Eleanor A. Dasi, "Entry on: Mbumanje and the Bamum Royal Pipe [Mbumanjé et la pipe du roi] by Emmanuel Matateyou, Mohamed Mounir Ngoupayou", peer-reviewed by Divine Che Neba, Daniel A. Nkemleke and Elizabeth Hale. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2022). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1448. Entry version as of November 21, 2026.

Emmanuel Matateyou , Mohamed Mounir Ngoupayou

Mbumanje and the Bamum Royal Pipe [Mbumanjé et la pipe du roi]

Cameroon (2021)

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	Mbumanje and the Bamum Royal Pipe [Mbumanjé et la pipe du roi]
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon
Original Language	French
First Edition Date	2021
First Edition Details	Emmanuel Matateyou, *Mbumanjé et la pipe du roi*. Yaoundé: Éditions Akoma Mba, 2021, 31 pp.
ISBN	9789956101702; 9789956101641
Genre	Fiction
Target Audience	Children (9+)
Author of the Entry	Eleanor A. Dasi, The University of Yaoundé I, wandasi5@yahoo.com

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.

Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Divine Che Neba, University of Yaoundé 1, nebankiwang@yahoo.com Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaoundé 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.com. Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au

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



Emmanuel Matateyou by Rama. Retrieved from Wikimedia Commons, licensed under Cc-by-sa-2.0-fr (accessed: December 15, 2021).

Emmanuel Matateyou , b. 1952
(Author, Storyteller)

Emanuel Matateyou is a writer and a professor at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, University of Yaoundé 1. He is a former Fulbright scholar and has published widely on oral literature and Cameroonian culture and languages. Some of his publications include: *An Anthology of myths, legends and folktales from Cameroon* (1997), *Les Merveilleux récits de Tita Ki* (2001), *Parlons Bamoun* (2001), *Problématique d'une conciliation du réel et l'irréel* (1999), *Les sociétés secrètes dans la littérature camerounaise le cas des Bamoun*. 2. vol. (1990).

Bio prepared by Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaoundé 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.com



Mohamed Mounir Ngoupayou , b. 1995
(Illustrator)

Mounir Mohamed is a young fine artist born in Douala, Cameroon in 1995. After high school, he continued to the University Institute of Fine Arts in Foumban, Cameroon, where he studied and obtained a degree in Fine Arts and the History of Arts. He then pursued a Master's program, specializing in Drawing and Painting. Equipped with a Masters degree, he began doing interior designs. His first exposition was in 2013 with Brasseries du Cameroun in Douala. He also had the opportunity to exhibit in Honfleur, France, in 2021. His works are influenced by Pop Art.

Source:

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.

Based on information kindly provided by the illustrator,

Bio prepared by Eleanor A. Dasi, University of Yaoundé I, wandasi5@yahoo.com

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.

Additional information

Translation

English: *Mbumanje and the Bamum Royal Pipe*, trans. Eleanor A. Dasi, Yaoundé: Akoma Mba, 2021.

Summary

There once lived a king in the Bamum kingdom called Makom. One sàsà* morning, he decided to tour his village. When he got to Kourom, the clan of hunters, Mbumanje, the village belle caught his attention. He immediately decided to make her his wife. The marriage ceremony was organized alongside the Njà** festival. Festivities lasted a whole week. During this period, villages flocked into the palace ground to behold the new queen and to admire the customary beauty of the land.

Nashênkyé, Mbumanjé's mother, decided to join the other village women in the palace. Her physical handicap (she was one-eyed and lame) made her journey slow but she finally got there. On the day of the festival, women and girls were dressed in their prettiest clothes, multicoloured jewelry and flamboyant hairstyles. The queens and princesses took their place beside the king and Mbumanjé, the favourite, sat his right with the royal pipe in her hands. The queens each marched to the king with their mothers for gifts. When it was Mbumanjé's turn, she instead took Mandou, her mother's co-spouse. Nashênkyé was heartbroken and burst into tears. She was mocked by those around her and her pain increased. She walked up to the throne, lifted her breast in the direction of Mbumanjé saying, "My daughter, if it is not this breast that fed you ..." (21). The crowd shouted and a violent wind blew accompanied by thunder and lightening bolts. Then suddenly, the pipe fell from Mbumanjé's hands and shattered. She had to be exiled for breaking the royal pipe. She was then tied up and taken to the edge of the kingdom where she was abandoned after ritual words of banishment were said by the Mùtngu. She continued walking until she came to a clearing in the Marom forest. She decided to rest and fell asleep under a big tree. She woke up to find that she was being surrounded by strange creatures which were closing in on her. She screamed and called out to her mother for help. Then suddenly another stranger creature, half human and half animal appeared between her and the other monsters. It took her into a cave, introduced himself as Mirane, and told her it is the mediator, the memory of the people and the link between the past and the present.

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.

There were other young girls in the cave who had come to receive training and initiation into the cult of wifehood and motherhood. Mbumanjé joined them. At the end of their training, they receive new names and are sent back to their various communities. Mbumanjé was renamed Ngamfé. Mirane offered her a necklace, asked her to ask for forgiveness from her mother after which she will have a new life.

* The first day of the week in the Bamum traditional calendar. With the Bamum, like with many other African communities, a week has eight days.

** A festival to showcase the beauty of the Bamum.

Analysis

The concept of curses and cursing is common among many African societies. Curses are generally feared because it is believed that they have a long-lasting negative effect, usually a miserable existence, on the victims. Anybody can curse, and the curse holds for as long as the allegations of the offended towards the offender are true. But generally, the curse of the mother is the most dreaded because it is only pronounced when the mother is in deep pain for being disrespected and ignored by her child. Again, a mother uses their breasts and vaginas, which are taboo parts of her body in many African societies, in pronouncing curses. When Nashênkyé, Mbumanjé's mother in the story is publicly humiliated and rejected by her own daughter, she feels excruciating mental pain and points her breast towards Mbumanjé. As a direct response, Mbumanjé instantly commits a sacrilege by breaking the Bamum royal pipe, a sacred symbol of the authority of the Bamum king. The clamour from the crowd and the sudden thunder and lightning bolts are signs of an impending doom for Mbumanjé, both from the curse and from the sacrilege she committed.

That notwithstanding, an opportunity is offered for redemption and Mbumanjé benefits from this in his encounter with Mirane, the genie protector of the Bamum people. His role is to ensure that young people know and practice the ways of the land. The only way for Mbumanjé to break free from the curse is by apologizing to her mother as she is the only one who has the power to reverse the curse

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.

	she placed. The story also offers a glimpse of life in the Bamum community, their artefacts, festivals, royalty and social relations and interactions.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Appearances Parents (and children) Supernatural creatures (non-classical) Values
Further Reading	Wachege, P. N., “Curses and Cursing among the among the Agĩkũyũ: Socio-Cultural And Religious Benefits”, available at https://profiles.uonbi.ac.ke/patrickwachege/v files/curses_and_cursing_among_the_agikuyu.pdf (accessed: September 21, 2021, no longer available).

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.