Eleanor A. Dasi, Julius Mboh Angwah, "Entry on: Ndàmìníp by Cosmas Aza", peer-reviewed by Daniel A. Nkemleke, Divine Che Neba and Elizabeth Hale. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/617. Entry version as of November 06, 2026.

Cosmas Aza

Ndàmìníp

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	Ndàmìníp
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	July 10, 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)
Author of the Entry	Eleanor A. Dasi, University of Yaounde 1, wandasi5@yahoo.com Julius Mboh Angwah, University of Yaounde 1, juliusangwah@yahoo.com
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Creators



Cosmas Aza (Storyteller)

Age of narrator: 70 (in 2018)

Social status: Notable

Profession: Carpenter

Language of narration: Meta

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

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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 their ancestors as the link between humans and God.

Occasion: staged

Ndàmìníp is a black serpent and also the name of a river in Nkòsì, Bessi, Mbengwi, North West Region of Cameroon. So many people believe that no one could consciously or unconsciously hurt any child in Ndàmìníp or even in Bessi because children were under the protection of the black serpent. The name “Ndàmìníp” directly translates as “Nda River”. This is so because the black serpent was discovered in the river by a little boy called Nda.

* Source: all-about-cameroon.com (accessed: January 11, 2019).

Summary

So many years ago, there was a small black serpent that got separated from its mother. It obviously couldn’t trace its trackback to where it had come out from, and so was wandering around the village. As it slunk around the community looking for comfort and a place to stay, everyone was aggressive towards it and wanted to kill it. After so much frustration, it then crept to the Nkòsì River and sat in a distance watching the children frolicking in the river. It stayed there for a couple of hours and later, when all the children had left the river, it slunk into the river to swim like the children.

One of the children, Nda, who had forgotten his clothes, went back to the river to get them and was shocked to meet the serpent swimming. Though he was frightened, he enjoyed it. The serpent soon enticed him and he went back to swim with it. They swam throughout the evening the way he had earlier swum with his friends. Nda became

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fond of the serpent and they became close friends.

Since Nda didn't go home on time, his siblings and friends set out in search of him. When they got to the river, they began calling his name so loudly. The black serpent had empowered Nda and taken him to the depth of the river, where they were swimming and having much fun. Nda could hear his family and friends calling in a distance, but could not answer. Later that evening, the black serpent accompanied Nda to the banks of the river and that was when Nda knew it could talk. The serpent told Nda that from that day, he should always refer to it as Ndàmìníp.

When the little boy got home and told his family and friends all what had happened that day, they didn't believe him, but as he continued meeting Ndàmìníp some other children began admiring their swimming culture and soon began joining them. Ndàmìníp noticed that it was safe among the children and so became fond of them too.

When the adult villagers realised that the children were fond of visiting the river daily because they enjoyed swimming with a black serpent, the chief priest was notified. On a fixed day, the chief priest was accompanied to the river by some adult villagers and after performing a few rituals at the bank of the river, he told the community that the black serpent was not dangerous to the children and that it was the child of a king who had died prematurely many years back. The chief priest also told the community that Ndàmìníp had traced its root back to the community and it was not a coincidence that it identified with children.

From that day, the river was also called Ndàmìníp because Ndàmìníp lived there. After that experience, so many testified that they met Ndàmìníp along their paths, after expressing unjust actions towards children, and this led so many to be careful with the way they treated children for fear that Ndàmìníp could punish them or even go as far as kill them for hurting children unjustifiably.

Analysis

In ancient world mythologies, water animals such as whales, snakes, turtles and sharks have had the status of deities especially in civilisations in which a body of water holds great cultural implications.

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	The above myth propagates the African belief that serpents are guardian ancestors and are particularly friendly to children; a serpent can only harm a child if it is on an evil mission. This is because children are considered free and innocent of diabolic thoughts and actions. In some African cultures, rivers, streams and lakes have snake guardians while other cultures consider the snake as symbolic of the connection between humans and the earth.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions
Further Reading	*Myths-Dreams-Symbols*, mythsdreamssymbols.com (accessed: January 10, 2019). *The Divine Serpent- Milky Way Mythologies: The Origin of the Creation Stories*, nativescience.net (accessed: January 10, 2019).
Addenda	Researcher: Eleanor A. Dasi Research Assistant: Julius Angwah Editor: Divine Che Neba Method of data collection: Tape recording

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