God is a Black Woman

Graphical Rendering of a Creation Myth

Yara Polana

Lokaritgerð til BA-prófs

Listaháskóli Íslands

Hönnunar- og arkitektúrdeild
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Lokaverkefni til BA-prófs í Grafískri hönnun

Leiðbeinandi: Sigríður Guðmarisdóttir

Grafísk hönnun

Hönnunar- og arkitektúrdeild
Desember 2013
Abstract

This thesis investigates a detailed account in designing a creation myth with references to stories and traditions from Northern Mozambique. With collaboration with animist religions and the book *God is a Black Woman*, which is a graphical rendering a female deity. The author of this thesis wrote the book and the story concerns unity and separation of the people. This thesis brings an open understanding to which steps are required to accomplish a graphical rendering of a creation myth, from what to research, to why the use of such distinctive divine symbolism. The research material to cover the story and this dissertation is based on African symbolism, rituals, traditions, language, dressings, religion, facial features and music that is used in social events. African mythology covers a large area. With so many countries, regions, languages, tribes, cultures and imperialist crossovers that the sheer diversity of prevailing Gods would seem overwhelming. This thesis tries to capture the importance of representing divine spiritual beings by exploring myths, its credibility, and introduces the Sacred Feminine from African perspective. My understanding of the religion beliefs and spiritual identities of today, got me to the conclusion that, knowing our Spiritual stories and histories, can prevent repetition of our most catastrophic mistakes, and that may well happen if we sincerely, so wish.
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Introduction

In the course of human history, people have envisioned their gods similar to what they themselves look like. Depending on the country of birth, growing up experiences and social structure, society will put God in the image of Man. This also happens in African communities where today God is believed to be Black but it hasn’t always been like this. A lot has changed in the beliefs of people, since Christianity came, many of the traditional beliefs were put aside and people were forced to practice them in secrecy. But when did this all begin? We know that the stories about each society’s Gods have been told since as far as humanity knows. We know that these stories or myths help us, as a community, to understand the unexplainable, the unknown, our surroundings and up to an extent the respect for the society we live in. There is a great symbolic power in storytelling, those who are known as the traditional storytellers of a tribe often are connected to spiritualism. They are often known as spiritual healers who speak with our ancestral family. These spiritual healers help leaders with their spiritual advice to keep their people with a sense of togetherness, community.

I will use references from the book *God is a Black Woman*, which was part of my final project in the Icelandic Academy of the Arts in the year 2013. This book was written in hopes to place our selves squarely with those who are committed to peace, in every sense of that word. This includes peace between the genders, the races, the faiths, as well as our painful common history, where fear rules. It is focused on some myths that were passed from generation to generation, molded to fit the country’s’ modern lives. It identifies strongly with the many efforts to resurrect The Sacred Feminine, so the merging with our largely unguided and love-starved Sacred Masculine, can be brought into common awareness. Born in the capital of the country, Maputo, to parents of two different tribal structures resulting in a Portuguese being the family language. I had input from different tribal beliefs, myth stories, traditions, separation and unification of certain habits. This has always fascinated me. Having this background in my life, I decided for my graduation project to bring this subject that talking was extensively avoided because of fear of exclusion from the community.

Most forms of traditional African belief are strongly monotheistic. This is due to
the belief that the earth is the supreme force of all spirits. The people give offerings and perform rituals so that the earth provides them with the most significant necessity of all. When Africans were introduced to Roman Catholicism, the conversion was easy due to this monotheistic ideology. Nevertheless Africans still practice their traditional religion in secrecy.

The archetypes of African Gods myths have a distinctive pattern, "the gods are all extremely dissatisfied with their creations believing the best of everyone and optimistically giving the benefit of the doubt to all and sundry." These Divine beings have a remarkable innocence in their behavior, they are always naive and unworldly, and that is why they were easily disappointed at the acts of humans. Trimming down the research to Mozambican religion, I discovered that it was hard to get information because mostly all stories are told in familiar gatherings where the grandfather, uncle or oldest cousin shares their vision of faith, and each tribe have their own beliefs and ways to teach to the community.

