Leopard boils his mother’s teeth than he too will have succulent corn.

3. Complicity. Lord Leopard foolishly submits to Gazelle’s false claim.
4. Difficult task. Lord Leopard’s eldest son Mabiala ma Ngo (the helper) carries out the task of pulling his grandmother’s teeth out.

5. Trickery. Despite boiling the teeth for a long time, the teeth were still hard as pebbles.

6. Punishment: The leopard is indirectly punished by the gazelle’s artifice and deceit, for his mother loses too much blood and dies.

7. Victory. The gazelle is proud of her deceit.

Pattern: \( \alpha-\beta-0-M-\eta-U-I \)

Story 3: When Lord Leopard Fell in Love with the Gazelle

One day the Gazelle disguised herself as a pretty girl. (1) Lord Leopard met this beautiful creature with whom he fell in love and whose hand he asked for. (2) The young girl seemed to agree to the marriage proposal, but placed a few conditions on it: (3)

Functions

1. Trickery. The gazelle disguises herself as a girl.

2. Complicity. The leopard submits to the deception and asks for her hand in marriage.

5. Difficult Task. The task given to the leopard in the form of a request by the gazelle. She asks that he remove his claws, teeth, eyes, and skin in order to be less frightening.

6. Liquidation. The leopard acquiesces to the gazelle’s deceit request and completes the task

7. Victory. The gazelle is triumphant.

8. Punishment: The victim, the leopard, is left suffering from his wounds.

Pattern: \( \alpha-\eta-0-M-K-I-U \)

Story 4: Why the Antelope Remained Wild

One day the Antelope met the sheep at the place where they usually went to graze on grass. The two began talking. The sheep asked the Antelope:

-“Why don’t you come to stay in the village with us?” The Antelope replied:

-“Stay in the village where I am hated? But I would risk death.” (1)

-“Not at all,” replied the sheep, “if you stay with us, no one will kill you.” (2)
Functions

1. Mediation. The Antelope cannot stay in the village because it is not safe.
2. False claim. The sheep assures the Antelope that will not be harmed should she go to the village.
3. Complicity: The Antelope submits to the sheep’s deceit and joins him in the village.
4. Departure. The Antelope leaves the safety of the forest for the village.
5. Attempt at a Reconnaissance. The hunter receives information about the antelope and wishes to ascertain the location of the Antelope.
6. First function of the donor. The hunter wishes to kill the Antelope and waits at the palm tree where she was previously spotted. He shoots his gun in practice.
7. Solution. The Antelope is alerted to the danger by the gunfire. She berates the sheep for misleading her and vows to stay in the bush, for she is a wild creature and an outsider.

Pattern: α-B-L-0-†-ε-D-N

Story 5: The Dog and the Lizard

One day the Lizard said to the Dog:

Lord Dog, you must be happy, because every day you eat meat from the hunt.” The Dog answered: (1)

“Mister Lizard, it is not as you think. Come tomorrow to the place where they carve up the game and you will understand.”

The Lizard said:

”Fine, I will meet you there.”

The next morning, as usual, the Dog went with hunters on the hunt. (2)
4. First function of the donor. Lord Dog is attacked by the men as he attempts to partake in the spoils of the hunt.

5. Difficult Task. The Lizard is now given the task of showing the dog that he too does suffer a great deal in order to drink palm wine.

6. Solution. Both the Lizard and Lord Dog suffer greatly in order to partake in the pleasures they seem to enjoy so easily.

