

Eldest Myth

Earliest written storytelling: From the Eeri to the Um Gul

By Zulum Tepit

Preface

I have in this tome attempted to compile all that is currently known of the earliest myths written down. The great age of these myths mean that it is probable that many of them are lost, as the mediums they were written on decayed over time, and it is a great fortune that those that survived have. However, we must remember that there probably were many more out there.

I have during my research for this tome been fortunate enough to be allowed to look at some of the original tablets and bark. As I am versed in many of the languages they are written in, I have been able to make attempts at doing my own translations. The texts presented to you in this tome are therefore new translations, that I have striven to make as accurate as possible. I consulted several other learned folk during my work on these new translations, in an attempt to ensure accuracy and that the right sentiments come across.

The stories in this tome are arranged semi-chronologically. I say semi-chronologically, for some of them are difficult to date properly. They are thusly arranged by the generally accepted dates of the cultures they arose from, and where possible are given dates based on other characteristic features such as age of the writing medium and certain stylistic elements.

I hope this tome will be enlightening to you, the reader.

- Zulum Tepit, scholar of Zagun, 230 Eagle 3.

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I. Myths of the Eeri

Introduction

The Eeri were, as far as the current state of knowledge can tell, the earliest society to invent writing and thus the first to ever record their stories and myths in ways we can understand. It may well be that some older societies tried, and that the Great Carved Wall of Selkenn is indeed a recounting of some great tale, but we cannot read such pictographs. Words, however, we can read. I will not here recount the tale of the decipherment of Eeri letters, but I will say it is a tale worth seeking out literature of.

The societies that formed what we today call the Eeri arose in the valleys and floodplains of the Isinumai River. Along this great river there is much fertile land. From the great valley forests and waterfalls, with farms along the valley floor, to the floodplains and marshes with myriad fields, the river was of enormous importance. Not of any lesser importance, it would seem, were the mountains. Greatest of all these mountains are Aatelen. A tall, prominent spire, many of old have pondered whether Aatelen inspired the Eeri stories of the great Tree.

The Tree is central to most Eeri myth, and it seems only appropriate that we start at the beginning; by recounting the Eeri creation myth.

The Tale of the First Tree

In the beginning there was nothing but an endless expanse of water. For a long time, there was only the water, and the water was still. Then, a drop fell. The water shook, ripples shooting out like great waves from where the drop hit. And then, from where the drop fell, the Tree became. At first, it drank of the water to grow, but its roots had nothing to fasten and grow into, and so the Tree created earth. As the Tree continued to grow, so indeed did earth, until they were both great and vast indeed. The Tree, with roots like mountains and a trunk reaching the heavens, continued to drink and eat, for it had now endless amounts of both food and drink. And as it drank and ate, two fruits bloomed.

The fruits ripened and cracked open, and out flew two luminous birds. One of silver, one of gold. They flew into the heavens, and went to survey all the earth. For the first time, the Tree saw now light, and by the nourishing of the light of the birds, many other fruits bloomed, thousands upon thousand. They ripened and fell to earth, cracking open to become all manner of creatures large and small. Seeds from the fruits, and from them grew all plants. The children of the fruit then spread out to cover all the earth.

It was after the birth of the children of the fruit that the birds found themselves again at the Tree, having travelled around all the earth. They saw then all the other creatures, and took it upon themselves to keep watch over them. The two birds then made an arrangement between them that they should always be flying at opposite sides of the earth, so that one was always watching when the other was not.

So it was then that earth and life came into being, all springing forth from the Tree.

The Tale of Aakimi, or How writing came to the **Eeri**

Aakimi was a herbalist. They lived in the forest that grew around the Tree in the First Days. They knew every tree in the forest, and every herb. Often they would brew together brews of healing and strength, and often villagers would seek their aid and wisdom. Aakimi would often wander the forest to gather herbs, but would always make sure to not take more than needed, and that whatever was taken could regrow stronger. It is said that Aakimi spoke to the forest, to ask for permission and to decide how much they could take. Whether true or not, prayers and honors are still given to the forests, as Aakimi is said to have done.

One day, while Aakimi was out, they got lost. They could not find their way home, and stumbled into the grove of the Tree, and perhaps the Tree even willed it such. Aakimi stood then in awe. They gazed upon the trunk of the Tree, mountainous and sturdy. They gazed upon the canopy of the Tree, shimmering and glittering like a clear night sky filled with stars. Long Aakimi stood in awe, but as they stood a dimly glowing bird flew down to them.

