Eleanor A. Dasi, "Entry on: Ejengi, the Provider of Light and Water by Daurette Bidja", peer-reviewed by Daniel A. Nkemleke, Divine Che Neba and Elizabeth Hale. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2021). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1280. Entry version as of October 30, 2026.

Daurette Bidja

Ejengi, the Provider of Light and Water

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	Ejengi, the Provider of Light and Water
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon
Original Language	Koonzime
Country of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Cameroon
Full Date of the Recording of the Story for the Databasey	June 6, 2019
More Details of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Lomié, East Province, Cameroon
Genre	Folk tales, Myths
Target Audience	Crossover
Author of the Entry	Eleanor A. Dasi, University of Yaounde 1, wandasi5@yahoo.com
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Creators



Daurette Bidja (Storyteller)

Age of narrator: 55 (in 2019)

Social status: commoner

Profession: Teaching

Language of narration: Koonzime

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Additional information

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating

The Baka people*, popularly known as pygmies, are of Bantu origin. They live in the dense tropical forest of the East Region of Cameroon and are traditionally hunter-gatherers. Because they are scattered all over the forest, it has been difficult for their population to be estimated. Like every other traditional African society, they believe in the worship of spirits and gods, the Jengi (or Djengui or Ejengi) being their principal forest spirit. Curiously, the Baka do not have any political hierarchies and are cut off from formal education due to their semi-nomadic lifestyle. However, they are very good in herbal medicine so much that people from all over Cameroon seek their help in matters of traditional medicine.

* Source: *Baka people*, en.wikipedia.org (accessed: July 30, 2021).

Summary

In the beginning was the powerful Komba. He was the god of the Baka people. He lived in the darkest part of the forest with his wife and children. Komba's powers came from two principal sources: first, from his sacred calabash in which his drinking water was kept. Nobody had the right to look at it, talk less of touching it. Second, he had a torch that could only be used by him. He also had a garden full of succulent fruits that were consumed by him alone. This god of the Baka was so greedy and cruel to an extent that he refused to provide drinking water to his subjects, including his wife and children. The population became very thirsty and did not know where to get drinking water from since Komba had conserved everything to himself in his sacred calabash. The only person who had access to his sacred calabash was his nephew, Ejengi. As a god and leader, Komba paid little or no attention to the plight of his people. Rather, he spent time listening to the sound of bees so he could follow them and discover their hive. Honey and the sound from bees were to him like food and music. Komba strictly forebode all forms of noise in the forest for fear that it might perturb him from hearing the buzzing of bees. He even went as far as transforming anyone who transgressed his orders into a beast.

One day, after drinking a huge quantity of honey, Komba got drunk and fell into a deep sleep. The population pleaded with Ejengi, who

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knew all the secrets of Komba, to break his sacred calabash so that they could have water. When this was done, the whole forest was filled with water and everybody was very happy to have water. As if breaking the sacred calabash was not bad enough, Ejengi also threw the magical torch in the air and everywhere was light. In the course of celebrating their new found freedom and Ejengi's prowess, the people made so much noise that Komba (the god) woke up from his deep sleep, to discover the disaster that had been caused by Ejengi. Furious, he went in search of the young boy with the intention of beating and banishing him from the forest. Knowing who his uncle was and what he could do, Ejengi decided to exile himself from the forest. When he was about to leave, a good number of the Bakas decided to go with him. The liberator (Ejengi) and his followers ran until at some point they met a very mighty stone that had blocked the road. The people started panicking. Some thought that the stone could be Komba who had transformed to block them from leaving the forest. In this dilemma, the elders resolved to look for a solution. Ejengi immediately started hitting the stone so hard that it got angry and asked him why he was disturbing its (the stone's) sleep. Ejengi replied that an enemy was after them. The stone pitied them and decided to help, but on one condition; that Ejengi gives it water to drink. When this was done, the rock divided itself into two and enabled the runners to access the other side of the road. When Komba finally met the rock, he was so arrogant and decided not to pay attention to whatever it was saying. As a result, it got very angry and denied him access. So he used his mystical powers and went round the stone. Meanwhile, Ejengi and his group ran until they finally got to a river, which they could not cross. From nowhere, a log of wood appeared on water and agreed to help the situation on condition that they gave him fire, for he had been living in water for long and had caught cold. This condition was immediately fulfilled and the crossing began. But then, Ejengi, as a good leader, wanted to make sure that all his followers crossed before him. Unfortunately for him, Komba caught him just when it was his turn to cross. A fight erupted and Ejengi was defeated by Komba. But then Komba's powers had been destroyed with the breaking of his calabash and the destruction of his torch. After killing Ejengi, he transformed into a beast and remained in the forest.

Since then, there exist two groups of the Baka people, that is, one in the South and the other in the East. Those in the East go to the Dja River every year to pay homage to Ejengi, whom they consider as their god and liberator. To date, they worship Ejengi as their guardian spirit

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	and the mediator between them and God.
Analysis	Cases of selfish, wicked and cruel gods abound in ancient communities around the world. The experiences with such gods have been narrated in myths and legends of the various societies which have survived. These wicked acts of the gods most often revolved around withholding some precious element from humans like water and light, as is the case of Komba. Ejengi brings to mind Prometheus, who sympathizes with humans and steals fire for them. Both Ejengi and Prometheus face the wrath of Komba and Zeus respectively for defying their authority. In essence, the myth highlights the virtues of courage, kindness, and humility as opposed to selfishness, wickedness and cruelty. It also underscores the idea that natural bodies and things like rocks and rivers can provide humans a safe harbour in times of distress, and that nature always has a way of rewarding kindness. That is why in desperation, Ejengi sought help from the rock, which he got because of his kindness. His compassion equally prompted the wood to offer help as they got to the river. For his courage, kind-heartedness and humility, Ejengi is still being revered by the Baka people today.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions Gods
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Conflict Disobedience Heroism Humanity Nature Oppression Revenge
Further Reading	Deary, Terry, *The Fire Thief,* London: Kingfisher, 2005.

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Fry, Stephen, *Heroes: Mortals and Monsters, Quests and Adventures,* London: Penguin Books, 2018.

Leonhardt, Alec, "Baka and the Magic of the State: Between Autochthony and Citizenship", *African Studies Review* 49 (2006): 69–94.

Addenda

Researcher: Eleanor Anneh Dasi

Assistant researcher: Missodi Bidja Charlotte Liliane

Method of data collection: Tape recording and note taking

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