Pattern: α-B-L-C-D-M-N

Yombe Folktales under Propp’s Model

Propp’s model helped shed light on the mechanics of the functional structures of a tale. From this study, I have come to the conclusion that there is a close relationship between the Russian folktales’ format—as far as the functions performed by the dramatis personae are concerned—and the Yombe format. However, I did notice that it is difficult to definitively say which character is fulfilling which role. In the Yombe tale, it is unclear to ascertain which character is the hero and which is the villain. For example in Story 1: Why Tsumbi the Monkey has no Tail, it seems that Mbende would be fulfilling the role of the hero, but she disobeys Nzambi Phungu’s decree and tricks Nzambi Phungu which is a function usually associated with the villain. Concurrently, it is a common notion that God is benevolent, but the Yombe tale seems to cast God in the role of the villain since he wishes to murder Mbende’s only child. Also in Story 2, it is also ambiguous as to which role the Gazelle plays because her trickery may very well be a form of villainy. Perhaps Navajo folktale functions will be less ambiguous in this regard. Just as in the Russian fairy tales, each Yombe tale begins by introducing the characters, giving their name, or status, i.e. the initial situation. I can see that some functions occur in pairs: interdiction-violation ($γ-δ$), mediation-liquidation (B-K), mediation-false claim (B-L), mediation-complicity (B-θ), and solution-victory (N-I), solution-punishment (N-U). However as Propp mentioned, the absence of a function does not preclude the appearance of another function. Moreover, there does not seem to be a constant pattern to the Yombe tale. Perhaps, Yombe tales are an anomaly in this regard.

Yombe Creation Myth as Law

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Story 1 is the Yombe creation myth it is meant to show the origin of man, flora, and fauna. All of humanity was created by God (Nzambi Phungu), and it is imperative to show this God deference and obedience. Also, I feel this narrative tries to impart the idea that we all share a common ancestor, i.e. the woman who begat all of humanity, i.e. Mbende. Remember, my hypothesis states folktales are a precursor to law transmitting ideals customs essential for survival in a new civilization. The Yombe people are considered to be an animistic culture believing in spirits and having diviners who contact the spirit world, healers for the sick, and paying homage to ancestors (Art and Life in Africa). I believe the Yombe creation myth was meant to unify a community built from smaller ethnically diverse and therefore culturally different clans. Also, it imposes the notion of obedience. As I argue these tales are humanities means of self-preservation and capitalize on essential ideals to ensure survival. I feel the Yombe creation myth does exactly this. Nzambi Phungu signifies the leader or chieftain of the first people. With his edict that none shall bear children who are whole under the penalty of death, he establishes a hierarchy with himself at the top-most echelon. His word is law; violate these laws, and there will be dire consequences. Although, God is above man, the land designated to man is known as the land of equality; therefore no man is above another man—all men are equal under God. Historically, the Yombe were a nation divided by tribal factions consistently on the brink of war in order, it was imperative that these people live and work together in harmony to establish a community and thrive. First, the myth says there is a set hierarchy which places God at the top, and his word is law. But also, the diviners and chieftains who are said to be chosen by God make sure his will is done and therefore are awarded a status above the rest of the villagers. Now, the Yombe creation myth sees this problem of tribal factions and seeks to rectify it by saying that these clans have no inherent differences among themselves since they share the same land, i.e. the land of equality, they need to set aside their differences because they all share a common ancestor and they are all children of God and therefore equal in his eyes.

Analysis of Navajo Folktales

It is conjectured the Navajo arrived in the southwest around A.D. 1000. The first known mention of the Navajo dates back to 1626 in the report of a Franciscan missionary. By this time the Navajo were no
longer a migratory people but agrarians who had adopted specific techniques for cultivation, weaving, and making painted pottery. Due to increasing encounters with the Pueblo Indians and colonial settlers, significant changes to the Navajo life by way of trade, war, and forced relocation. The estimated Navajo population is around 300,000 (The Navajo, 33-47).

A full rendition of the tales may be found in *Navajo Folk Tales* Franc Johnson Newcomb

**Story 1: The First Three Worlds**

It was called the Black world, or the Place of Running Pitch. Not many people lived there and, as they were unhappy and miserable, they decided to move to a new world where conditions would be better and where everyone would have room to move about. (1)

- “*How can we leave this place?*” inquired the ants.

1. Mediation. The conditions of the first world are deplorable, but the Insect People do not know where to go.

2. Liquidation/Departure. The Insect People decide to leave the first world in search of better conditions.

3. Interdiction. The White Crane stipulates that the new comers may stay as long as they wish as long as they do not encroach on the land of the inhabitants.

