Divine Che Neba, "Entry on: Ngoniton by Nde Fru ", peer-reviewed by Daniel A. Nkemleke, Eleanor A. Dasi and Elizabeth Hale. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/440. Entry version as of November 06, 2026.

Nde Fru

Ngoniton

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	Ngoniton
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon
Original Language	Mangkon
Country of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Cameroon
Full Date of the Recording of the Story for the Databasey	March 7, 2018
More Details of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Mankon
Genre	Myths
Target Audience	Crossover (Young adults and adults)
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 Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au

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



Nde Fru (Storyteller)

Age of narrator: 66 (in 2018)

Social status: Commoner

Profession: Businessman

Language of narration: Mangkon

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

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Additional information

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating

Ngoniton: In Mankon, the word means a protruding navel. The same myth pertains to the Bafut with the principal character as “Ndutong” which literarily has the same meaning as Ngonito

Background: Mankon is found in Bamenda city, the capital of the North West Region of Cameroon. Like any other fondom of this region, the Mankon people revere the ancestors and have special objects that are symbols of authority and continuity. Their traditional worship system is based on rituals and sacrifices offered to these ancestors both at the community and individual levels. Their sacred shrines are found in rivers, forests, trees and stones. Many of them have however embraced Christianity. They speak Ngemba language and engage in farming as their main occupation. Their rich cultural diversity is displayed in the museum situated in the Mankon palace.

Occasion: Life performance

Summary

Long time ago,

There lived a woman,

Who had only one daughter

This daughter was called Ngoniton.

The main occupation of this woman was fishing.

Her yields were usually good while

Those of her co-spouse were often poor.

Her lone daughter Ngoniton was very beautiful.

She was shining like the face of the moon.

Because of her beauty, her stepmother hated her.

A time came when Ngoniton’s mother’s yield became low.

The yield was low.

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It persisted for sometime.

She tried, she tried again,

Nothing happened.

People told her to offer a sacrifice

To the gods of the river.

Her co-spouse

Told her that the best sacrifice was Ngoniton.

That she should push her into the stream and

Her yield would be high.

One day, as she went out fishing,

She caught nothing.

She shouted to the river:

WATER, GIVE ME FISH

I WILL GIVE YOU NGONITON

NGONITON MY LONE DAUGHTER

(the audience particularly women exclaimed)

By the time she finished her declaration to the river,

Ngonition was coming to help her.

She cast the net into the river,

Wanted to draw out the net.

The net could not come out.

She called the daughter to help her;

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They both pulled the net;

The net was full of fish.

When the net was out,

She pushed Ngoniton into the river.

(More exclamation from the audience. Some people put their hands on their heads)

Since she could not carry the fish,

She went and called for her husband,

They carried the fish back home.

When the husband asked,

Where Ngoniton was,

The wife said she did not know

She added that

“You know how girls are today;

We were together

And immediately one young man signaled,

She disappeared.”

The father was not happy

He said,

“Ngoniton cannot leave like this.”

The father waited and waited for Ngoniton

But Ngoniton did not come back.

He knew Ngoniton had gone forever.

One day, her stepbrother

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Went out to fetch wood in a forest

Near the stream where Ngoniton was drowned.

He saw a dry tree near the river,

He went there,

Started cutting it.

Each time he cut, there was a noise.

He wondered, stopped and listened, then cut again.

A voice come from the bowels of the river singing:

Who is cutting the tree?

My brother, I am Ngoniton

Go and tell my father

That my mother is a bad woman.

That she plunged me into the river

In exchange for fish.

Tell my father that I am suffering.

I am a baby sitter.

I now clean the throne of the water god

And wear an identification bangle on my left hand.

The stepbrother heard the voice and wondered

“IS THAT NOT NGONITON’S VOICE?” (The narrator opens his eyes wide and points at the audience)

He ran back to their father,

And narrated the story.

Their father could not believe what he heard.

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He decided to follow the son to the stream.

When they arrived there,

The son started cutting the tree once more;

The same voice was heard:

Who is cutting the tree?

My brother, I am Ngoniton

I now clean the throne of the water god

And wear an identification bangle on my left hand.

The father heard Ngoniton's voice,

And was astonished.

Back at home,

Ngoniton's mother was struggling to smoke the fish

She had had in exchange for her daughter.

The grill was so heavy that it broke;

The fish fell into the fire.

Some got burnt beyond recognition.

At the same time, the father had invited some villagers

To help him fish out Ngoniton.

They moved down the river,

The step brother started cutting the tree.

This time, Ngoniton came out

And started singing her song.

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They cast the net, caught her

Started running with her;

They went across seven hills

And hid her there.

The king of the water gods returned

Only to realize that Ngoniton was no more in the palace.

He was very angry;

Sent the first spirit to search for Ngoniton;

The spirit came back without Ngoniton.

The second spirit was sent,

It came back without Ngoniton.

The king of the river god was angry,

Ordered a flood to go and search for all the fish

That Ngoniton’s mother had collected.

The whole land was flooded; there was water everywhere,

It filled the house, collected the dried fish.

When the king counted them,

He realized that some were missing.

He discovered that the fire had consumed some.

The water entered the fire to collect the remains;

In anger, the fire was put out.

From then, the god of the river

Declared enmity with fire.

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	That is why water and fire have always remained enemies That is the end of my story. (Members of audiences were satisfied. Everybody smiled)
Analysis	"Ngoniton" is an origin myth meant for children and adolescents in which a highly entertaining tale is weaved to teach a vital life lesson. In this case, the enmity between water and fire is used to expose Ngoniton's mother's inordinate quest for wealth and the consequent loss of her lone daughter. Also, it exposes ills such as child abuse, child sacrifice, jealousy and hypocrisy especially in polygamous family structures. This is evident from the fact that Ngoniton's mother is advised by her co-spouse to offer her daughter to the river god in exchange for a bountiful catch just because they are jealous of Ngoniton's unparalleled beauty. The myth also proves that with time all crimes are exposed and wrongdoers are always punished. On the other hand, the myth illustrates the father's role in standing up for his children.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Appearances Conflict Family Murder Parents (and children) Religious beliefs Sacrifice Society Water
Further Reading	Chi, Christopher Che, *Kingdom of Mankon: Aspects of History, Language, Culture, Flora and Fauna*, Langaa RPCIG, African Books Collective, Michigan State University Press, 2010.

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Addenda

Researcher: Divine Che Neba.

Method of data collection: Tape-recording.

Editors: Daniel A. Nkemleke and Eleanor A. Dasi.

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