Amshetu Melo Forchu, Dorcace Makodjou Poka, "Entry on: Njintapmayo by Mama Asanatou", peer-reviewed by Daniel A. Nkemleke and Susan Deacy. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2021). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1316. Entry version as of November 05, 2026.

Mama Asanatou

Njintapmayo

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	Njintapmayo
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon
Original Language	Bamun
Country of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Cameroon
Full Date of the Recording of the Story for the Databasey	May 21, 2020
More Details of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Yaoundé, Mfoundi, Central Cameroon
Genre	Myths
Target Audience	Crossover
Author of the Entry	Amshetu Melo Forchu, University of Yaoundé, meloamshetu@gmail.com Dorcace Makodjou Poka, University of Yaoundé 1, dorcacepoka@gmail.com
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This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Creators



Mama Asanatou (Storyteller)

Age of Narrator: 77 (in 2020)

Social status: Housewife, matriarch

Profession: Housewife

Languages of narration: Bamun, Baba

Bio prepared by Amshetu Melo Forchu, University of Yaoundé, meloamshetu@gmail.com

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Additional information

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating

Cultural Background*: Bamoun (Foumban)

The Bamoun Kingdom is situated in the Western region of Cameroon. It is surrounded by Donga Mantung and Bui Divisions in the North, Mifi Division in the West, Bafia and Bangante towns in the South and Banyo town in the East. Its origin dates back to 1390 with its founder Nchare, a prince from Rifum (the present day Bankim), in the Adamawa Region of Cameroon (see here, accessed: July 9, 2019). The Foumban traditional society is well structured with "Mfon" (King) at the head, closely assisted by the "Momamfon" the queen. Other custodians of culture include the notables. The Mfon is noted for his numerous wives and uncountable children. Other secret societies which assist in the administration of the Kingdom, both in the physical and spiritual realms, include the secret societies. Among them are: Nguri and Muitngu secret societies. Owing to the people attachments to the Gods, spirits and ancestors, the Foumban people pay particular attention the popular Nguon Festival (of fertility and protection), which has become a crowd pulling event in Cameroon for the past years. Gods and ancestors are worshiped during the festival and the spirit of sharing encouraged among the people by the king. The Foumban kingdom is one of the oldest Kingdom in Africa and noted for the invention of their own form of writing, which was later pushed to the periphery.

* Sources:

Mamadou, Ntiecheles, L*es conflicts Socio-politique dans le Royaume Bamoun de 1863–1889*, DIPESS II Dissertation, University of Yaoundé 1, 2000.

Fewoh, Paul Mouliom, *Collectives Décentralisée et Developpement Local: le Cas de la Commune Ubaine de Foumban*, DIPESS II Dissertation, University of Yaoundé, 2006.

Summary

A very long time ago, there lived a man, Njintapmayo*, in a far distant village. He had several wives and children and they all lived together

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in a very large compound. This man was a gourmand (big eater) and was fond of moving around all the time looking for food to eat. On one fateful day, he went to a road junction and saw a large basket of food and meat covered in a huge wooden container. He called for the owner but did not see anyone, so he asked: “Who is here? Please come and let me help put this load on your head”. When no one showed up, he tasted the food and looked around as if he was afraid of something. However, he continued eating: “I called for you and you did not come! If you don’t come, I will open the container and eat the food again”. Likewise, no one came because indeed there was no physical person. Consequently, Njintapmayo finished eating the whole basket of food he found at the road junction.

Thereafter, Njintapmayo left for his compound and at night he could not sleep because invisible people kept taunting and molesting him and demanding their food that he had eaten during the day. These people were invisible to other members of Njintapmayo’s family, however; he asked his wives and children to give them a goat, but they said: “We see no one molesting you, how can a goat be given to people we don’t see?”. For all this time, the invisible people had been talking in a very low tone, audible only to Njintapmayo. Later they began to speak in loud tones, and Njintapmayo’s wives and children could hear them clearly. Consequently, they asked: “Who are you people and what do you want?”, and they replied; “We want our food that had been eaten by Njintapmayo”. To this loud appeal, Njintapmayo replied: “I’m the one who ate the food and meat at the road junction, please, loosen the goat and give them”. At this point, the family members of Njintapmayo heard voices, but did not see physical people, and as the saga continued, Njintapmayo became increasingly weaker almost to the point of death. With insistence, he asked his wives and children to give the goat to these invisible people to make atonement for their food he had eaten. He exclaimed! “Give them the goat! Give them the food! I am dying!” Despite his plea, the wives and children could still not help him since they could not see the people. In the end, the invisible people took Njintapmayo with them to their spirit world. He died physically and went to serve them spiritually in their world.

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* This literally means a man who eats too much, in the local language of Bamun.

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Analysis	In the Bamun community and in most grass field cultures of Cameroon, it is believed that food that is prepared and put at the road junction belongs exclusively to the gods. The nature of the food, as well as its presentation on the road junction, differ from ethnic group to ethnic group. This practice is done in order to pacify the gods of the land. Eating the said food is considered an overt disrespect to the gods and a clear manifestation of gluttony which cannot go unpunished. Another belief in the grass field cultures of Cameroon holds that if someone picks money deposited on a road junction, he or she will be plagued by the ill-luck of the person who deposited the money. The myth of Njintapmayo clearly highlights the fact that gluttony is shunned by the Bamun community. Throughout the reading of this myth, one directly comes into contact with this vice and its fatal consequences. Also, the disrespect of cultural norms which forces the intervention of supernatural forces in natural circumstances is evident here. The supernatural forces here play the role of menders of bad ways or punishers of bad habits. Equally, the issue of naming plays an important role in the cultural value implied in the myth of Njintapmayo. This shows the importance that this culture gives to the names of children as these names can be prophetic, that is, can pre-determine the character or even the fate of the name bearer. All in all, the myth of Njintapmayo is very rich in its cultural value as it highlights bad behaviours which disrespect cultural norms and as such are condemned by the gods.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth	Character traits Death Family Morality Punishment Values

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Culture

Further Reading

Fomine, Forka Leypey Mathew, "Food Taboos in Precolonial and Contemporary Cameroon: A Historical Perspective", *Gastronomica* 9.4 (2009): 43–52.

Nä'Si OMC entry (accessed: August 6, 2021).

Why Tortoise Has a Cracked Shell OMC entry (accessed: August 6, 2021).

Addenda

Researchers:

Amshetu Melo Forchu and Dorcace Makodjou Poka

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