4. Violation/ Mediation. The Insect People overpopulate the second world, resources diminish, and they begin to encroach on the territory of the Great Birds.

5. Liquidation. With White Crane commanding the battalions in the east, blue Heron in south, yellow Grebe in the west, and black Loon in north, the birds wage war against the Insect People and almost exterminate them.

6. Mediation. The Locust declares that the Insect People leave this world full of enemies for peaceful place.

7. Departure. The Insect People rise into the air and follow the voice of the Blue Wind who leads them to a new land, the Third, or Yellow, World, whose inhabitants include human beings and they lived happily and prosperously for a time.
8. Mediation. The People increase in numbers, food becomes scarce, crowding, stealing, and fighting amongst neighbors ensues.

9. Liquidation. Messengers are sent to all the People to attend a meeting to establish a government, laws, and a headman.

10. Mediation. The First People are unable to agree on a headman. The mountain people from the West choose the Mountain Lion, the people from the high mesas and plains from the East choose the Wolf, the people from the southern fertile valleys choose the Bluebird, and the forest people of the north choose Hummingbird.

11. Liquidation. In order to choose a leader among the four chosen, they must set out to the four corners of the world to find the most useful thing and that will be the determining factor.

12. Difficult Task/Beginning of Counter-action. The four candidates must find and bring back something that will be the most useful to the People and that candidate will become the headman.

13. Departure. The four candidates set off to the four corners of the world for eight days and nights.

14. Return. On the beginning of the ninth day, each candidate returns. Wolf returns with morning light, spring showers, and young corn. Next, Bluebird arrives with blue sky, summer rain, and soft rain. Soon after, Mountain appears with evening light, autumn rain, and ripe corn. And finally, Hummingbird joins the People with northern lights for dark winter days, a wide assortment of stored corn and beans, and a bowl used for storage that will never become empty.

15. Solution. All four candidates reign over the land.

Pattern: α-B-K-↑γ-δ-B-K-↑-B-K-B-K-M-C-↑↓-N

Story 2: The Fourth World

For a time all went well with the inhabitants of the Third World. They had more light than in the land below, though the dim yellow fog gave them neither night nor day. But when the four travelers had brought farm seeds to the First People, they had not stayed with the donors long enough to learn anything about the corn, or the beans, or other farm plants (1)…
1. Mediation. The First People do not know how to utilize the goods brought to them from afar because they were brought in haste, food grows scarce, and quarrelling soon follows.

2. Liquidation. The First People don their winged suits and fly to the upper world where four different voices beckon them: First Woman in the east, First Girl in the south, First Man in the west, and First Boy in the north. The First People divide themselves into groups and assimilate to a new way of life in their respective new homes and become the Diné (the First People). Soon after, with the north wind comes laziness and trickery, these are qualities associated with Coyote. And with the south wind comes industry and perseverance, characteristics the Diné attribute to Badger.

3. Interdiction. First Woman commands that they make homes near the Pueblo peoples and work in their fields as farm laborers to earn food and seeds to plan in their own fields.


5. Liquidation/Violation. Coyote suggests that they steal one ear of corn from the Pueblos rather than labor. After an initial hesitation, the First People agree to this. Mrs. Spider, Skunk, Crow, and Coyote go in four different directions at dark.

6. Mediation. The four return with corn unfit to eat or plant.

7. Branding and Punishment. Crow, who was once grey and white, returns painted black as punishment for his thievery.

8. Difficult Task. At a council meeting, First Woman appears and advises that four maidens offer gifts of forgiveness, and four youths must accompany them and work on the farms and learn the planting rites and prayers chants.

9. Departure. Otter’s daughter accompanied by his son, Bluebird Maiden accompanied by Mockingbird Youth, Canary accompanied by Blackbird, and Beaver Girl accompanied by Muskrat Youth set off for the Pueblos to accomplish the task at hand.

