Divine Che Neba, "Entry on: The Power of the Magic Ring by Sama Ambe", peer-reviewed by Daniel A. Nkemleke and Katarzyna Marciniak and team members in Warsaw. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/194. Entry version as of November 11, 2026.

Sama Ambe

The Power of the Magic Ring

Cameroon

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	The Power of the Magic Ring
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon
Original Language	Bafut
Country of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Cameroon
Full Date of the Recording of the Story for the Databasey	November 16, 2016
More Details of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Bafut, North-West Region, Cameroon
Genre	Myths
Author of the Entry	Divine Che Neba, University of Yaoundé 1, nebankiwang@yahoo.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaoundé 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.com Katarzyna Marciniak and team members in Warsaw, University Warsaw, kamar@al.uw.edu.pl

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



Sama Ambe

Age of Narrator: 43/50 (in 2016/2017)

Social status: Aristocrat (Duke)

Profession: A Cook

Language of narration: Bafut

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

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating

Background of Bafut: Bafut is located in the North-West region of Cameroon with an estimated population of over at 140,000 inhabitants spread over a land surface area of about 340 square kilometres. As Shu Abednego Che and Tanda Isidore Fuh rightly observed, in the *History of Bafut*, the first Bafut people migrated from Lake Chad down to the Tikari area North West of Fumban which had a dynastic rule. In constant search for fertile land and a more peaceful settlement, they migrated again to Ndobo (present day Ndop) and then down to Bafut where they finally settled. The people are called B+f++. The Fon who is a paramount leader, the head of the legislative wing of leadership in Bafut, is closely assisted. Batangchos (second class Fons), who all pay allegiance to him. Prominent religious festival in Bafut include Pacification of village Gods in all major shrines in Bafut; the wangle (Grass cutting ritual geared at protecting the village form enemies of all types, including neighbouring villages); worship of family Gods in family shrines; protection rituals at individual family and village levels. The people generally believe in the worship of ancestors, spirits, ghost, God, Gods. Most of the shrines of these gods are at the mountain sites, caves, in streams, lakes, valleys etc. The end-of-year religious festivals are crowned with the Fon dance (Abinimfor), which can be compared, for instance, to the Greek Dionysian festival*.

Occasion: Live performance

* See: Nkemleke, Daniel A., Divine Che Neba and Eleanor A. Dasi, *Mythic Fulfillment and Performance in the Bafut Abinimfor and the Greek Dionysian Festivals.*

Summary

Capital letters indicate high pitch from narrator; italics indicate low pitch from narrator:

The Boy and His Bag of Salt

In the beginning,

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.

When people used to live together,

Animals were also communicating

With people.

Then came a time,

When people started sending

Their children

To go out in quest for wealth to nearby villages.

There was a man, who had many children.

A certain time came,

He dispatched the children

To go and look for money.

Most of the children went

And brought back much money.

Among these children,

One was very dull and extravagant,

All that he had was squandered.

He brought back nothing.

In one of their wealth hunting exploits, they met a man.

The man was in the middle of the road.

Fire was burning on this man’s head.

This man cried three times:

“PUT OUT THESE FLAMES ON MY HEAD!

PUT OUT THESE FLAMES ON MY HEAD!

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.

PUT OUT THESE FLAMES ON MY HEAD!”

The other children, who carried money with them, ignored the man with fire on his head.

They had no time to spend.

They continued with their journey back home.

The only thing that the extravagant, dull, and lazy boy had was a bag of salt.

He poured the bag of salt on the man with the fire on his head.

The flames went out.

As the flames were off, he left.

He started his journey again.

On his way again, he saw the same man with fire on the head again.

The man was still shouting:

“PUT OUT THESE FLAMES ON MY HEAD!

PUT OUT THESE FLAMES ON MY HEAD!

PUT OUT THESE FLAMES ON MY HEAD!”

The other boys laughed and passed by.

The extravagant boy emptied a bag of salt on the man’s head again.

With this last bag of salt emptied, the boy had nothing left.

The man with fire on the head called the boy:

“My son, come.”
He [The boy] came,
He [The man] removed a ring on his hand,

Gave it to the boy, he told the boy: “This ring is your fortune, and the fortune of your family.

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.

All your wives will come from this ring.

