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Ba Venyuseh

How Jumneh Came Into Existence

Cameroon

TAGS: African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions Gods





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

General information	
Title of the work	How Jumneh Came Into Existence
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon
Original Language	Ga'a-Kedjom
Country of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Cameroon
Full Date of the Recording of the Story for the Databasey	January 5, 2018
More Details of the Recording of the Story for the Database	KedjomKetinguh
Genre	Myths
Target Audience	Crossover
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Creators



Ba Venyuseh (Storyteller)

Age of narrator: 110 (in 2018)

Social status: Village Elder

Profession: Farming

Language of narration: Ga’a-Kedjom

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Additional information

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating

Background: The Kedjom people are believed to have migrated from the North-East of Cameroon likemany other Tikertribes. Oral narratives hold that they lived side-by-side with the Oku people until a dispute broke out over the ownership of Lake Oku.The Oku people were favoured and the Kedjom people had to move and join the Kom people. When the Fon(king) of Kom wanted to make them his subjects,they refused and migrated to their present site. Another dispute erupted within them and divided the kingdom in two: KedjomKeku and KedjomKetinguh. Both kingdomsshare a common ancestry and socio-political systems of governance. The Fon is the executive arm of the traditional government while the *Kwifonis* the judiciary arm. The people believe in the existence of a supreme deity and other deities, with the ancestors being chief mediators between humanity and the Gods. Their main occupation is subsistence agriculture*.

Occasion: Staged

* Yenshu, Vubo, Emmanuel. *Itinerant craftmen Highland and the Royal Herdsmen: An Interpretation of Kedjom Historical Tradtion*s, Limbe: Designed House, 2001.

Summary

In the beginning, a God called Mphih lived in the celestial realms with his three children – Yondoh, Tih and Jumneh. However, these children quarreled often and made his home too rancorous and tense for his liking. So as soon as Yondoh, Tih and Jumneh came of age, he decided to separate them. He divided the world into three parts and asked each child to choose its part. Yondo chose the trees and Tih chose the streams. Jumneh also wanted the stream and would not settle for any other thing. In order to resolve this problem, Mphih created a body of water somewhere among the hills with all the elements of aquatic life as in the streams. Jumneh, who was naturally the jealous and troublesome one, accepted this new dwelling place, though grudgingly.

When humans got up one morning and saw this calm body of water

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flowing from the hill in their village, they were amazed and thankful to Mphih. More so, when they realized that it was full of fishes, crabs, and tadpoles; and that every plant around it grew luxuriantly, they were really delighted. So the people started fishing and cultivating crops around the lake. When Jumneh saw this, he was displeased by their noise and decided to curse all the aquatic elements and plants in and around the lake. As a result of the curse, women who ate fish from the lake and food cultivated around the lake became barren, while children became stubborn, dishonest and rebellious. The people became extremely quarrelsome despite the abundance of food in their barns.

To find out why things were this way, the people decided to consult the chief priests and the powerful Kwifon* of the land. They found out that the nefarious lake-god was indeed responsible for the social malaise in the land. They offered many sacrifices of fowls, goats, sheep and palm wine but the Gods would not be appeased. So they reported the matter to the other Gods and spirits of the land. The Gods and spirits took side with the people and launched a fierce battle against Jumneh. The latter was defeated and chased out of the lake. The people resumed their activities on the lake. But Jumneh was not a God who would give up so easily. One day, the people woke up only to discover that the lake had dried up leaving a large expanse or depression which remains empty to date in KedjomKetinguh.

* The judiciary and administrative arm of the traditional government.

Analysis

This myth highlights the disaster and chaos that jealousy, overzeal, selfishness and discord within the family can cause. “The empty lake,” as the Kedjom people call it, illustrates the consequences of strife and division among siblings; the lake did not relocate elsewhere (as is common with myths of lakes in the grassfield regions of Cameroon) but simply disappeared, to show the intensity of Jumneh’s spite and resultant wickedness. In this vein, the myth sets out to reorder and reform society by underscoring the need for love, unity and harmony within the family.

At another level, the myth re-echoes the belief that humans are only playthings in the hands of the gods who may take delight in inflicting

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	pain on humans for no just cause. Such is the case with Jumneh, who decides to vent his anger against his father and siblings on humans.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions Gods
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Character traits Conflict Family Humanity Nature Parents (and children) Religious beliefs Siblings
Further Reading	Oppenheimer, Paul, *Evil and the Demonic: A New Theory of Monstrous Behavior*, New York: New York University Press, 1996. Yenshu Vubo, Emmanuel, *Itinerant craftmen Highland and the Royal Herdsmen: An Interpretation of Kedjom Historical Tradtions*, Limbe: Designed House, 2001.
Addenda	Researcher: Divine Che Neba. Research Assistant: Regina Akuh Vegah. Method of data collection: Tape recording and note-taking. Editor: Eleanor A. Dasi.

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