10. Solution/Return. Late in the harvest season, the maidens arrive with corn and seeds; the Diné decree that from now on women will plant seeds. Nine days and nights later, the youths return as
medicine men that can hold all the rites of seed blessing and from that time on nearly all medicine
chanters have been men. These are prosperous times the Diné and play games and gamble.

11. Trickery. Coyote learns to gamble and cheats by weighting his dice.

12. Complicity/Mediation. The First People are unaware of Coyote’s cunning and are duped. After a
while they no longer wish to play against him so he begins to cheat the Pueblos who have been
playing these gambling games for much longer than he has. They Pueblos are bested by Coyote
as well. They put their best player Water Monster against Coyote, but he is no match for Coyote’s
cunning and loses his fur coat and jewels to Coyote who in turn runs away with the coat.

Unbeknownst to Coyote, Water Monster’s coat holds two small water babies.

Pattern: α-B-K-γ-B-K-δ-B-J-U-M-†-N-¶-η-θ

Story 3: The Flood

During the time the First People had been living in the pleasant Fourth World, they never thought
that one day they would be obliged to leave, and with so little warning that most of their
possessions would be to be abandoned…But Water Monster, reaching his home in the evening,
learned that his babies had been stolen. (1)

1. Mediation. Water Monster returns to his home only to realize that his babies have been stolen.

2. Villainy. Upon this realization, he flies into a rage and vows to destroy all the people in the
land and then destroy the land in which they lived. He dives to the bottom of the ocean and
opens all the flood gates and the waters rise higher than the tallest mountain peaks.

3. Departure. The thirty-two clans of Navajo, Hopi, Zuni and the Pueblo peoples, under the
leadership of First Woman, are forced to leave their homes and journey to a far off mountain
peak to avoid the deluge.

4. Transfiguration. Those few stay behind transform into Water People and that is why the
Din’é do not kill or eat water creatures for fear they may be descendants of former friends
and neighbors.

Pattern: α-B-A-†-T
Story 4: Turkey and the Big Reed

Not all the First People arrived at the top of the mountain at the same time. The eagle, hawk, cliff swallow, and some other Bird People came first, and then the locusts, dragonflies, beetles, and the bees arrived. The fleetest of the Animal People came next. First Woman anxiously watches the many groups of stragglers laboring up the slopes, just barely keeping ahead of the foaming water. The waters continue to rise and the People begin to panic. (1)

1. Mediation. The thirty-clans reach the top of the mountain, but the waters continue to rise and pandemonium ensues.
2. Liquidation. First Woman calls the thirty-two wise men to hold a council, they each produce a magical bamboo seed that will become a full-grown tree in four days, and they carve a hole into the tree and use it as shelter from the storm.
3. Mediation. There is no food or way to make crop for the new land.
4. Liquidation. Turkey is the last to arrive and brings with him the seeds needed to farm.

Pattern: a-B-K-B-K

Story 5: Through the Sky: Locust Wins This Earth

The flood waters continued to rise. Soon the people noticed how dark it had become, and First Woman said, “The water has risen above our crystal windows so we must all climb to a higher room.” (1) They gathered up their possessions and went up the ladder; they did not pause long in the next room as that also darkened. Room after was left behind as they climbed the ladders inside the great tree. When they reach the twelfth room, the tree began to sway and it seemed that it would tip to the east.

1. Mediation. The rising sea levels cause the tree to sway precariously, making it difficult for the birds and insects to remain perched. The tree threatens to tip over.
2. Liquidation. The Winds and Hosteen Eagle steady the tree, but the water levels continue to rise.
3. Difficult Task and Departure. Yellow Hawk, blue Heron, and Big Buzzard are asked by First Woman to find or make an opening through the sky. They are only able to make the tiniest of openings.
4. Difficult Task and Departure. Locust is given the task of using the magical arrow to enlarge the opening.

5. First Function of Donor. On the other side of the opening is an island, Locust is greeted by Crane, Blue Heron, Grebe, and Loon. They test his magic to prove that he is worthy of the island.

