Divine Che Neba, "Entry on: Nyamaboh and His Aunt by Rachael Lum", 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/442. Entry version as of November 21, 2026.

Rachael Lum

Nyamaboh and His Aunt

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	Nyamaboh and His Aunt
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon
Original Language	Bafut
Country of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Cameroon
Full Date of the Recording of the Story for the Databasey	March 3, 2018
More Details of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Mforya - Bafut
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 Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au

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Creators



Rachael Lum (Storyteller)

Age of narrator: 60 (in 2018)

Social status: Commoner

Profession: Farming

Language of narration: Bafut

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

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Additional information

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating

Background: Bafut is located in the North West Region of Cameroon, with an estimated population of about 140.000 inhabitants, spread over a surface area of 340 square kilometers. As Shu Abenego Che and Tanda Insidore in *The History of Bafut** rightly put, the first Bafut people migrated from Lake Chad down to Tikari area Northwest of Foumban, which was a dynastic rule. In constant search for fertile land and a more peaceful settlement, they migrated again to Ndobo, (present day Ndop) and then down to Bafut where they finally settled. They negotiated leadership with the aborigines, who were the Mbebili people, under the leadership of Niba Chi. The Mbebili people later accepted to be subservient to those who came in from Ndobo for peace to reign. Mbebili today is one of the villages that make up the Bafut Kingdom.

Occasion: Staged

* Shu Abenego Che and Tanda Insidore in The History of Bafut (accessed: April 20, 2018).

Summary

Long time ago

There lived a woman

Who had her only son called Nyamaboh.

The woman was old,

But the child was still too young.

A plague occurred in the village - scabies.

The plague killed the old woman and many others.

Upon her death, this child was handed to his aunt.

The aunt had many children.

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Nyamaboh was always being mistreated .

He became the hewer of firewood for the family.

Sometime later, a prolonged rain came.

People had to trek for long distances

Before they could get wood to burn.

Some crossed mountains to look for firewood.

Among the firewood fetchers was Nyamaboh.

One day he went out to fetch firewood,

He spent the whole day, since he had to trek a long distance.

He had a good bunch of firewood for the day.

As it was getting dark,

He hurriedly tied his firewood,

Left the bush but forgot his cutlass.

It rained heavily that day.

A drop was like a mango fruit.

He struggled in the rain and finally reached home

When it was already dark.

He threw the firewood *bim**

Nobody cared.

A voice came from the house,

BRING SOME OF THE FIREWOOD,

PLACES ARE TOO COLD.

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He was looking for the cutlass

To untie the bundle,

Unfortunately, the cutlass was not there.

As he was struggling to undo it with his bare hands,

His aunt came out

Asked him to undo it with the cutlass.

He said,

It seems I have left the cutlass behind.

The aunt, like a tiger, caught him by the ear;

Told him,

YOU CANNOT SLEEP IN THIS HOUSE

WITHOUT THAT CUTLASS.

WHERE THE CUTLASS WILL SLEEP,

THAT IS WHERE YOU ARE GOING TO SLEEP.

The boy left for the bush inside the rain

(Audience sympathizes; some sighing, others with their hands on their cheeks

and putting on melancholic looks; and one of them spoke)

“OH! THE GAME OF AN ORPHAN

IS ALWAYS SHARED WITHOUT SKINING.”**

(Narrator continues)

The first thought that came into his mind,

Was to run away from home,

He contemplated for a while:

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If I run away, where will I go, where will I stay?

Life will be worse than this.

Another thought came:

If I am caught by a wild animal

Or meet a ghost,

That will be the end of my life.

Finally, he decided to continue:

I WILL GO, A MAN IS A MAN.

IT DOES NOT ALLOW A MAN

*AND MEETS A TREE.****

It was very dark,

He could not see the road well.

Everything he saw was scary.

You cannot count the number of times

That his hair stood on end;

The number of times when

Goose pimples came out of him.

But he continued.

On arriving the entrance of the thick forest,

His hair stood on end,

Followed by goose pimples.

He saw an old woman and wanted to run.

The old woman said:

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"Take this" (showing a log of firewood)

"I know what you are looking for,

Are you looking for your cutlass?"

Nyamaboh nodded.

"Carry this log of firewood into my hut,

I will give you your cutlass."

The boy was afraid

But took the log into the cave of the crone.

The cave was very dark,

He saw nothing in it.

The old crone thanked him,

And gave him the cutlass

She also gave him an egg,

Told him to break the egg on his arrival back home.

He took the egg and his cutlass.

With fear in him, he started running.

He ran, ran, ran and ran.

As he was running,

He had the impression that a group of people

Were following him.

So he kept on increasing his speed

Only increasing

Till he reached their house.

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He hid the egg, and took the cutlass to his aunt.

The next day he took the egg,

Went to where his mother was buried,

I mean, their own compound.

Broke it,

Fortune came.

Riches, seeds, dishes, cutlasses, food, clothes

A big house, bags of rice,

And many good things.

The aunt had to stoop before him.

The aunt's children became servants in his house

And he became a very important councilor in the village

This is the end of my story.

(audience comes in)

"That is not the end."

Narrator: "can you then end it with your big mouth."

Audience: "The aunt also sent out her children."

Narrator: "That is a similar story. Tomorrow I will narrate that one to you people.

I have narrated this story just the way it was narrated to me by the late chief himself"

Audience: (nods)

Narrator: "If Wanki accepts then everything is confirmed."

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* Sound produced when as the child throws down the bundle of firewood.

** An African proverb which means that orphans are often maltreated because there is no one to back them up.

*** A proverbial saying which means problems are encountered by human beings and not by objects (tree). People are therefore expected to face the problems to show their strength.

Analysis

This myth falls into the rich folklore in many communities around the world in which an orphan was usually mistreated by their foster parents or stepmothers (e.g. Cinderella and Snow White in folk tales collected by the Grimm brothers) but who, by some stroke of fortune, is finally rewarded with either wealth, a good spouse or power. As with most orphan stories, readers (who may or may not be orphans themselves) easily connect or sympathise with the orphan hero. This myth originates from an African society, which does not consider children who have lost their parents as orphans. In the extended family structure, a relative or stepparent would adopt the child as their own. However, this does not rule out cases of severe mistreatment at the hands of these foster parents. Many myths show the triumph of the orphan child amid untold suffering, perseverance, and bravery. This myth therefore moralises foster parents and society as a whole on the dangers of mistreating or despising orphans. It equally exhorts orphans never to lose hope and assures them of divine providence and protection.

The myth shares some motifs with the myth entitled *An Orphan Child and Her Uncle's Wife*, such as the motif of a neglected orphan eventually rewarded with an egg of wealth.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions

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Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Family Justice Magic Oppression Orphans
Further Reading	*An Orphan Child and Her Uncle's Wife* (accessed: November 30, 2020).
Addenda	Researcher: Divine Che Neba. Method of data collection: Note-taking. Editors: Daniel A. Nkemleke and Eleanor A. Dasi.

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