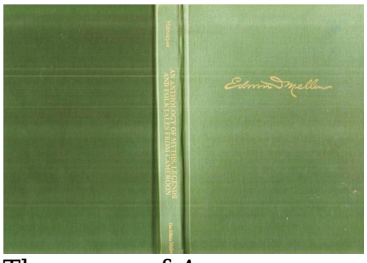
Daniel A. Nkemleke, "Entry on: Why Moon and Sun Live in Sky by Joseph Eboa, Emmanuel Matateyou", peer-reviewed by Courage Yaah and Katarzyna Marciniak and team members in Warsaw. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/199. Entry version as of November 06, 2026.

Joseph Eboa , Emmanuel Matateyou

Why Moon and Sun Live in Sky

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	Why Moon and Sun Live in Sky
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon
Original Language	Mboo
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	February 17, 1993 (summarised from a book published in 1999, in which the date of the collection of the story is mentioned)
More Details of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Melong, Littoral region, Cameroon
Genre	Myths
Target Audience	Crossover
Author of the Entry	Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaoundé 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.com

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Creators



Joseph Eboa (Storyteller)

Age of Narrator: 63 (in 1993)

Occupation: Teacher

Language: Mboo

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



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).

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Additional information

Summary

The original published version of this myth appears in: *An Anthology of Myths, Legends and Folktales from Cameroon* by Emmanuel Matateyou, published in 1997 (pp. 41–43) by The Edwin Mellen Press Ltd. Although we have the permission 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. We are therefore very thankful to The Edwin Mellen Press Ltd and Professor Mataeyou for granting us this permission.

In the beginning, the Water and the Sun were very great friends. The Sun always paid visits to his friend, the Water. But the Water on his part never visited the Sun. Not even on a single occasion. But instead, the Water usually invited the Sun to meet him at a specific spot in the open air. The Sun could not just understand why the Water never visited him in his own house. He reflected over this problem for a long time: "Perhaps Water is looking down on me," he said to himself. "But I can't bear this any longer," the Sun continued. He went to Water and asked him why he had never paid him a visit in his own house. He bluntly told Water that he would stop coming to Water's house, if he (Water) failed to return his visits in his turn. Water laughed and told the Sun that he had not been paying visits to him because he was afraid that his entourage might cause a problem to the Sun's family. But the Sun insisted that he was very capable of accommodating Water and his entourage. "Anyway, if you continue to insist, I shall come. When you are ready to receive me, please send word to me," the Water said to his good friend, the Sun.

The Sun returned to his house and informed his wife, the Moon, of the planned visit of Water. He and his wife set straight to work, doing all necessary preparations for Water's unprecedented visit. Sun and his wife expanded their house, and used pure red earth in plastering the walls and painting the floor. New furniture was added to the existing ones in order to provide accommodation befitting the Water and his company. When the Sun and the Moon were satisfied with their preparations to receive Water, the Sun sent a message to Water stating the day of the visit. When the day of the visit came, the Sun and his wife were very happy to be honoured with a visit by their best friend, Water. The Sun and his wife invited some of their relatives, neighbors, and friends to the occasion. When Water arrived in the Sun's compound, the Sun's family and all those whom he had invited

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cheered and ululated in joy. Water stopped at the Sun's door and asked him once more if he was quite prepared to receive him. "Of course! What type of question is that? You are my guest of honour," Sun replied. Water entered into the house and was ushered to a special seat. Water's entourage continuously flowed in until the whole house was almost filled.

While this was going on Mr. and Mrs. Sun's [other] guests had quietly vanished out of the house and left the Sun's compound unnoticed. The Sun and the Moon climbed on the chairs and soon onto the bed as the level of the water rose. Water asked the remaining part of his entourage still outside to wait. He then turned to the Sun and asked him if he could tell the remaining part of his entourage outside to go back home. But shame can cause one to eat poison. The Sun was embarrassed by this kind of proposal from his quest of honour, Water. He had strongly insisted on Water paying him a visit and so did not want to appear childish to his guests. He asked Water to allow his entourage to enter into the house. Water felt that his host was quite at ease to see his house filled by his entourage. He thus ordered the remaining part of his entourage outside to enter into the house. And immediately, they started flowing into the house until the entire house, right up into the ceiling was filled with water. The Sun and the Moon climbed from the bed on which they had been perching up to the traditional bamboo shelves as the level of the water rose, and then onto the ceiling, then up to the roof and finally up to the sky, when the level of the water had risen and covered the whole house right up to the roof. Since then, the Sun and his wife, the Moon, have remained in the sky waiting for the Water to liberate their house. That is why the Sun and the Moon are in heaven.