And all your houses will come from it.

Ask anything you need, and the ring will give you."

He said to the boy:

"If you are doubting the potency of this ring,

You can test it here."

The boy fitted the ring on his thumb and said:

"MY RING, IF YOU KNOW THAT YOU ARE MY RING, GIVE ME A BAG OF MONEY!"

The ring gave him a bag of money.

He nodded.

Thanked the man.

And left.

The Boy Returns to the Village

As it was about sunset,

The mothers* of the other children were already celebrating

As their children came back, with money, clothes and many things.

The extravagant boy came back to the compound with nothing.

As he entered into the compound, nobody welcomed him,

Since his step brothers had announced what he had been doing with his money.

He greeted his mother,

She did not answer.

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.

He greeted his father,

The father did not answer.

The mother was angry and asked:

“Where is your own bag?

Why can you not behave like the other children?

What have you brought back from the journey?”

The boy did not answer.

The only thing he said was that he was hungry.

He was immediately rebuked.

His mother did not give him food that night.

He went to bed hungry.

The next day, everybody was slandering him,

But he said nothing,

He removed his ring,

Fitted it on the thumb,

And said:

“My ring,

IF YOU KNOW THAT YOU ARE MY RING, RAISE ME AN EXTRAORDINARY HOUSE! HERE!” [Each time that the storyteller repeated this statement, he stared at his hand and waved it up and down.]

An extraordinary house appeared out of the place.

He asked the ring again:

“My ring,

CROWN ME THE KING OF THIS VILLAGE, IF YOU KNOW THAT YOU

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.

ARE

MY RING! AND THAT ALL MY BROTHERS SHOULD BE SERVANTS IN MY KINGDOM!"

He commanded tall buildings to appear

And many other things to appear;

Before he completed his command,

He became the ruler of the land.

The old chief abdicated.

All his brothers became his servants,

*And his mother was called "Mamfor."***

The whole village had a new look,

His brothers began to worship him.

The first thing he said was that:

His parents should give him a piece of land where he could construct his own house.

Everybody laughed.

Some asked:

"Is it the house of a bird?"

He left immediately to

The nearby mountain,

Cleared and cleaned the summit.

When he was through,

He repeated:

"My ring,

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.

IF YOU KNOW THAT YOU ARE MY RING, GIVE ME A WIFE, A WIFE WHO IS SHINING LIKE THE MOON AND A HOUSE!"

The ring gave him a wife that was shining like the moon and a house.

He said:

"MY RING, IF YOU KNOW THAT YOU ARE MY RING. GIVE ME ONE CAT AND TWO DOGS!"

Before he completed the words, the two dogs and one cat appeared.

He said:

"MY RING, IF YOU KNOW THAT YOU ARE MY RING, GIVE ME MONEY AND BAGS OF SALT SO THAT I CAN SEND THEM TO MY PARENTS."

Before he completed the words, the bags of salt were present.

He said:

"My ring,

IF YOU KNOW THAT YOU ARE MY RING, TAKE ME ROUND THE VILLAGE

WITHIN THE SHORTEST TIME SO THAT, THE PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW THAT,

I AM THEIR NEW KING!"

Within a twinkle of an eye, the ring carried him round the village.

The Old King Exacts Revenge but the Dog and the Cat Outsmart Him

Although the old King pretended to have abdicated his throne,

He was planning to kill the young man.

He took the ring from the young man,

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.

Sent it to the country of rodents.

The chief of rodents,

Transferred it to

The chief of rats and

The chief of rats sent it

To the chief squirrels.

The ring was already missing.

The young man started suffering.

The dog [one of the two dogs] asked the cat:

“Why should we allow our master to be suffering in this manner?

What can we do to help our father?”

The dog told the cat that they should go out for a search.

[The storyteller seemingly threatened by the eyes of one member of the audience, he immediately says.] *I am narrating this story the way my own father told me.*

They started their search.

The dog told the cat that,

If he enters into a country,

He should start destroying everything he finds

For his part, the dog would be killing people,

And that the cat should be breaking

And scattering the bamboos on their bed.

They entered into the first country

And asked:

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.

"Have you people seen the ring of our father?"

Nobody answered.

The dog started killing people

And the cat started breaking

And scattering the bamboos on the beds.

