Divine Che Neba, "Entry on: The Young Initiate and Emomodo, the Monster by Julienne Ngah", 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/1285. Entry version as of November 06, 2026.

Julienne Ngah

The Young Initiate and Emomodo, the Monster

Cameroon

TAGS: African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions





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

General information	
Title of the work	The Young Initiate and Emomodo, the Monster
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon
Original Language	Bulu
Country of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Cameroon
Full Date of the Recording of the Story for the Databasey	20 December, 2018
More Details of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Ma'an, South Cameroon
Genre	Myths
Target Audience	Crossover
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This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Creators



Julienne Ngah (Storyteller)

Age of narrator: 68 (in 2018)

Social status: commoner

Profession: farming

Language of narration: Bulu

Bio prepared by Divine Che Neba, University of Yaounde 1, nebankiwang@yahoo.com

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Additional information

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating	The Ma'an people constitute part of the Betis of South Cameroon. A mythic legend among the Beti reports that the Beti came from the other side of the River Sanaga. They finally crossed the river at the end of the eighteenth century on the back of a snake called Ngan-Medza. They fled from Ousman dan Fodio, a Muslim leader from the region of Adamawa in the north of the country, who decided to Islamize all Animist peoples in Cameroon at the time. The Beti are descendants of the Bantu. They attach a lot of evil to women because they believed that evil (Evu) entered their community through the woman. The Beti society, like most African societies, is patriarchal.

Summary

In the beginning, in a village called təgə ndɔŋ (meaning useless), lived a monster called Emomodo. It used to swallow people be they young, old, men, or women. Due to the wanton deaths and untold sufferings it made people go through, the elders of the village held a meeting to discuss how to stop this monster's terrible terrific actions in the village. They decided to empower the bravest warrior in the village with magical charms and equipped him with a blade, a knife and some pepper so that he could defend himself in case the monster was to swallow him. The young initiate accepted the call and embarked on the journey of liberating his people from the monster.

He left for a long and tedious journey into the heart of a sacred forest where the monster lived. On his way, he encountered the hungry monster looking for prey. As soon as the monster saw the young man, it opened its mouth, swallowed him and went back to its closet. While in the stomach of the monster, this brave young man discovered that the stomach of the monster was larger than anybody could imagine. In fact, it was a big wide world on its own and he discovered that all the generations of people that the monster had been swallowing over the years were still alive and living under very miserable conditions. The young initiate, after discovering his clan's men asked them one after the other: "Do you trust and believe I can save you from this monster's stomach, or have you already resigned to fate?" Some said they trusted the young man. Others castigated him and told him that people braver than him have never been able to save them from this captivity. Yet, others showed no interest in his question, as they had already resigned to fate. The young initiate used his blade and cut the

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monster's intestines, then carefully rubbed them with pepper. The monster, after struggling for some time, died. The young initiate took his knife and tore open the monster's stomach for his people to come out. All those who said they trusted him came out safe and others who undermined him perished. After this victory, life became normal in the village. The young initiate became a celebrated hero in the village.

Analysis

The exploits of the young initiate can be compared to heroes from many African mythologies who were fighting with swallowing monsters and defeated them with no harm for swallowed people*. These heroes oscillate between death and life as they carry out their quest, geared towards liberating their individual societies from negative and opposing forces. The young initiate, as this myth purports, could no longer bear the pain inflicted on his people by Emomodo, the monster. Like enumerated epic heroes, the young initiate sets out for his perilous journey to eliminate a common enemy, which takes him into a new world - the stomach of the monster.

* See: Werner, Alice, "The Swallowing Monster" in *Myths and Legends of the Bantu*, London: George G.Harrap & Co., Ltd., 1933, 206–221 (accessed: April 30, 2021).

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions

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

Adventure Heroism Journeys Sacrifice

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Further Reading

Cotterell, Arthur, *A Dictionary of World Mythology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Werner Alice, “The Swallowing Monster” in *Myths and Legends of the Bantu*, London: George G.Harrap & Co., Ltd., 1933, 208–209.

Addenda

Researcher: Divine Che Neba

Assistant researcher: Menounga Astarie Manuela

Method of data collection: Tape recording and note taking

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