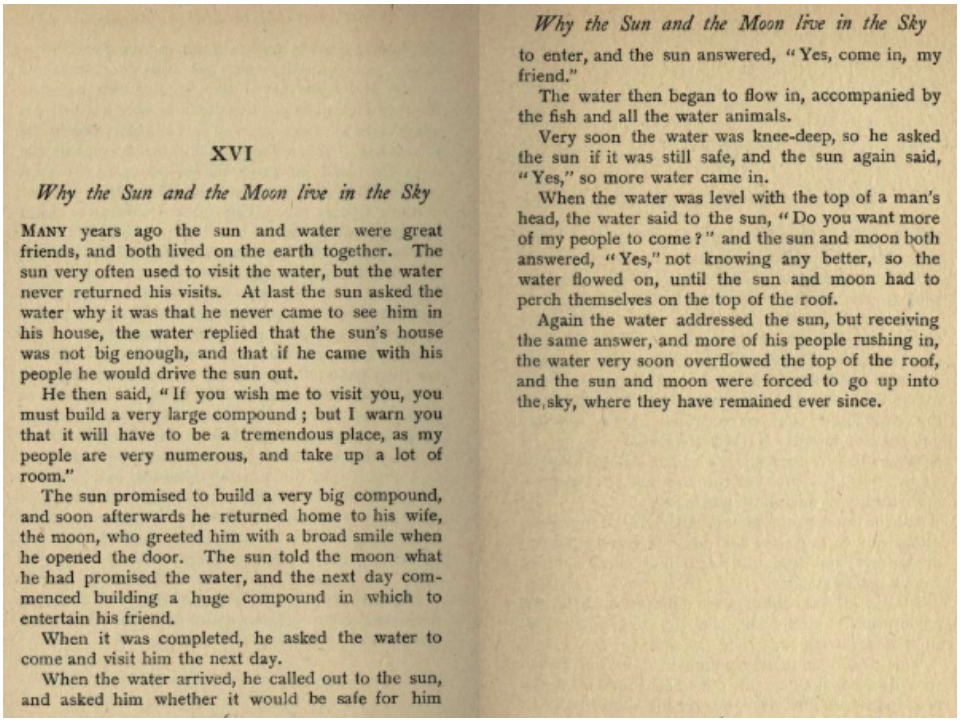
Analysis

The organization of the cosmic order is a puzzle to humanity and myths in most cultures remain the lone panacea used in resolving this enigma. Humanity, including the Mboo people of Cameroon, wants to know why certain terrestrial and celestial bodies are where they are in the cosmic order, who positioned them and why. These questions have propelled humankind into pondering all, including why the moon and the sun live in the sky. In the sacred records of the Mboo people of Cameroon, the answer becomes evident: cosmic disharmony. The nature of some cosmic bodies makes it difficult for a harmonious co-existence. That is why these bodies must stay apart eternally. For this

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	reason, the moon and the sun are bound to be apart from the earth. Compare similar tales: Elphinstone Dayrell, "Why the Sun and the Moon live in the Sky" in *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria, West Africa*, London–New York–Bombay–Calcutta: Longmans, Green and Co., 1910, 64–65. "Why the Sun and the Moon Live in the Sky" in *1500 Eternal Masterpieces of Fairy Tales (Atheneum Classics),* Pandora's Box, Kindle Edition, 2019, 973.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Family Friendship Nature Water
Further Reading	Matateyou, Emmanuel, *An Anthology of Myths, Legends and Folktales from Cameroon*, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press Ltd, 1997. Dayrell, Elphinstone, "Why the Sun and the Moon live in the Sky" in *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria, West Africa*, London–New York–Bombay–Calcutta: Longmans, Green and Co., 1910, 64–65.
Addenda	Collected by Adolph Benga

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XVI

Why the Sun and the Moon live in the Sky

MANY years ago the sun and water were great friends, and both lived on the earth together. The sun very often used to visit the water, but the water never returned his visits. At last the sun asked the water why it was that he never came to see him in his house, the water replied that the sun's house was not big enough, and that if he came with his people he would drive the sun out.

He then said, "If you wish me to visit you, you must build a very large compound; but I warn you that it will have to be a tremendous place, as my people are very numerous, and take up a lot of room."

The sun promised to build a very big compound, and soon afterwards he returned home to his wife, the moon, who greeted him with a broad smile when he opened the door. The sun told the moon what he had promised the water, and the next day commenced building a huge compound in which to entertain his friend.

When it was completed, he asked the water to come and visit him the next day.

When the water arrived, he called out to the sun, and asked him whether it would be safe for him

Why the Sun and the Moon live in the Sky

to enter, and the sun answered, "Yes, come in, my friend."

The water then began to flow in, accompanied by the fish and all the water animals.

Very soon the water was knee-deep, so he asked the sun if it was still safe, and the sun again said, "Yes," so more water came in.

When the water was level with the top of a man's head, the water said to the sun, "Do you want more of my people to come?" and the sun and moon both answered, "Yes," not knowing any better, so the water flowed on, until the sun and moon had to perch themselves on the top of the roof.

Again the water addressed the sun, but receiving the same answer, and more of his people rushing in, the water very soon overflowed the top of the roof, and the sun and moon were forced to go up into the sky, where they have remained ever since.

"Why the Sun and the Moon live in the Sky" in *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria, West Africa*, by Elphinstone Dayrell, scan retrieved from the Internet Archive (accessed: October 10, 2021).

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