The intention of the affirmation God is a Black Woman used within this thesis is not to create controversy between beliefs. It is an approach to harmonically break the barriers of religion, and the dominant tribal mentality that is breaking apart our global society. But what is the importance the book God is a Black Woman? The first chapter tries to give an overview of the book, answering these main questions why it was written and why is it relevant, while exploring all the graphical reference that was rendered to make the illustrations and finally analyze the artistic approach for the representation of a divine entity. The second chapter will give an overview of my country’s background, the early ancestry beliefs from the Macuans, one of the largest tribe, and some influences from my childhood that ignited the research to write the story. Ultimately the third chapter tries to explain how the story for the book God is a Black Woman began by answering the most complex question. Who, what and how is God, according to our old myths?

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1. GOD is a Black Woman

"God is a Black Woman" is a spiritual fictional account to the creation of the universe and qualifies as a spiritual and lyrical version of "A Biography of The Universe" from a Mozambican's perspective. Written in early March of current year, the story is based on a traditional tribe from the North of Mozambique called Macuas.

Why write about God? Once on the radio in Mozambique, there was a vague description of Africa’s belief, saying that what Africans had, was a traditional worshiping and ritualistic system in order to get food and well being. This radio program led me to the conclusion that there is a lot of mis-understanding on Africans belief system, religion and tradition. The leaders of the colony had the first attempt to write Mozambican’s history. Therefore there is a lot of information that gets left out or simply out of lack of understanding it is mis-interpreted and ultimately mis-leading. Then the idea of writing God is a Black Woman emerged from the need of a local to write local history or better-said story.

In order to make a story as a whole in a communal sense, I read all about the location from each tribe, macua, sena, ndau, ronga, xope, nsenga, nyanja, xuabo just to name a few (see fig. 1). The macua tribe and maconde tribe from the north were the most popular ethnic groups. The macua who are known for being the biggest and the first to immigrate to Mozambique and for their women for having beauty powder called mussiro on their face (see fig. 2, 3 and 4), the makonde being the one's who have distinctive symbolism on their bodies, specially the face (see fig. 5), the ndau and sena with traditional distinctive dance (see fig. 6), and the tsonga and thonga with strong ritualistic behavior to please the gods and spirits (see fig. 7). Mozambique has several unofficial languages and using a few of the words to name the Gods and the dances was perfect for the story. Many of them have interesting literal meanings such as:

- **Xipoco**, that means ghost in Changana (language of the Tsonga or Thonga);
- Mulungu that means White Man (Mulunga white woman, also Tsonga);
- **Ine** that means “I” or “myself” in Sena (language of the Senas);
- **Xikuembo** that means God (original meaning) or witchery (modern adaptation)

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in Changana;
- Nyanga that means Witch doctor or someone that practices traditional medicine, also in Changana.

The majority of the words I took from the dominant dialect (Changana) that is from Maputo the capital, which and I adapted them to the context of the story. The chapters contained in the book are: “Birth of the universe”, “Beginning of human life”, “The Conga drums and the seeds”, “Reincarnation and Rejuvenation”, “Nyanga The Hybrid child”, “The Rainbow snake and the spirit guides”, “Mlunga and The First Ghost”, “Beginning of death”, “Two Paths of Separation”, “Further signs of Division”, “A Spreading Fire”, “Ndzuti The Dead Spirits”, “Shetani The Demon Lion” and “The Fruit of existence”. Why think of God as Black and if so, does that apply only to dark skinned and black people? Not necessarily, especially because of the knowledge we carry that the cradle of humanity is Africa. In Dr. Linda Beckerman’s research, she says that some genetics state that we are all black, and always been since the beginning.

What scientists now believe is that everyone started out with dark skin in the first place because it is protective against absorbing too much Vitamin D, which is toxic. Dark skin screens out UV radiation and your body, which uses UV to produce Vitamin D, produces less of it - a real evolutionary advantage at the lower latitudes where we began.4

With our vision of God being similar to our image, one can say that God being black applies for everyone. But one cannot impose such belief on modern society due to our religious and political differences. The book reflects mainly on:

- Matriarchy, often called the opposite of Patriarchy, which in this case is related to the Mother instead of the father. Will be explained further on the next chapter.
- The Sacred Feminine or Divine Feminine, which defend female Goddess.
- Mary Magdalene, which by Elizabeth Claire Prophet, is about discovering the essence of Mary and Jesus’ teachings on Divine Feminine.
- And The Black Athena, where Martin Bernal discusses the existence of African and Asian civilization in Greece, and the influence of religion on those societies.

