Maurice Tangang

Why “Kighori” Has Remained a Holy Ground for the People of Bambui

Cameroon

TAGS: African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions





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General information	
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Genre	Myths
Target Audience	Crossover
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Creators



Maurice Tangang (Storyteller)

Age of Narrator: 52/55 (in 2017)

Social status: Traditional Councilor

Profession: Teaching

Language of narration: Mbeuh, Bambui / English

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Additional information

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating

“Kighori”: Name of a ritual ground

Background*: The Bambui chiefdom, which is believed to have existed for about 400 years, originated from the Tikar tribe. They are believed to have migrated from the northern regions of Cameroon. Their migration was done in waves with the Manju, Matulaah and Mallam being the first to arrive their present site. They were then joined by the people of Alaakubeh and Fingeh, who escaped from their ancestral homes in Santa and Kom respectively, due to chieftaincy and land disputes. This takes the number of chiefdoms to five, each controlled by a sub-chief who is answerable to the paramount chief. They worship their ancestors whom they believe watch over them, and transmit their worries to the supreme being. They practice agriculture both for subsistent and commercial purposes.

Occasion: Staged performance

Source: *Bambui Town, North West Region of Cameroon*, all-about-cameroon.com (accessed: May 6, 2019).

Summary

Long time ago,

After the Bambui people settled here,

The person who led them

Into this land disappeared. Before his disappearance,

He told the people,

I WILL SHOW YOU PEOPLE A SIGN

The time came,

And the people saw the sign.

There are three principal shrines here (in Bambui),

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These shrines were seen through

This promised sign.

One day,

As the people were moving around,

They came to a place,

Near Mfontah.

A forest suddenly emerged there.

(The forest is not there any longer).

A lake also emerged and

Surrounded the forest.

Immediately the people saw it,

They knew that was the promised sign,

An order was passed that

Nobody should cut a tree,

Fetch wood,

In the sacred forest.

The shrine was named “Bingkeng”

Around “bingkeng”was a lake,

This lake travelled occasionally.

Before its departure each time,

It gave a thunderous sound,

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Its coming back was also

Signaled with a thunderous sound,

It provided a fertile place for the

People to live and farm,

As the villagers had to fish there,

When it travelled,

The villagers came in for fishing,

It gave notice

To the villagers

That it is going away,

To come back.

Before it came back,

It announced its coming with a sound like that of thunder- “kwangkwang, kwang”

When the people heard

The signal,

They knew it was time for

Them to stop fishing.

The lake killed many people.

Those who could not hear

The signal.

Or who heard it,

And continued fishing were

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Often buried in the lake.

The people knew that the forest,

The lake,

Were holy places.

They offered sacrifices there

ALL traditional rites were being

Performed there.

Death,

Birth,

Marriages,

Initiations,

Were performed there, people went there with cooked food,

And wine,

And offered to the gods

And ancestors.

The gods and ancestors came out in the night to

Collect their offerings.

These activities continued

For some time,

It was a ritual that was

Performed regularly in the village of Bambui.

One day,

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One man violated

The law of the forest

He cut down a tree from

The forest,

The lake was angry,

And left forever,

Suddenly,

A host of butterflies appeared.

The butterflies covered the whole village.

They covered the whole area.

The whole sky was as dark as a rainy night.

“Do you people know where the butterflies came from”? (Asked the narrator)

“No”. (Replied the audience)

The butterflies were the angry gods of “Bingkeng.”

The butterflies started singing,

The people have

Disappointed us,

For that reason

We are going.

The song was sung like this:

Kighorikwapkwap (We have been driven away)

Kighorikwapkwap, Kighoriikwapkwap (We carried all our beddings

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away)

And going away,

The butterflies covered the village.

THE WHOLE DAY,

Nobody could see the sky.

It was a locust day.

After a day,

The butterflies disappeared.

No lake was seen again, it had also disappeared,

No fishing for the people.

But the forest was still there (narrator cautions the audience).

If you go to Mfontah*

You will see the relics

Of the forest.

That is where the activities

I am narrating took place,

That was a long time ago

My father told me.

The forest was not holy again,

With the disappearance of the lake,

The people could not allow

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Things like that to remain unexplained.

They wanted to know

What happened with the lake.

One day,

One father came out of his house.

He saw a host of butterflies.

That started directing him to a

New direction.

He closely followed the butterflies,

As they were going, going, going and going,

They reached a place called Kighori.

When they arrived at Kighori,

The butterflies disappeared.

The old father stood there,

Wondering.

He heard a voice:

“This is a holy land”,

“Always offer your sacrifices here,”

“We have not abandoned you people.”

From then,

The people started offering

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Sacrifices at Kighori once a year.

Kighori has remained a holy ground,

For the people of Bambui.

The gods of the village are there.

Another sign came from Kighori.

That is, a rainbow.

The rainbow stretched itself

From Kighori

To a small water in Misaa**.

The whole day people were watching

Watching, watching and watching

To see the reaction of the rainbow.

The rainbow remained there till...

After one day it disappeared.

The people carefully,

Went and inspected where

The rainbow had stopped.

As they arrived the waterfall,

A voice came out of the waterfall,

And said,

This is a holy land,

Constantly offer your sacrifices here.

ALL your missing chiefs are here

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The shrine is called “Fili.”

This is how the principal shrines

In Bambui were discovered.

We perform sacrifices in “Fili”annually,

We also believe that Ntsu’u (God),

Was the person who was directing the people to those places.

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* Name of a place.

** Name of a place.

Analysis

Choosing societal worship places (shrines) in traditional Africa is usually not haphazard. These places are often prophesied or shown to the people by spirits, Gods, ancestors or introduced to them in their dreams. In some situations, certain mythic events occur to prefigure these sacred areas. When these areas are identified and accepted by the people or families, the presiding priests, family heads, or prophets prepare them for worship and the offering of defined sacrifices. As in the case of the above myth, Nstu’u is the prophet that introduced the major shrines to the Bambui people.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions

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

Death Nature Prediction/prophecy Religious beliefs Sacrifice Society

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Further Reading	LaGamma, Alisa, *Art and Oracle: African Art and Rituals of Divinatio*n, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000.
Addenda	Method of data collection: Tape recording and note-taking. Researcher: Divine Che Neba. Research Assistant:Augustine Njamitoh (trans.). Editor: Eleanor A. Dasi.

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