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Beyana Ngarbaï

Kazaye and the Horn of Abundance

Chad

TAGS: African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions Cornucopia





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

General information	
Title of the work	Kazaye and the Horn of Abundance
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Country/countries of popularity	Chad
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Creators



Beyana Ngarbaï (Storyteller)

Age of Narrator: 62 (in 2019)

Social status: Notable

Profession: Teaching

Language of narration: Mundang

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Additional information

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating	Background: See here.

Summary

There was once a hunter in the village of Lere, in the Mayo Kebi East area of N'djamena in Chad. He was called Kazaye. He always hunted to feed his family, and would keep fruits for them upon return home. One fateful day during his hunting expedition, he felt itches on his body and decided to take a bath in the river. While taking his bath, he happened to touch a hard and twisted object (a horn) inside the water. He immediately took it out of the water and out of curiosity, started singing aloud to the horn asking, "What are you? Who are you?" To this question, the horn answered: "I am the giver of food". Kazaye then asked if the horn could provide him with pounded millet. As soon as Kazaye made this request, a big calabash* of pounded millet with meat appeared in front of him, which he ate to satisfaction. After this generous meal, Kazaye took the horn home, and upon arrival, called his wife, Mandjakra, and ordered her to bring a large calabash, and gather all his children in one place. When this was done, he removed the horn from his bag and repeated the question: what are you? Who are you? And the horn responded again: "I am the giver of food". After this, the horn began to send out food of various types, which Kazaye and his whole family ate to their satisfaction. From here, Kazaye took the horn to the village chief, and told him to gather all the villagers, for he had something very precious for them — indeed a miracle to perform for them! The chief asked "what precious thing can you offer us, Kazaye, son of Marsuo?"** Kazaye answered: "obey me and you will see". The chief insisted that Kazaye should perform the miracle first, a thing he did. He asked the magical question to the horn: what are you? Who are you? And food appeared in abundance. After this the chief ordered his notables to send the message to the entire village for them to gather at the village square. Immediately the notables beat the drum***, the entire village gathered at the square, including animals. Kazaye stood in the middle and repeated the magical question to the horn again: what are you? Who are you? The horn answered: "I am the giver of food". After this response, the horn began to produce food in very large quantities. The villagers and animals who had gathered ate to their satisfaction. At this point, the chief ordered Kazaye to stop the horn from producing food. Kazaye

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took his horn back home. On his way home, the horn told Kazaye that it should always be kept inside a special shelf made of bamboo****. Kazaye became popular in the whole village for his magical powers and was nicknamed “the satisfier of men”*****.

One day, using the magical formulae, Kazaye ordered the horn to produce food, which he ate to his satisfaction as usual. Having eaten too much food, he fell asleep and forgot to put the horn on the bamboo shelf. When he woke up in the morning, he could not find the horn. Worried about the sudden disappearance of his horn, he went directly to the forest river; where he had found the horn in the first place. Luckily or unluckily for him, he found one, but it turned out not to be “the giver of food”, but the “giver of lashes”. When Kazaye asked the magical question to the “new” horn: what are you? Who are you? The “new” horn’s response was, “I am the giver of lashes”. Then Kazaye ordered it to demonstrate, and indeed he did by severely beating him up. When the lashes were too much to bear, Kazaye pleaded for mercy. When mercy was granted, he took the horn to the village and told the chief that he wanted to give food to the villagers again. This time around, everyone came, including disabled people who were unable to come the first time, and were transported on horseback to the village square. When all were gathered, the chief said, “Kazaye, son of Marsou, ask your horn to serve us food”. Kazaye stood up and went to the middle of crowd and said the magic question: what are you? Who are you? The horn answered: "I am the giver of lashes”, and lashes began to come from every direction and everybody was severely beaten, including the village chief. People tried to run in disorder, others fell trying to escape. At this point, Kazaye pleaded for mercy, and the lashing stopped. He then took the horn back to the forest. From that time, Kazaye became restless and furious against himself and was never forgiven by the villagers.

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* In traditional communities in Africa a pumpkin is often cut and its content emptied, so that the empty shell, called calabash, can be used as a bowl or container. In many rural places in N’djamena today, the calabash is used as a dish for food and containers to keep water.

** Marsuo is the father of Kazaye, and in the traditional society of the Mundang people, a son is identified by his father’s name.

*** The drum has long been a means of communication in traditional

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society in Africa. In most villages it is used to summon villagers to important social functions.

**** In traditional societies and villages in the Mundang culture, men build shelves with bamboo to store corn, beans and other foodstuff, when they are dried. Generally, women don't have access to it. When the women need anything from there, she must ask the husband to get it for her.

***** The Mundang culture is highly patriarchal. And when "men" are mentioned, it implies men and women, the latter being subordinate to the former — indeed considered as properties.

Analysis

Want of food has been one of mankind's preoccupations since the dawn of time. That is why humans have to hunt and farm to feed and sustain themselves. In many world cultures, the responsibility of providing for the family rests on the shoulders of the man. This is why in this myth, Kazaye hunts and brings home food for his family. However, sometimes, humans also benefit from the largesse and/or sympathy of the gods, who may take upon themselves to provide food for humans as a bounty. It was the case of manna that was released upon the children of Israel according to the Bible. The horn may bring up that of Amaltheia, Zeus' she-goat nurse, which provided him with all sorts of food during adolescence until he returned home. This mythical Greek horn is known under its Latin name as the cornucopia, meaning horn of plenty.

However, such benevolence from the gods is always accompanied by conditions which, if not fulfilled, will lead to a withdrawal or loss of the opportunity. This is the case of Kazaye who, out of negligence, forgets to put the horn in its rightful abode (the bamboo shelf) and so loses forever the opportunity of free food. The bamboo shelf then represents a sacred dwelling or shrine of the gods.

In all, the myth underscores the need for gratitude, responsible behaviour and honesty. Because Kazaye was irresponsible and ungrateful, he failed to put the horn in its place. Furthermore, the villagers are punished unjustly due to his dishonesty – he brings home a horn that distributes lashes instead of food. The myth again underlines the fact that when humans fail to follow instructions from the gods given with the magical objects, punishment follows and even

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	the innocent suffer.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions Cornucopia
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Character traits Emotions Loss Punishment
Further Reading	Calvino, Italo, “II regalo del vento tramontano” in *Fiabe italiane*, Torino: Einaudi, 1956. Grimm, Brothers, “The Table, the Ass, and the Stick” in *Household Stories*, London: David Bogue, 1857, 116–122 (accessed: January 19, 2021). Grimm, Brüder, “Tischchen deck dich, Goldesel und Knüppel aus dem Sack” in *Kinder- und Haus-Märchen*, Berlin: Realschulbuchhandlung, 1812. Rattray, Robert S., “How The Whip And The 'maara' Spoon (a Broken Bit Of Calabash) Came To The Haunts Of Men” in *Hausa Folk-Lore*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913, 80–107.
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