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Some of these subjects get discarded by the mainstream anthropologists and patriarch conservatives who claim that are just theories by radical feminists. To name an example of such critics, S. Michael Houdmann, who uses the author of *The Da Vinci Code* to criticize the concept of the sacred feminine says:

The sacred feminine assumes that women, through the ability to bear children, are more “sacred” than men … neither Dan Brown’s imaginations nor the sacred feminine has any basis in the Bible … the “sacred feminine” is not sacred, nor does it accurately represent what the Bible describes as true femininity.⁵

But why represent God as a Woman? What portrays the female as divine? When researching upon the identity for divinity in femininity I came across one of the greatest definitions with Mevlana Jalaluddin Rūmī, an Islamic Sūfī, where he explains some personal fact about Women that led to fully engage on writing the book. Rūmī wrote: “Woman is the radiance of God; she is not your beloved. She is the Creator—you could say that she is not created.”⁶ The sentence “She is the Creator” gave birth to *God is a Black Woman*. The first chapter is essentially the reflection of that sentence, the creation of the universe through a woman’s womb. How is it possible to represent graphically a myth from a multi-cultural nation? Which characters to portray, and what colors to use. What is the importance of symbolism in the representation of these characters?

Before graphically representing an idea, a character or a story we have to know about art. It is difficult to define art, because it takes two distinctive branches. Where one is related to the appearance, such as what proprieties are included, what genre, history of the evolution of art,⁷ and the other branch is related to the aesthetics features, such as balance, harmony, subjective or objective beauty and perfection⁸. But for this thesis I will define art as a visual language influenced by thoughts and feelings. And as a visual language, can take the form of image, symbols, icons, graphics, paintings, sculptures and others. What qualify as graphical components of a creation myth? Since we are representing something that in our minds, hearts we perceive as real, symbols,

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colors, iconography, characters and the features that the characters hold, are the components that are significantly required.

What should be searched to be able to represent these components? What are the first steps to be assembled? We start wide as possible to have an overview of what we will go into, for the book it was used the African continent as the widest threshold. Africa is a bold continent and art is often expressed with bold, vivid colors and clear shapes (see fig. 8). Each color holding its own meaning. Trimming down to Mozambican we notice its liveliness on the flag. Which has golden yellow, red, black, green and white (see fig. 9). Golden yellow representing the richness of the subsoil, red the resistance towards colonialism, black the Dark Continent, green the richness of the soil and white represents peace. Carrying on to the next step we are ought to identify a known local artist, which has also international recognition. By identifying the artist we study his or her work by focusing on the pattern system, complexity, harmony, intention, colors and meaning. Malangatana Valente was one of the local artists that had great influence on the pick of style for the graphics, to carefully represent the subconscious of the country through his art.

Malangatana’s works have always projected a bold vision of life where there is a communion between human, animal and plant life. He draws on his indigenous heritage whilst simultaneously embracing symbols of modernity and "progress", synthesis of art and politics.

He was a versatile painter whose art reflected mythology, witchcraft, crowds and the colonial period of pain and suffering (see fig 10 and 11). Ultimately after assembling all graphic components and we structure the story. The book follows a specific sequence, starting with the beginning of everything that surrounds us, adaptation and learning how to coexist. In some myths before the creation of everything there is usually solitude among the divines, just like in the bible most assume that before God created the heavens and the earth there was nothing. Therefore the first chapter follows such rhythm where great Goddess was in solitude on her own realm, and decides to give birth to a universe to end her loneliness (see fig. 12).

The second part of the sequence is the conflicts where another character that has the almost same powers as the Goddess follows an evil path creating doubt and

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9 Recognition of Malangatana’s stature implicit in the statement made by UNESCO's Director-General Federico Mayor.
insecurity. To be more specific, the second part of the story is about the beginning of patriarchy and the need of protection; the separation of tribes; the beginning of death through poisoning and murder (see fig. 13).

Almost universally in myths throughout Africa, in the beginning there was no death. In some myths, the SUPREME BEING made people young again after they grew old. In other tales, people died but were reborn. In still others, people went to the heavens and lived with the Creator, in a different form ... death was often inflicted on humans as a punishment for disobedience.10

The meaning of death in the Macua tribe is always addressed as accidental and an act caused by bad spirits or man. The Macua believe that God never created them as his beloved sons and daughters only to kill them in the end. They also believe that there are strong forces or spirits that are more powerful than God Himself. That is why they loose their lives and die.11

The third and part of the sequence is about forgiveness, recognizing that no longer the people were living in harmony and the finding of the path to spiritual enlightenment. Further investigations on the story structure will be presented later on Myths and Gods identity chapter. But first I want to ask why the Macuans are important to the story of God is a Black? Who are they and where are they from?