The people said that

The ring was in the country of rats.

They went and performed the same action in the country of the rats.

The rats said that

The ring was in the country of

The squirrels.

They arrived at the country of

The squirrels and saw the ring.

The Dog and the Cat Return Battling Adversity

As they started coming back,

The cat told the dog to give him the ring, because the dog was fond of putting his tongue out

And making – "hahahahahahahaha!" [The storyteller mimics sound of the dog at this point.]

The dog refused,

The cat decided to allow it to the dog.

They reached a river,

The cat fell into the river,

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.

Swam very fast to the other side.

The dog came.

Inserted the ring in his mouth,

Fell into the river.

The first thing was,

The dog put out his tongue – “hahahahahaha!”

The ring fell into the river.

As it fell, the cat turned and saw some women fishing downstream.

He invited the women to come up stream.

He told the women that there was a BIG fish up stream.

The cat repeated:

“Please you, women, should come and do your fishing here.”

The women came up with their nets.

The cat beckoned that he would be very grateful if the women could only give the intestines of the fish to him.

The women came up, started fishing,

The cat and the dog were removing the intestines of the fish that were being caught.

The cat tore off the stomach of the fish – “ghaaaghaaa!” [The storyteller mimics sound.]

It opened.

They saw the ring there.

They hid it.

And told the women that

The intestines were not what they wanted.

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.

They left with the ring carefully.

This time,

The ring was with the cat.

As they were arriving,

Their father was about to be hanged.

The abdicated King and his people

Had been planning to kill him.

The people used their father's own hair to hang him.

The cat hurried,

Climbed the tree on which their father was hanging,

Gave the ring to the master,

Who was virtually dying,

He took it.

And said:

"MY RING, IF YOU KNOW THAT YOU ARE MY RING, REMOVE ME FROM THIS TREE AND TAKE ME BACK TO MY COMPOUND!"

The ring carefully removed him.

And he went back to his compound.

They ate and were very happy

As the [abdicated] King learnt that he was back,

He killed himself;

The boy became the new King of the village.

He used his ring to build his village.

And commanded many things to appear.

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.

This is the end of my story.

Analysis

The law of karma, though associated with Indian religions (Buddhism and Hinduism), is equally applicable to other world mythologies, particularly African mythology. According to this philosophy, what happens after someone's actions is considered the consequences of his/her actions, be they positive or negative. Put simply, love begets love and hate begets hate. Despite his abject poverty, and due to his extravagant and empathic nature, the protagonist in this myth proceeds to empty his last bag of salt on the man in flames. His empathic, sympathetic and generous nature towards others earns him a ring of fortune, which finally makes him the richest person in the society, and is envied by the king and his siblings. The wheel of fortune turns to his favor because he is ready to sacrifice all to save humanity. This issue of fortune or misfortune in one's life is linked to the concept of predestination in African Traditional Religion, wherein, once God has paved one's way, nothing can disrupt it. The King's attempt to thwart the protagonist's fortune only ends with his (king) abdication and the kingdom handed over to the protagonist in this myth. In West African Traditional Religion T. N. O. Quarcoopome, making reference to Yoruba Mythology, posits: "The spiritual part of man is the Emi. This gives life to man ….Before God, the Emi has to give account of his deed on earth. Thus, the fate of Emi is determined by his doing on earth" (103). Humanity should expect to reap what he has sown. Giving out fortunes, as is the case with the protagonist, fetches fortune.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions

Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture

Adversity Animals Child, children Family Hierarchy Justice Magic Past Relationships Revenge Society Violence

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.

Further Reading

Engard, Ronald K., “Myth and Political Economy in Bafut (Cameroon): The Structural History of an African Kingdom”, *Paideuma* 34 (1988): 49–89.

Mbunwe-Samba, Patrick, “Oral tradition and the African past” in R. Layton, ed., *Who Needs the Past? Indigenous Values and Archaeology*, Routledge, 2012, 105–118.

Quarcoopome, T. N. O., *West African Traditional Religion,* Ibadan: African Universities Press, 1987.

Addenda

Researcher: Divine Che Neba (trans.).

Editor: Daniel A. Nkemleke.

Method of data collection: Tape recording and note taking.

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.