Eleanor A. Dasi, "Entry on: Holidays in the Village [Vacances au village] by Pierre Yves Njeng", 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/1450. Entry version as of November 15, 2026.

Pierre Yves Njeng

Holidays in the Village [Vacances au village]

Cameroon (1996)

TAGS: African Storytelling African Traditions



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

General information	
Title of the work	Holidays in the Village [Vacances au village]
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon, United States
Original Language	French
First Edition Date	1996
First Edition Details	Pierre Yves Njeng, *Vacances Au Village*. Yaoundé: Éditions Akoma Mba, 1996, 24 pp.
ISBN	9956100196
Genre	Fiction
Target Audience	Children (3+)
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Creators



Pierre Yves Njeng (Author, Illustrator)

Pierre Yves Njeng studied modern French Letters and specialized in French Literature at the University of Yaoundé I. Upon leaving the university, he did menial jobs until 1993 when he had the opportunity of participating in a writing workshop organized by Marie Wabbes, a Belgian writer and illustrator, who introduced participants to writing particularly children's books. His first manuscript, "Vacances au Village," was presented at an international book fair in Bologna, Italy in 1994 and it attracted foreign publishers. It was however issued only in 1996 by Akoma Mba publishing house in Yaoundé, Cameroon, and in December of that same year, Njeng took it to be shown at the international book fair in Montreuil, France. In 1999, Boyd Mills edited and translated it into English. This edition won the African Young Children's Honor Book in 2000. Njeng's interest in children's books was motivated by the lack of this kind of publications in his country. Together with colleagues, they started AILE (an association of illustrators and writers of children's books) in Cameroon. As their activities became intense, they began the Akoma Mba publishing house, which he headed between 1994–1999 before relocating to France.

Source:

De toutes nouvelles maisons d'édition en Afrique : "Une aventure exaltante" *Takam Tikou* 6 (1997): 22–26.

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

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Additional information

Translation

English: *Holidays in the Village. A Story from West Africa*, Honesdale, Pennsylvania: Boyd Mills Press, 1999.

Summary

Nwemb and Ngo Nwemb are happy when their father announces to them that they would spend the holidays in the village. Nwemb would not take along his toys because he does not know any children to play with. All night, he thinks of this world where children may not have the right to play. He had thought that he would be bored there.

Their grandparents, who have not seen them for a while, happily welcome them. They meet Masso, who helps them arrange the house. Grandfather informs Nwemb that Masso belongs to the same lineage that he does. The following day, Masso tells Nwemb of his adventures in the forest. Nwemb is excited and longs to be part of these adventures.

In the evenings, grandfather tells them beautiful tales about their culture and bravery of their ancestors. With permission from his mother, Nwemb and Masso go fishing but come back tired and without any fish. On their way back, Masso catches a tortoise which was on its shell. He offers it to Nwemb as a sign of friendship. They name it Kulas and it became their playmate. Masso also teaches Nwemb to make toys out of bamboo, set traps for animals in the farms, climb trees and he shows him every nook and cranny of the forest.

Holidays are over and Nwemb is sad to leave the village but resolves to return to its simple life.

Analysis

Since many African countries have come in contact with western civilization, the only places where indigenous knowledge is found are the villages. That is why parents who live in cities take their children to their villages of origin during holidays so that they can experience culture and a lifestyle different from that in the cities. The experience of venturing into the forest, climbing trees, and going fishing cannot be had in the cities because such places were destroyed for the cities

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to be built.

Many grandparents reside in the village because it is quiet and peaceful. They bond with their grandchildren when these children visit, help teach them about the ways of the land thereby strengthening family ties and giving the children a sense of belonging and cultural attachment. In the story, Nwemb learns about his culture and ancestors from his grandfather. The grandfather's stories, together with Nwemb's adventures with Masso are experiences that give Nwemb a different view of life.

Children in the villages have the opportunity to explore nature and learn to use it. They also find games in non-conventional toys like the tortoise Nwemb uses as a playmate. In all, the village offers an informal education that helps children to have an original perspective of life away from the sophistication of city life.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	African Storytelling African Traditions
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Family Siblings

Further Reading

MacCann, Donnarae, University of Iowa [review] (accessed: June 8, 2022).

Omolewa, Michael, "Traditional African Modes of Education: Their Relevance in the Modern World", *International Review of Education* 5/6 (2007): 593–612.

Rand, Donna and Toni Trent Parker, *Great African American Children's Books about Boys*, New York and Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2001 (accessed: June 8, 2022).

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