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2. Macua: a Matrilineal Tribe

Mozambique, a former colony of Portugal during 500 years, is located on the east coast of Africa, neighboring South Africa to the south, its latitude parallel to that of the island of Madagascar to the east in the southern hemisphere (see fig. 14). According to the The Historical Archives of Mozambique the name was given after an old Arab merchant that lived up the north in an island close to the Mozambican coast before Vasco da Gama and his colony came, Mussa Al Bique, Mussa Al Mbik or Mussa Ben Mbiki, and due to pronunciation it became Moçambique.12

Mozambique is a nation with many nations, a multi-cultural country driven by music, rhythm, happiness and the joy of living. It is multicultural because of its mixture between tribes and ethnicities, Bantu, Khoisani and Arabs are a great influence to the initial history of the country's culture, and nowadays we have Asians, Europeans, Americans and South Americans all living in harmony within the land (see fig. 15). With a population of 24 million Mozambique is divided into tribes, today we have the modern westernized culture predominant in the major cities but when going out of the cities we encounter the real locals because the deeper we go the less exposed to western culture they are. Some archaeological studies say that approximately sixteen major ethnic groups scattered all over the country with Macua (Makua or Makhua) as the largest of them all. The variety of cultures lead to a variety of tribal beliefs and religion, social structures, traditions, dialects, ritual of initiation and social ceremonies with music and dance as essential acts of expression for these events.

Almost all religions in Africa and Mozambique are animist. They attribute spiritual or supernatural power to everything on earth, plants, inanimate objects, and natural phenomena. As John Mbiti describes animism as “a word derived from Latin anima which means breath, breath of life, and hence carries with it the idea of the soul or spirit”13. While growing up I carried a belief that everything had life but that belief was washed away when weekend Christian school started. With the writing of God is a

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Black Woman that early child belief is coming back again and slowly the conclusion of having a connection with everything that surrounds us is getting continuously concrete.

Macua, as the largest tribe, was one of the first tribes to immigrate to the country and it is by far the most different tribe from all others, this is because they share a matriarchal\textsuperscript{14} form of social structure. Matriarchy is a form of political and social organization in which the Female line is reckoned by their power. Many disagree regarding the existence of matriarchal societies, such as Bob Black who says “Matriarchy does not exist in the present, there is no direct evidence of its existence in the past, and all of its supposed survivals may coexist with authority systems which are not matriarchal.”\textsuperscript{15} Matrilineal is what is found today in many societies such as India and North Mozambique. Matrilineal is where the Women have power over the family and society, but not in an authoritarian mode more as a natural order. In this particular tribe, Macua, the children take the mother’s last name, which means according to a definition in \textit{Vocabulary} that they are truly matrilineal:

Matrilineal refers to familial relationships that can be traced through a female. To follow the matrilineal line in our family, we start with our mothers ... The adjective matrilineal describes anything related to kinship through a female line. If the children in your culture take their mother's last name, and not their father's, this is a matrilineal tradition.\textsuperscript{16}

The females are considered primordial, and within the social structure there is no gender role, boys and girls were treated equally until they reach puberty where they are thought their natural roles (the boy goes hunting and the girl nurtures the family).

Many believe they originated on a sacred mountain called mount Namuli. There is a cave on the mountain from which all the animals were born. A female foot is said to be imprinted on the outside of the cave – hence the matrilineal family structure.\textsuperscript{17}

The ancestors due to their relation with the cult of the Feminine decided this form of


\textsuperscript{15} Bob Black, “Stone Age or Old Age: An Unbridgeable Chasm”, \textit{Nightmares of Reason}, no publisher, no city of publication, 2010, p. 49.

\textsuperscript{16} Matrilineal, See: \textit{Vocabulary.com}, no date of publication, viewed on 20 October 2013, \url{https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/matrilineal}.