6. Solution and Return. Locust is proven worthy and wins the island. He returns to give First Woman news of the world above.

7. Mediation. The opening is still too small for all the people to pass through.

8. Liquidation. A rope must be built so that someone strong may reach the opening to enlarge it.

9. Difficult Task and Departure. Dragonfly is to carry Spider to the opening Dragonfly holds one end while Spider spins her web into a thick rope-like ladder to the tree.

10. Difficult Task and Departure. The Ant People are called to spread soil and grass seeds. They are also instructed to enlarge the opening which they do by biting off the pieces of sky and depositing them in the new world. These would then be known as turquoise. The ants head to the four corners of the world spreading earth and grass.

11. Mediation. The opening is still not big enough to allow passage, and the water level is still on the rise.

12. Difficult Task and Departure. Mole, Gopher, Chipmunk, and Little Prairie Dog, are dispatched to create a tunnel large enough for the rest of the people. They fail.

13. Difficult Task and Departure. Badger is dispatched to dig enlarge the tunnel. Coyote tags along under the guise that he too will dig a hole.


15. Punishment. Coyote loses the bag of jewels stolen from Water Monster as he pretends to throw the sticky black mud over his shoulder.

16. Solution. The opening is large enough for all the thirty-two clans of Navajo, Hopi, Zuni, Pueblo Peoples, and larger animals to pass through to the new world.

Pattern: α-B-K-M-↑-M-↑-D-N-↓-B-K-M-↑-M-↑-B-M-↑-M-↑-η-U-N
Navajo Folktales under Propp’s Model

Once again, it is evident that there is a relationship between the Navajo format and Propp’s model. In general, Navajo tales are much longer than Yombe tales. Each tale slowly introduces its characters and attributes. Moreover unlike their Yombe counterparts, Navajo folktales do have a clear pattern of a series of conflicts and resolutions. Once again, it is evident that certain functions are paired with each other: mediation-liquidation (B-K), difficult task-departure (M-†), and interdiction-violation (γ-δ). As I had hoped, Navajo folktales are much less ambiguous in regards to the functions of dramatis personae. I did not find myself perplexed by the actions of a character being counter-intuitive to their role. However, if you recall Propp stresses that an action cannot be defined apart from a narration because these actions may be identical in form, but they carry diverse meanings. This notion was particularly evident in Navajo folktales. If you consider my interpretations of the functions found in Story 1 (bullet points 2 and 4), it is evident that I have two interpretations of these functions, and this can be seen throughout the rest of my analysis of Navajo folktales. Perhaps Propp would be perturbed by this dual interpretation, but I wonder if a one-to-one correspondence is necessary? Propp stipulates that in order to avoid this one must consider the outcome of the function, i.e. the consequences which ensue from the action of a character. I find that this is an over-generalization of the functions. For example, Story 1 point 2, which is both a liquidation and a departure, I believe Propp would merely list this as a departure, but I would argue that it is also essential to say that this action is a liquidation because it is important to note that this action was a temporary resolution of the initial problem. But I feel this is a minor problem, the greater issue at hand is the meaning of these tales and what they teach.

