

Short note on Kings as “tears of the Rain” and Mankind as “tears of the Sun”

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Excerpt of “The case of kings as Tears of Rain (Nkoya, Zambia) / humankind as Tears of Re^c (Ancient Egypt)”

This paper has discussed one particularly intriguing parallel between the modern Nkoya people of Zambia (South Central Africa), and Ancient Egypt: those revolving on the Nkoya image of kings as the tears of Mvula, ‘Rain’, the demiurge who is considered the child of the High God Nyambi.

Nkoya (Zambia): Kings as the ‘Tears of Rain’

In the Nkoya case, my task has been rendered easier but more complex by the availability of a local compilation of mythology, *Likota Iya Bankoya*, which circulated in one or two heavily contested manuscript copies before I edited and published the text around 1990 – however, it is the confrontation of *Likota Iya Bankoya* with other, more diffuse and less controlled, oral traditions that produced my proto-historical reconstruction in *Tears of Rain*.

Kingship is one of the central Nkoya institutions and the one most highlighted in publicly circulating mythology. Therefore one expects a Nkoya myth of origin of kingship, and this is in fact available, in the following form – which finds its apotheosis in the ‘Tears of Rain image’ at the end.

I present both the Nkoya text and my English translation; the rendition of the text retains the biblical format which, for the compiler the first Nkoya pastor Rev. Shimunika, was the only form of text production with which he was familiar :



‘The king-ship of the Nkoya is said to have started with the large cooking-pot full of game meat. Many of the Nkoya in the past said that Mwene Nyambi is a bird; and that Mwene Nyambi has a child, Rain (Mvula), also a bird; and that two clans in this world are the relatives of Rain: the Nkwehe [Hawks] on the part of the birds, and the Mbunze [Buzzards] on the part of the people (...).

At the end of the ceremony it rained so heavily that the fire was extinguished. The people said : ‘Our Kingship comes from the Raindrop.’

Egypt, mankind as “Tears of the Sun”

For Ancient Egypt, the ‘tears of the divinity’ image is ascertained to emerge only in the Middle Kingdom, i.e. a time when the Egyptian unified state and its religion had been in existence for a thousand years.

Meanwhile, in another version humankind did not directly issue from Re^c’s tears, but Re^c’s tears fertilised the earth so that it could bring forth mankind:

‘Re is sometimes called the “weeper” which refers to his creation of mankind, explained by means of a play on words: the sun-god wept and from the tear (Egyptian remy []) that fell on earth, there sprang man (Egyptian remet [])’

The point I will make is that the parallel between the Nkoya expression ‘Our kingship is from the Drops (or Tears) of [the Demiurge] Rain’, and the Egyptian imagery of humankind as emerging from the tears of Re^c, is so close, and the Egyptian imagery can be argued to have emerged in such a specific, and fairly identifiable, context in time and space, that here we are tempted to give up our prudence, and conclude to downright continuity between the Bronze Age Egyptian expression, and the present-day Nkoya one.