\textsuperscript{17} “Makua people: Mozambique’s largest matriarchial tribe which still holds its ancient ancestral worship intact and are noted for Musiro facial painting”, \textit{Trip down Memory Lane}, 25 March 2013, viewed on 18 May 2013, \url{http://kwekudee-tripdownmemorylane.blogspot.com/2013/03/makua-people-mozambiques-larhest.html}.
gender identity in the Macuan society as predominant structure. They viewed earth as a female deity, and they looked upon earth as a fertile being that needs to be nurtured in order to create fruits. Growing up drawing the outlines of Mozambique upside down, (see fig. 16) lead me to the belief that we have a strong connection with the Women, I viewed women as important, and especially because they are usually projected as the one who takes care of everything such as food, water and the children. This strong symbolic link between femininity and nurturance is portrayed in most parts of the world. In fact, when we look at the female figure, we find resemblance in the way they nurture, are receptive, peaceful and share love. Sri Aurobindo an Indian philosopher, yogi teacher and Maharishi\textsuperscript{18}, also described by Robert McDermott, a Former President at California Institute of Integral Studies, as someone who serves humanity as a spiritual master\textsuperscript{19} says, “If there is to be a future, it will wear the crown of feminine design.”\textsuperscript{20}

And Andrew Harvey adds:

> Unless we awaken to the mystery of the sacred feminine, of the feminine as sacred, and allow it to glow into, irradiate, illumine, and penetrate every area of our activity and to create in them all harmony, justice, peace, love, ecstasy, and balance, we will die out and take nature, or a large part of it, with us.\textsuperscript{21}

In modern days many people from different parts of the world are arriving to this conclusion. If we behave similarly in different places we might share an inner connection within ourselves. 

God is a Black Woman

was greatly influenced by the tribe’s belief of the divine feminine. Many of Mozambicans specially in the older generation never learned to read or write, education only became available to the Mozambicans in the last century before it’s independence, but it was still a struggle, it has been told that our grandparents were forced to repeat twice each grade before continuing to the next no matter how good their grades were. This is why the Portuguese were the ones who wrote many of the official documents about Mozambican history and culture. There is little written information today about the traditions of our


\textsuperscript{19} Institute for Wholistic Education Sri Aurobindo Information Page, Sri Aurobindo, no date of publication, http://aurobindo.net.

\textsuperscript{20} Sri Aurobindo, quoted by Andrew Harvey, no date of publication, viewed on 08 of December 2013, http://www.greatmystery.org/nl/vancouver2012aharvey2.html.

ancestors, especially since the only medium of sharing this information was within their own tribes, through storytelling.

Matriarchal societies have always existed but something happened in order to change this belief. Dr. James DeMeo's research focused upon major complex of traumatic and repressive attitudes, behaviors, social customs and institutions that are correlated with violence and warfare with patrist in comparison with matrist societies. What is a matriarchal and patriarchal society? As briefly mentioned before, matriarchal is when the females, especially the mothers have the central role of political leadership, moral authority and control over property and their children. The patriarchal is when the male is the primary authority figure central to social organization where fathers hold authority over women and children. Gordon Rattray Taylor in *Sex in history* developed a dichotomous schema of human behavior in various societies, expanding upon his theory according to findings in repressive societies are called *patrist*, and they differ in almost every aspect from the *matrist* cultures, whose main focus were to protect and enhance the pleasurable maternal-infant and male-female bonds. The table 1 bellow by Dr. James DeMeo gives a drastic contrast between forms of *patrist* (armored) and *matrist* (unarmored) culture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Patrism (armored)</th>
<th>Matrism (not armored)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infants, Children &amp; Adolescents</td>
<td>Less physical affection</td>
<td>More physical affection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Painful initiations</td>
<td>Absence of pain in initiations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sex-segregated houses or military, or age villages</td>
<td>Mixed sex children's houses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexuality</td>
<td>Restrictive attitude</td>
<td>Permissive attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Genital mutilations</td>
<td>No genital mutilations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female virginity taboo</td>
<td>No female virginity taboo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Limits on freedom</td>
<td>More freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inferior status</td>
<td>Equal status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vaginal blood taboo (hymeneal, menstrual &amp; childbirth blood)</td>
<td>No vaginal blood taboo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cannot choose own mate</td>
<td>Will chose own mate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural &amp; Family Structure</th>
<th>Males control female fertility</th>
<th>Females control own fertility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian</td>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchal</td>
<td>Egalitarian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrilineal and Patrilocal</td>
<td>Matrilineal and Matrilocal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsive lifelong monogamy</td>
<td>Non-compulsive monogamy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often polygamous</td>
<td>Rarely polygamous</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military caste structures</td>
<td>No full-time military</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent, sadistic</td>
<td>Nonviolent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion &amp; Beliefs</th>
<th>Asceticism, avoidance of pleasure</th>
<th>Pleasure welcomed and institutionalized</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inhibition, fear of nature</td>
<td>Spontaneity, nature worshiped</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Full-time religious specialists</td>
<td>No full-time religious specialists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male shamans</td>
<td>Male or female shamans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strict behavior codes</td>
<td>Absence of strict codes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 - Dichotomous behaviors, attitudes, and social institutions.