The bird sung to grab Aakimi's attention, and Aakimi was brought out of their trance. They noticed then the bird, and as the bird saw this it began to fly and sing. For each pattern of flight, one sustained note. As it flew, the Tree groaned, and a great sheet of bark fell off. Aakimi grabbed the bark, and with their knife carved every pattern of the bird, and carefully memorized the song. A full day they spent in that grove, but as they saw the sun once more they had noted down every pattern of the bird.

They found then that the singing of the patterns could come together to sing every word they knew of, and so Aakimi brought the sheet of bark to the closest village, and taught them all the song. And so from birdsong, writing was born.

The First Winter and the First Stars

After the birds took flight, there was a long age of summer. The two Birds flew across the heavens as was their arrangement, one after the other as day follows night. The creatures of the ground flourished; much strange shapes of life came to be and thrived, knowing naught but warm days and cool nights.

But as the land teemed, it was not so with the sky. In the above there was a great expanse of silence. The Birds were ever far from each other, only on rare occasions ever meeting when one had flown too fast or the other too slow. As such, they rarely spoke, and though they saw the joys of the creatures of the land, their tasks forbid them from taking part. And so it was that the birds grew lonely.

They began to fly ever slower over the land, having only the companionship from afar of the creatures of the land, and wishing so to see it for as long as they ever could. But as this went on, the Birds lost sight of their task, seeing now what they wished for but did not have. Their willpower waned.

One day, no light was there in the sky. Those of the land were confused and concerned by this. They did not understand why this would be, and many talked and whispered why and what was behind this. One of them, by the name of Teeteí, took to words to calm the others: “Let us not be lost in fearful guesses and worry! Let us seek out the home of Lights, and see for ourselves why our skies have darkened!”. The people felt this a wise direction, and altogether they set out to seek the home of Lights.

Six days and six nights they journeyed, far up the river towards the feet of the mountains. On the sixth night they saw a great glow in the distance. On the dawn of the seventh day they went towards it, and found the Grove. Stunned they were all at the splendor of the Tree, and they beheld there the Birds sitting on great branches, their glows fading.

Thusly, the people spoke to the birds, seeing that the lightbringers were saddened:

“Joyous lightbringers! Wherefore is it that you fly no longer? Wherefore is it that you hide your light?”

And the birds spoke in return:

“Oh mirthful creatures of earth, we are lonely! Life thrives below, but the sky is silent and barren! We have none to speak nor celebrate alongside!”

And again the people spoke:

“But can you not celebrate with us? We would greet you in great cheer!”

And the Birds answered:

“Alas that it cannot be so! Should we come to you in our full light you would be scorched and likewise the land! And should we come to you lightless the days would be ever confused afterwards, and we know not what would happen to life then!”

At this a sadness filled the glow. All felt mournful and speech beyond their reach, and none had the answer to this puzzle before them.

They were not to stand so for long, for a great rumbling came, and the Tree began to shake. Its leaves once emerald green began to all turn silver, and as the shaking continued they came off their boughs and began to fall slowly to the ground. As all the leaves were falling a silver shower filled the Grove. All those who were there looked upon in awe, but they did not understand why this was occurring.

Right before the silver shower hit the ground, it stopped falling, and the shaking stopped. The carpet of leaves began to murmur, and those who were there saw that the leaves began to change shape and glow. No longer were these silver leaves, but all sorts of strange and new creatures of the air, and as the leaves got their own glow, they took off to the sky, and what was once a dark expanse was now filled with life and light of its own.

The people, already both awestruck and confused, were not any less so for what happened next. For as the Tree stood before them without leaves, small specks of the glow of the leaves began to fall from the sky and cover the ground, and every heart was lifted at this.

The Birds cried out in joy: “Companions we desired and companions we now have! We thank you, those of the land, for had we not spoken to you why wonder if we would ever have spoken at all!”

“Will you forget us now, Lightbringers?” The people asked.

“Nay, we will not! Some of our time we shall spend closer to our new companions, and some of our time we shall spend closer to you! Now have mirth, you of the land, for more mirth there is now in this world than ever before, and the sky shines with the splendor of ten thousand silver shimmers!” And at this, the Birds took off to resume their task.

And so it is that the shifting seasons came to be.