Divine Che Neba, "Entry on: Why There Is Plenty in Palaces by Atangche Munga ", peer-reviewed by Daniel A. Nkemleke, Eleanor A. Dasi and Susan Deacy. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/455. Entry version as of November 06, 2026.

Atangche Munga

Why There Is Plenty in Palaces

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	Why There Is Plenty in Palaces
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon
Original Language	Ngemba
Country of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Cameroon
Full Date of the Recording of the Story for the Databasey	March 2, 2018
More Details of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Bafut
Genre	Myths
Target Audience	Crossover (Young adults and adults)
Author of the Entry	Divine Che Neba, University of Yaounde 1, nebankiwang@yahoo.com
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Creators



Atangche Munga (Storyteller)

Age of narrator: 72 (in 2018)

Social status: Kingmaker

Profession: Carpenter

Language of narration: Ngemba

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: Life performance
Summary	Long time ago, In the olden days, There lived a man and his wife. They had two children, A boy and a girl. A time came when there was Famine in the village. One day, As these children, Were coming back from their daily activities, Their parents were quarrelling,

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About eating one of them.

The father wanted the girl to be killed;

The mother wanted the boy to be killed.

As the boy and girl heard the argument.

They planned to escape.

Never to go to their house again.

They started on a journey

To an unknown land.

They passed through many forests.

They became tired at the entrance of one of the forests

So they stopped to rest.

In the night,

The boy watched the girl sleep.

The boy saw light approaching from the sky,

He placed his hand on his sister

(Narrator stretches his arm to a woman sitting near him)

The light came down

It came, came.

Finally, it settled on the boy's feet.

The boy realized it was a bird.

The bird gave the boy a comb and said,

"With this comb,

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You people will have plenty,

If your sister combs her hair with it,

A lot of money will come out.

If she holds it and laughs

The sun will shine.

If she weeps, it will rain.

If she wades in the water

Lots of fish will die".

After handing the comb

To the young man,

The bird disappeared.

It was dawn

The boy woke up his sister,

Gave her the comb,

Asked her to comb her hair with it.

As she combed her hair,

There was sunshine

I mean total sunshine.

She wept,

Rain started pouring down.

She waded in a nearby stream,

All the fish died.

The girl was afraid

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But when the boy revealed

The prophetic encounter with the bird,

She became very happy.

She smiled.

It gave them a mild sunshine

Which permitted them to continue their journey.

They continued their journey.

They travelled for three days;

Reached a land;

This land was strange.

They knew nobody there.

The boy left his sister with an old woman

Went directly to the palace to see the Chief.

He asked the chief whether he could house them.

The chief accepted.

He went back for his sister.

They came into the palace.

They were given food and accommodation.

The people were very welcoming.

The next day,

The boy asked the Chief whether his people

Needed fish, sunshine, money and rain.

The Chief answered,

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“Who on earth can refuse these things?”

The boy thought that the girl

With whom he was in the palace

Was his sister.

It was not his sister.

The old lady they met

Had deceived him.

As they were entering the land,

The lady had scooped out the eyes of his sister,

Thrown her into the nearby stream

And used magic to make

The boy think that the girl

With whom he was was his younger sister.

Thinking that he was with his sister

And the magic comb,

The boy told the Chief

To assemble the whole village;

That he was going to provide

Them with all their needs.

The Chief was surprised.

He asked,

“With everything?”

And the boy answered “YES”.

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The herald was sent.

The gong went round the village.

The news went through the village within the twinkle of an eye.

People brought bags, tins, baskets;

Everybody was ready to go home

With money that will keep him for the rest of his life.

As everybody assembled,

He called the girl,

Ordered her to comb her hair,

She combed;

Nothing happened. (members of

audience sympathized)

He asked her to smile.

She smiled;

Nothing happened.

He asked her to weep.

She wept;

(Audience) “Nothing happened.”

There was growing tension in him.

The boy was humiliated,

The Chief felt insulted.

The Chief ordered his people to arrest him,

The people told the boy that,

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In this village,

People who lied to the Chief

Were punished by death.

Meanwhile, the sister who was thrown into the river

Was saved by a hunter.

The hunter was from the village

Where his brother was facing trial.

She narrated the whole story of

What the old lady did to her,

She told the hunter that

She was going to give him money

If he could direct him to where the brother was.

The hunter told the girl that there was a certain boy

Who was presently facing trial

And would, obviously be killed

Because he failed to provide

The village with fish, money, sunshine and rain as he had promised.

The girl knew it was her brother

She combed her hair,

Money came out in abundance,

She gave it to the hunter.

She asked the hunter to use some of the money

To buy her eyes from the old lady who removed them.

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The hunter approached the old lady,

Told her he needed human eyes to give to his dog

So that with them, it can see well, and see further.

He said: “he was ready to pay anything demanded.”

The old woman brought out the eyes of the girl,

Sold them to the hunter.

The hunter brought the eyes to the girl;

Fitted them into their sockets.

The girl combed her hair once again,

Money came out.

She gave part to the hunter again.

She moved directly to the palace.

When the brother saw her approaching,

He jumped up,

Turned,

Only to discover that the other girl

Was not his proper sister;

That he had been deceived.

By then, the villagers were preparing

To strangle the boy to death.

With the coming of his sister,

He said:

“GIVE ME ANOTHER CHANCE

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TO OFFER MY PROMISE

I AM READY FOR IT NOW".

The people said,

"Go ahead." (the members of audience

Are now relieved from the tension)

The boy asked his sister to weep,

She wept;

And there was a heavy down pour of rain.

The boy asked her to smile,

She smiled;

Sunshine came immediately; and dried up the place.

The brother ordered her to wade in the stream;

She placed her leg in a nearby stream

Moved them about for some time;

All the fish came to the surface.

The villagers fell on them.

He ordered his sister to comb her hair,

She combed;

Money, I mean, money

Started falling like rain.

The whole place was erupting.

People jubilating and sweating.

Everybody jumped,

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Kissed the boy and his sister;

The chiefdom became a paradise.

That is why even today

There is always plenty

In the palace.

Analysis

Why There is Plenty in the Palace touches on an important African cultural element – respect for traditional authority. This myth shows that when the entire village gathers at the Chief's palace it is for important business and there can be serious consequences for those who undermine it. It also hinges on the image of the lost or damaged child, and an errant parent as well the consequence of such a loss or damage to society and home culture. There is also the refreshing idealism of love between siblings able to keep them together and help them overcome the most difficult challenges of life – in this case blindness, a death sentence, and even death.

The myth includes some motifs known from tales of magic like the motif of a supernatural helper (here represented by the bird made of light), the motif of magical objects (the comb) or the motif of eyes bought back and replaced.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions

Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture

Animals Authority Child, children Journeys Loss Magic Parents (and children) Siblings Society

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Further Reading

Ce, Chin and Charles Smith, eds., *Oral Tradition in African Literature*, Handel Books, 2015.

Neba'ane Asombang, Raymond, "Traditional methods of conservation. A case study of Bafut" in Webber Ndoro, Shadreck Chirikure, and Janette Deacon, eds., *Managing Heritage in Africa: Who Cares?*, New York: Routledge, 2018.

Addenda

Researcher: Divine Che Neba.

Method of data collection: Tape-recording.

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

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