Divine Che Neba, "Entry on: Nya'ti and Her Frog Lover by Rosa Foyenka Lukong", peer-reviewed by Daniel A. Nkemleke, Eleanor A. Dasi and Susan Deacy. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/621. Entry version as of November 01, 2026.

Rosa Foyenka Lukong

Nya'ti and Her Frog Lover

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	Nya'ti and Her Frog Lover
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon
Original Language	Lamso
Country of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Cameroon
Full Date of the Recording of the Story for the Databasey	December 15, 2017
More Details of the Recording of the Story for the Database	Nseh
Genre	Myths
Target Audience	Crossover
Author of the Entry	Divine Che Neba, University of Yaounde 1, nebankiwang@yahoo.com
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Creators



Rosa Foyenka Lukong (Storyteller)

Age of narrator: 82 (in 2017)

Profession: Farmer

Language of narration: Lamso

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Additional information

Origin/Cultural Background/Dating

Background*: Nseh, a village in the Bui division of the North-West region of Cameroon, is part of Nkum and is located between the geographical coordinates Latitude 60 22' 16" North and Longitude 100 44' 29" East of the Equator. It has three ethnic groups: Wiya, Warr, and Tang. The basic activities of the Nseh people are cattle grazing and farming and their beliefs go in tandem with those of the Nso people of the Bui division. In Nseh, there are mandatory cults where members, "Samba Wir", take life responsibilities. Cult membership and titles, therefore, come with lifetimes commitments.

Occasion: staged

Sources:

Goheen, Mitzi, "Chiefs, Sub-Chiefs and Local Control: Negotiations over Land, Struggles over Meaning", *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 62 (1992): 389–412, available at jstor.org (accessed: January 16, 2019).

sheytatah.dk (accessed: January 16, 2019).

Summary

A long time ago, there existed a kingdom called Nseh. In this kingdom, animals talked and walked and no animal crawled, skipped or stooped, hopped or jump for movement; they all walked. In the kingdom, there lived a beautiful princess named Nya'ti. She was the most beautiful girl in the kingdom. Her beauty attracted all the young handsome men in the kingdom, and the princes in the neighboring kingdoms and beyond. It was each and every man's wish to have her as a wife but unfortunately, everyone's attempt at marrying her failed. After turning down all the suitors, including a young, rich and handsome prince from one of the neighboring kingdoms, she was banished from the palace by the king. She moved out of the palace as a result of her exile and lived a solitary life in one remote part of the kingdom. As a means of livelihood, she embarked on farming, alongside cooking and selling of sweet corn juice. As a daily routine, she would go to the farm, wash her dresses in the stream and prepare

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her corn to ferment in order for her to brew her corn juice with. This special drink could remain so sweet even for months.

One day, while washing her maise by the stream, a flirting frog walked up to her and appreciated her beauty. She smiled. Her smile was rather sly than shy, for she had heard such compliments numerous times from both beasts and humans. She stooped and continued washing her corn in the basket. Suddenly, the frog jumped on her back and insisted that she should carry him like a child. She shrugged for the frog to fall down to no avail, and pleaded for hours but the frog wouldn't get down. She carried the frog home and proceeded to do each of her chores while the frog remained glued to her back. For three consecutive days, the frog slept on her back like a weird baby.

After preparing her corn juice one evening, the frog wanted to taste some. Nya'ti hastily agreed and the frog rudely skipped inside the calabash of corn juice. Nya'ti quickly sealed the calabash, imprisoning the frog in it.

She ran from house to house seeking for safety, for she no longer felt safe living alone. Finally, she resorted to running back to her father's palace. After a hasty explanation of what befell her to her father, the king had no choice but to hide his daughter from the curse of the frog, a creature whose story had seldom been heard in the kingdom. It was thus unimaginable that it would want to force the pretty princess into courtship.

After the frog drank about half the calabash of corn juice, his stomach broke open the lit of the calabash and he came out. He looked around for the princess but the whole house was too quiet. He called her over and over to no avail. After a rest, he turned to the corn juice and cursed it for being too sweet; sweet enough to make him lose the love of his life.

> "And to you corn juice" he said with tears dripping from his eyes into the leftover corn juice; "you will henceforth become sour and turn alcoholic after a few days, for you have caused me to lose the love of my life".

He then proceeded to searching for Nya'ti. He moved to an old woman by the stream and explained his story, begging the old woman, in a song, to direct him to where he can find his lover. The song goes thus:

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Nya'tibotimo eh

Lumti

Bo timowaiyngang eh

Lumti

EbeyNyaebey.

Lumti

Translation:

Nya 'ti lied to me

Lumti (Hook or chorus)

Lied to me and put me in a calabash of corn beer

Lumti

Damn Nya 'ti! Damn

The old lady pitied him and pointed to the direction of the palace. After a long walk, he met another group of maidens and sang the same song to them and they showed him the palace. He got to the palace and met everybody in chaos. This was because everyone was taken aback at the sudden change of the taste of the leftover corn juice that was prepared for the royalty. He informed the king that he had come for Nya'ti, and that he had cursed the corn juice to be soar and alcoholic. The king refused to hand over Nya'ti to the frog and he sang the song to the king. Nya'ti heard the song and ran out, for the sound of it was magical and seductive. On seeing Nya'ti, he was very happy and focused all his attention to her. He passed by the King and did not greet him. All what was on his mind was Nya'ti. The king became so furious at the degree of disrespect the frog showed to him. As a result, he cursed the frog saying:

"Ye creepy creature, you will forever jump and hop as you jumped on my daughters back".

The princess sadly retreated to her home far away from the palace

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and forever carried
the frog on her back till she died. Since then, frogs have been jumping and hopping as way of movement.

Analysis

Self-esteem, pride and disgrace are cardinal themes in the above myth. Nya'ti, with her stunning beauty ends up in the hands of a mean creature – submits to a Frog as life partner because of self-esteem and pride. The Frog here symbolizes total ugliness, if not exaggerated. Most mythic heroines within this category of myth, beside their personal character traits, usually suffer from a curse, either from the world beyond or from their immediate surroundings. This is the case with Nya'ti, who marries an outsider. Besides the fact that the husband is a pariah, her father does not sanction the union with a frog. Thus, she does not receive the ancestral blessings which any African bride carries into her marital home. Rather, the anger of his father is equated to a curse.

The motif of rejection of suitors caused by a bride who considers herself too good for them and then is forced to accept a disgusting or terrifying husband is present in the following myths: *The Were-Wolf Husband*, *The Water God "Atutu" Marries the Most Beautiful Princess*, *Mitidi – the Snake-man*, *Myth of Ntiteuh* (accessed: December 20, 2020).

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

African Mythologies African Storytelling African Traditions

Further Reading

Mitidi – the Snake-man, (accessed: December 20, 2020).

Myth of Ntiteuh (the Most Beautiful Woman on Earth) Who Married the Sky King, (accessed: December 20, 2020).

The Water God "Atutu" Marries the Most Beautiful Princess, (accessed: December 20, 2020).

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Werner, Alice, "The Were-Wolf Husband" in *Myths and Legends of the Bantu*, George G.Harrap & Co., Ltd., 1933,190–191 (accessed: September 13, 2021).

Addenda

Researcher: Divine Che Neba

Assistant researcher: Hans Ayuni

Method of data collection: Tape recording and note taking

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