This table explains a lot that is found today in many patriarch-based societies some still found in tribal communities of the rituals of initiation such as genital mutilation, tribal tattoos, that mark the origin of their nation and that was changed to protect the body from bad spirits, controlling the women inducing fear or depriving them from leadership. When reading this table we have to keep in mind that these differences is not about choosing to have one gender ruling the other, it is about having the balance between genders that benefits both male and female, in which the Matriarchs know how to do best. Such as welcoming other religions and nature-based worship, equal treatment to both genders, female freedom, absence of pain, mutilation, persuading using fear and manipulation, absence of the need to have absolute power and control.

The idea of having a matriarch society in the book fit perfectly with the Macua’s culture and represented better the creation myth. But what is a creation myth? And how do you write a credible one? How are myths connected to the story?
3. Myths and Gods identity

Myths carry a wide range of definitions and its meaning can vary from community to community. In Mozambique myths are taken as if it was written somewhere, in fact according to John S. Mbiti, African religions is written in peoples hearts, and minds and each person emphasizes these beliefs by their own perception of it.\textsuperscript{24} Myths explain a lot about our surroundings. Africa holds the highest number of illiterates, because the art of writing was introduced to natives on a very late era. Therefore there is little information on African religions. The art of storytelling became indeed the most popular form to communicate and educate on traditional and religious matters. That’s why applying Myths to a day-to-day activity holds such great importance.

The word myth comes from the Greek word *mythos* which means story or word, and often its characteristics includes: heroic characters, often not human, but when human was always doing rightful and just acts, the social or moral teaching and the clarifying of natural or supernatural phenomena and so a creation myth is a story evolving the beginning of the universe, earth and its habitants. Mircea Eliade, the author of *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, has an interesting approach to the definition of myth “The myth relates a sacred history, a primordial event that took place at the beginning of time … to tell a myth is to proclaim what happened … once revealed the myth becomes absolute truth”.\textsuperscript{25} Writing a credible creation myth involves great deal of research in which a lot was used for the book. Religion was the main focus for writing it because it changed along the years since the colonials came to Africa.

Africa is often called the black or dark continent. Why it is called the dark or black continent, may have nothing to do with the color of the skin of the majority of the people who live there. The name was given in the early 1800s and 1900s by the Europeans who were seeking for land to explore had little knowledge about the place.

Henry Stanley named Africa “The Dark Continent” in his 1878 travelogue, remarking that it was poorly known. Only 7 years later, the Congress of Berlin felt obliged to carve up the darkness into convenient chunks for the

Until this day Africa holds a great deal of mystery in its land, and this applies to religious or traditional religious beliefs (see fig. 17). Many western anthropologists try to define particular beliefs but since each African country is both diverse and complex, it would require a few decades of serious tribal research to get to know about all beliefs. One interesting fact is that these “one traditional religion cannot be propagated in another tribal group” although one tribe could assimilate another tribe’s religion due to marriage, migration, or exchange of knowledge between the higher experts of the tribes.

Since God is a Black Woman explored a path to the fictional account of a creation myth, there was a high research demand to include the country’s most of the popular myths. Such as why dark skinned have mulungo children that are bringers of evil, because it empowers and enriches of the witch doctors, to considerably increase the story’s credibility. The most known myth tellers from Mozambique are Mia Couto, writer and poet, and Malangatana Valente, painter, artist, singer, dancer who died in 2004. They both have referential material to the era after the independence where the threshold was of much grief, pain, and on the other hand music, rhythm dancing and joy. Couto said on an interview about his latest book Êstorias Abensonhadas:

There was a thirst for all, a will to power again, to be born again. We had lived 16 years of war, surrounded by violence without hope that some day there was peace. And suddenly, that peace came. The stories in this book reflect this moment of rebirth of a nation, and every one of us who resist a long parade of death and destruction. It’s amazing how, even in the midst of this drama, what we wanted was to laugh, sing, and celebrate life.

