Divine Che Neba, "Entry on: Myth of the Origin of the Bakossi People by Ntiege Mesumbe", peer-reviewed by Eleanor A. Dasi and Susan Deacy. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2021). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1281. Entry version as of November 07, 2026.

Ntiege Mesumbe

Myth of the Origin of the Bakossi People

Cameroon

TAGS: African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions Founding Legends



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

General information	
Title of the work	Myth of the Origin of the Bakossi People
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon
Original Language	Akoɔsə
Country of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Cameroon
Full Date of the Recording of the Story for the Databasey	January 21, 2019
More Details of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Tombel, Koupé-Manengouba, Southwest Cameroon
Genre	Folk tales, Myths
Target Audience	Crossover
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Creators



Ntiege Mesumbe (Storyteller)

Age of narrator: 50 years (in 2019)

Social status: Commoner

Profession: Inspector of Post and Telecommunication

Language of narration: Akɔɔsə

Bio prepared by Divine Che Neba, University of Yaounde 1
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Additional information

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating

The Bakossi* land is situated on latitude 5° 59' 0" N and longitude 14° 26' 0" E. It was founded by Ngoe (or Ngweh), a hunter, whose children built the various clans of Kupe Muanenguba. The western sides of the Mounts Kupe and Manenguba are inhabited by Bakossi people. They speak Akose, a Bantu language, and are noted for their firm attachment to their cultural heritage. They believe in sacred societies and the highest title in the land is Mwakum. Their sacred societies have magical powers that are used to maintain peace and to wade off evil in the land. They equally believe in the worship of ancestors, gods, God, spirits and totems.

* See: Ngade, Ivo, "Bakossi Names, Naming Culture and Identity", *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 23.2 (2011): 111–120.

Summary

In the beginning there lived a skilful lonely hunter in the Bakossi land called “Ngoe” or “Ngweh”. One day, he went hunting in the mountains, and after a long hunt, he did not catch any game. Exhausted, thirsty and hungry, he decided to rest under a baobab. Before he could close his eyes, he had an eerie feeling around him. Suddenly, he felt the presence of something around him and thought it was a wild animal. In that shock, he opened his eyes only to discover a very beautiful woman near him. She was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. He wondered where she might have come from. He tried to touch her but unfortunately for him, she disappeared. He was so worried. He realised that he had instantly fallen in love with the strange beautiful woman but had no means of getting her back and she had disappeared. He made up his mind that he would search for her. He forgot about the hunting expedition and went out for a love hunt. He searched for her for three days and three nights to no avail. During his search, he sometimes felt as if he had seen her but suddenly the image would disappear. So he continued wandering in the heart of the forest. This woman reappeared and disappeared several times, yet Ngoe was determined to get her even though already exhausted, thirsty and hungry. On the fourth day into his search, he found her sleeping under a palm tree. He walked up to her quietly and said, “I have found my wife” and she too responded, “I

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have found my husband." Both introduced themselves and later got married. Ngoe and Sumediang, as she was called, had many children though history mostly names their sons. They were: Anongoe-Nninong, Mbongoe-Mwambong, Ngelendoe-Muangel, Enamengoe-Mwamenam, Mukundange-Bakundu, Asomengoe (who make up Southern Bakossi); Abongoe-Babubog, Khangoe-Elung, Ngubengoe-Nhia, Nssuossuengoe-Bassossi, Elongoe-Mwangem, Nforngoe-Bafaw, Mbohngoe-Mbo, and others.

During their stay for sometime as a big family, a strange woman visited them. She was called Ngoténkang which means a scabrous supernatural woman. They welcomed her warmly and provided her with food and shelter. The comfort and care she received from them made her warn them about an imminent flood in the land. She advised them to seek refuge in a box, else they would die. So, Ngoe built an ark in which he and his family, together with some animals, lived. The flood came, caused havoc and when that frightful period passed, they found themselves surrounded by hills which they named Muanenguba. Then, they left the ark and settled some kilometres away from it. This is how the Bakossi people originated.

Analysis

The appearances and disappearances of Sumediang in this legendary myth of the origin of the Bakossi can be associated with myths involving Mermaids appearing to attract men for a union and later disappeared. Ngoe, through his mythic love declarations, impedes the spiritual transformation of his strange wife and brings her into the human realm where both combine and finally beget the Bakossi clan.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions Founding Legends

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

Abandonment Adventure Isolation/loneliness Love

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Culture

Further Reading

Enongene, Sone Mirabeau, *Symbolism of the Mountain in Bakossi-Cameroon Mythology* (PhD Dissertation, University of KaZulu-Natal, Durban, 2011).

Nkemleke, Daniel A. and Divine Che Neba, "Human Categories in Oral Tradition in Cameroon" in Katarzyna Marciniak, ed., *Chasing Mythical Beasts: The Reception of Ancient Monsters in Children's and Young Adults' Culture*, in the series "Studien zur europäischen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur / Studies in European Children's and Young Adult Literature" 8, Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2020, 387–400.

Van Stipriaan, Alex, "Watramama/Mami-wata: Three Centuries of Creolization of a water spirit in west Africa, Suriname and Europe", *Matutu: Journal for African Culture and Society* 27/28 (2005): 323–337.

Addenda

Researcher: Divine Che Neba

Assistant researcher: Munge Ajebe Nina

Method of data collection: Tape recording and note taking

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