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Soliey Mbezenyuy

Myth of the Origin of Lake Wasibel

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	Myth of the Origin of Lake Wasibel
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon
Original Language	Lamnso
Country of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Cameroon
Full Date of the Recording of the Story for the Databasey	March 17, 2018
More Details of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Bamenda, North West Region, Cameroon
Genre	Myths
Target Audience	Crossover (young adults + adults)
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Creators



Soliey Mbezenyuy (Storyteller)

Age of narrator: 70 (in 2018)

Social status: Notable of the Nso Clan

Profession: Trader

Language of narration: Lamnso

Bio prepared by Eleanor A. Dasi, University of Yaounde 1, wandasi5@yahoo.com and Julius Mboh Angwah, University of Yaounde 1, angwahjulius@yahoo.com

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Additional information

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating

Background*: The people of Jakiri are part of the larger Nso community of Kumbo, Bui Division, which is considered the largest ethnic group in the Northwest Region of Cameroon. They speak Lamnso and have a filial lineage to the Bamoun people of the West Region. The local population survives on subsistence farming. A majority of them have embraced Christianity and Islam, but still practice traditional African religion alongside. In Nso cosmology, there is the general belief in the powers of the earth (which include the ancestors'), which powers, have a direct influence on the living. They organize annual cultural festivals during which the king and notables visit the shrines of the Gods of the land, amidst a display of their most feared and revered masquerades. One of the sacred sites of the Nso people is the Lake Wasibel. The Lake is believed to be mysterious as anything that does not come from it cannot get into it. Even the leaves and sticks from the forests that surround the lake may be blown to every other direction of the forest but not into the Lake. The local People are also prevented from swimming in the lake because anyone whose ancestral spirit is not in the lake could be killed for daring to get into it.

Occasion: staged

* Source: tumeourheritage.wordpress.com (accessed: January 10, 2019).

Summary

A long time ago in the days of the forefathers, the chief priests from all the communities in Banso gathered at the king's palace to offer their usual annual sacrifices to the gods. After some rituals and incarnations had been performed, the Gods revealed to them to perform subsequent rituals in the motionless waters in Wasibel. The chief priests and notables were confused, because there was no such water in Wasibel. They offered more sacrifices to the gods for them to reveal the exact location of the body of water. The Gods then instructed them to secure a particular vast portion of land in the Wasibel forest, where no one was to go to in three days. A charm was prepared to prevent people from going into the forest during that

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period of time. On the third day, there was a strong breeze blowing from the Wasibel forest. The people had never experienced such a refreshing and consoling breeze before. The chief priests then performed some sacrifices, before going into the forest to find out if the water had been exposed as promised by the Gods. Less than two kilometers into the forest, they could not believe their eyes. The area they earlier carved out had transformed into a relatively vast lake. The waters were motionless and dark, exactly how the gods had described. They went back and informed the people that the gods had created the Lake Wasibel as they promised. They told the king and the villagers, and there was total jubilation in the village.

Since then, Lake Wasibel has remained a spiritual site where generations of kings and chief priests perform their sacrifices as well as commune with the gods of the kingdom for blessings. Only the king, some notables and the chief priest are allowed to swim in the lake and whenever the king goes to swim with the Gods, he comes back fortified with spiritual powers and wisdom to rule. During his week of communion with the Gods, no one gets into his private chamber, because anyone who sees him during, or immediately after the swimming will die. The king leaves the lake and appears directly in his inner chamber with the blessings from the gods. It is believed that since he is the primary mediator between the gods and the people, every blessing he gets from the lake is automatically extended to every son and daughter of the Banso clan. That is why his communion with the Gods does not have to be interrupted. Basically, three days before and after his swimming with the gods of Lake Wasibel, no chief priest or notable is allowed to swim in the lake.

Analysis

Most lakes in cultures of the grass-field regions of Cameroon have myths attached to their origins. Lake Wasibel is one of such lakes which is believed to have been created by the Gods themselves, principally as their abode and a site for communion with the rulers of the land. Many world cultures also indicate bodies of water as the dwelling places of divinities and as such, these bodies of water usually had mythical implications.

Classical, Mythological, African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions Gods

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Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Sacrifice
Further Reading	Chem-Langhëë, Bongfen and Verkijika G. Fanso, eds., *Nso and Its Neighbours. Readings in the Social History of the Western Grassfields of Cameroon: Readings in the Social History of the Western Grassfields of Cameroon*, Langaa RPCIG, African Books Collective, 2011.
Addenda	Researcher: Daniel A. Nkemleke. Research Assistant: Julius Angwah. Translator: Jude Berinyuy Tangwa. Editors: Eleanor A. Dasi. Method of data collection: Tape recording.

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