Eleanor A. Dasi, "Entry on: Myth of Dzàna Ngazok by Anatole Ikuana", peer-reviewed by Daniel A. Nkemleke, Lisa Maurice and Karolina Anna Kulpa. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2020). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1013. Entry version as of November 21, 2026.

Anatole Ikuana

Myth of Dzàna Ngazok

Cameroon

TAGS: African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions Katabasis Underworld



We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	Myth of Dzàna Ngazok
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Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon
Original Language	Bulu
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Target Audience	Crossover
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Creators



Anatole Ikuana (Storyteller)

Age of Narrator: 58 (in 2019)

Social status: Commoner

Profession: Teacher

Language of narration: Bulu

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Additional information

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating

Background: The natives of Sangmelima, like many others across Cameroon, are very much lovers of traditional ways of life. Although urbanisation and modernism have tended to overshadow some of the age-old cultural practices like polygamy, different rites associated with birth, death, and initiation into manhood and secret societies, there are still many people who are strong advocates of tradition. Belief in the ancestors is rife especially in the rural parts of Sangmelima, and there are many ceremonies and incantations that may accompany the rituals of offerings to the ancestors.

Summary

In the beginning, there was a man called Dzàna Ngazok, who had a very beautiful wife called Angonomane. He loved and cherished her with all his heart and with all his soul. Unfortunately, Angonomane died. After her funeral, Dzàna Ngazok decided to follow her to the world of the dead in order to bring her back to the world of the living. He prepared himself; took his machete, his lance and his dog. He walked for days and nights traversing hills, forests and bushes. When he was tired of walking, he stopped by a mythical river called Yom* and sat down to rest. He knew that if a living person washed his face with the same water which has been first used to wash a dog's face, he would be able to enter into the world of the dead. Taking advantage of the River Yom, he performed the rite that transported him to the world beyond. (He had planned this before leaving his village). Once there, he found his wife, who was surprised to see him coming alive into the world of ghosts and spirits. She asked him:

"What have you come to do here?"

"I have come to take you back home", he answered.

"Alright, we will go back but let me first welcome you," she said.

Angonomane took him to where she was staying and offered him a seat, which was her bed, while she cooked his favorite meal. Dzàna Ngazok noticed that the bed was stretching unlimitedly but blinded by his absolute desire to recover his wife, he thought his eyes were fooling him. Angonomane served him Fufu cassava** with kpwem nkou***. Dzàna Ngazok was known for his big appetite. He started eating this special meal with eagerness but soon noticed that the more

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he ate, the more the food multiplied in his plate. Then his wife told him that they could pass to the next step only if he finished his meal, the goal he was unable to accomplish. So it happened that Dzàna Ngazok, who left to bring back his wife from the underworld never came back. From that day; it is said among the Beti Fang people of Sangmalima that marriage does not continue in the underworld.

* A river that denotes the boundary between the world of the living and the world of dead in Fang Beti mythology.

** Cassava flour cooked into a thick paste.

*** A thick sauce made with cassava leaves.

Analysis

This myth underscores the power of love and the unbearable pain caused by its loss. Dzàna Ngazok undertakes the journey to the underworld because of the excessive love he has for his wife. His attempts to bring back his wife, Angonomane, can bring to mind the Greek mythical character of Orpheus, who undertook a journey to Hades to bring his wife Eurydice back to the land of the living.

Many mythologies that have the concept of the underworld use water bodies as the primary route through which to get there.

The failure of both Orpheus and Dzàna Ngazok to bring back their wives to the land of the living emphasizes that there is no simultaneity between the two worlds. There is hardly ever any return when one journeys to the land of the dead. In other words, mortals cannot acquire the status of immortals without passing through death.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions Katabasis Underworld

Death Journeys Love Religious beliefs Water

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Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture

Further Reading

Kwasi Benefo (accessed: January 19, 2021).

Addenda

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