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Clement Che Bonuh

The Rise and Fall of Fulantieh

Cameroon

TAGS: African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions Hero(es)



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

General information	
Title of the work	The Rise and Fall of Fulantieh
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon
Original Language	Nsei
Country of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Cameroon
Full Date of the Recording of the Story for the Databasey	December 12, 2019
More Details of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Bamessing
Genre	Myths
Target Audience	Crossover
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Creators



Clement Che Bonuh (Storyteller)

Age of Narrator: 36 (in 2019)

Social status: President of the Ngoketunjia Youth Association

Profession: Teacher

Language of narration: Nsei

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Additional information

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating

Cultural Background*: Bamessing

The people of Nsei (Bamessing), like many other people of the North West Region of Cameroon, originated from Tikari in the 15th Century. It is one of the four villages that make up Ndop Central Sub Division, and one of the thirteen villages of Ngoketunjia Division of the North West Region. Administratively, Bamessing is a second class Fondom, with respect to the administrative divisions in Cameroon, which is led by a traditional ruler, whose decisions are guided by the Ngumba.** Educationally, there are several institutions, including government-owned, private-owned and denominational. Economically, Nsei is a pottery center and the villagers are also involved in traditional crafts like chairs, bags, sculptors etc, which are sold all over the nation. There is also a small museum in the area which serves as a tourist site. Culturally, Nsei has annual festivals, (which reunites all sons and daughters of the land) prominent amongst which are: Mekong fuehn, bengwai and siinteh. During these festivals, sacrifices are offered to the gods for prediction, protection, provision and procreation.

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*Sources:

Bamessing, Wikipedia.com (accessed: July 30, 2021).

Jean-Pierre Warnier, *Cameroon Grassfields Civilization*, African Books Collective, 2012.

** The traditional council of elders and the highest governing authority of the land.

Summary

A long time ago, as the notables of Nsei land were performing sacrifices during the siinteh festival, Fulantieh jumped down to them from above as a sign that the gods have accepted their sacrifice and plea and sent down Fulantieh to help them. They wholeheartedly received him and gave him a place to stay. He was a great warrior, combining both spiritual and physical force to win wars against

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territorial intruders. It was known that he would go to war alone and place his legs on two hills that were 15 km apart so as to be able to see the enemies. From this position, he would singlehandedly win the war. Since he came directly from the gods, he was their eye amongst the people, serving also as personal adviser to the Fon* and spiritual adviser to the people in general. He revealed pertinent information to the Fon particularly in cases of witchcraft before judgement was passed.

Fulantieh's compound was considered holy ground. No one was supposed to whistle or walk around it. Fulantieh never ate publicly and it was believed that he used his right toes to eat and not his mouth as every ordinary human being would. When he was served food, he ate by tapping his toes on the ground and not even in the presence of his wife.

Fulantieh lived an ordinary life with friends despite his spiritual link. Many people loved him except for the witches and wizards who considered him a threat to their craft as not only were they unable to use it for financial benefits but they were also being exposed and punished. They soon plotted to seize his powers and use it to strengthen theirs. Unfortunately, Fulantieh's friends accepted to be part of this plot. They lied to his wife that the powers he possessed were initially hers. This made her furious but she was told that she still has a chance of taking them back if she cuts off his right toes in which the powers resided. She foolishly accepted; then prepared his meal with a sleep-inducing herb and whilst he was deep asleep, she cut off his right toes. This led to the death of Fulantieh; but before dying, he laid a curse of deprivation on his wife which extended unto her generations. Today, Fulantieh's descendants still live among the people but they have remained wretched and insignificant since then.

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* Fon is a title of a traditional ruler in the villages of the North West Region of Cameroon. It is a corrupted form of "Efor", the original appellation. The German colonial administrators, who named most of the villages here, pronounced it as "Fon", because of the difficulty in pronouncing "Efor".

Analysis

In an attempt to ease communication between humans and

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themselves, the gods usually raise people who would act as mediators between the spiritual and physical worlds. These beings, whether priests, prophets or seers, sometimes have extraordinary births or are sent directly from the spirit realm as is the case in the above myth, and on the basis of their mysterious origins, they are usually endowed with mystical and mythical powers from the gods. They served as mouth pieces of the gods and were also able to warn people of impending doom and/or help them in some way to avert a calamity. Fulantieh is one of such beings who was sent down to the people of Nsei. He is not only the mediator between the people and the gods, but also the spiritual adviser to the ruler.

However, the abode of such powers is usually in a part of the body which becomes a vulnerable spot that when touched, such touch will destroy the powers. Fulantieh's powers are hidden in his right toes, while Biblical Samson's in his hair. Greek Achilles' heel, too, was his vulnerable spot.

The myth further evokes the idea that women have often played a big role in bringing about the downfall of great people. In this myth, Fulantieh's wife conspires with his enemies to rip off his toes because of her lust for power and wealth.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions Hero(es)
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Death Emotions Friendship Heroism Relationships Tricksters Violence

Further Reading

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Addenda

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