Eleanor A. Dasi, "Entry on: Myth of the Shye Vak Vak by Diane Modjo", 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/1282. Entry version as of November 05, 2026.

Diane Modjo

Myth of the Shye Vak Vak

Cameron

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	Myth of the Shye Vak Vak
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon
Original Language	Ghomala
Country of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Cameroon
Full Date of the Recording of the Story for the Databasey	June 27, 2019
More Details of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Bayangam, Koung-Khi, West 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



Diane Modjo (Storyteller)

Age of narrator: 40

Social status: ordinary citizen

Profession: Teaching

Language of narration: Ghomala

Bio prepared by Eleanor A. Dasi, University of Yaounde 1, wandasi5@yahoo.com

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Additional information

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating

Bayangam is located in the West Region of Cameroon between latitudes 5° 14 'and 5° 19' N and latitudes 10° 14’ and 10° 23.8’ E. They are part of the Bamileke tribe, precisely from the Nde Division of the West Region. They owe their origins to the Tikar group that migrated from Egypt. The Bayangam clan includes three groups: the Bayangam, Batoufam, and Bandrefam. The people practice Christianity but are still very much attached to their traditional religion. They also have cults, particularly the cult of the dead. Because the dead are considered to be among people, they are worshipped and venerated through their exhumed skulls.

Source : « Le Peuple Bamileke : Origines, Traditions, Culture, Religion et Symboles. » (accessed: July 30, 2021).

Summary

A long time ago, in Bayangam village, there was a plague. Almost everybody was suffering from one mysterious illness or another. Traditional doctors from far and near did all they could to remedy the situation to no avail. One day, one of the young traditional healers of the village was offering sacrifices to the gods of the land and suddenly, he saw his late father’s spirit in front of him. The man got frightened but the spirit reassured him that he was his father and that he shouldn’t be scared. The spirit of the father then told his son that he had brought good news from the ancestors. He said that the ancestors had heard his prayers and the plea of the people, in relation to a solution to the mysterious illnesses that had invaded the entire population. His father asked him to take a look at the rock on the hill behind them. Then he said: “Not long from now, water will burst out from those rocks and it will become the solution to all the sicknesses and any other problems the villagers have been facing”. With this piece of good news, the native doctor thanked his father, ancestors and the gods of the village and quietly went back to his house, and waited patiently for the promised miracle to happen.

Some months later, the chief priest, as usual, was on his way to offer sacrifices to the gods when he noticed a large crowd at the foot of the rock that his father had shown him. When he went closer to feed his eyes, he discovered that the promise made by the ancestors through his father’s spirit had been fulfilled. He was amazed when he saw

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water coming out from the rock. It was at this point that he rallied everybody and revealed what their forefathers had made as a promise and which had been fulfilled. They all entered the water; some drinking, others bathing. Thereafter, they named it shye vak vak meaning “the healing waterfall.” Since then, to this day, the Bayangam waterfall is believed to soothe mysterious and incurable illnesses and remains the pride of the Bayangam people.

Analysis	Water has always been regarded in many cultures, religions and myths (particularly creation myths) around the world as a source of rejuvenation, healing and purification, and also destruction and death. That notwithstanding, and for the most part, particularly in many African cultures, water sources are used as sites for healing, cleansing and purification rituals because it is believed the ancestors and gods reside around bodies of water. These bodies of water in which spirits live are thus believed to have miraculous healing powers, curing both physical and spiritual illnesses, and standing as mediators between humans and the gods. The myth suggests that there is physical and spiritual healing in nature, thus humans just need to identify these areas that provide such healing and protect them.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Health* Nature Water
Further Reading	Croon, J. H., “Hot Springs and Healing Gods”, *Mnemosyne* 20.3

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Addenda

Researcher: Eleanor A. Dasi

Assistant researcher: Fohom Chabou Fabrice

Method of data collection: Tape recording and note taking

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