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Eleanor Zofoa

Myth of the Origin of the Babungo 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	Myth of the Origin of the Babungo People
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon
Original Language	Wang Vengo
Country of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Cameroon
Full Date of the Recording of the Story for the Databasey	April 2, 2018
More Details of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Bamenda, North West Region, Cameroon
Genre	Myths
Target Audience	Crossover (young adults + adults)
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Creators



Eleanor Zofoa (Storyteller)

Age of narrator: 25 (in 2018)

Social status: Princess

Profession: Student

Language of narration: Wang Vengo, English

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Additional information

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating

Background*: Babungo is a rural community and one of the thirteen villages that make up the Ngo-Ketunjia Division of the Northwest Region of Cameroon. It is located between Latitude 60 44' 43.0152" North and Longitude 100 26' 59.154" East. Its fertile land, rich water sources, and pastoral plains make the place good for cattle grazing and farming. The place is an ideal touristic site, due to its rich cultural artifacts. The arts and cultural museum in the palace reinforces its cultural potentials, and adds to the rich diversity of cultures of the Northwest Region.

History holds that the people migrated from the Tikar of present day Adamaoua Region, made their first stop at a place called Forghai, before being guided by the gods to their present location. It has a population of approximately 4000 people, the majority of whom are subsistence farmers. It is a typical traditional setting ruled by the "Ngumba" (council of elders) which stands as both the Kingmaker and the father of kings. Like many traditional societies of this part of the country, the Babungo people have remained glued to their aged beliefs in the Gods.

Occasion: staged

* Source: cameroontourismlink.wordpress.com (accessed: January 10, 2019).

Summary

So many years ago, Babungo was only a dense forest with a lake in the middle, and no signs of human settlement. The lake, which was later named Lake Forghai, gurgled and roared for a few minutes and after roaring, people (two brothers, their uncle, their wives and grandfather), as well as a white goat, came out of it. The entire area was strange to them but, even so, they really needed a place to settle. Before they came out of the lake, the Gods of the lake told them to take the goat along, and that wherever the goat stopped, they should settle there. In order to better guide them, the Gods told them to move southwards, and so they started their journey.

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They went on until they got to a place called Ngineh. Ngineh was not too far away from Forghai. At Ngineh, the goat stopped and slept on the ground. They gave it corn to eat, and few days later, it died. It was buried on the same spot where it died. The people then began building up their community. The younger brother was crowned the King, and his palace was built on the same spot where the goat was buried. The elder brother was titled the *Tita Bah* (second in command to the King of Babungo). The *Tita Bah* tried a couple of times to overthrow his younger brother to become King of the land but each time he tried, an ancestor came outof Lake Forghai to remind the entire community of their common origin, as well as the diversities of their functions in the society.

The spirits of the ancestors constantly reminded the people that Babungo society was administratively stratified by the Gods right from its origin. Thus generations of the younger brother should be Kings while those of the elder brother should be *Tita Bahs*. Tita Tivike, the uncle who came out of the lake with the two brothers, was the spiritual custodian of the land, and his descendants would be chief priests. No one, except those from the three families, could run the three respective offices in the clan. They could only exchange responsibilities in the case where there is no legitimate heir to a particular office. Even then, the Gods must be consulted. In order for them to affirm if the chosen individual was the rightful person, he was sent into the lake, where he spends at least five hours. If he comes out alive, then he can take over the new office. There has, however, never been any such case because the Gods have always made sure that the three men continue to have progeny to inherit their positions.

The grandfather, who was amongst those who came out of the lake, only accompanied the three leaders in order for them to begin the land, and to draw their attention to the fact that they are spiritually backed up by the Gods of the land in their activities. It is said that since he accompanied them to the land, he was never seen again. He lived among the people spiritually and he is always there in times of pain and joy.

Analysis

Creation myths often begin with a void, and later, the emergence of humanity. The Babungo legendary myth presents a dense forest that harbors a lake with no form of human life at the beginning. Later, out of this nothing emerges humanity and a spotless white goat. This

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	nothingness at the beginning, which ends up constituting what we have today as the Babungo society.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions Gods
Further Reading	Belcher, Stephen, ed., *African Myths of Origin*, Penguin Classics, 2006. Warnier, Jean-Pierre, *Cameroon Grassfields Civilization*, Langaa RPCIG, African Books Collective, 2012.
Addenda	Researcher: Divine Che Neba Research Assistant: Julius Angwah Method of data collection: Tape recording

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