Divine Che Neba, "Entry on: God and His People by Mathieu Djele", peer-reviewed by Daniel A. Nkemleke and Katarzyna Marciniak and team members in University Warsaw. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/157. Entry version as of November 05, 2026.

Mathieu Djele

God and His People

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	God and His People
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon
Original Language	Fefe
Country of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Cameroon
Full Date of the Recording of the Story for the Databasey	December 12, 2016
More Details of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Bafang
Genre	Myths
Target Audience	Crossover (Young adults + adults)
Author of the Entry	Divine Che Neba, University of Yaoundé 1, nebankiwang@yahoo.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaoundé 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.com Katarzyna Marciniak and team members in University Warsaw, kamar@al.uw.edu.pl

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



Mathieu Djele (Storyteller)

Age of Narrator: 54 (in 2017)

Social status: Notable

Profession: Driver

Language of narration: Fefe

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

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Additional information

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating

Background: Bafang is situated 300km North of Yaoundé; the political and administrative capital of Cameroon. It is in the West region of Cameroon and has a surface area of 80 square kilometers. It lies at the heart of the territory of the Bamiléké people. Like most Bamiléké people of the West region of Cameroon, the Bafang people believe in the worship of ancestral spirits. Their spirituality is evident in the multiplicity of natural and man-made shrines they possess. These sacred places range from natural habitats to homes. The ancestors to them are more or less living in the spiritual realm and the world beyond. They hold them in high esteem because they serve as intermediaries between the living and the dead.

Occasion: Staged Performance

Summary

Once upon a time, God used to live, chat, and eat with his people. He lived together with human beings. All things were decided by him [God] before they were done by them [the people]. One day God wanted to make a visit around the world. But before leaving his people he told them not to bury anyone who dies in his absence. They should not dare to perform any burial. God left for his tour in the planting season. Not long after, when all crops were planted, a man who had been sick for years, died. People came to see the corpse. Only men and women old enough were permitted to see the corpse. Soon the corpse started to decompose and to send out a bad smell. And the people continued waiting for God to come back. The smell became so strong that the people felt uncomfortable and started falling sick. One day the people decided to go and bury the corpse in the forest. Not long after the corpse was buried, God returned from his visit. God asked whether everything was all right. The people said that all was well, except the death of the old sick man. They added that as the corpse was putrefying they decided to bury it. God burst out in anger. He could not stand such deliberate disobedience. “These people must be left to themselves,” God said.

God could not return to live with such disobedient people. He left them and went up to the sky. The people remained alone on earth. They lived like sheep without a shepherd. They were disorderly; they quarreled among themselves. Many troubles started coming on them.

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Each one started solving his own problems in the way he thought was fitting. Some found God too far away from them. They preferred having a god near them, a god that could hear and see their problems. Many started creating their own private gods to solve some of their problems. These private gods [according to the people of the Western Region of Cameroon] can be found in strange and frightful places like caves, thick forests, and in some villages even in the places where ancestors have been buried.

Analysis

This myth shares similar themes of disobedience and punishment; as well as the physical separation between man and God; the Bafang people of the Western Region of Cameroon record that disobedience is the cause for the permanent physical separation between humankind and the supreme Deity [God]. The coming into being of divinities [gods] was to fill in the gap orchestrated by the act of disobedience. Though the spiritual string remained, the Bafang people needed God's presence and places where they could communion with him. Thus, numerous divinities emerged not only to satisfy their immediate spiritual and material need, but to link them with the supreme deity in a more cordial manner. Consequently, the divinities were named either by their allotted functions or natural phenomenon. The Bafang people perform sacrifices today to the gods of caves, shrines, forests and mountains. These shrines are abodes of the divinities, who are derivatives of the supreme deity. Their coming into being resolves humanity's problem under the patronage of the supreme deity. Thus, these divinities can also be seen as, to borrow from E. Bolaji Idowu in *African Traditional Religion: A Definition* as the "… conceptualization of certain prominent attributes of Deity, especially as discerned through natural phenomena" (172). These divinities only come in to fill the gap created by humankind's action.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions Gods

Death Disobedience Humanity Punishment Relationships Religious

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Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	beliefs

Further Reading

Idowu, Bolaji E., *African Traditional Religion: A Definition,* Ibadan: Fountain Press,1991.

Kouega, Jean-Paul, *Le Peuple Baloum: Origines, evolution et perspectives*, University of Yaoundé 1: Association Baloum 10 (AL10), 1995.

Myth *Origin of EVU (Evil Spirit) and AWU (Death) Amongst the Beti-Fang, Cameroon* (accessed: January 21, 2021).

Scheub, Harold, *A Dictionary of African Mythology: The Mythmaker as Storyteller*, Oxford University Press, 2000.

Addenda

Method of data collection: Note taking.

Researchers: Divine Che Neba and Gabriel Djele (trans.).

Editors: Daniel A. Nkemleke.

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