Divine Che Neba, "Entry on: How Jealousy Originated in Polygamous Homes by Ndi-deng ", peer-reviewed by Daniel A. Nkemleke, Eleanor A. Dasi and Lisa Maurice. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/413. Entry version as of November 11, 2026.

Ndi-deng

How Jealousy Originated in Polygamous Homes

Cameroon

TAGS: African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions Archetype





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

General information	
Title of the work	How Jealousy Originated in Polygamous Homes
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Original Language	Mbwe'we
Full Date of the Recording of the Story for the Databasey	November 11, 2016
More Details of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Awing
Genre	Myths
Target Audience	Crossover
Author of the Entry	Divine Che Neba, University of Yaounde 1, nebankiwang@yahoo.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaounde 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.com Eleanor A. Dasi, University of Yaounde 1, wandasi5@yahoo.com Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, lisa.maurice@biu.ac.il

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



Ndi-deng (Storyteller)

Age of Narrator: 65 (in 2016)

Social status: Notable (a member of the tribal hierarchy)

Profession: Farmer

Language of narration: Awing or Mbwe'we

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

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Additional information

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating

Background:

Oral History holds that the people of Awing came from the North East Congo* and settled in Widikum via Tadkon near Batibo and finally moved to their present site. Legend re-enforces that they originated from the Bantu roots of East Africa. They belong to the upper Ngemba tribe of Bamenda central. Awing is one of Cameroon's wonders. Her hilly undulating landscape creates a spectacular panorama. It is the major shrine where most sacrifices in the village take place. It provides ultimate tourist splendor to the inhabitants of Santa sub-division in the North West Region and support a thriving agriculture industry. In many legendary myths, Lake Awing is the abode of the village numerous Gods, which requires annual appeasement to guarantee fertility, peace and love in the land.

Occasion: Staged

* See: all-about-cameroon.com (accessed: April 10, 2018).

Summary

A long time ago,
There lived a man,
Who had a soft hide on his bed.
When he was about to travel,
He called his wives,
Showed them the hide,
And said,
"LOOK,THIS HIDE IS VERY
EXPENSIVE AND IS PART OF MY LIFE.
TAKE CARE
LET NOBODY CLIMB ON IT.
I AM SAYING SO
BECAUSE THIS HIDE
WAS GIVEN TO ME BY A WATER GOD.
IF IT IS DIRTY,
WE CAN ONLY WASH IT AT
MINYENGE* RIVER."

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(The audience is astonished)
When the man gave his instructions, he left
As he left,
The first wife's son climbed on the hide,
And mistakenly excreted on it.
When their husband returned from his journey,
He was very angry.
(The narrator opens his eyes wide)
He ordered the wife,
"YOU MUST GO AND WASH THIS HIDE AT MINYENGE RIVER."
Minyenge River was a long distance.
The wife carried the hide,
Crossed five rivers
And sang a song.
"Which river is this,
Like Minyenge River,
It is my fault!
Ohoo!
This hide I am carrying,
Will only be washed in Minyenge River".
Nobody answered.
When she reached the fifth hill,
She sang the song again:
"Which river is this,
Like Minyenge River,
It is my fault!
Ohoo!
This hide I am carrying,
Will only be washed in Minyenge River."
As she sang the song,
A voice answered in the nearby river.
She said:
"COME OUT AND HELP ME"
A crone came out from the river,
So frightful
With layers of scabies on her body,
There were rashes all over her body.
The crone ordered the woman to wash her rashes.
The woman had no option
She came out,
And carefully washed her.
After washing her,

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The crone went under the river,
Came out with two eggs,
Gave the eggs to the woman,
And asked her to shoot
A certain beast she would encounter on her way back
With one of the eggs.
If she succeeds,
The beast would be blind
And make way for her to go back.
The crone also asked her to break
The other egg at home.
She followed these instructions.
She shot the beast on the way.
As she got home,
She cleaned the compound,
Broke the other egg
New hides came out,
Fine things came out,
Sweet things came out,
Money came out,
And many, many things came out.
The second wife became envious,
Asked her son to excrete on the new hides,
The son did so.
The husband was again angry,
Came out and ordered:
“YOU MUST GO AND WASH THIS HIDE AT MINYENGE RIVER.”
The second wife carried the skin,
Crossed five rivers
And sang the same song:
“Which river is this,
Like Minyenge River,
It is my fault!
Ohoo!
This hide I am carrying,
Will only be washed in Minyenge River”.
No body answered.
When she reached the fifth hill,

She sang the song again:
“Which river is this,
Like Minyenge River,

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It is my fault!
Ohoo!
This hide I am carrying,
Will only be washed in Minyenge River."
As she sang the song,
A voice answered in the nearby river,
She said:
"COME OUT AND HELP ME"
A crone came out from the river,
So frightful
With layers of scabies on her body,
There were rashes all over her body.
The crone ordered the woman to wash her rashes.
The woman said she was too ugly for her to touch.
The crone however gave her two eggs,
Gave her the same instructions she had given her co-spouse.
She took the eggs and left.
When she met the beast,
She thought to herself,
I cannot waste this egg on a beast.
She then took another road.
When she arrived the village,
She summoned all the villagers,
Broke the eggs,
Wild animals came out,
Snakes, scorpions, tigers.
The villagers were scared
Nobody wanted to talk to her
They deserted the area.
She was very disappointed.
It was then that jealousy started
In polygamous homes.

* A river in which spirits reside.

Analysis

This myth emphasizes the need for obedience and selflessness. In a typical African setting where polygamy is a norm, obedience is expected from the wives by their husband and there are always

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	penalties when important instructions are disregarded. Also, the myth points to the importance of being kind to strangers for gods and angels often disguise themselves as poor beggarly strangers. However, in the modern African society where people are increasingly questioning and turning away from the practice of polygamy, this myth helps to underscore one of the problems of this type of polygamy. Other thematic concerns raised in the myth include: mercy, compassion, pity, pardon, hospitality, kindness before destruction, and reward. The myth shares some motifs with the myth entitled *An Orphan Child*, such as the motif of an old woman with scabies or the motif of two eggs - one with wealth as a prize, the other with snakes bringing death as a punishment.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions Archetype
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Disobedience Emotions Family Justice Obedience Relationships Respect Society Storytelling Supernatural creatures (non-classical) Witch
Further Reading	Loven, Lena Larsson and Agneta Strömberg, eds., *Ancient Marriage in Myth and Reality*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010.
Addenda	Researcher: Divine Che Neba. Method of data collection: Tape-recording. Editors: Daniel A. Nkemleke and Eleanor A. Dasi.

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