The Nuosu Book of Origins

Bender, Mark, Luo, Qingchun, Zopqu, Jjivot, Harrell, Stevan

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In the ancient past, before the separation of the sky and earth, in the vast expanse of the heavens, the family of the sky spirit Ngeti Gunzy produced forty-eight immortals. The place the sun rises, produced the spirit Ddebbu Sysse. The place the sun sets produced the spirit Ddeshe Sysse.\(^1\) The headwaters of the north produced the spirit Sysse Dihni. The tail waters of the south produced the spirit Momu Sysse.\(^2\) In the vast expanse of the heavens lived the sky spirit Ngeti Gunzy. If not sent, he must be sent—\(^3\) send Ddebbu Ahly to go and stand atop Tulur Bbo’o Mountain and summon the spirit Ddeshe Sysse. The spirit Ddeshe Sysse summoned the spirit Sysse Dihni. The spirit Sysse Dihni summoned the spirit Momu Sysse. The spirit Momu Sysse summoned the spirit Gemo Ahly.
The spirit Gemo Ahly passed over Tulur Hxuovo Mountain, arriving at Shymu Ngehxa in the sky. The family of Ngeti Gunzy prepared to separate the sky and earth, and invited all spirits and immortals to talk of this great event. They talked of it for nine days until dark. During the talks they slaughtered nine cows, discussing it for nine nights until dawn. During the talks they drank nine crocks of wine: Hlyshy Awo gave his opinion to Ayi Sunie; Ayi Sunie gave his opinion to Poli Ayo; Poli Ayo gave his opinion to Awo Shobbu; Awo Shobbu gave his opinion to Momu Sysse; Momu Sysse gave his opinion to Sysse Dihni; Sysse Dihni talked of it for one day until dark, and slaughtered a cow while talking of it; one night talked of it until dawn, and drank a crock of wine while talking of it. Sysse Dihni broke apart nine huge copper and iron pots and gave them to Gemo Ahly. This person, Gemo Ahly, this strange craftsman, with his strange methods, used his knee as an anvil to smithy, used his fist as a hammer to smithy, used his fingers as tongs to smithy, and hammered out four copper and iron forks. One fork was given to Ddebbu Sysse to go and separate the place where the sun rises in the east. In the place where the sun rises, a small crack was opened, and a faint glimmer of light appeared;
and there the wind came out.
One fork was given to Ddeshe Sysse
to go and separate the place where the sun sets in the west.
In the place where the sun sets,
a small crack was opened,
and a faint glimmer of light appeared;
and there the wind went back in.
One fork was given to Sysse Dihni,
to go and separate the place at the northern headwaters.
At the headwaters,
a small crack was opened,
and a faint glimmer of light appeared;
and from there water flowed out.
One fork was given to Momu Sysse,
to go and separate the place at the southern tail waters.
At the southern tail waters, a small crack was opened;
and there the water flowed back in.
Gemo Ahly
hammered out a copper door bar,
hammered out an iron door bar,
and used them to push the sky to the place of the sky,
and used them to push the earth to the place of the earth:
cracks shone in all four directions.
Ngeti Gunzy stood up,
and looked down upon the world below.
He saw that the separation of the sky and earth
was not complete.
Four gigantic copper and iron balls
still lay in the human world below.\textsuperscript{5}
The family of Ngeti Gunzy
had to send them; it could not be otherwise.
They sent young steeds
to the human world of Shymu Ngejjiy
to kick the copper and iron balls.
Could they be kicked away?
They could not be kicked away.
They sent young heifers
to butt them with their horns.
Could they be butted away?
They could not be butted away.
They then sent a pair of yellow and red goats
to go and dig away the copper and iron balls.
Could they be dug away?
They could not be dug away.
They sent a pair of yellow and black pigs
to go and root away the copper and iron balls.
Could they be rooted away?
They could not be rooted away.
Sysse Dihni
then sent Gemo Ahly
to go and hammer the nine copper and iron balls
into nine copper and iron brooms.
He then gave them to nine female fairies
to go sweep the sky and earth.
They swept the sky to the place of the sky,
and the vast blue skies appeared;
they swept the earth to the place of the earth,
and it became the vast, barren land.

Four pillars that supported the sky and earth
stood in the four directions, supporting them.
In the place of the rising sun,
Muvu Hande Peak was the support.
In the place of the setting sun,
Muke Doli Mountain was the support.
In the place of the headwaters,
Nimu Hxosa Mountain was the support.
In the place of the tail waters,
Huomu Dici Mountain was the support.
The four pillars pulled the sky and earth
from the four directions, pulled apart the sky and earth,
crossing from east and west to pull apart the sky and earth.
Four stones were used to affix the sky and earth,
brought from the four directions to affix sky and earth.

The person who separated the sky and earth was
Sysse Dihni.
The person who finished making the sky and earth
was Muddie Yozu.
Sysse Yozu
—was not to be sent, but was still sent—

sent to get Gemo Ahly
to hammer out nine copper and iron axes;
and to give them to nine young immortals;
and to go with Sysse Yozu.

Sysse Yozu
prepared to refine the shapes of the sky and earth.

At dawn,
“You and I” excitedly discussed it;
by afternoon
“You and I” went into action.\(^8\)

They shaped the mountains into mountains;
they shaped the valleys into valleys.

One place that was shaped into mountains,
became a goat herding area.

One place that was shaped into flatlands,
became a bullfighting grounds.

One place that was shaped into rice fields,
became a place where rice is raised.

One place that was shaped into mountain slopes,
became a place to raise buckwheat.

One place that was shaped into ridges,
became a battleground.

One place that was shaped into small valleys,
became a place of flowing water.

One place shaped into tablelands,
became a place to establish homes.

Sysse Dihni,
having done the things in the sky,
having done the things on the earth,
having done the things with copper and iron,
passed through Tulur Hxuovo Mountain
where he came to send the spirit Ayi Sunie on a task.

Ayi Sunie
smashed the rocks to get water,
and water flowed out and circled around the earth.

Sunie Legge
used a *shipur lizzi* hoe\(^9\)
to flatten the Earth, and then plant grass;
and the grass grew very green.
Ngeti Gunzy stood up and
went and strolled three times below his house.
In one place there were trees;
in one place were no trees.
In one place there was grass;
in one place there was no grass.
In one place water flowed;
in one place no water flowed.
In one half were grasslands;
in one half there were no grasslands.
In one half there were living things;
in one half there were no living things.