Daniel A. Nkemleke, "Entry on: Tikoloshe by Babila Mutia", peer-reviewed by Divine Che Neba and Elizabeth Hale. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/198. Entry version as of November 21, 2026.

Babila Mutia

Tikoloshe

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	Tikoloshe
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Country/countries of popularity	Republic of South Africa
Registration Files	This is a brief summary of the myths as it is available on the internet. However, I also sat down with Babila Mutia to talk about the myth. His account of the story was largely similar to those found on the internet (see links)
Country of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Cameroon
Full Date of the Recording of the Story for the Databasey	Jan. 18, 2017
More Details of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Yaoundé, Cameroon
Genre	Myths
Target Audience	Crossover
Author of the Entry	Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaoundé 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Divine Che Neba, University of Yaoundé 1, nebankiwang@yahoo.com Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au

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Creators



Babila Mutia , b. 1951
(Storyteller)

Babila Mutia is an associate professor in oral literature and creative writing in the department of English at ENS, University of Yaounde 1. He is a widely travelled short stories writer. He earned his BA in English from the University of Benin in Nigeria, his MA in Creative Writing from the University of Windsor, Canada and a PhD in English from Dalhousie University, Canada. He has been a visiting Fulbright scholar in Western Washington University. He is a professional storyteller whose short story *The Tiger Trail* was broadcast on the BBC in 1979. His best known published works include: *Whose Land* (1996), *Coils of Mortal Flesh* (2008) and *The Miracle* (2012).

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

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Additional information

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating

Region: Kwazulu Natal in South Africa

The Zulu belief system include ancestral spirits, which they believe are omnipresent in their daily lives. Zulu people may use them as mediums to communicate with their ancestors with the aid of sacrifices.

Cultural influences: The myth of Tokoloshe has influenced many cultural productions in Africa and beyond, see the following links:

The South African Tokoloshe, roadtravelafrica.com, May 21, 2011 (accessed: August 22, 2018).

Creatures from African Mythology: Tokoloshe, theillustrationist.com, January 10, 2013 (accessed: August 22, 2018).

Tikoloshe, en.wikipedia.org (accessed: August 22, 2018).

Tokoloshe, Myth or Reality?, news24.com, September 1, 2013 (accessed: August 22, 2018).

Tokoloshe Myth of Southern Africa (Google's graphics). google.fr (accessed: August 22, 2018).

Summary

According to Zulu myth, the Tikoloshe is a mischievous dwarf spirit that becomes invisible when it drinks water. It is said to rape women and bite people's toes in their sleep as well as cause illness and death. Elders often use it to dissuade children from bad behaviour. It is believed that women who are harassed by witches at night offer Tikoloshe gifts such as salt and milk to keep off the witches from making love to them all night long*. Tikoloshes manifest in different forms such as dwarf-like gremlins or bear-like humanoid beings. Some Zulu people believe that the traditional priests, *shammas* or *dibias* can employ a Tikoloshe to wreak vengeance on offenders. They are usually blamed for all sort of misfortune. Many people and children even dread mentioning its name for fear of attracting its wrath.

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	* The phenomenon of witches making love to women at night is very lively in Cameroon, especially in the western region. The phenomenon is referred to as “Poisson de nuit” (“night poison”). According to the stories, women experience love making in their dreams and would wake up in the morning to find that they are wet. When this happens, it is believed they need to seek the services of a Marabout to cleanse them otherwise they became barren. If you travel from Yaoundé to Bafussam by bus today in Cameroon, you would find people selling items that can help women keep away these witches.
Analysis	Tikoloshe is a tale of a kind of witchcraft and sorcery practiced on humans, particularly at night. This phenomenon finds parallels in the communities of the North West and Western Regions of Cameroon. According to the stories, women experience love making in their dreams and would wake up in the morning to find that they are wet. It is also represented by victims being fed with delicious meals in their dreams, and when they wake up to find that they actually ate the food, it means they have ingested some poison. The phenomenon is referred to as night poison or “poison de nuit.” When this happens, the victims need to seek the services of a tradi-practioner to cleanse them otherwise they will become barren or may die. Some people even sell antidotes to this phenomenon on the buses travelling plying major roads in Cameroon.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Rape Supernatural creatures (non-classical) Tradition Violence Witch

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Further Reading

McNab, Chris, *Mythological Monsters,* New York: Scholastic, Inc., 2007.

Scholtz, Pieter, *Tales of the Tokoloshe*, Johannesburg: Struik Publishers, 2005.

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