Daniel A. Nkemleke, "Entry on: Autan and the Monster by Tidjani Yaya", peer-reviewed by 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/434. Entry version as of November 21, 2026.

Tidjani Yaya

Autan and the Monster

Cameroon

TAGS: African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions Hero(es) Monsters





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

General information	
Title of the work	Autan and the Monster
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon
Original Language	Mboum
Country of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Cameroon
Full Date of the Recording of the Story for the Databasey	January 2, 2018
More Details of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Galim
Genre	Myths
Target Audience	Crossover (Young adults and adults)
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Creators



Tidjani Yaya (Storyteller)

Age of narrator: 64 (in 2018)

Social status: Commoner

Profession: Cattle breeder

Language of narration: Mboum

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

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Additional information

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating

Background: Galim-Tignere is found in the Faro and Deo Division of the Adamaoua Region in the northern part of Cameroon. The greater part of its population lives on the plateaus of the Adamaoua. The village is made up of four ethnic groups viz: the Nyem-nyems, who were the first to arrive the area towards the end of the 18th century, the Mboums (Mbororos), the Hausas and the Peuhls or Foulbes who joined them in the 19th century. Each of these ethnic groups has its own cultural peculiarities and economic activities. The Nyem-nyems practice mostly farming, the Haousas, fishing and hunting while the Peuhls and Mboums are specialized in cattle rearing.

Occasion: Staged

Summary

A long time ago, in the village of Galim-Tignere, there lived a woman called Iya and her husband with their two kids. This village was being terrorised by dodo - a wild monstrous animal. The presence of this animal made it impossible for the villagers to go out very early in the morning and late at night. If anyone did, they were either killed or seriously wounded by the animal. Iya soon became pregnant for her last child. During the months of pregnancy, she would sit in front of her hut to feel the fresh breeze but would soon hurry inside for fear of the animal. She bore the child she was carrying in her womb and named him Autan. The child started talking and walking immediately it came out of his mother’s womb.

The birth of Autan terrified the monster. It seemed it sensed that the boy will one day challenge it. Its presence in the village now became a daily routine. It would come at night and roar in front of Iya’s hut till the first cock crow and then it would return to the forest. During this time, Autan was growing normally and witnessing the roaring. When he turned seven, he asked his mother what was producing that horrible noise. The mother told him about the monstrous beast and how it has conditioned movements in the village. Her idea was to frighten him but it did not work.

One day, Autan decided to challenge the animal in order to free his people. He started by collecting wood for a big fire. Then he took seven of his father’s lances, put them in the fire and waited for the

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monster. It appeared and surprised at the boy's presence, started to sing:

"Who can challenge me in this village, I the monster?"

The boy instantly replied:

"I, last born of Iya, challenge you and I am even stronger."

Furious at the boy's reply, the monster ran towards him and the fight began. It was a fierce fight that lasted seven days. After each day, the monster would retreat to the forest and then would reappear again singing the same song:

"Who can challenge me in this village, I the monster?"

And the boy would reply:

"I, last born of Iya challenge you and I am even stronger."

And the fight would continue with the boy sending a hot lance into the animal's body each day. On the seventh day, the boy sent a lance into the animal's mouth and it went into its stomach. It fell and died. The next day, the villagers were amazed to see the lifeless body of the animal. It turned out to be a lion and so since then, the people decided never to eat the flesh of a lion. Autan was then praised and honoured for freeing his people.

Analysis

This myth encourages heroism and selflessness as life-saving attributes in humans. As explained in the myth, Autan decides to single-handedly fight the monster to save his people from its ferociousness. The myth therefore falls in the category of the superman or superhero with extraordinary strength, courage and ability, who undertakes some risky venture to save someone or a whole community from some calamity. Mention can be made here of the legendary Superman in movies, who is admired for his unusual bravery and skill in helping people out of very difficult situations. Love also comes in here as a virtue. It is because of love that these heroes take upon themselves to save lives and communities.

Tales of evil dragons and monsters abound in ancient world myths and often involve the monster being killed by a super-hero.

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Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions Hero(es) Monsters
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Animals Family Self Superheroes

Further Reading

Bane, Therasa, *Encyclopedia of Beast and Monsters in Myths Legends and Folklore*, London: Robinson, 1999.

Clayton, Matt, *Greek Mythology: A Captivating Guide to Ancient Gods, Goddesses, Heroes and Monsters*, New York: Barnes and Noble, 2017.

Ford, Clyde W., "Lituolone" in *The Hero with an African Face: Mythic Wisdom of Traditional Africa*, Bantam Books, 1999, 36–37.

Werner, Alice, "The Swallowing Monster" in *Myths and Legends of the Bantu*, London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1968, 206–222.

Addenda

Researcher: Daniel A. Nkemleke.

Assistant Researcher: Djafarou.

Method of data collection: Tape-recording/note-taking.

Editor: Eleanor A. Dasi.

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