

Madagascar Creation Myth

At the beginning of time there was Zanahary, the Supreme Being, who created the Earth. There was nothing on it at first, it was empty and desolate.

Suddenly Ratovantany, the Self-Created One, took root in the ground and shot up out of the earth, like a plant. This took Zanahary by surprise so, being curious, he came down from the sky to take a closer look at this new god of the Earth.

When he found him, he was delighted to see that Ratovantany was making clay statues of animals and humans and was laying them out to dry in the sun. Ratovantany was very sad however, as he was unable to bring his images to life. Feeling sorry for him, Zanahary offered to help, by breathing life into them. When he saw how beautiful these new living creatures were, he begged Ratovantany to allow him to take them back up to Heaven with him.

Ratovantany loved his creatures too and refused to let his creation go. Eventually, they came to an agreement that, as Zanahary breathed life into humans, he would also take the life back when the creation died. Their bodies, however, were always to remain on Earth with Ratovantany. This is why, when people die in Madagascar, their bodies are always placed in the ground to be looked after by Ratovantany, while their souls soar up to Heaven, to be joined with Zanahary, the Supreme Being.