Eleanor A. Dasi, "Entry on: Whatever Will Be, Will Be by Richard Ngamfu", 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/450. Entry version as of November 06, 2026.

Richard Ngamfu

Whatever Will Be, Will Be

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	Whatever Will Be, Will Be
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon
Original Language	Mungaka
Country of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Cameroon
Full Date of the Recording of the Story for the Databasey	March 5, 2018
More Details of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Nkefat, Bali Nyonga, 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
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Creators



Richard Ngamfu (Storyteller)

Age of narrator: 63 (in 2018)

Social status: Commoner

Profession: Trader

Language of narration: Mungaka

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

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Additional information

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating

Background*: Bali Nyonga is a part of the larger Bali Chamba group found in Cameroon and Nigeria. The account that the Bali Nyongas give of themselves is that they came from the Niger on horseback, attacking and defeating other tribes along their path until they finally settled in their present site. This is probably why they are known by their neighbours as a warlike and aggressive group (particularly Mankon, Pinyin, Meta, Bafut, Moghamo, who have been victims of their aggression). Their language, Mungaka, gained prestige during the colonial days as it was used by missionaries for communication and education. Like any other cultural group in the North West Region of Cameroon, the Bali people pray to God through the ancestors. They have a rich cultural heritage which they manifest each year through the Lela Festival.

Occasion: Staged

* Source: Bob Ata, *The Bali Nyonga of Cameroon, a story of African Migration*, mediablackberry.com (accessed: August 20, 2018).

Summary

So many years ago, Death had the habit of visiting people and giving them a leaf that contained the exact time they were to die. Death had visited so many people and as such was known and feared by many. Physically, he was huge, bearded and wrinkled. He lived in the great forest and was apparently the strongest youth in the world of the dead. In fact, those who saw him swore that he was three times the size of an adult human. He was hardly ever patient with those he visited, making any negotiations or befriending impossible. For this reason, people did not like him.

Ba Muh, one of the first notables of the land who was known for his wisdom and intelligence, closely observed the callous indifference of Death and promised to outwit Death whenever he would come for him. Since Death's visits were systematically arranged according to various communities and households, Ba Muh knew that after Death's visit to his immediate neighbour the previous night, he would likely be the next.

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The next night, just as Ba Muh had expected, Death visited and Ba Muh was prepared to outsmart him. He had cooked a delicious pot of meal and bought a jug of sweet palm wine. He put sleeping pill in both the food and the wine, and set the table, and then quietly sat waiting for Death.

Unlike his previous victims, Death noticed that Ba Muh was not scared; he seemed calm and composed. That distracted Death for a while. Ba Muh, humbly genuflected and requested that Death eat the delicious meal he had prepared for him. At first, Death did not want to, but because Ba Muh pleaded and even confessed that he loved and respected Death so much and would not want him to turn down his food, Death accepted to eat and drink. The food was so delicious that he ate everything and just as Ba Muh had planned it, he began to sleep.

Death had a bundle of leaves which were as many as everyone in the world. Every leaf contained the time of dying of each individual. The leaves were systematically arranged according to earlier and later time. From stories of Death's visits, Ba Muh knew the leaf on top was for him and was earlier in time than the ones beneath. So he quickly swapped it with the one beneath while Death was asleep.

When Death got up, he was so grateful for Ba Muh's act of kindness that he decided to reward him by making him the last person to die in the world. Consequently, instead of giving him the leaf on top, which was indeed meant for him, Death decided to give him the one beneath. Unfortunately for Ba Muh, the one beneath was what Death had initially prepared for him but he had swapped it over. That day, he learnt that it was difficult to change one's destiny and that whatever will be, will be.

Analysis

This myth reinforces the view that death is inevitable and that humans of all ages must live in anticipation of death and not in fear. Young people and adults therefore ought to live prudently. This might encourage young people in particular and every one in general not to procrastinate or laze about doing little or nothing.

Classical, Mythological, African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions

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Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Death Intellect Knowledge Religious beliefs Tricksters
Further Reading	Page, Ben, "Slow Going: The Mortuary, Modernity and the Hometown Association in Bali-Nyonga, Cameroon", *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 77.3 (2007): 419–441 (accessed: January 24, 2021).
Addenda	Researcher: Eleanor A. Dasi. Assistant researcher: Julius Angwah. Method of data collection: Tape-recording. Editors: Daniel A. Nkemleke and Divine Che Neba.

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