Navajo Folktales as Law

As was seen in the analysis of the Yombe folktale, Story 1 is also a creation myth. We see a nation of the People migrating to a new place which is already inhabited. They are welcomed but told to adhere to one rule: do not encroach on the land that is not yours. The rule is violated, war ensues, and they are forced to leave. They find a new land, but their numbers grow to be too great and food grows scarce. We see the People using a proto-democracy system towards a common goal of electing a leader. This
narrative has a completely different feel from the Yombe tale. First and foremost, there is no God from whom all things come from. The People are self-sufficient and must rely on each other for survival. Nonetheless, the White Crane can be seen as a God-like character, for his word is law. With the violation of the interdiction and the subsequent war, the People learn that the violation of laws carries a heavy price. When food grows scarce, the growing nation works together to elect a leader. Like the Yombe, the Navajo people are considered to be an animistic culture believing in spirits, having diviners who contact the spirit world, having healers for the sick, and paying homage to ancestors. I believe the Navajo creation myth, like that of the Yombe, was meant to teach the lesson that the violation of rules comes with dire consequences. Also, I believe this tale wishes to not only instill the notion of obedience but also working together. As I argue, these tales are humanity's means of self-preservation and capitalize on essential ideals to ensure survival. The People, having found themselves destitute in a foreign land, needed to band together to elect a leader. The People adopt a proto-democracy and choose a representative from each clan to pose as a leader on their behalf. In a nation devastated by war and suffering through a famine, it was imperative that these people live and work together in order to establish a hierarchy and maintain an order necessary for survival. Propp speaks on the nature of moralistic folktales, “If members of the people always know that folktales are invention that cannot be believed but that provide tremendous enjoyment, then stories about sinners express some truth that is very close to the people and entirely real, so strong that the question of belief or disbelief in what is being narrated cannot even be asked. The people believe in the truth of these stories and tell them with a feeling of dread, and reverence, without pondering whether such events could actually happen or not…” (Forrester 2012: 271). It would seem Propp acknowledges that there are different classifications of folktales. Although these stories are just as fanciful as folktales, they seem to carry much more weight than their counterparts. Could it be because of the nature of these tales? There must be something in a moralistic tale which allows for the suspension of disbelief and therefore facilitates the ability to accept the truths found within the tales.

Conclusion

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Vladimir Propp and his 31 functions serve the purpose of analyzing the structure of folktales. Propp generalizes the folktale down into its basic components to categorize the folktale into themes and sequences. By boiling folktales down to their basic components, the folktale becomes less cumbersome and from this comparisons may be drawn. But why subject oneself to this tedium if not for some greater purpose? As Propp explicates that these key components make it easier to make comparisons and that these comparison may help explain the similarities among tales found worldwide. I have found that Propp’s model, at first thought to only apply to Russian folktales, does have merit. In studying Yombe and Navajo tales, I have found these functions do exist in tales outside of the scope of Eurasia. I found that these functions tend not only to come in pairs, but if one function is missing this does not preclude the presence of another function. Although the Yombe tales do not have a particularly predictable pattern, the Navajo folktale seems to be based on a conflict-resolution scheme. Regardless, I have found that these two cultures despite being separated by time and space still manage to have a creation myth that, granted have differing content, propagates the same values.

There have been various theories as to the origin of folktales. I still cannot find an explanation, and I do not think one definitive answer is available. Concurrent with Joseph Mbele’s work, I can only assume that either these tales were created spontaneously and simultaneously as civilizations sprouted around the world, or these tales were an amalgam of various tales and were mutated to match the values and traditions of a specific culture as these tales were diffused (Mbele 2001: 124-5). But my goal is not to find the origin of the folktale, my contribution to this subject matter is bringing two cultures that have never been in a dialogue before and to establish commonalities between these stories and what they teach their respective communities. As Niati says, “People around the world have the same capacity of imagination. A folktale is a myth, and a myth can be compared to a truth that has survived. The reason it has survived is that it appeals to human imagination. Indeed the ancient myths of documented cultures represent the human imagination to express their understanding of the relationship between human beings and divine power that is the reason there are similarities in myths of so many cultures. Human beings around the world seem to have the same set of cultural experiences” (Niati 2012 125). As I compare the
histories of these two cultures, I am obliged to agree with Niati’s notion. The Navajo and the Yombe are two civilizations comprised of smaller clans. Both the Navajo and the Yombe have experienced migrations over great distances; furthermore, these groups both share being hunter-gatherers as well as sharing similar spiritual practices. As I compare their respective creation myths I must also agree with Mbele’s theory of polygenesis. I see two cultures separated by space and time, which still managed to have closely related ways of life and histories. Perhaps this is the reason we can draw comparisons among these two cultures because of the correlations found in their histories. There are core values integral to the survival of a people, and these values are disseminated through folktales.
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