Divine Che Neba, "Entry on: Abobo Ndene and Otene Nka'a by Elisabeth Belomo", peer-reviewed by Eleanor A. Dasi and Elizabeth Hale. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/156. Entry version as of October 31, 2026.

Elisabeth Belomo

Abobo Ndene and Otene Nka'a

Cameroon

TAGS: African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions Gods





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

General information	
Title of the work	Abobo Ndene and Otene Nka'a
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon
Original Language	Ewondo
Country of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Cameroon
Full Date of the Recording of the Story for the Databasey	September 23, 2017
More Details of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Yaoundé, Ewondo
Genre	Myths
Target Audience	Crossover
Author of the Entry	Divine Che Neba, University of Yaoundé 1, nebankiwang@yahoo.com
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Creators



Elisabeth Belomo (Storyteller)

Age of Narrator: 55 (in 2016)

Social status: Ekang Women Leader

Profession: Catechist

Language of narration: Ewondo (one of the languages of the Ekang ethnic group)

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

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Additional information

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating

Cultural Background*: Ewondo

The Ewondo people originated from the larger Bantu family. They live in the rain forest and practise agro-fishing. They are known for their "Bikutsi" music genre. The word 'bikutsi' translates literally as "beat the earth" or "let's beat the earth". It is a dance that is accompanied by stomping the feet on the ground. The Ewondo people (or Kolo-Beti) speak Ewondo or Kolo language (a Bantu language), a branch of the larger Niger-Congo language family. Originally, the Ewondo practice ancestral rites, marked by a certain degree of monotheism, but with the arrival of the Europeans most of them are now nominal Christians.

Occasion: Life Performance

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* Sources:

Ewondo (Yaunde) People: The Original Inhabitants of Yaunde, the Capital of Cameroon, kwekudee-tripdownmemorylane.blogspot.com, September 18, 2014 (accessed: July 8, 2019).

Tatiana Agostino, *Ethnie Ewondo au Cameroun: connaître l'essentiel*, cotedivoire.news, January 14, 2018 (accessed: July 8, 2019).

Summary

Long, long time ago, AboboNdene, the spider, and OteneNka'a, the monitor lizard, were close friends; so intimate that they shared everything: their happiness, worries and sorrows. They both believed in the same ideologies as they openly rebuked inhumane inclinations.

One day, on their way back home from the farm, they engaged in a debate on the origins of good and evil. Before they realised it, they were on opposing sides: while Abobo held God responsible for good and evil, Otene attributed these qualities to man. For the first time ever, the two friends argued their disparate points without arriving at a consensus. Unfortunately, no third party came in to help them solve the mystery.

Almost a month or so later, Abobo and his friend had not found a

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common ground on their debate. One night, after much thought, AboboNdene came up with a clever idea. Early the next morning, he went to his friend and suggested they hang around the road junction so as to inquire from disabled passers-by. OteneNka'a agreed knowing the target group would provide substantial evidence on their topic of discussion. They immediately hurried to the nearest joint. There, Abobo spread his web over the road and joined Otene on the sidewalk. Soon after, a blind man came by. As he felt the spider web covering his face, he exclaimed: "If only I could see!" Before he sighed, Abobo cut in and asked "To Whom do you attribute your disability?"

After the blind man had grumbled over the sarcastic question, he argued that Zamba, the Almighty God, knew why he created him so. AboboNdene, visibly comforted by the man's answer, turned to his friend and said, "hadn't I told you? Have you heard?"

The two companions were still commenting on the blind man's answer when they heard bitter murmurs at the junction. A dumb was complaining about the spider web on his forehead. Once again, Abobo inquired, "in your opinion, who bears the responsibility for your handicap?" Spontaneously, the dumb pointed his fingers up to heaven. Once more, the answer affirmed Abobo's position. A third passer-by showed up. His hernia had developed to an extent that he was carrying it over his shoulder. Instantly, Abobo and Otene burst into laughter. The man stopped and stared at them. He looked up into the sky and said, "father, forgive them for they know not what they do". Then he turned to them, "Laugh not, for this is the burden Ntondobe, the Lord, has given to me. What about yours?"Abobo chuckled. After all, he was right. ZambaNkombodo, God the Creator, is almighty. He does and undoes everything and anything.

In spite of the unanimity of responses men provided on the origins of good and evil, OteneNka'a still doubted their accuracy. He seemed to need more salient proofs. According to him, men were missing to understand God; "Zamba is essentially right and just. How can men doubt it?" he wondered. Failing to get satisfactory answers from men, Otene decided to question the Creator himself. So he urged his friend Abobo to travel to sky where he would clear all their doubts on the issue they had been debating on. Abobo then embarked on a ten-year journey. Finally, he got to his destination safely. He was filled with enthusiasm as he reached the paradisiacal soil.

"How can I help you, man?"Ntondobe asked perceptibly annoyed by

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this human presence in the celestial realms. “The reason for your coming must be genuine and serious, I guess”, he continued.

“Yes! Indeed, it is! Down on earth, your children are fussing on the origins of good and evil. An overwhelming majority hold you accountable for their sufferings. Some are infuriated because, as they say, you have been deaf to their cries. Therefore, have I come to inquire the truth from you. Why do men languish and err endlessly?”

“Man, your foolhardiness prefigures your downfall. Your presumptuousness is unkind. Since when am I accountable to men for the management of my creatures? That is bold of you! … As you go back, remember righteousness is my attribute. Now, I declare, because of your recklessness, that you will henceforth live in underground caves and will die suspended on your web.”

Disappointed, Abobo travelled back to earth and was shattered by the certainty of his mortal fate.

Ever since, AboboNdene is associated with the knowledge of good and evil. He symbolises clairvoyance in the Beti cosmogony, for he alone has met Ntondobe the Almighty. On his return home, Abobo was renamed Ngam meaning tarantula (big spider) or clairvoyance. It is believed that Ngam, the spider, foresees events. Up to this day, traditional doctors receive inspirations from Ngam to predict their patients’ futures. More, the translation of “to foresee/to predict (the future)” in many Beti languages like Eton or Ewondo is “á bóNgam”.

Analysis

Since its very beginning, humanity has often been entrapped in the complex web of unravelling the origin of good and evil. Most world mythologies, in an attempt to provide accurate responses to this question, have pointed accusing fingers at women. This myth falls within the category of myths that look at the origin of evil beyond a potential woman's fault. The failure of Abobo Ndene, the spider, and Otene Nka’a, the monitor lizard, to obtain a satisfactory response to the question about the origin of good and evil does not stop them from looking for the answer even through a ten-year journey to heaven to ask the Creator himself. Because Abobo Ndene, is sent back to earth to experience what evil is, he has since become associated with the knowledge of good and evil.

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Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions Gods
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Animals Friendship Good vs evil Knowledge Religious beliefs
Further Reading	Adams, Robert M., "Must God Create the Best?", *Philosophical Review* 81 (1972): 51–64. Boyd, Gregory, *Is God to Blame?*, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003. Pyle, David, *On the Origin and Nature of Good and Evil*, available at questformeaning.org (accessed: April 23, 2019).
Addenda	Method of data collection: note taking. Researcher: Divine Che Neba. Research Assistant: Marcelle Akamba (trans.). Editor: Eleanor A. Dasi.

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