Divine Che Neba, "Entry on: The Myth of Lake Ber by Mainsah Lukong", peer-reviewed by Daniel A. Nkemleke, Eleanor A. Dasi and Hanna Paulouskaya. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2022). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1549. Entry version as of November 07, 2026.

Mainsah Lukong

The Myth of Lake Ber

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	The Myth of Lake Ber
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon
Original Language	Lamnso'
Country of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Cameroon
Full Date of the Recording of the Story for the Databasey	December 26, 2021
More Details of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Nso', Northwest Region, Cameroon
Genre	Myths
Target Audience	Crossover
Author of the Entry	Divine Che Neba, University of Yaounde 1, nebankiwang@yahoo.com
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Creators



Mainsah Lukong (Storyteller)

Age of narrator: 90 years (in 2021)

Profession: village priest

Language of narration: Lamnso'

Bio prepared by Divine Che Neba, University of Yaoundé 1, nebankiwang@yahoo.com

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Additional information

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating

The people of Nso, Kumbo Subdivision, Bui Division, are the largest ethnic group of the Northwest Region of Cameroon. Their population is estimated at 217,000 people on a surface area of 2,300 km2. They speak Lamnso, and have a filial lineage to the Bamoun people of the West Region. The local population survives on subsistence farming. A majority of them have embraced Christianity and Islam, but still practice traditional African religion alongside. In Nso cosmology, there is the general belief in the powers of the earth (which include the ancestors'), which powers, have a direct influence on the living. They organize annual cultural festivals during which the king and notables visit the shrines of the Gods of the land, amidst a display of their most feared and revered masquerades.

Source: tumeourheritage.wordpress.com (accessed: January 3, 2019).

Summary

Long time ago, in a small village called Ber in the Kingdom of Nso there lived a tribe. These people had vast lands for settlement and agriculture. They woke up one day to discover that a lake had suddenly emerged on one part of the land that was uninhabited. The lake was named "lake Ber" after the name of the village. This lake stretched into the neighboring Kingdom of Bamoun. Both kingdoms were astonished at the happening around the area and started quarreling over its ownership, especially as its topology was good for a worship ground. Later, the neighboring Bamoun people admitted that fighting over the lake would yield nothing and decided to come to terms with the people of Ber to jointly use it as a worship ground. This lake is capable of indicating signs of bad or good omen, by changing its color from red to blue respectively.

Apart from the color change, there are flocks of white birds that hover over the lake persistently. These birds are not to be killed for whatsoever reason, for they are believed to be guardian spirits of the lake. If anyone kills any of them, a pool of blood appears in the person's house and part of the flock will come chirruping around the house of the killer, signaling bad omen.

One day, some people who were farming nearby discovered that the lake had suddenly disappeared, but later reappeared, upon its return,

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there was earth tremor. After the incident, both kings (King of Nso and King of Bamoun) offered some sacrifices and performed purification rites to pacify the spirits of the lake and the gods of the land.

The village priests foresaw more sacredness around the lake and decided to harvest the herbs around the banks of the lake to use as medicine for different illnesses. Barren women who drank water from the lake became fruitful; the sick were healed and some people carried the water to their homes to drive away evil spirits. The people of Nso (particularly from Nkar area) to date continue to perform yearly sacrifices to the gods of Lake Ber as a means of appeasing the spirits, ancestors, and gods of the land.

Analysis

Natural shrines like lakes, rivers, mountain sites, streams, and falls, to mention a few, are sometimes mystical occurrences or revelations of prophets, prophetesses, or village priests. Most, if not all of these sites have a myth that surrounds them, as is the case with lake Ber. Some of these natural places of worship help to ascertain the people's religious beliefs, especially with the mystical happenings around them. The importance given to these places and the different manifestations answer some of the unanswered questions on whether Africans have a religious base or not. The activities of the entire community vis-a-vis these sacred places have also strengthened the belief system of the younger generation based on indigenous religion in Nso and Bamoun, amid the proliferation of myriad religions in these communities. The older generation like the younger in the Nso and Bamoun Kingdoms continue to maintain the bond between the living and their gods, spirits, and ancestors by offering yearly sacrifices to the inhabitants of lake Ber. As the narrator indicates, the myth equally foretells good and bad omens, thereby keeping the community on constant alert about happenings on earth and hereafter.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

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Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Prediction/prophecy Religious beliefs Sacrifice Supernatural creatures (non-classical)
Further Reading	Idowu, Bolaji E., *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*, Ibadan: Fountain Publications, 1991.
Addenda	Method of data collection: note taking Researcher: Divine Che Neba Assistant researcher: Barah Happiness Nyuymengka

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