Dance, music, arts has been playing a crucial role in the Mozambican educational and cultural scene. It is a form of communication, teaching, learning and sharing

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27 John S. Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy, p. 4.
28 John S. Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy, p. 4.
29 Edgar Machangana says that Mulungo is a person without any pigmentation on his skin, also known as an albino, Changaná – Maputo’s local language, Interviewed on 03 of February 2013.
information between the people. Music influences our emotions and most of the time uplifts our spirit, dance identifies us from each part of the country and each tribe, art describes how we are inside, our vulnerabilities, fears and beliefs.

Religion can be a very controversial subject when connected to science, politics and opinions. Critics to religion have many arguments to why religion in general should be bad for society and it is true that many totalitarian regimes have been backed up by religious ideas. There exist many other examples where religion has been a strong force for promoting democratic principles, especially in modern time. But even in our modern times we have cultures that benefit from these induced principles for the well being of society, such as the Indians, the Native Americans and the traditional Africans.

God is looked at as a male figure in many countries. But why is the gender of this deity recognized as a paternal figure? This came across my path when studying the structure of society, the ruling part always have the same structural paternal pattern, where the leaders have the need to protect their people. But when did this happen? Why is it that in many African communities and tribes our maternal figures are looked as protective and have space in the ruling class? The need to protect your own kind of people started in early tribal eras where when their homes or huts where being threatened by the animal kingdom and there was the outburst need to keep the ones who take care of the house and young ones safe, meaning women and children. The men started to go hunt down the enemies to keep their loved ones safe.

The spiritual healers, consultants were also part of this hunting, keeping the bad spirits of the evil animals apart from their daily life. These spiritual consultants have a strong sense of a higher spiritual presence that today we refer to it as God. But where does this spiritual being comes from? The earth. Earth is the biggest spiritual being in the African world, it is looked at with respect due to what is given to their people. For the spiritual people the act of giving fruits, water and peaceful environments is an act of a female, a mother to be precise. “The earth is our Mother. The sky is our Father.”

Without one of them we wouldn’t have what we need, food and nurture. The women have always had a sense of enlightenment in caring for others. The mother figure is strong in that sense, since they are the ones who give birth they carry an inbuilt caring system with them. We have many cultures that defend the existence of female gods, such as Buddhism and Hinduism. But how did this all started? The primitives have a

strict believe that a female entity is very strong among us, starting with earth.

God was not thought of as male, but as a woman. Revered for centuries, she was the Great Mother who gave birth to all life in the universe. She was no virgin queen, but the fertile vessel of sexuality and creativity regarded as both sacred and central. In fact, only one thing was absent from their societies: warfare. Their cities, though equipped with everything from temples to drainpipes, had a distinct absence of defensive walls, their gravesites a remarkable absence of weapons. By all counts, evidence shows they were both advanced and peaceful, a combination which may seem as startling as the concept of a feminine god.\(^{32}\)

The sacred feminine is a religious movement that emphasizes femininity as being closer to divinity than masculinity. Those of the sacred feminine tradition worship feminine beauty and the power of sexual reproduction. The sacred feminine assumes that women, through the ability to bear children, are more sacred than men. Men can only experience the sacred feminine, spiritually, through sexual intercourse. Advocates of the sacred feminine viewpoint range from pseudo-Christians to radical feminists, goddess worshippers, and Wicca witches. In a Theological Study by Elizabeth A. Johnson, she looks to symbolize Mary as the female face of God.

Maternity with its creativity, nurturing, and warmth; unbounded compassion; sovereign power that protects, heals, and liberates; all-embracing immanence; re-creative energy: thus is borne out the hypothesis that the Marian tradition is one fruitful source of female imagery of God.\(^{33}\)

She started looking at the connection Mary had with God in order to deliver Jesus Christ. Mother Goddess is a term used for the representation of motherhood, fertility, creation, or who embodies the bounty of the Earth (see fig. 18).


