Eleanor A. Dasi, "Entry on: How the Earth (Land) Came to Be by Nson Ngambi", peer-reviewed by 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/877. Entry version as of November 21, 2026.

Nson Ngambi

How the Earth (Land) Came to Be

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 the Earth (Land) Came to Be
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon
Original Language	French
Country of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Cameroon
Full Date of the Recording of the Story for the Databasey	April 12, 2019
More Details of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Big Batanga
Genre	Myths
Target Audience	Crossover
Author of the Entry	Eleanor A. Dasi, University of Yaoundé, wandasi5@yahoo.com
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Creators



Nson Ngambi (Storyteller)

Age of narrator: 30 (in 2019)

Social status: common man

Profession: Farming

Language of narration: French

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

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Additional information

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating

Cultural background*: Big Batanga is located between latitude 4°24'0"N and longitude 11°1'0"E, in the South Region of Cameroon. The Batanga people are descendants of the Bantu family group who escaped slavery, harsh climatic conditions of North Africa and Pharaonic dominations. They speak Batanga and are spread in Central East of Africa (Uganda, Burundi, Tanzania ...) and the Central African region (Congo, Zaire, Central Africa, Cameroon). Those of Cameroon have a common ancestry with the Douala people through Ntanga Mu Mbedi (son of Mbedi). They believe in the god of the waters called Jengu or Mami Water, a half human half fish creature who lives on the seabed. Its spirit is the totem that is transmitted to the Batanga boys and girls when they arrive puberty and are ready for initiation. Just like other tribes in Cameroon, the Batanga people meet on an annual occasion called Mayi to perform rituals and communicate with the gods of the land.

Occasion: staged (date of performance: April 12, 2019)

* Source: *Duala people*, wikiwand.com (accessed: October 30, 2019).

Summary

In the beginning, the earth was just a vast body of water. Three gods lived in the sky: Mabea the Noble, Mabea the Labourer and Mabea the Silent. As time went by, Mabea the Noble and Mabea the Laborer created an axe which was used to build canoes in which they could sail the waters, but they did not have wood with which to build the canoes. Since the three gods were curious to know if there existed a piece of land beyond the water, Mabea the Silent was asked by the other two to go to the earth and find out since he had the ability to see beyond the ordinary. He transformed into a fish, went into the water, explored and discovered there was no land surface in it. He only discovered a white spot on the surface of the water, but he didn't know whether to consider it as a hard surface or not. He finally went back and told his brothers what he saw, and they decided to go back seven days after to confirm what it was. When they went back, they saw that the water had disappeared leaving a marshy surface on which birds could perch. Mabea the Laborer then threw stones from

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the sky and filled the empty surface, and it finally became earth.

After the creation of the first land, Mabea the Silent continued to study the white spots which gradually became a hard substance and as a result became land; but it was just a vast surface with no vegetation. In order to give vegetation to the empty surface, Mabea the Noble gave Mabea the Labourer the seed of a creeping plant which he planted and not long after, the plant covered all the land's surface, and growing into different kinds of trees and grasses. "What we lack on this earth now is inhabitants" said Mabea the Silent. "Go and cut a branch of the creeping grass" said Mabea the Noble. Mabea the Labourer went and cut the creeping plant and as each drop of liquid from the plant touched the earth, different kinds of creatures came into being, both human and animal. That is how the first inhabitants on earth were mysteriously created.

Analysis

How the earth came into being is still a marvel to many people despite the numerous mythical accounts offered to explain this phenomenon. These mythical accounts vary from culture to culture depending on the cosmology of the society in question. Despite these varying accounts, the common theme is that some god or supernatural being(s) existed before the creation of the world. The above myth adds to the vast array of myths that try to explain how one phenomenon or another came into being, in this case, the land or the earth. Much as this myth confirms the role of myths in the making of the world, it also serves as a medium through which the Batanga people relate with the rest of the human community with respect to their cosmic worldview.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions Gods

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

Nature Religious beliefs Water

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Culture

Further Reading

Sprout, Barbara, *Primal Myths: Creation around the World,* San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1979.

Von Franz, Marie-Louise, *Creation Myths*, Boston: Shambhala, 1995.

Addenda

Method of data collection: Tape recording and note taking.

Researcher: Eleanor A. Dasi.

Assistant researcher: Mbama Jean Pierre.

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