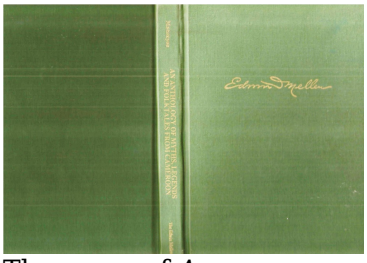
Daniel A. Nkemleke, "Entry on: How Dogs Came to Live as Domestic Animals by Emmanuel Matateyou, Elias Mbome", peer-reviewed by Courage Yaah and Elizabeth Hale. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/158. Entry version as of November 06, 2026.

Emmanuel Matateyou , Elias Mbome

How Dogs Came to Live as Domestic Animals

Cameroon (1997)

TAGS: African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions



The cover of *An Anthology of Myths, Legends and Folktales from Cameroon* by Emmanuel Matateyou. Courtesy of The Edwin Mellen Press Ltd.

General information	
Title of the work	How Dogs Came to Live as Domestic Animals
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon
Original Language	Bakweri
First Edition Date	1997
First Edition Details	Emmanuel Matateyou, *An Anthology of Myths, Legends and Folktales from Cameroon*. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997, 255 pp.
Country of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Cameroon
Full Date of the Recording of the Story for the Databasey	August 15, 1995
More Details of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Buea, Southwest, Cameroon
Genre	Myths
Target Audience	Crossover
Author of the Entry	Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaoundé 1, nkemlekedan@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.

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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



Elias Mbome (Storyteller)

Age of Narrator: 69 (in 1995)

Occupation: Carpenter

Language: Bakweri

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Additional information

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating

Background: The Bakweri people are principally settled at the foot of Mount Cameroon in Buea, Fako Division of the south West Region of Cameroon. Like every other society, the Bakweri people believe in God, Gods, ancestors and spirits. According to the people, God is a male being, with some special powers which people believe in. The supreme god of the Bakwerians is called Efasa Moto. His abode is a cave at the summit of Mount Fako. He is half human, half stone and commands all the other gods of the land. He is the owner of all the land on the mountain range and the wealth it produces, that is, a large sugar cane plantation, fruits of many kinds and beautiful flowers. Visitors are allowed to go up the mountain, eat of all the types of fruits found there but are not permitted to take anything, not even peelings, out. God, Gods and spirits are important to the Bakweri community since they serve as sources of life and peace to the populace. These gods are there to assist the people in all their activities. Thus they are pacified in all traditional and social events.

Summary

The original published version of this myth appears in the book: *An Anthology of Myths, Legends and Folktales from Cameroon* by Emmanuel Matateyou, published in 1997 (pp. 58–62) by The Edwin Mellen Press Ltd. Although we have the written authorization of the publisher and the author to reprint up to 10 myths in the collection for our research on "Our Mythical Childhood…"., we have chosen to summarize this particular myth because the original version is too long. We are therefore very thankful to The Edwin Mellen Press Ltd and Professor Matateyou for granting us this permission.

In the beginning, Dog lived with the other animals in peace and harmony in the forest. They all had one dreadful enemy: Man. Consequently, Dog went to his bigger and stronger brother, Leopard, and asked for protection. Leopard gladly took him in. One day, while they slept at night, a dry branch broke off and fell on their house. Frightened, Dog skipped out of bed and started barking loudly. Furious, Leopard got up and gave him a hard slap reprimanding him for putting their lives at risk. His loud barking, Leopard said, could help their archenemy, Man, to locate and kill them. At this incident, Dog realised that Leopard was as fearful and vulnerable to Man as himself, and left to look for stronger protection. He soon knocked at

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Lion's doorpost – the one animal that was dreaded for his strength and aggressive nature. Lion accepted him. One day a branch also fell on their roof at night while they were asleep and Dog started barking. Lion's slap was harder and even life-threatening than Leopard's. Dog ran away again. This time, he went to elephant; when another dry branch broke, a tree and fell on their roof, and he barked again, the kick from Elephant's tusk almost killed him. So he sat up and thought hard. "If the biggest and strongest animals are so afraid of Man, then maybe Man was the best source of protection", he ruminated. Therefore, he ran off to man and soon befriended him with his humility and respect – lying at his feet and wagging its tail. One day, a branch also fell on their house when they were sleeping and Dog started to bark. Man just calmly complained about him disturbing his sleep. When Dog asked him if that was the only thing he feared, he explained that because he worked so hard during the day, there was nothing more dreadful than sleeplessness. Dog realised that Man was the best protector he could get and he promised to help him hunt other animals and serve him loyalty as long as they lived together.

Analysis

It is a mystery how dogs, among the myriad of animals, came to be the companions of humans. Some sources hold that the dog came in contact with humans in Africa when it brought down fire. However, as the above myth suggests, it was because of the dog's humility and respect that the animal was able to find a place among humans. Apart from this, the myth heightens the belief in human intellectual superiority over other animals. This is why the humans were able to tame the dog and bring it under their control by way of friendship. The humans' nonaggressive behaviour, which is contrasted with the brutality of the leopard, lion and elephant, eases the dog's fear and makes it more comfortable and secure in presence of humans. Whatever the case, dogs have been humans' companions since the two species came in contact with each other, and the dogs have been of great help to humans.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions

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Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Animals Humanity Relationships
Further Reading	*Dogs of Greek Mythology*, sheppardsoftware.com (accessed: April 24, 2019). Serpell, James, *In the Company of Animals: A Study Human-Animal Relationships*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Lilja, Sara, *Dogs in Ancient Greek Poetry*, Helsinki, 1976.
Addenda	Collected by Kate Silo Mbome.

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