Conclusion

This thesis endeavored to explore the steps to create a fictional creation myth and add image to a divine entity, in this case God. The existence of God varies according to our common history, genetics and some scholars that defend the belief and disbelief. All religions, largely, promote moral values, discussions, but more important most of them promote some sort of involvement with society, the results obtained with this research were more surprising that I expected, in particular the one with Linda Beckerman’s study where she says that we are all Black. The differences between human behavior in matrist and patrist societies give reasons to believe that there are other factors than social structures and hierarchy. The take on natural phenomena from the tribal belief to modern belief defines their identity, i.e. patriarchal societies originated from fear, insecurity, the need to be in control and it is believed that natural phenomena influenced the group mind of this society.

The book *God is a Black Woman* was created in order to have for the first time an identity to a local God, however the idea for adding image to an African deity was not necessarily about a dark skinned supernatural being, but a spiritual being from an African soil. At least in Africa this is what was believed before the Catholic movement was introduced. Some of the underlying factors that affected religious beliefs and the general group mind are influencing the sociological nature and attitudes in human behavior, causing repression and in extreme cases major complex traumatic social acts, these factors were studied by Dr. James DeMeo using a geographical approach and clinical and cross-cultural observations on human biological needs. DeMeo explains the differences between the Patrist (Patriarchal, the dominant) Society and the Matrist (Matriarchal, the nurturing) Society. Many leaders changed course of history and religion to fit with their social agenda to better influence the community.

This thesis tried to capture the importance of myths and its credibility, the graphical representation of a divine spiritual being and introduces the Sacred Feminine from African perspective. The concepts within can be used to point towards new directions for further research.
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Via telephone
Polana, Maria, interviewd by Yara Polana, 06 June 2013

Maria, age 53, is a Sena speaker from Beira, center of Mozambique. She studied Teaching and Psychology and works as a Health Officer in Mozambique. The questions addressed to Maria were related to the psychology of the self and the collective in Beira. She explained that the Sena people were very strategic and when they migrated to Mozambique they did not have a leader, therefore the individualism did not exist only later with the inter-cultural relations with other immigrants of that area. She explained to me the meaning of Ine, which today has the meaning of “I” or “oneself”, but previously Ine was addressed to the group. Similar to the Jamaicans of today, “I and I” can mean “Me and You” or “Me and Us”.

Via social media
Machangana, Edgar, interviewd by Yara Polana, 03 February 2013

Edgar, age 30, is a native Changana and Rhonga speaker from Maputo, capital and south of Mozambique. He studied Journalism and Music, and works part time as a Promoter of local events in Mozambique. Edgar has written some accounts about myths, the questions addressed to him were related to the validity of meaning of certain words in Changana. As a native speaker, Edgar explained that the only book that was available was written by a foreign and according to his Linguistic teacher there are many mistakes. He explained to me that southern people are very concrete. And gave me definitions of Xikwembo, Momomo, Muloyi, Nyanga,,Zione, Xitsungo and Muhedene.
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Fig. 12. Yara Polana, “Birth of The Universe”, God is a Black Woman, Reykjavik, 2013, p. 9.

Fig. 13. Yara Polana, “The two paths of Separation”, God is a Black Woman, Reykjavik, 2013, p. 38.


Fig. 17. FSNKLVR, Tumblr, 10 December 2013, retrieved on 11 of December 2013, http://fusionkelvar.tumblr.com.

Fig. 18. Oya governs the winds and guards the gates of cemeteries. Her formal title is "Madre del Nueve," or "Mother of Nine," and her associated number is nine. Nine different shades of brown are her colors, retrieved on 08 of December 2013, http://acc6.its.brooklyn.cuny.edu/~scintech/mercury/Oya.htm.
**Image Reference**

**Chapter 1**

Fig. 1. Map of linguistic groups.

Fig. 2. Young woman wearing decorated mussiro on her face.

Fig. 3. Woman with decorated mussiro.

Fig. 4. Woman with full face covered in mussiro.
Fig. 5. Makonde woman.

Fig. 6. Ndau/Sena dancing.

Fig. 7. Shaman performing a ritual.

Fig. 8. Batique.

Fig. 9. Mozambican flag.

Fig. 10. Untitled by Malangatana 1961.
Fig. 11.Untitled by Malangatana 1980.

Fig. 12. The Universe in the Goddess’ womb.

Fig. 13. Makonde figure with dead lion.
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Fig. 14. Mozambique in the African Continent.

Fig. 15. Poetry Night at ICMA - The German Culture Center in Maputo, Mozambique.

Fig. 16. Mozambique upside down
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Fig. 17. Culture of Africa.

Fig. 18. Goddess Oya.