

Cherokee Creation Story

The earth is a great island floating in a sea of water, and suspended at each of the cardinal points by a cord hanging down from the sky vault. When the world grows old and worn out, the people will die and the cords will break and let the earth sink down into the ocean, and all will be water again. We are afraid of this.

When all was water, the animals were above in Galunlati, the sky arch, but it was very crowded, and they were wanting more room. They wondered what was beyond the water, and at last Dayunishi, "Beaver's Grandchild" the little water beetle, offered to go and see if it could learn. It darted about in every direction over the surface of the water, but could find no place to rest. Then it dived to the bottom and came up with some soft mud, which began to grow and spread on every side until it became the island which we call the earth. It was afterwards fastened to the sky with four cords, but no one remembers who did this.

At first the earth was flat and very soft and wet. The animals were anxious to get down. At last they sent out the buzzard and told him to go and make ready for them. This was the Great Buzzard, the father of the buzzards we see now. He flew all over the earth, low down near the ground, and it was still soft. When he reached the Cherokee country, he was very tired, and his wings began to flap and strike the ground, and whenever they struck the earth there was a valley, and where they turned up again was a mountain. When the animals above saw this, they were afraid that the whole world would be mountains, so they called him back. But the Cherokee country remains full of mountains to this day.

Swimmer, Ayuini

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