Eleanor A. Dasi, "Entry on: The Mban by Chrysantus Mboh", peer-reviewed by Daniel A. Nkemleke, Divine Che Neba and Susan Deacy. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/444. Entry version as of November 11, 2026.

Chrysantus Mboh

The Mban

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	The Mban
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon
Original Language	Meta
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	Bamenda, North West Region, Cameroon
Genre	Myths
Target Audience	Crossover (Young adults and adults)
Author of the Entry	Eleanor A. Dasi, University of Yaounde 1, wandasi5@yahoo.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaounde 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.com Divine Che Neba, University of Yaounde 1, nebankiwang@yahoo.com Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, s.deacy@roehampton.ac.uk

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



Chrysantus Mboh (Storyteller)

Age of narrator: 86 (in 2018)

Social status: Commoner

Profession: Trader

Language of narration: Meta

Bio prepared by Eleanor A. Dasi, University of Yaounde 1, wandasi5@yahoo.com

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.

Additional information

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating	Background: The Meta people are found in Mbengwi, the Divisional Headquarters of Momo Division in the Northwest Region of Cameroon, and its surrounding villages. They belong to the Menemo clan of Bantu origin and are reportedly settled only in Cameroon. The name Mbengwi in Meta literally means “land of wild animals.” This name comes from the fact that the place was a hunting ground before the coming of the colonialists. The people believe in the ancestors as the link between humans and God. Occasion: Staged

Summary	Mban is the dwelling place of the ancestors whose spirits incarnate in special stones. From time immemorial, it has served as a pillar of justice and truth in the community. In the early days, long before the Meta people settled in the Meta land, evil had already conquered the hearts of men. There were only twenty-nine families who were all descendants of the same paternal lineage. Twenty-nine great and honest fathers from the twenty-nine families of the land converged and came up with a code of justice built on truth. Though the code was encoded in every heart and everyone was expected to be truthful and objective, they needed a temple with perceptible relics of their commitments. The most beautiful artifacts in the land at the time were small shiny sea stones a guest had given the clan during a friendly visit. So they selected twenty-nine of the best shiny stones and used them as pillars of the justice they so passionately sought for. Whenever any of them died, they were consecrated to God and their spirits were evoked and assigned to live in the shiny stones. After such rituals, they were considered as part of the celestial justice system and could effectively enact penalties on dishonest and disobedient indigenes. The penalties varied from misfortunes to death. Though they were built on the beliefs of the fathers, the Mban became the most powerful hut in the land. It was a friend to good and honest people and an enemy to bad and dishonest people. As time went on, the Mban became more powerful. The initial twenty-nine fathers became the first twenty-nine spirits of Mban. The new heads of the families could evoke their spirits and request for their blessings on their children in various ways. Similarly, it was a taboo to

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.

go against the justice system of Mban or even endorse marriages without acknowledging the ancestors and requesting their blessings. Such an act alone could attract unbelievable misfortunes that could transcend right down to the descendants of the defaulters. Indeed, all those who were humble and fortunate enough to tap the blessings from a descendant of this twenty-nine elders, flourished in a remarkably astonishing way.

Today, once a family grows too big and wishes to break away, it must indicate its intentions in the palace so that the family could be given the authority and blessings to build a successful home. All those who have struggled to destroy Mban, have died mysteriously. Even at that, the gods of Mban are never jealous if any of their descendants chooses to join another sect or religion. All the gods require is that they live a just and upright life, respect traditional rites especially in cases of death and marriages. They also demand that siblings love and not try to harm each other. In fact, the thought of killing someone who is recognized by the spirits of Mban could lead to death. It is believed that certain mysterious deaths in the community are partly due to ignorance and evil deeds.

Analysis

The shiny stones as shrines parallels the existence of shrines in many world religions. The Mban myth addresses issues of cultural identity amid religious diversity and difference. The aspect of religious tolerance and the freedom to construct a post-identity that both draws and deviates from the original ethno-religious identity is also evoked. Also, the myth vulgarises and valorises the Meta cosmology as consisting of a supreme God and the spirit of the ancestors who have both beneficial and malevolent powers depending on the conduct of the people. It also validates the assertion that “Africa's indigenous religions and cosmologies are neither dying, nor are they operating as anachronisms. They have proved themselves capable of adapting to changing circumstances over which they may have little or no control” (*Cosmology: African Cosmologies**). So despite the advent of British colonisation and western religion, the Meta people through the help of Mban have maintained their worldview and adherence to the Mban religious tradition. There is also the issue of social justice or divine retribution which is enforced by the spirit of the ancestors. Finally, the myth also raises the needs for religious tolerance.

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.

	* Hallen, Barry, “Cosmology: African cosmologies” in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2005, 7, at Encyclopedia.com.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Emotions Family Identity Justice Nature Punishment Religious beliefs Society Truth and lies
Further Reading	Hornblower, S., *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. Hallen, Barry, “Cosmology: African cosmologies” in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2005, 7. Encyclopedia.com.
Addenda	Researcher: Eleanor A. Dasi. Assistant researcher: Julius Angwah. Method of data collection: Note-taking. Editors: Daniel A. Nkemleke and Divine Che Neba.

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.